

FEMA Responds to Severe Winter Weather in the Southeast

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WASHINGTON -- As large sections of the United States are being impacted by extreme cold, snow, ice and high winds, FEMA is actively coordinating with impacted states, local and tribal governments to address unmet needs.

President Joseph R. Biden approved emergency declarations for [Louisiana](#), [Oklahoma](#) and [Texas](#), authorizing FEMA to provide emergency protective measures for mass care and sheltering and direct federal assistance. Texas Governor Greg Abbott requested a major disaster declaration today, which is under review.

Even as FEMA is focused on supporting vaccination distribution efforts, the agency maintains its mission readiness and is supporting multiple disasters. FEMA has moved water, blankets, shelf-stable meals, generators and fuel to help states respond to this event.

“We're working with Texas and the local governments there to provide resources they need,” said Acting FEMA Administrator Bob Fenton. “Individuals need to continue to heed the warnings of local government officials. Don't expose yourself to the cold for long periods. Check on friends and family, and make sure that they get to warming stations if they need to.”

Anyone who is still without power should seek a warming center in their area, while taking COVID-19 precautions. Older adults, young children and the disabled can be especially vulnerable in extreme temperatures, so please check on your neighbors and encourage anyone who needs assistance to go to these shelters for warmth.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Acting Secretary Norris Cochran [declared a public health emergency](#) for the state of Texas. This declaration authorizes certain flexibilities for healthcare providers in the state.



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Winter Storm Impact on COVID-19 Vaccination Efforts

Severe weather continues to impact COVID-19 vaccination efforts across the United States, with heavy snow, freezing rain, ice and high winds potentially affecting areas in the storm's path.

- More than 2,000 vaccine sites are located in areas with power outages. FEMA is working with state partners to ensure they have everything necessary to safely reopen any closed facility.

FEMA Response Actions

Thursday evening, Acting Administrator Bob Fenton appeared on MSNBC to discuss FEMA's ongoing response activities for winter weather across the southeast.

"We're there to support the state of Texas," said Fenton. "They set the priorities where they want us to focus our resources and where we can provide assistance. Right now, we're providing resources directly to individuals through shelters, warming stations -- whether that be water, meals, blankets, cots, those kind of things. We're providing [generators] to pump stations or other critical infrastructure to get those up and operational, and we're bringing fuel in and other things."

Today, Fenton also appeared on [CBS This Morning](#), where he discussed the ongoing recovery efforts in Texas, noting the best and fastest way for individuals to start recovery is by contacting their insurance company.

He also explained that the agency's responding to the emergency declaration in Texas was not hindered in any way by FEMA's ongoing COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

Stay Safe in Winter Weather

Listen to state and local officials about warming centers, as well as storm warnings and road conditions in your area. Follow these tips to stay safe and warm when winter weather hits.

Avoid Carbon Monoxide Poisoning



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If you lose heat due to severe winter weather, avoid carbon monoxide poisoning and fires.

- Use a Generator Safely! Never use a generator inside a home, basement, shed or garage, even if doors and windows are open. Keep generators far away from windows, doors and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.
- Grills, camp stoves or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal burning devices should never be used inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area. These should only be used outdoors and at least 20 feet away from windows.
- Never use a gas stovetop or oven to heat your home.
- Do not run a car in a closed garage.

Stay Safe and Warm

Severe winter weather may cause you to lose heat. Have adequate clothing and blankets to keep you warm. Include extra blankets for pets and service animals.

Do not avoid going to a warming center or shelter due to COVID-19. If you go to a warming center or public shelter, be sure to take supplies to protect yourself and your family. These supplies include hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol and two face masks per person.

Check on neighbors who may need assistance, such as infants, children, older adults and people with disabilities.

- Residents in Texas can [find the closest warming shelter online](#).
- To find out if 2-1-1 services are available in your area or to search for resources, visit [211.org](#).
- To assist people in the impacted area in coping with the stress of the winter storms, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration activated the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#).
 - This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support provides immediate 24/7, 365-days-a-year crisis counseling and support. Residents in affected areas may call 1-800-985-5990 to connect with a trained crisis counselor. Spanish speakers should press 2.



- FEMA has additional information on how to prepare for winter weather at [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov).
- If you have damage from these storms, or have been severely impacted, check your insurance policies or call your local agent for assistance you may be eligible to receive.

Avoid Scams

A false post is being shared on social media indicating that FEMA is paying for hotels in Texas due to the recent storm. This is a scam. The best information on legitimate sources of help in your area will come from local officials or the Texas Division of Emergency Management.

- Don't trust anyone who offers financial help and then asks for money or personal information.
- Beware of visits, calls or emails from people claiming to be from FEMA asking for your Social Security number, bank account or other sensitive information. Giving out this type of information can lead to identify theft.

