Winter Awareness & Preparedness

Supporting Slides, Spring/Summer 2026

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Groundwork: Changing Places Changing Lives
Environment Agency
VCS Emergencies Partnership
Met Office
British Red Cross
Community Fund

Session Overview:

Understanding Winter Risks & Impacts

- Cold weather hazards
- Cold Weather management
- Climate Change

Staying Warm & Healthy

- Impacts and risks
- Protecting your home
- Introduction to Groundwork Green Drs
- Other support

Winter Community Resilience

- Preparedness activities
- Community Emergency Planning
- Social connection
- Warm Spaces

Learning Outcomes:

- To understand winter risks and impacts and how you can build your community resilience
- To identify ways to keep yourself warm and healthy in your home
- To take away 2-3 actions to move forward with

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Understanding Winter Risks and Impacts

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Cold Weather Hazards

Snow

Ice

Wind Chill

Freezing Temperatures

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Other climate risks related to Cold Weather

Cold weather doesn't necessarily happen in isolation, be aware that at the same time as a cold weather snap there can also be...

- Flooding
- Storms
- Power outage
- Other utilities outage

Consider wider Communities Prepared sessions:

Community Emergency Planning and other hazard specific modules

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Who helps manage cold weather

Met Office

MET Office provides the weather forecast and data
'Are you weather Ready' campaign

UK Health Security Agency

Extreme Events and Health Protection (EEHP) team develop, review and support the implementation of the Adverse Weather Health Plan

NHS

Manage health effects of cold weather, planning, awareness, wider vaccinations, supporting vulnerable people,

national highways

Major A roads and motorways are gritted by National Highways

Your County Council

Gritting primary and secondary routes
Prioritise primary routes
Planned to meet adjacent counties, creating regional network

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Cold Weather Health Alert System

Home > Weather health alerts

Cold health alerts

The Cold-health alerting systems core alerting seasons runs from 1 November to 31 March each year. However should an episode of cold occur outside of this core period, an extraordinary alert will be issued. Make sure you are registered to receive the alerts directly by email by completing the registration form.

View map of weather health alerts

North East	Updated 10:09am on 18 November 2024	Amber
North West	Updated 10:09am on 18 November 2024	Amber
Yorkshire and The Humber	Updated 10:09am on 18 November 2024	Amber
East Midlands	Updated 10:09am on 18 November 2024	Amber
West Midlands	Updated 10:09am on 18 November 2024	Amber
East of England	Updated 10:09am on 18 November 2024	Amber
London	Updated 10:09am on 18 November 2024	Yellow
South East	Updated 10:09am on 18 November 2024	Yellow
South West	Updated 10:09am on 18 November 2024	Yellow

https://ukhsa-dashboard.data.gov.uk/weather-health-alerts/cold

Home > Weather Health Alerts > Cold Health Alerts

Cold-health alert for East Midlands

Last updated on Monday, 18 November 2024 at 10:09am

Amber Cold-health alert has been issued
Alert is in effect from 18 November 2024 at 10:00am to 23 November 2024 at 06:00pm

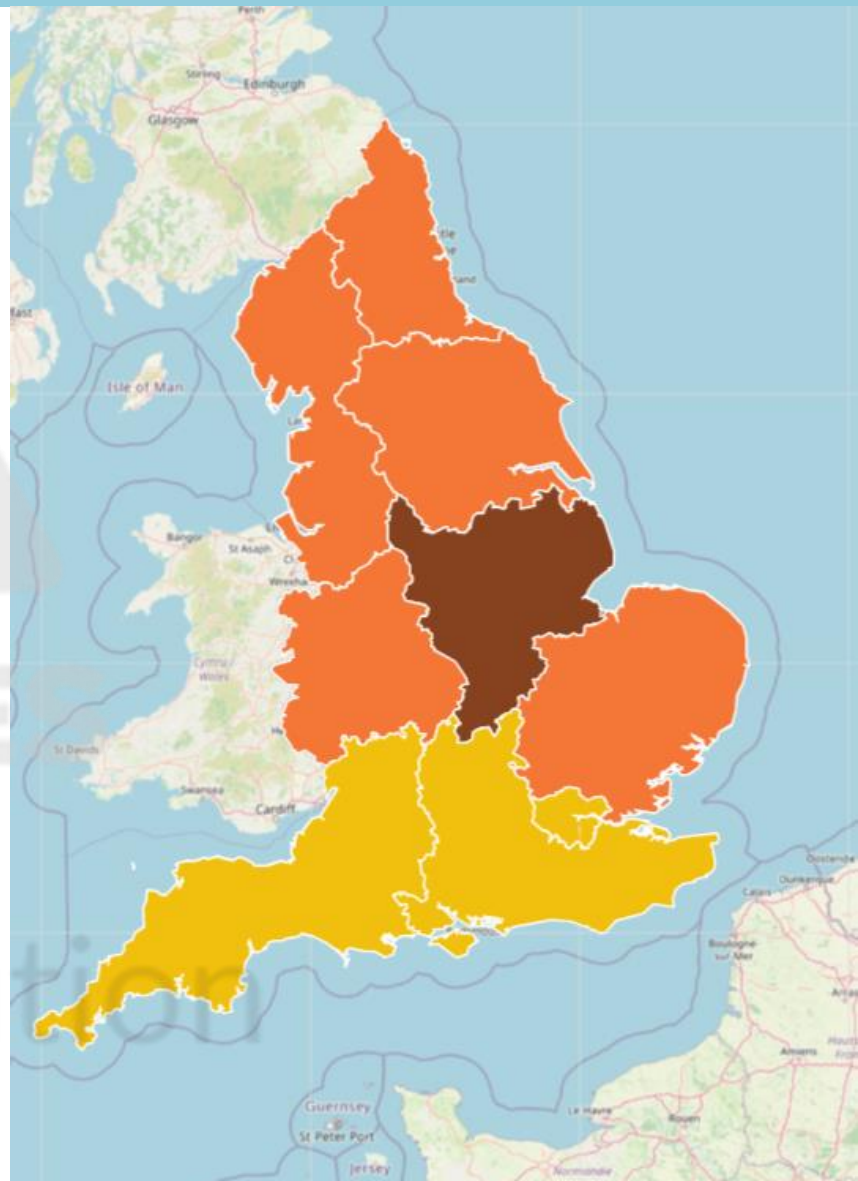
Type	Cold Health Alert
Colour	Amber
Start	18 November 2024 at 10:00am
End	23 November 2024 at 06:00pm

Description

Forecast weather is likely to cause significant impacts across health and social care services, including:

- a rise in deaths, particularly among those aged 65 and over or with health conditions. We may also see impacts on younger age groups
- a likely increase in demand for health services
- temperatures inside places like hospitals, care homes, and clinics dropping below the levels recommended for assessing health risks
- challenges keeping indoor temperatures at the recommended 18°C leading to more risk to vulnerable people
- staffing issues due to external factors (such as travel delays)
- other sectors starting to observe impacts (such as transport and energy)

View map of weather health alerts



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What the cold health alert colours mean

Green	• Minimal impact on health but a time for preparedness.
Yellow	• Cold unlikely to impact most people, except those who are particularly vulnerable and are likely to struggle to cope and where action is required within the health and social care sector specifically. • Can also relate to low confidence in weather forecast but worst-case scenario would have significant impact
Amber	• Expected impacts likely to be felt across the whole health service, with potential for the whole population to be at risk and where other sectors apart from health may also start to observe impacts, indicating that a coordinated response is required
Red	• A red alert would indicate significant risk to life. Several impacts would be expected across all sectors with a coordinated response essential.

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[Weather-health alerting system - user guide (publishing.service.gov.uk)]

Climate change and cold weather

UK Current Winter Climate

The average coldest day of the year has become 1.7°C warmer

Number of days where max temperatures don't rise above 0°C has decreased

Future Winter Climate Projections

Warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers on average

Colder than average winters will become less likely in the years to come

Average number of days of frost across UK will decrease

So cold weather days have become milder and fewer .....

But cold weather and its impacts not going to disappear completely

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Discussion

What are your concerns for you and your community?

How are you preparing and building resilience?

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Staying Warm and Healthy

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Who is at risk and what are the impacts

Everyone can be at risk but especially……

Older adults, people with health conditions, disabled people, people with mental health challenges, pregnant people and children, people facing socio economic challenges

DIRECT

Heart Attack, Stroke,
Respiratory Disease,
Influenza, Hypothermia, Frostbite,
Slips, Trips, Falls & Injuries,

INDIRECT

Disruptions, cold homes, fuel poverty, poor mental health and social isolation, infrastructure damage, power outages, reduced education and employment, Carbon monoxide poisoning

Risks and Impacts

In 2024 an estimated 11% of householders (2.73 million) were in fuel poverty
(Gov.UK)

For every 1°C drop in temperature below 5°C, GP consultations for respiratory illness in older people increase by 19%.
(Hajat, 2004)

10% of excess winter deaths (EWDs) are directly attributable to fuel poverty & 21.5% are attributable to cold homes
(UCL, Institute of Health Equity)

Damp and mould are associated with a 30-50% increase in respiratory problems
(Ruse & Garlick, 2018)

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Protecting your home

Warm

- Keep house at 18-21°C, for health, cost and boiler efficiency
- Focus on 'lived' spaces (use thermostatic radiator valve)
- Maintain, rather than re heat

Energy

- Consider switching
- Environmentally Friendly Tariffs
- Smart Meter

Damp & Mould

- Reduce moisture
- Adequate ventilation
- Serious damp & mould requires specialist support

Insulation

- Understand how your home loses heat and draft proof
- Explore energy grants for loft and roof installations
- Check your Energy Performance Certificate

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Prioritise individual needs and circumstances.

Energy Efficiency Products

Cold Weather Support

Financial Support

Boiler maintenance

NHS Guidance

Emergency Numbers (Power: 105 & Gas: 0800111999)

Priority Services Register

Prioritise individual needs and circumstances.

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Groundwork Green Drs Scheme

Independent expert energy advisors.
Scheme operates through Groundwork Trusts
Offering resources, advice and possible free consultations (case by case)

- Understand **heating systems** and how to use them effectively
- Explaining **statements**, **energy caps** and changes in the domestic energy world which affect the household
- Check to see if the client is on the most **appropriate tariff** with your suppliers
- Access **practical tips** for how to use household appliances efficiently
- Advise on your **energy habits** to reduce bills
- Discussing heat and food sources which use solid fuels/gasses which may increase risk of carbon monoxide production – we can supply clients with CO alarms when necessary
- Checks with the gov and your suppliers for **energy support schemes**

GREEN DOCTOR

https://www.groundwork.org.uk/getenergyhelp/

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Discussion

How could you engage your community to stay warm and healthy in winter?

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Winter Community Resilience Activities

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Community Preparedness Activities

Improve your homes & venues insulation and energy efficiency

Register for cold weather alerts

Monitor weather & communicate via community channels

Integrate cold weather into your community emergency plan

Raise awareness with comms campaigns, community events & meetings

Check in with at risk people

Engage Local Authority to understand wider cold weather initiatives

Promote Priority Services Register

Engage Green Drs and explore wider energy saving advice

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Cold Weather Annex to your CEP

Develop a community cold weather plan, integrate into your CEP

- Check if a local snow or cold weather warden scheme exists
- Engage with LRF or Local Council
- Utilise CEP core elements: communication channels, buddy working, escalation points, risk assessments
- Consider who/what/where in your community you want to prepare
- Identify warm spaces and warm food points
- Consider what tasks and activities your community might do
  - Checking on neighbours
  - Gritting community spaces (check PPE/H&S/Insurance)
  - Providing a warm space
- Integrate activation and triggers into you CEP e.g. weather warning
- Don't be too ambitious! (you can always add more areas in later)

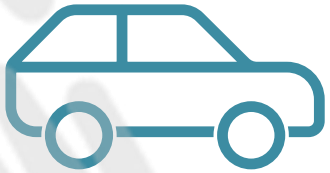
Keeping yourself and others safe

Carbon Monoxide Awareness

Ensure you have a working alarm, test regularly
Maintain appliances
Use any additional heating measures safely, following guidance
Be aware of signs of CO poisoning

Emergency Kit

Warm layers and spares, warm drink, food, high vis items, torch, sunglasses, phone and charger



Travel Safety

Footwear with grip, be aware of body temperature/sweat, Be aware of wind chill **NEVER** walk on frozen water, be aware of untreated paths

Driving Safely

Follow safety advice, check engine and tires, first aid kit, ice scraper, torch & batteries, jump start cables, empty fuel can

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Creating Community Connection

"9 in 10 older people who are often lonely also feel unhappy and depressed

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By 2034 1.2 million people over 65 at risk of feeling lonely"

(Age UK, 2024)

"Depression in winter increases 40% among adults in Greater London"

Seasonal Affective Disorder, reduced sunlight, colder temperatures, food insecurity, reducing energy usage

(Workplace Wellbeing, 2024)

Combatting Loneliness:

- Reengage: events, groups and call companion service
- Age UK Silver Line: Phone call service to support connection
- Wavelength: technology provision to reduce loneliness through connection
- Jo Cox Foundation: Great Winter Get Together, events and conversations across the UK

Set up a Warm Space

A place that offers warmth, comfort, safety and social interaction

- A space that you can sign post people to
- Ask your local council
- Check out warm welcome campaign
- Consider setting up a warm space in your community
- During snow, consider weather conditions and travel routes
- Sign posting and awareness raising
- Inclusive and accessible
- Social contact and connection (MH and SAD)
- A location to launch other resilience activities from
  - Warm clothing exchange/drive
  - Warm food offer

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Engage Wider Community Groups

Connect with your local community, voluntary and faith organisations and groups

- Volunteer locally
- Befriending schemes
- Community spaces
- Connection helplines
- Homelessness Support
- Food Banks

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Discussion

What 2-3 actions are you taking forward from today's session?

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Summary

- Consider the different weather elements and hazards that make up cold weather
- Be aware of the wider hazards and risks that cold weather can cause or be connected to
- Factor in both direct and indirect impacts of cold weather, recognising that more people are at risk than you may think, from milder temperatures than expected.
- Sign up for cold weather alerts, be aware of the different alerts and monitor and act accordingly.
- Take mitigating actions to keep yourselves and others warm and safe, consider travel safety, follow advice and take precautions
- Explore energy efficiency actions, products and support. Explore Green Dr Resources further and engage locally.
- Consider what preparedness activities you might want to introduce to your community
- Consider adding a cold weather annex to your Community Emergency Plan
- Consider supporting those who are lonely, especially during winter months
- Engage wider community and voluntary organisations
- Consider setting up or engaging with a warm space to further support people in cold weather

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Useful Links

- Weather Forecast: https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/
- Cold Health Alerts: https://ukhsa-dashboard.data.gov.uk/weather-health-alerts/cold
- NHS Guidance: https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/keep-warm-keep-well/
- National Highways: https://nationalhighways.co.uk/road-safety/travelling-in-severe-weather/travelling-in-snow-and-ice/
- Priority Services Register: https://www.thepsr.co.uk/
- British Red Cross Guidance: https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/power-cut
- Hypothermia Awareness: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hypothermia/
- Carbon Monoxide Safety: https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/carbon-monoxide-safety/
- Groundwork Green Drs Scheme: https://www.groundwork.org.uk/getenergyhelp/
- Warm Welcome: https://www.warmwelcome.uk/
- Combatting Loneliness Schemes:
  - https://reengage.org.uk/
  - https://www.ageuk.org.uk/services/silverline/
  - https://wavelength.org.uk/
  - https://www.jocoxfoundation.org/2020/01/23/loneliness-and-social-isolation-a-new-decade-of-action/

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Thank you

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