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OPERATIONAL BULLETIN

Bulletin #	Title		Date Issued
2026-01-23-01	Preparedness: Extreme and Dangerous Cold		January 23, 2026
Superseded	Released By:	Source:	Pages
N/A	Maine EMS	N/A	2
Overview: National Weather Service (NWS) forecasts for Maine indicate a period of extreme and dangerous cold beginning today, Friday, January 23, through Sunday, January 25. High temperatures will struggle to reach double digits, with overnight lows plummeting to -11°F. The most significant risk is the wind chill, forecasted as low as -32°F on Saturday. Additionally, a high-probability snow event (70-80% chance) is expected to impact the state starting Sunday night into Monday morning.			

CLINICIAN SAFETY & PROTECTION

Clinicians are the most valuable resource in our system. Exposure at -30°F wind chill can lead to frostbite in as little as 10–20 minutes.

- **Uniformity:** Agencies should authorize the use of non-standard, high-visibility winter outerwear, including heavy parkas, insulated boots, and thermal headwear.
- **Layering:** Clinicians must use the "wick-warm-weather" layering system (moisture-wicking base, insulating middle, wind/waterproof outer).
- **Scene Safety:** Limit time spent outside the vehicle or residence. Utilize "warm-up rotations" for personnel during extended extrications or outdoor scenes.
- **Hydration/Nutrition:** Extreme cold increases metabolic demand. Ensure crews have access to warm, non-caffeinated fluids.

VEHICLE & EQUIPMENT READINESS

- **Fuel Levels:** All response vehicles should always maintain a fuel level of no less than 50% to prevent fuel line freeze-up and ensure engine idling capacity for cabin heat.
- **Temperature-Sensitive Equipment:**
 - **Monitor/Defibrillators:** Cold temperatures significantly degrade battery life and LCD screen responsiveness. Keep monitors in the heated cabin until needed.

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- Medication Bags: Ensure all medications, particularly liquids (D50, Saline, etc.), are protected. Check that "hot boxes" or climate-controlled cabinets are functioning correctly.
- Suction: Cold can thicken secretions and cause mechanical failure in battery-operated suction units.
- Fluid Warmers: Verify your capability to provide safely warmed IV Fluids?

SNOW EVENT (Sunday Night – Monday)

- Staffing: Agencies should consider "Pre-emptive Staffing" or "Storm Standby" starting Sunday at 20:00.
- Traction Devices: Verify that all ambulances that are equipped with chains or automatic traction chains (Onspots) are functioning appropriately.
- Power Outages: Expect a potential increase in Carbon Monoxide (CO) calls and requests for assistance from residents using medical devices (oxygen concentrators/ventilators) if the snow/wind causes local outages.

Maine EMS is monitoring the situation closely. Stay safe and stay warm.