

Severe Winter Weather Preparedness Advisory

Executive Brief for Local Businesses | Issued: January 2026

Forecast Impact: 16-24 inches snow followed by accumulating ice. Multi-day event Saturday through Monday with extended recovery period likely.

Why This Matters:

- Ice accumulation significantly increases operational disruption beyond typical snow events
- Power outages and access complications may persist 24-72+ hours after precipitation ends
- Historical patterns show 2-4 day business closures for similar events

Critical Pre-Event Decisions (Before Saturday):

Use a 3-column layout with these sections:

Operations:

- Closure thresholds and reopening criteria
- Decision authority and communication chain
- Remote work options where feasible
- Essential personnel identification

Facilities:

- Test backup power and heating systems
- Protect pipes from freezing
- Stock salt/ice melt for walkways
- Verify emergency contacts for utilities

Workforce:

- Communicate early—avoid last-minute decisions
- Discourage unsafe travel explicitly
- Clarify pay and leave policies
- Support conservative employee judgment

Key Principle: Plan for conditions to be worse and last longer than forecasts suggest. Make deliberate decisions now rather than during the event when information flow is disrupted.

Key Considerations & Resources

Common Pitfalls to Avoid:

- Reopening too early, then closing again due to refreeze or outages
- Underestimating power restoration duration (typically 24-72+ hours)
- Making closure decisions at the last minute
- Pressuring staff to return before conditions are stable
- Committing publicly to reopening times that may change

Recovery Phase Planning:

- Budget extra time for facility preparation before reopening
- Expect reduced customer traffic as conditions remain challenging
- Monitor refreeze cycles that may create new hazards
- Document damage and expenses for insurance purposes
- Coordinate with vendors on delayed deliveries

Essential Preparation Checklist:



Test Backup Power Systems

Verify fuel levels for all critical backup power systems to ensure readiness.



Protect Pipes & Infrastructure

Implement measures to prevent pipes from freezing and safeguard critical infrastructure.



Stock Facility Supplies

Ensure adequate stock of essential items like salt, flashlights, and batteries.



Verify Emergency Contacts

Confirm all emergency contact information for staff, services, and utilities is up-to-date.



Prepare Customer Messages

Draft and finalize communication messages for customers regarding potential closures or service impacts.



Document Facility Conditions

Thoroughly document current facility conditions for comparison and insurance purposes.

Key Resources:

- Local National Weather Service forecast office
- County emergency management for road conditions
- State department of transportation for highway status
- Local utility companies for outage reporting

❏ The combination of heavy snow and ice creates operational complexity beyond typical winter weather. Businesses that plan realistically, communicate clearly, and prioritize safety will be best positioned to weather this event and resume normal operations when conditions allow.