

Nursing home and assisted living residents exposed to freezing temperatures during Arctic blast

Liz Cabrera**22 January 2024**

Do you work a nursing home? Tell us what the conditions are like at your facility by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Nursing homes and assisted living communities across the United States have reported losing power and heat during the so-called Arctic blast, endangering the lives of the elderly and disabled.

In Kerrville, Texas, seniors at Waterside Nursing and Rehabilitation were left without heat last weekend. Staff, fearing retaliation but concerned about their residents, made anonymous reports to local news about the unsafe conditions in the building. Staff members reported that there were 50 patients directly impacted by the 40 degree temperatures, the majority of whom were over the age of 70 and suffering from Alzheimer's disease. According to staff, they were simply told to put blankets over residents. Staff also reported that since they could see the residents' breath and that residents had to sleep in uncomfortable, cold conditions.

Staff reported that the facility lost heat on Saturday and a state inspector did not arrive until Monday. It was not until Tuesday that heaters were brought in and residents were moved to other areas of the facility.

The wave of brutally cold weather is continuing to affect large swaths of the country, with the latest reports indicating a death toll of over 90 people. Many areas of the country are unprepared for severe winter weather, increasing the danger of road accidents, power outages, hypothermia and putting some of society's most vulnerable in danger.

At The Portage Apartments senior living facility in Montana, one of two boilers went out, leaving the residents in below zero temperatures. According to one

resident, "They always say it's being worked on, it's being worked on ... That's the same damn story they've had for two years, so, it's ridiculous." The residents have been forced to seek warmth by gathering near a fireplace in the common area. Some turned their ovens on with the oven door open to keep them warm in their rooms.

Azria Health Montclair, a nursing home in Omaha, Nebraska was forced to relocate some of its residents after experiencing heating issues. Some residents were moved late in the evening when the temperatures reached -20 Fahrenheit (-29 Celsius). Nurses handed out extra blankets and gloves. Family members of the residents were told by the home's administrator that the heating system could not be fixed for over a week.

In Chicago, seniors at Woodlawn Senior Living suffered without heat for days. One resident reported waking up to an ice-cold apartment with the vents blowing cool air. She resorted to turning on the oven to keep warm but has not been able to sleep, anxious that she could start a fire or poison herself or others with carbon monoxide. She said that management dropped off a space heater two days later.

Once again, the extremely cold weather has exposed the fragile conditions of the electricity and heating infrastructure across the U.S. particularly in nursing homes, senior living facilities and senior apartments. The elderly residents and patients in these facilities and apartments are one of the most vulnerable sections of society. The ruling class sees them not as people, but as a drain on society, no longer churning out profits for the corporate oligarchy.



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