

Heating failure in cold weather

ACTION CHECKLIST

Use dry layers, blankets and a smaller dry room while you identify safe heat or a warmer reachable place. Never use a gas oven, barbecue or generator to heat indoors. Confusion, slurred speech, unusual drowsiness or poor coordination can mean hypothermia: seek urgent care and begin safe warming.

[] Get dry and insulated

Replace wet clothes, layer loose dry clothing and insulate beneath the body as well as above it. Keep vulnerable people away from draughts.

[] Use one workable space

Choose a dry room that remains safe and has a usable exit. Close unnecessary interior doors without blocking ventilation needed by approved heating appliances.

[] Avoid combustion shortcuts

Use only heating equipment approved for indoor use according to its instructions, with working CO alarms. A grill, oven or indoor generator is not a backup heater.

[] Check people regularly

Cold can impair judgement. Pay particular attention to infants, older people and anyone with illness or limited mobility. Do not rely on a person saying they feel fine.

[] Move before severe exposure

Confirm a warmer destination and safe route while people can still travel. Do not cross dangerous ice or an active hazard merely to reach a public warming centre.

WATCH FOR

Do not give alcohol as a warming method or rub frostbitten skin. Fuel-burning devices can create lethal CO even when you cannot smell anything.

IF HELP IS UNAVAILABLE

Use the safest dry shelter and insulation available while confirming a warmer private or community destination. Leave early if you cannot keep vulnerable people warm rather than waiting for official shelter.

Updated 2026-10-02 | Civilian educational guidance. Seek qualified help when reachable and safe; do not delay immediate protective action.

Full guide: <https://ospreyzero.com/emergencies/heating-failure/>

Extreme cold · official guidance