



# City of Milwaukee

Tom Barrett  
Mayor

Jeanette Kowalik, PhD, MPH, MCHES  
Commissioner of Health

## Health Department

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To all members of the Common Council:

Re: Thursday, February 14, 2019 Steering and Rules Committee Communication File [181649](#), Resolution [181609](#), and Ordinance [181648](#)

In 2013, the Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) created the Milwaukee Extreme Cold Event Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) to limit the adverse public health effects of extreme cold weather through reduction of the incidences of morbidity and mortality attributed to extreme cold weather. To effectively respond to an extreme cold weather event in Milwaukee, the Extreme Cold Event EOP describes plans for a coordinated effort utilizing key partnerships with other governmental entities, as well as community-based non-profit and private organizations.

Governor Evers declared a state of emergency ahead of the extreme cold weather event on Monday, January 28, 2019. Conditions on January 29, 2019 reached the level of a "Cold Emergency" based on the Milwaukee Extreme Cold Event EOP, prompting Commissioner Kowalik under the authority of State Statute 250.042 to declare a public health emergency. This declaration was meant to protect public health and safety in response to the dangerous public health environment the extreme cold temperatures created for City of Milwaukee residents and non-essential employees.

The Extreme Cold Event EOP utilizes predictive and real time situational information reports from the National Weather Service Milwaukee/Sullivan office for decision making and plan activation. The plan contains *clearly defined thresholds* for issuing closure recommendations for City services and schools.

The extreme weather that led to closure of City services during the week of January 28 was historic for the City of Milwaukee, as well as the region and state. The record low maximum temperature in Milwaukee was broken on January 30, 2019 with a high of -10 F. The previous record was -3 F set in **1951**. On January 31, 2019 the record low temperature in Milwaukee was broken with a low of -23 F. The previous record was -15 F set in **1899**. The wind chill in Milwaukee reached -53 F on January 30, 2019 just short of the record minimum wind chill of -56 F set in **1982**. This extreme and historically unique level of cold posed a dangerous threat to the safety and well-being of City residents and non-essential employees. Despite these measures, there were still five suspected cold related deaths pending confirmation from the Medical Examiner's Office.

Respectfully,

Jeanette Kowalik, PHD, MPH, MCHES  
Commissioner of Health

Attachments:

Wisconsin State Statute 250.042

MHD Extreme Cold Event Emergency Operations Plan

