



# Severe Weather Response

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MARCH 3, 2017

Severe weather emergency:  
No one will be turned away

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# An unusual season

## Overmatched assumptions, this year

- Multnomah County experiences relatively few instances of extremely cold or dangerously inclement weather each year.
- On rare occasions, Multnomah County experiences high winds or receives snow, sleet or accumulations of ice that pose an imminent danger to those living without adequate shelter.

## Overwhelmed triggers, this year

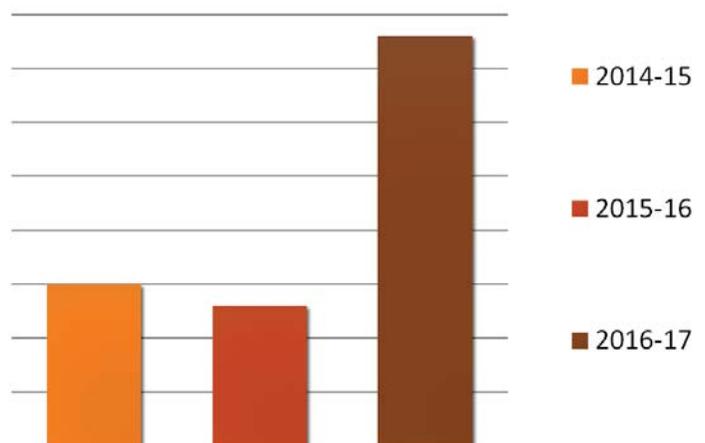
- Forecasted temperature or wind chill 25° F (-3.9° C) or below
- Forecasted snow accumulations of 1.0 inch or more sticking to the ground in most locations.
- Forecasted temperature at or below 32° F (0° C) with driving rain of 1.0 inch or more overnight.



# Unprecedented need

- **First day** with severe weather protocols in place: December 6
- **Most recent day:** February 24
- Overall, severe weather protocols have been active for **nearly 40 days this season.**
- **A typical season**, from November 1 to March 31, sees **10 to 20 days.**

Severe weather days



# Unprecedented response

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- Since the winter season started, we have provided **13,000 shelter bed nights**. On the most used night, **January 15**, the community provided shelter space for nearly **750 people**.
- We mobilized **unprecedented outreach and transportation support**.

Volunteers, community members, government employees, PF&R, Parks, PPB, Sheriff's Office all came through to staff warming centers, check on neighbors, drive people and supplies, and call 911.

- **The conversation changed:** People understood this was an all-hands moment. That engagement helped shift our conversation on homelessness from divisiveness to **a shared responsibility** for helping neighbors.



# Emergency warming centers were spread across the region

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**St. Henry Catholic Church**, Gresham

**Bud Clark Commons**, Portland

**Imago Dei**, Portland

**Union Gospel Mission**, Portland

**St. Francis Catholic Church**, Portland

**University Park United Methodist Church**

**Anawim Christian Community**, Gresham

**American Legion Post 134**, Portland

**Bridges to Change**

**Clackamas Service Center**

**St. Peter and Paul Episcopal Church**

**Hooper Detox Center**

**Montavilla Warming Center**

**First Baptist**, Gresham

**Mt. Scott Community Center**

**Charles Jordan Community Center**

**Portland Building**

**Multnomah County East**



## Cold weather and health outcomes

Multnomah County Health Department monitors cold-related health events using death and syndromic data.

↓ temperatures = ↑ in hypothermia-related health events

### Emergency room/urgent care visits\*

**This winter:** hypothermia-related visits = **0.3% of visits** (144/53,751)

**Last winter:** hypothermia-related visits = **0.1% of visits** (53/48,348)

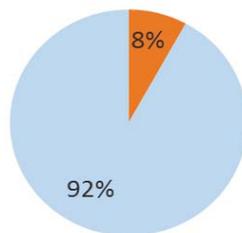
**200% (or 3x) increase** of hypothermia-related events this winter compared to last



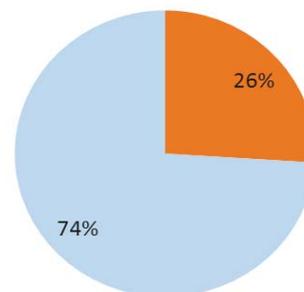
## Hypothermia visits and homelessness

People experiencing homelessness have accounted for a much larger percentage of hypothermia-related visits this winter compared to last winter.\*

Winter 2015-2016 (N = 53)



Winter 2016-2017 (N = 144)

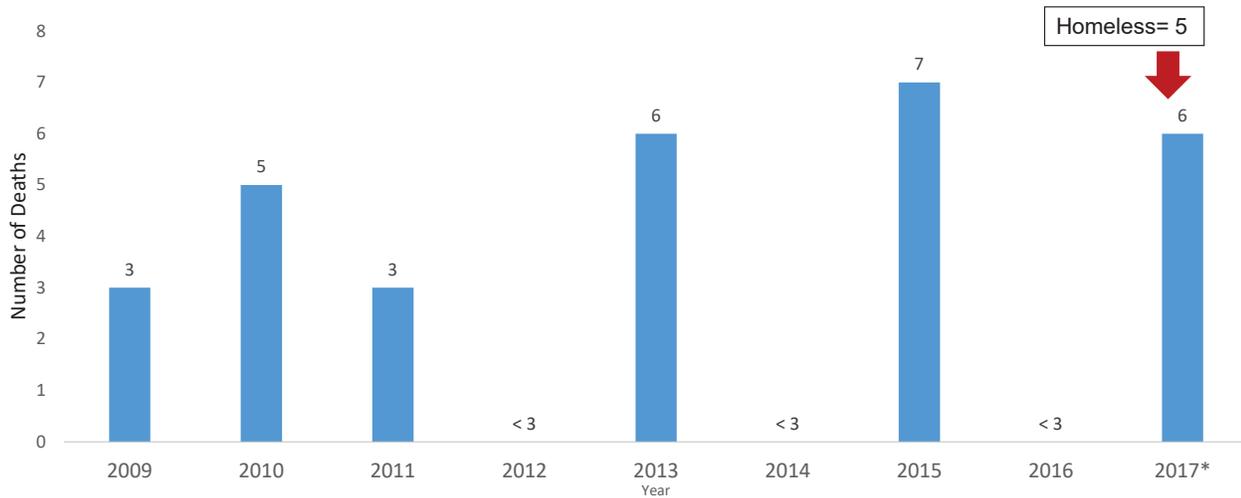


■ Homeless ■ Non-Homeless



\*Data Source: Oregon ESSENCE Syndromic Surveillance System: Comparing December 1, 2015-January 24, 2016 and December 1, 2016-January 24, 2017 Data

# Severe weather: Hypothermia deaths



\* 2017 data includes only January and February  
Source: Oregon Medical Examiner's Office

## Cold weather health: caveats/conclusions

### Caveats

- Not all hypothermia cases present at emergency departments
- Homelessness status is likely undercounted in emergency rooms

### Conclusions

- As the homelessness numbers increase, **the population at risk for cold-related health events increases**
- Severe winter weather is highly correlated with hypothermia-related visits
- Multnomah County Health Department will continue to partner with A Home for Everyone and other partners

# Next steps and lessons learned

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- **Detailed surveys** went out to the many people who worked with our severe weather response. One sought recognition for superstar volunteers and agencies. The other **asked for help examining our response** overall.
- The Joint Office of Homeless Services is **working with emergency management peers** to refine its protocols.
- Joint Office staff talked over survey results with service providers, Portland and Multnomah County agencies, emergency management partners and others at **an after-action debriefing on severe weather** Feb. 22.

