



United Way  
of East Central Alabama

## Warming Station Opening Policy

### Purpose

To provide temporary relief and shelter for individuals in Anniston, Alabama, during extreme cold weather conditions, protecting those at risk of cold-related health issues, particularly vulnerable populations. This policy outlines the criteria for opening, operating, and closing a warming station based on weather forecasts from the National Weather Service (NWS).

### Scope

This policy applies to the United Way of East Central Alabama and its partner agencies responsible for emergency shelter operations.

### Definitions

- **Warming Station:** A temporary shelter providing warmth, basic necessities, and safety during periods of extreme cold.
- **Vulnerable Populations:** Individuals at higher risk of cold-related illnesses, including the homeless, older adults, and individuals without reliable heating.
- **Extreme Cold:** Weather conditions with temperatures or wind chills that pose a risk of hypothermia or frostbite.

### Activation Criteria

The warming station will open under the following conditions, based on forecasts from the **National Weather Service (NWS)**:

#### 1. Temperature Thresholds:

- **Nighttime temperatures** are forecasted to drop to **36°F (1.6°C) or below** for **two or more consecutive hours**.
- **Daytime temperatures** are forecasted to remain at or below **40°F (4.4°C)**, with precipitation, freezing rain, or snow.

#### 2. Wind Chill Factor:

- Wind chill values making it feel like **32°F (0°C) or lower**, even if the actual temperature is slightly higher.

### 3. Severe Weather Events:

- **Snowstorms, freezing rain**, or any severe winter weather event that increases the risk of cold-related injuries or exposure.

### 4. Prolonged Cold Events:

- Extended periods of **two or more days** where daytime temperatures remain below **36°F (7.2°C)**.

## Warming Station Location

The warming station will be hosted at **The Bridge at Anniston First United Methodist Church**, ensuring accessibility for individuals experiencing homelessness and other vulnerable members of the community.

## Operating Hours

- The station will typically operate overnight from **6:00 PM to 8:00 AM**.
- In severe or prolonged cold weather conditions, the station may remain open during the daytime.

## Procedures for Activation

1. **Weather Monitoring:**
  - The **National Weather Service (NWS)** will be the official source for monitoring weather forecasts. The **United Way of East Central Alabama** staff will check daily NWS forecasts for Anniston to identify when criteria are met for station activation.
2. **Internal and Public Notification:**
  - **Internal:** The Program Director will notify all relevant staff, volunteers, and security personnel.
  - **Public:** Announcements will be made through social media, and local news outlets, as well as through partner agencies.
3. **Coordination with Local Agencies:**
  - The United Way will coordinate with emergency management services, local law enforcement, and community agencies for transportation and additional support for individuals in need.
4. **Resources Provided:**
  - The station will offer **blankets, warm drinks, and food**.

## Staffing

- **Facility Monitors** and volunteers will be present during the station's operating hours. Staff will receive training in **de-escalation techniques, mental health first aid**, and **basic first aid**.

## Health and Safety

- **Amnesty Box:** Guests will be required to dispose of dangerous items in the amnesty box at the entrance.
- **Security Screening:** All guests entering the warming station will be required to undergo **security screening using metal detectors** and **contents searches** of personal belongings to ensure the safety of all individuals.

## Closing Procedures

- The warming station will close when:
  - **Daytime temperatures rise above 36°F (7.2°C).**
  - **Severe weather conditions** have ended, and the forecast shows no further risk of extreme cold.
- **Notifications:** Staff, volunteers, and the public will be notified at least 12 hours in advance of closing the station.

## Review and Update

This policy will be reviewed annually before the cold-weather season to ensure it aligns with best practices, local needs, and changes in weather patterns.