



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

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CONSUMER ALERT: TIPS TO BATTLE BITTER COLD AT HOME

The Citizens Utility Board (CUB) on Friday released tips for Illinoisans to keep their homes safe and warm, with temperatures expected to plunge following a winter storm.

“With dangerously low temperatures approaching, everyone’s top priority over the next few days should be to stay safe,” CUB Executive Director Sarah Moskowitz said. “Please make sure you’re staying safe and warm, and your loved ones are too.”

CUB has tips and helpful information at [CUBHelpCenter.com](https://www.cubhelpcenter.com). Here are some quick tips:

Don't take risks. Don't use your oven or stove to heat your home. If you use a space heater, place it on a hard, level surface; don't use an extension cord; keep it at least three feet away from flammable objects, such as the couch, blankets or curtains; and don't leave it on overnight. During this cold, keep your home at a safe temperature (about 68-70 degrees or more). Remember, setting the thermostat too low is dangerous to your health and can freeze pipes. Make sure carbon monoxide alarms and smoke detectors are in working order.

Don't overwork your heating system. Close blinds/curtains or cover your windows with blankets as an extra layer of protection against icy night winds. But let the sunlight in during the day to help heat your home. Clear radiators, registers, air returns and baseboards of obstructions. Dust, carpet and furniture can block the heat and leave a room chilly. You can't heat your home if the air isn't circulating.

Reduce the drafts. This bitter cold is an opportunity to pinpoint the drafts in your home. Your hardware store can provide the materials to seal those leaks. If you don't have a door guard or sweep to block cold air under your front and back doors and you can't get to the hardware store, use a rolled up towel, a rug or newspaper to block the drafts.

Clean or replace filters for a forced-air heating system. A dirty or non-functioning filter does nothing but drain money from your wallet. Check it every month—and now is a great time to clean or replace it if it's dirty.

Beware of bad deals. If your gas or electric bill is skyrocketing, check to see if you're paying for a bad deal with an alternative supplier. Read your utility bill to see if another company is listed on the supply section.

Inquire about assistance this month. Homes that can't afford their heating bills should contact the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to see if they qualify for assistance: **1-877-411-9276**.

Be a good member of the community. Confirm that neighbors, friends and family are OK.

[KeepWarm.Illinois.gov](https://www.KeepWarm.Illinois.gov) has information on where Illinoisans can find warming centers.

The Citizens Utility Board (CUB) is celebrating its 40th anniversary as Illinois' leading nonprofit utility watchdog group. Created by the Illinois Legislature, CUB opened its doors in 1984 to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility customers. Since then, CUB has saved consumers more than \$20 billion by helping to block rate hikes and secure refunds. For more information, call CUB's Consumer Hotline at 1-800-669-5556 or visit www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org.

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