

# Shelter, schools, brace for cold spell

BY NORM CANNADA  
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SENECA — On Tuesday, the white flag was flying outside Our Daily Rest in Seneca, signaling the building could house six men and six women who needed to get out of the cold that night.

Executive director Lauren Richardson

said the shelter puts the flag out any time temperatures are projected to drop to 36 or below.

And Lauren Carroll, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Greer, said Tuesday night temperatures were expected to be in the low-to-mid 20s

“We don’t want

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The white flag was up Tuesday outside Our Daily Rest, signaling the shelter had limited room available overnight for people to get out of what officials said would be the coldest morning of the fall season. Our Daily Rest provides space when the temperatures are expected to drop to 36 or below. Tuesday was the fourth time the flag had been out this fall.

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anybody to lose their life because it’s too cold outside,” Richardson said of providing the space for the night. “It’s the right thing to do.”

“If you have need of a safe, warm place, we simply ask that you not be obviously under the influence of alcohol or drugs,” she added. “They can freshen up, they can get a warm meal, they can get a warm, safe place to sleep. If they need warm clothing or anything like that, we can certainly attend to those needs.”

## THE COLDEST ...

Carroll said the forecast today “is actually about 5 degrees below our normal January temperatures.”

“It will be the coldest temperatures of the season so far — not quite record lows — but we’re only going to be a couple of degrees off record lows though,” she said.

In the School District of Oconee County, associate superintendent for administration Steve Hanvey said Tuesday officials were preparing for colder temperatures.

“It’s going to be the first really cold day for our buses,” he said. “We’ll have some drivers come in early to help the area supervisors go ahead and start the

buses early, so when the people get there they are ready to go. We will make sure they all start and have spares ready.”

Hanvey said bus routes were expected to run a little bit behind schedule since they wait a little longer at the bus stops for students who wait inside for the bus.

“As the weather gets colder, we try to give them more time,” he said. “We don’t want them to be out in the 22 or 23 degrees for 10-15 minutes waiting on the bus. The buses may be 5 to 10 minutes off their normal time, but we’re allowing them to stay inside, so we have to add that extra time on there.”

He added that facility specialists arrive at schools early to make sure the heat and electricity work in the buildings. And while icy conditions were not expected, Hanvey planned to ride Tuesday afternoon on mountain roads in areas of the county where road conditions are often the most troublesome and check for anything bus drivers need to be aware of encountering.

“We try to get ahead of it as much as we can,” Hanvey said. “This is one of the most stressful and difficult decisions we have to make, because you’re talking about the safety of students and staff and you’re always going to err on the side of caution.”

He encouraged students to dress in layers.

“It’s going to be comfortable in the school, but we encourage them to dress in layers to be prepared, so if they want to take a sweatshirt off when they get to school, that’s fine,” he said.

## PREVENTING FIRES

Oconee County Fire Chief Charlie King encouraged people to be cautious heating their homes.

“We understand it gets colder and folks turn their heat up and may burn fires a little warmer or a little longer,” he said. “Certainly be cautious with portable heaters — both kerosene and fuel

— to make sure those are fueled outside the structure, not inside. Make sure space heaters are not overloading circuits or put close to combustible materials so that they don’t start a fire. We have run into folks who use things like stoves and ovens to heat with because they just don’t have other

means of adequate heat. Be cautious.”

King added officials will watch for power outages and other issues that would call for opening warming shelters if the need arises.

The colder temperatures are not forecast to last, with temperatures rising by Friday and continuing to improve over the weekend. Carroll said a long-term outlook through January shows “an above-average chance of above-average temperatures.”

“It doesn’t mean we won’t get more cold-air outbreaks, but it suggests it may be a little bit more scarce,” she said.

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