



# STATE OF WISCONSIN

## DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS

### DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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#### ***For Immediate Release***

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### **Wisconsin Residents Urged to Prepare for Winter Weather *November 9-13 is Winter Awareness Week in Wisconsin***

MADISON, Wis. – Wisconsin winters can bring beautiful snowfalls and great opportunities for outdoor recreation. They can also result in dangerously cold temperatures and icy conditions. To help encourage everyone to be prepared for the months ahead, Gov. Tony Evers has declared Nov. 9-13 Winter Awareness Week in Wisconsin.

“While Wisconsin typically experiences most of its winter weather from late November through April, this season got off to an early start with several parts of the state receiving a late-October blast of snow,” said Dr. Darrell L. Williams, Wisconsin Emergency Management administrator. “It’s an important reminder that winter weather can be unpredictable, so you need to be prepared early on for what mother nature may throw at us.”

During Winter Awareness Week, ReadyWisconsin encourages everyone to learn about the common risks they may face during the winter months. Be prepared for snow and icy conditions that could impact travel on roadways, make sure you have emergency kits in your vehicle and at home, and ensure your home and vehicle are prepared for the extreme cold temperatures the state often experiences.

“Take time during Winter Awareness Week to make sure your emergency kits have fresh supplies, schedule a tune-up for your furnace, and winterize your vehicle,” advised Williams. “Don’t wait until dangerous winter weather is in the forecast to get you and your family ready.”

Winter emergency kits should include items such as food, water, a flashlight and batteries, and blankets. In your vehicle, include a snow shovel, extra gloves and hats, face masks, and kitty litter or sand to help give your wheels traction on icy roads in case you get stuck.

According to the National Weather Service, Wisconsin experiences an average of three to six winter storms during the season. Last winter, the city of Bayfield in Bayfield County received the highest one-day snowfall of 25.0 inches on Dec. 1, 2019. Upson in Iron County recorded 143.2 inches of snow last winter, giving it the highest seasonal snowfall total in the state. The

coldest temperature recorded in Wisconsin was -39 degrees Fahrenheit on Feb. 15, 2020 in Mather, located in Jackson County.

Winter driving can be extremely hazardous. Between 2015-2019, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation says an average of 43 people were killed and 4,138 were injured each year in crashes on icy or snow-covered roads in the state. On average, there are about 18,000 vehicle crashes in the state each year caused by poor winter driving conditions.

“During the winter months, it’s important to check current road conditions before you head out,” said Williams. “Consider cancelling travel plans, if you don’t need to be on the roads. If you can’t avoid driving, make sure you have an emergency kit in your vehicle, slow down, and make sure someone knows where you’re going and that you have arrived safely.”

You can check travel conditions for most major roadways in the state by using 511 Wisconsin, a state Department of Transportation service that is updated regularly with the latest traffic and road conditions on major routes throughout the state. This information, along with live traffic cameras and traffic alerts, can be accessed through the free 511 Wisconsin mobile app, @511WI on Twitter, or the mobile-friendly site [www.511wi.gov](http://www.511wi.gov). You may also find updates through local government websites and social media accounts.

Find more tips on getting ready for winter at <http://www.readywisconsin.wi.gov>. You can also follow ReadyWisconsin on Twitter (<http://twitter.com/ReadyWisconsin>) and on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/ReadyWisconsin>) for daily safety tips and severe weather updates.



## **Safety First - Stay Informed**

**The National Weather Service (NWS) issues winter storm warnings, watches and advisories. Here's what they mean and what you should do:**

**Winter Weather Advisory** – There is a high confidence that a hazardous winter event will occur over a 12-hour period (e.g., 3 to 5 inches of snow) but should not become life threatening if caution is used.

**Winter Storm Watch** – Winter storm conditions including freezing rain, sleet, and heavy snow are possible within the next 36-48 hours. Continue monitoring the weather forecast.

**Winter Storm or Ice Storm Warning** – A significant winter storm is occurring or will begin in the next 24-36 hours. Heavy snow (e.g., 6 inches in 12 hours) or the combination of snow, sleet, freezing rain, and moderate winds will impact travel and outdoor activities and could become dangerous or deadly. An Ice Storm Warning is issued when mostly freezing rain is expected with ice accumulations of at least ¼ inch within a 12-hour period. When a Warning is issued, take precautions and consider canceling travel plans.

**Blizzard Warning** – A dangerous storm with winds that are 35 mph or greater in combination with falling and/or blowing snow that reduces visibility to ¼ mile or less for a duration of at least 3 hours. Canceling travel plans is advised.

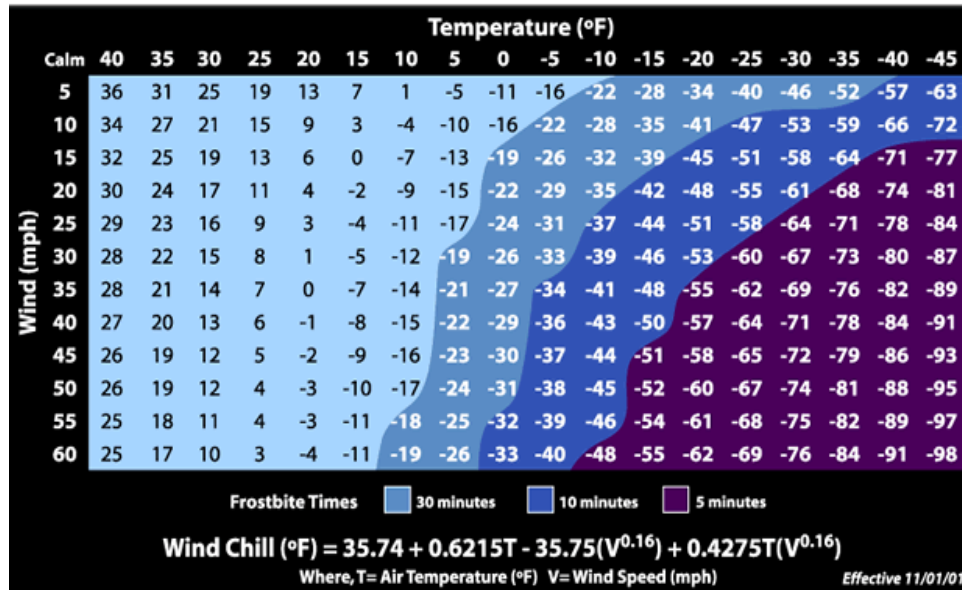
**Snow Squall Warning** – A short duration warning issued for a relatively small geographic area when intense short-lived bursts of heavy snowfall occur. Although rare, these snow squalls can lead to quick reductions in visibilities and often accompanied by gusty winds. Sudden whiteout conditions and slick roads can develop.

**Wind Chill Advisory** – Issued for bitter cold wind chills of 20 to 34 below zero (25 to 34 below zero in the northwest portion of the state)

**Wind Chill Warning** – Issued with wind chills of 35°F below zero (40F below zero for far NW portion of Wisconsin). Frostbite is possible when outside for 10 minutes or less.



# NWS Windchill Chart



## Keep Warm and Safe

**Frostbite** is damage to body tissue caused by extreme cold. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, ear tips or the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, seek medical care immediately!

**Hypothermia** is a condition that develops when the body temperature drops below 95°F. It is very deadly. Warning signs include uncontrollable shivering, disorientation, slurred speech and drowsiness. Seek medical care immediately!

**Overexertion** is dangerous. Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow or pushing a car can bring on a heart attack or make an existing medical condition worse.

**Pets** also need extra care when the temperatures fall. They should be brought inside when the temperature reaches 30°F with wind chill. Dogs and cats can get frost-bitten ears, nose and feet if left outside during bitter cold weather. Chemicals used to melt snow and ice can also irritate pets' paws – be sure to keep anti-freeze, salt and other poisons away from pets.

## **Winter Driving in Wisconsin**

Know before you go this winter season with the 511 Wisconsin Traveler Information System. By downloading the free 511 Wisconsin Smartphone app, following @511WI on Twitter, or visiting [www.511wi.gov](http://www.511wi.gov) you can access these current statewide travel resources:



- Road conditions
- Travel times
- Traffic delays
- Incident alerts
- Construction closures
- Traffic cameras

511 Wisconsin is a 24/7 travel service provided through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

### **Driving Tips from the Department of Transportation:**

- In the last five years (2015-19), Wisconsin has averaged 18,296 motor vehicle crashes that involved snow/ice-covered roads.
- In the last five years, an average of 43 people were killed and 4,138 were injured in Wisconsin each winter season in crashes, during a time period when roads are often covered in ice, snow and slush.
- Many crashes are caused by "driving too fast for current conditions." Also, when the first winter weather event arrives, motorists often need to readjust to driving in slippery conditions.
- Be gentle with both the accelerator and brake. Don't use cruise control in wintry conditions.
- Don't be overconfident in your four-wheel drive vehicle. You may get going quicker than others, but it doesn't mean that you can stop faster. Four-wheel drive vehicles can lose traction as quickly as a vehicle with two-wheel drive.
- Always wear your safety belt. You and your passengers absolutely need this protection, even in lower speed "fender-bender" crashes that frequently occur on slick roads.
- Leave plenty of room for snowplows. By law, you must stay back at least 200 feet from the rear of a snowplow.
- Obey Wisconsin's "Move Over" law, which requires drivers to shift lanes or slow down in order to provide a safety zone for a law enforcement vehicle, tow truck, ambulance, fire truck, highway maintenance vehicle, or utility vehicle that is stopped on the side of a road with its warning lights flashing.
- If your vehicle slides off the road, gets stuck, or becomes disabled, stay inside it if possible, with your seat belt fastened until a tow truck or other help arrives. If you're inside your vehicle and buckled up, you have protection against out-of-control vehicles. There's no protection outside your vehicle.

## **Keep a Winter Emergency Kit in Your Vehicle**

When traveling during the winter months, carry a winter storm survival kit in the back seat of your vehicle (in case your trunk jams or is frozen shut) that includes:

- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Extra hats, socks and mittens
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- Extra face masks
- Shovel, booster cables and windshield scraper
- High-calorie non-perishable food (raisins, candy bars, energy/protein bars)
- Sand or cat litter to use for traction
- Cell phone adapter
- Also, bring fresh water with you when you leave home



### **If you become stranded during a winter storm or in a remote area:**

- If possible, call 911 on your cell phone. Provide your location, condition of everyone in the vehicle and the problem you're experiencing.
- Follow instructions: you may be told to stay where you are until help arrives.
- Do not hang up until you know what will happen next.
- If you must leave the vehicle, write down your name, address, phone number and destination. Place the piece of paper inside the front windshield for someone to see.

### **Winter travel survival tips:**

- Be easy to find: Tell someone where you are going and the route you will take.
- If stuck: Tie a florescent flag (from your kit) on your antenna or hang it out the window. At night, keep your dome light on. Rescue crews can see a small glow at a distance. To reduce battery drain, use emergency flashers only if you hear approaching vehicles. If you're with someone else, make sure at least one person remains awake and always keeps watch for help.
- Stay in your vehicle: Walking in a storm can be very dangerous. You might become lost or exhausted. Your vehicle is a good shelter.
- Avoid Overexertion: Shoveling snow or pushing your car takes a lot of effort in storm conditions. Don't risk a heart attack or injury. That work can also make you hot and sweaty. Wet clothing loses insulation value, making you susceptible to hypothermia.
- Fresh Air: It's better to be cold and awake than comfortably warm and sleepy. Snow can plug your vehicle's exhaust system and cause deadly carbon monoxide gas to enter your car. Only run the engine for 10 minutes an hour and make sure the exhaust pipe is free of snow. Keeping a window open a crack while running the engine is also a good idea.



It is also important to check and winterize your vehicles before the winter season begins. Make sure your car's battery is in good shape – cold temperatures can reduce the effectiveness of a battery by 50 percent. Make sure your tires are suitable for winter driving conditions.

## **Be Prepared at Home**

Some of the dangers associated with winter storms include loss of heat, power and telephone service and a shortage of supplies. To help protect your family, now is the time to put together a disaster supply kit. Here are some items to include:

- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio and a commercial radio
- Bottled water and non-perishable food that requires no cooking
- First-aid supplies
- Fire extinguisher, smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector
- If appropriate, extra medications and baby items
- If you have an emergency heating source such as a fireplace or space heater, make sure you have proper ventilation
- Make sure pets have shelter and plenty of food and water

For additional information, contact your county or tribal emergency management office, the National Weather Service (<https://weather.gov>) or the state's ReadyWisconsin campaign (<https://readywisconsin.wi.gov>).

## **Check Carbon Monoxide Detectors**

Carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control. On average, carbon monoxide poisoning sends about 500 people per year to the emergency room in Wisconsin, according to the Wisconsin Environmental Public Health Tracking Program.



To protect your family from carbon monoxide, follow these simple safety tips:

- **Make sure you have working CO detectors.** All homes and duplexes in Wisconsin are required to have CO detectors on every level including the basement, but not the attic or storage areas.
- **Have your furnace or wood-burning stove inspected annually** to make sure it is structurally and functionally sound and vents properly to the outside of your home.
- **Never run a gasoline or propane heater or a grill (gas or charcoal) inside your home or an unventilated garage.** Any heating system that burns fuel will produce carbon monoxide. Use a battery-powered detector where you have fuel burning devices but no electric outlets, such as in tents, cabins, RVs, and boats with enclosed cabins.

- **Never run a car in an enclosed space.** If a vehicle is running, you must have a door open to the outside.
- **Generators should be run a safe distance from the home.** Never run a generator in the home or garage, or right next to windows or doors.

Breathing carbon monoxide displaces the oxygen in the blood and can cause death within minutes at high levels. Symptoms of overexposure to carbon monoxide are often mistaken for the flu and include headaches, fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath/chest pain, nausea/vomiting, and confusion. If you experience any of these symptoms, or your carbon monoxide detector sounds an alarm, head outside immediately for fresh air and call 911.

For more information on carbon monoxide poisoning, visit:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/air/co.htm>

### **Wisconsin winter weather records for 2019-20**

- The coldest temperature recorded in Wisconsin was -39°F in the Mather (Jackson County) on February 15, 2020.
- Upson (Iron County) had the highest overall seasonal snowfall total in Wisconsin at 143.2 inches.
- The greatest daily snowfall total recorded in the state was in Bayfield (Bayfield County), which reported 25 inches on December 1, 2019.
- Wisconsin's all-time, lowest temperature is -55°F, recorded on February 2 & 4, 1996, near Couderay (Sawyer County). Readings of -30°F or colder have been recorded in every month from November through April. Brief readings in the 50s, 60s and 70s are also possible during winter as well!
- Average annual snowfall in the state ranges from 32 to 40 inches near the Illinois border to 135 to 168 inches in the Iron County snow-belt from Gurney to Hurley.

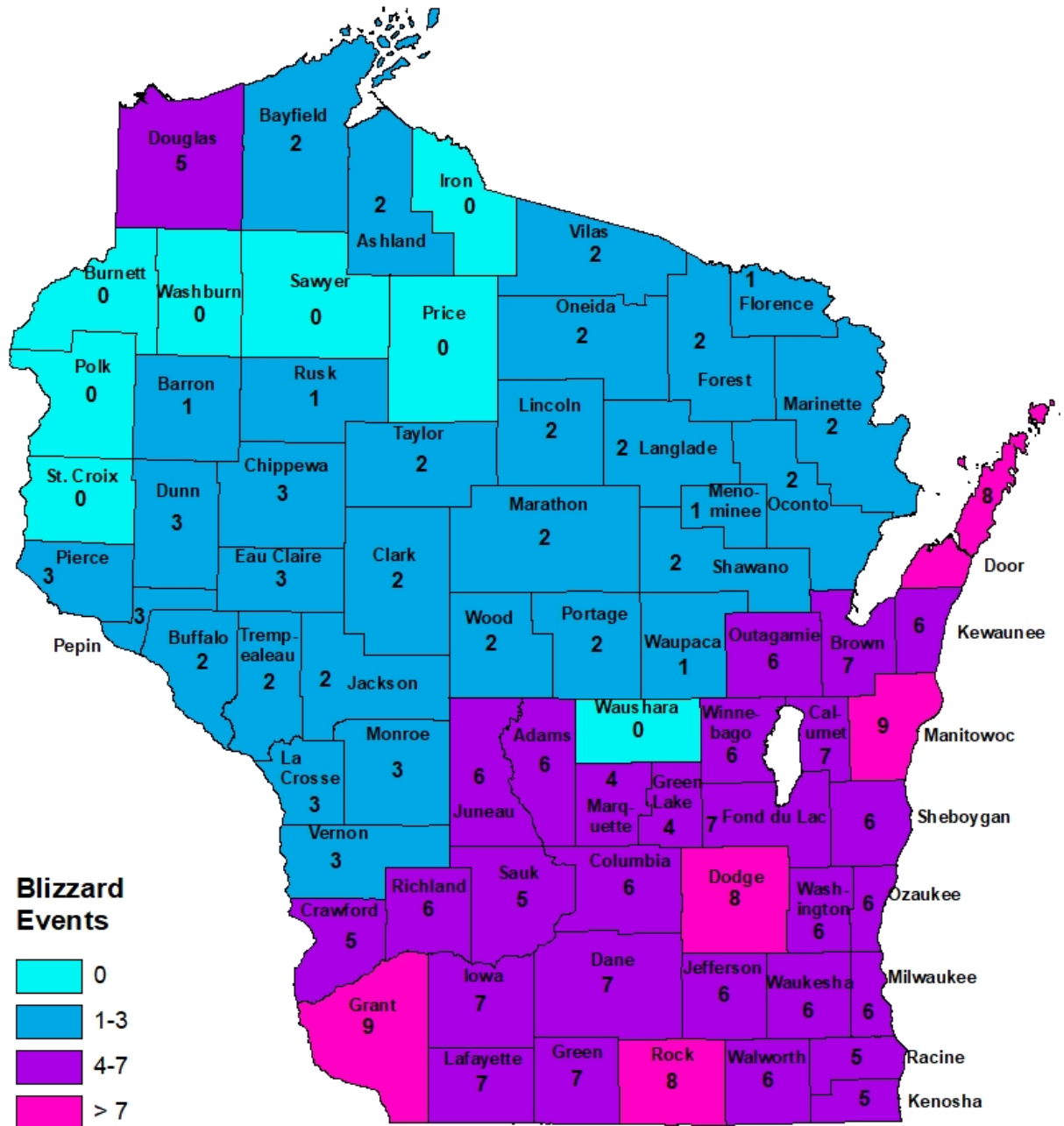






# Wisconsin Blizzard Events

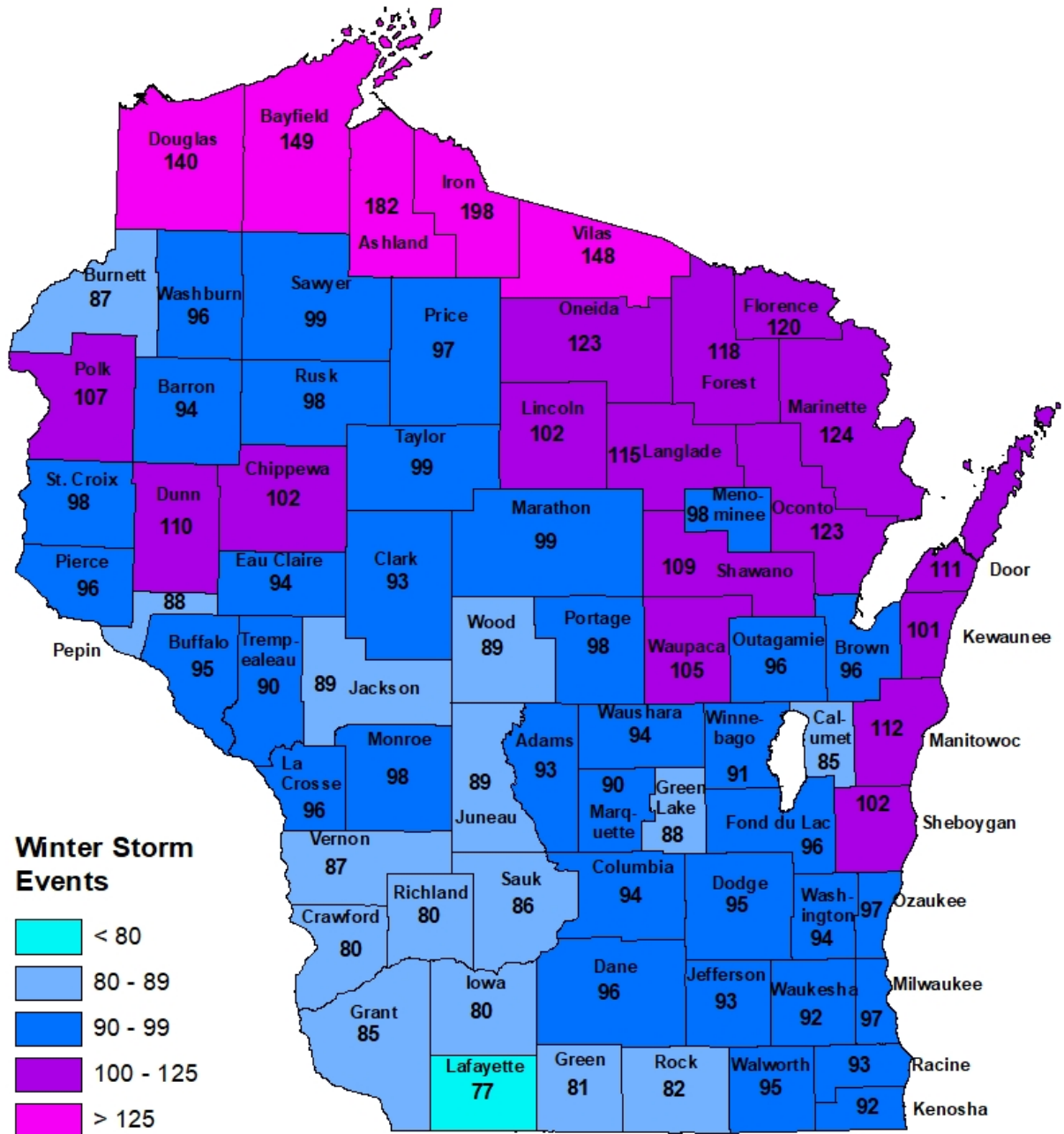
Winter 1982-83 - Winter 2019-20





# Wisconsin Winter Storm Events

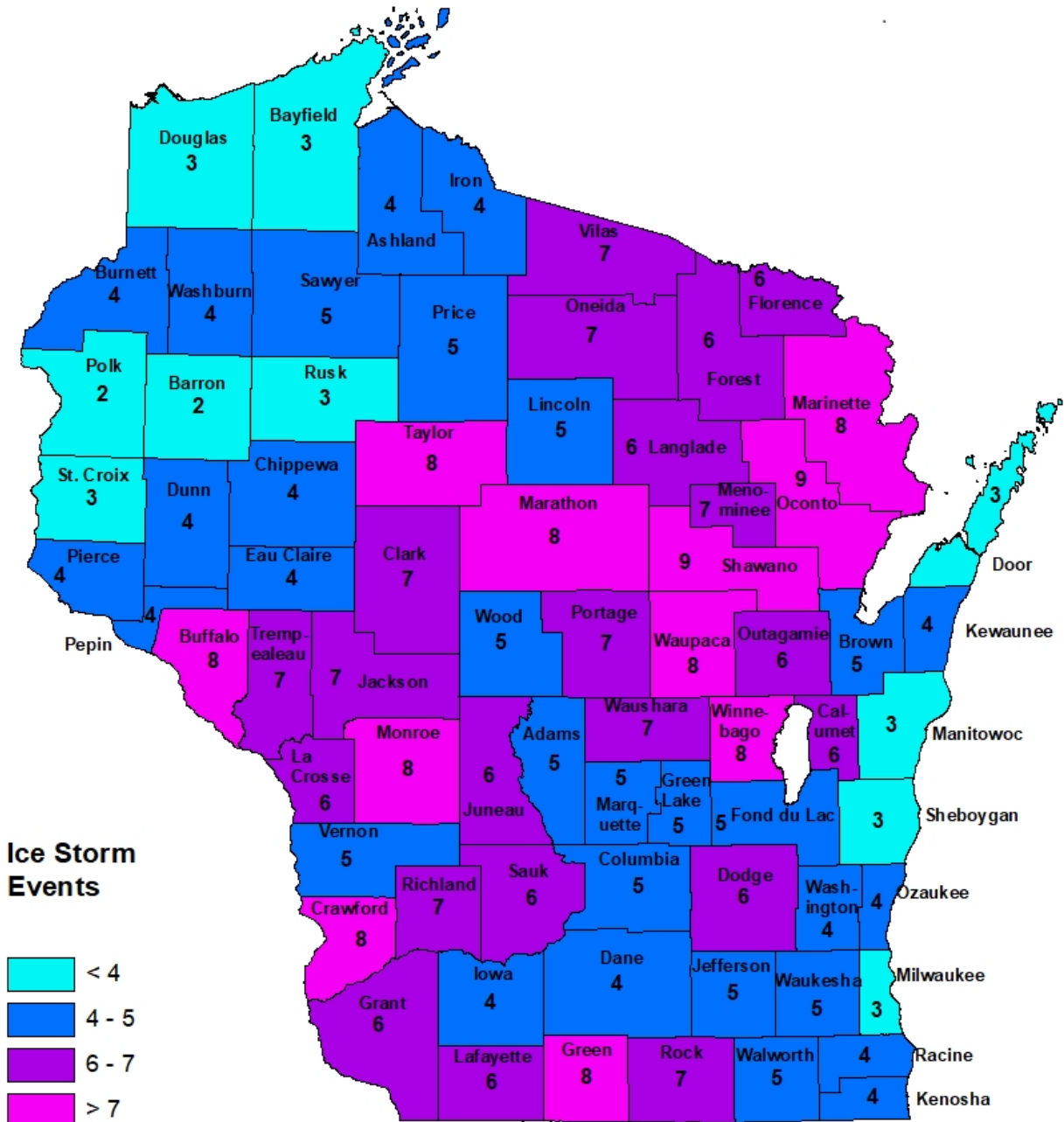
Winter 1982-83 - Winter 2019-20





# Wisconsin Ice Storm Events

Winter 1982-83 - Winter 2019-20





# Wisconsin Extreme Cold Events

Winter 1982-83 - Winter 2019-20

