



Winter Storm Fern Preparation, Response & Recovery

Town Council Regular Meeting

February 10, 2026

Overview

Winter Storm Fern: A Historic Impact

Event Duration: January 22 – February 4, 2026.

The Challenge: A three-phase "perfect storm" of extreme cold, heavy frozen precipitation, and a prolonged deep freeze.

The Goal: Preservation of life safety, maintenance of critical roads & infrastructure, and restoration of community mobility.

The Storm Profile

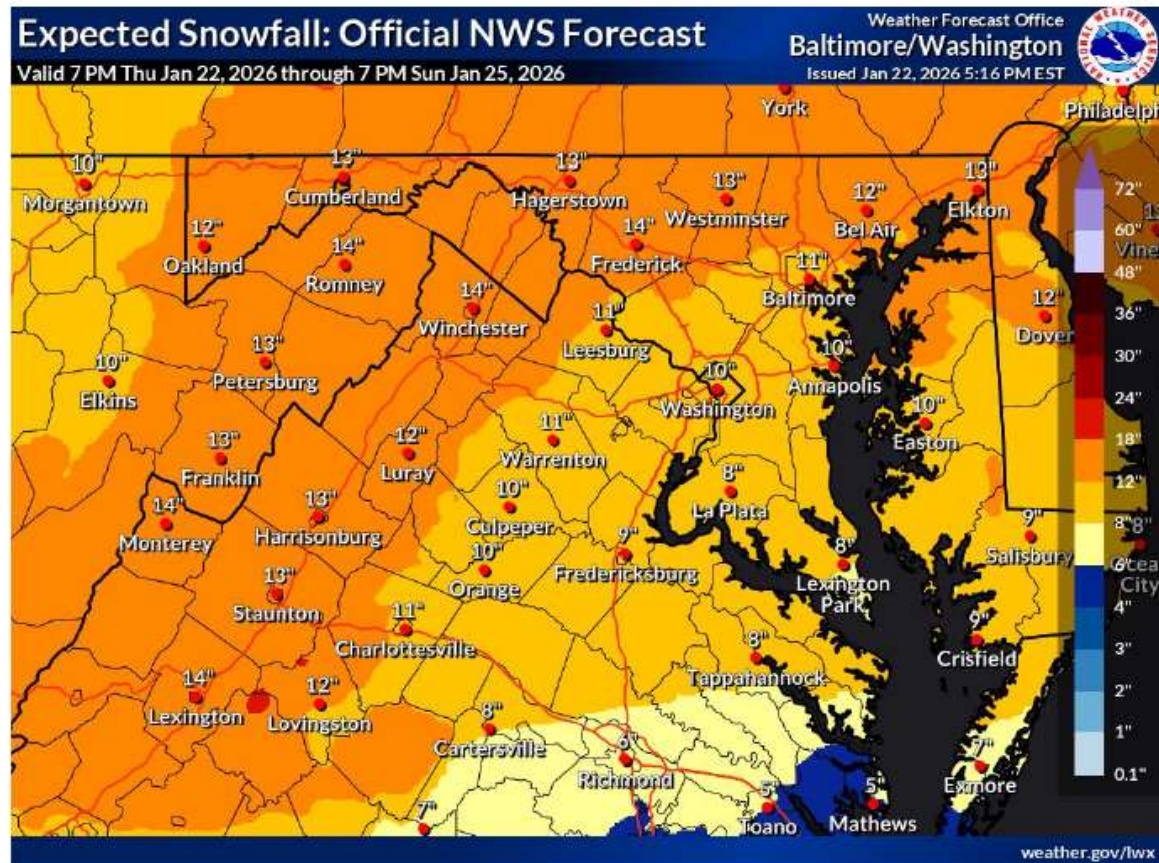




Expected & Range of Possible Snowfall

January 22, 2026
6:00 PM

Expected Snow Forecast through 7 PM Sunday (most of the event)



Forecast snow amounts remain highly uncertain as snow will likely transition to sleet and freezing rain for some areas Sunday morning, with most confidence of transition along and south of I-66/U.S. 50.



National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Baltimore/Washington



Winter Storm Watch Issued

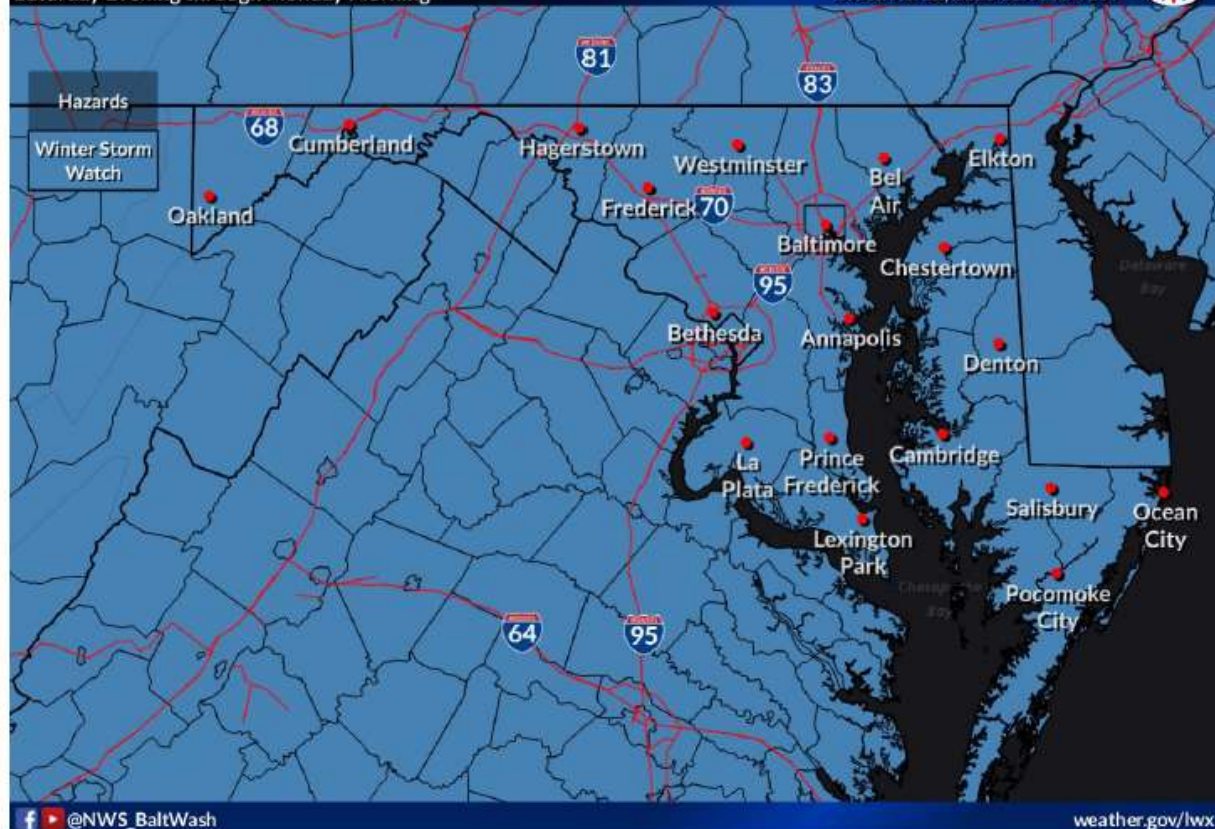
January 22, 2026
6:00 PM

Timing and Intensity Details

Winter Weather Headlines

Saturday Evening through Monday Morning

Weather Forecast Office
Baltimore/Washington
Issued Jan 22, 2026 11:39 AM EST



- **Onset Time:** Accumulating light snow starts Saturday evening, spreading northeast and reaching northeastern MD late evening/near midnight. Likely mixes with sleet and freezing rain Sunday afternoon for all but western MD.
- **End Time:** Monday morning (tapering to flurries)
- **Most Intense Period:** 12-18 hour period of heavy snow late Saturday night through Sunday morning.
 - Travel will be hazardous and life-threatening, *if not impossible*, Saturday night into Sunday through much of the region.



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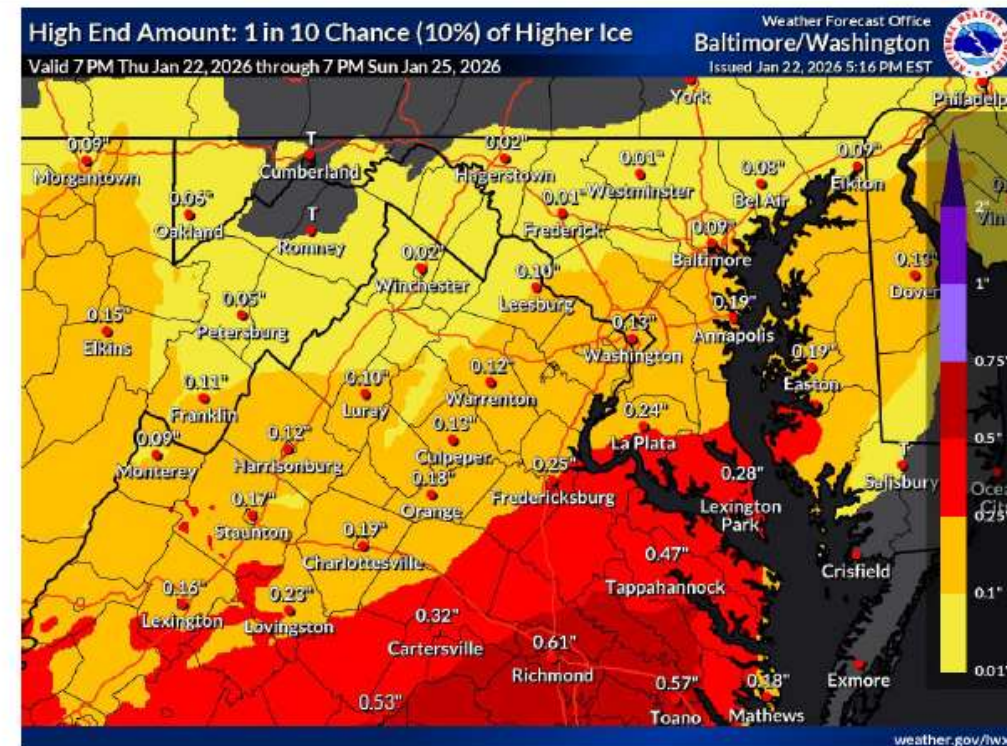
Projected Ice Totals - Event Total

January 22, 2026
6:00 PM

Expected and High End Ice Amounts through 7 PM Sunday (most of the event)



- Still lots of uncertainty with ice amounts.
- Highest confidence for ice is along and south of I-66/US-50.



- This scenario would play out if we get a very strong surge of warm air, transitioning precipitation predominantly into freezing rain, especially southeast of I-66/U.S. 50 which could result in tree damage and power outages.



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Strategic Readiness

- Local Emergency Declaration: Issued Jan 22 to mobilize resources and expedite procurement.
- Infrastructure Safeguards:
 - Secured rental emergency generator.
 - Equipped all snow fleet with ice chains.
 - Transferred 25 tons of salt to Fauquier County (Mutual Aid)
- Snow Emergency Routes: Activated Jan 24 (8:00 AM) with a strategic delay in the business district to support local merchants.
- Personnel: Secured lodging for essential staff to ensure 24-hour operational continuity.

Strategic Readiness



Operational Response Highlights

- Public Works: Transitioned to 24-hour duty with 12-hour rotations. Managed “snow-crete” conditions using 50/50 salt-sand mixes.
- Utility Stability: Zero infrastructure-related power or water outages reported—a major success given the ice loading.
- Field-Based EOC: The Emergency Operations Center operated from the field, providing real-time crew support and resident education.
- Public Safety: WPD utilized high-clearance trucks for patrols and prioritized wellness checks.

Operational Response Highlights



Support & Wellness

- Warming Centers: Successfully operated at Town Hall and The WARF (the only centers active in the immediate area).
- Community Hotline: 37 requests for assistance triaged.
- Volunteer Partnership: Collaborated with Christ in Action for debris and resident assistance.
- Wellness: Distributed pre-arranged meals to crews to maintain essential operations.

Support & Wellness

Storm Recovery Assistance for Elderly and Disadvantaged Residents



warrentonva@email.getrave.com

To Johnny Switzer

You forwarded this message on 1/28/2026 2:55 PM.



Wed 1/28/2026 10:56 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] DO NOT CLICK links or attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

AlertWarrenton!: Need help?

In the wake of the recent storm, we want to ensure that no one in Warrenton is left behind—especially our elderly residents and those facing significant hardships.

We have partnered with a **Volunteer Organization Active in Disasters (VOAD)** group that is mobilizing in Warrenton to provide recovery assistance.

How to Request Help: If you or a neighbor is disadvantaged, elderly, or suffering from the impacts of the storm and cannot manage recovery efforts alone, please contact us immediately:

- **Call the Hotline:** 540-215-0054 - Option #4
- **Email:** EM@warrentonva.gov

Please include:

1. Full Name
2. Street Address
3. Phone Number
4. Brief description of the help needed (e.g., clearing debris, property damage, or wellness checks).

Our goal is to prioritize those who need it most and get our community back on its feet. Please share this information with your neighbors who may not have internet access.

Stay Safe,

- Warrenton Emergency Management Agency -

Volunteer Organization Active in Disasters (VOAD)



**WINTER STORM FERN
DEPLOYMENT**

Volunteer Organization Active in Disasters (VOAD)



Recovery & Pedestrian Accessibility

- Contractor Assistance: When recovery efforts exceeded internal capacity, four contractors were activated for high-priority pedestrian areas.
- Debris Management: Established a snow-hauling site at the dead end of Alexandria Pike.
- Refuse/Recycling: Successfully resumed normal schedules by Wednesday, Jan 28.

Fiscal & Policy Outlook

- Fiscal Impact: Estimated \$250,000+
 - (Personnel, Contractors, Materials, Repairs).
- Policy Review:
 - Sidewalk Ordinance: Staff is reviewing regional standards (24–48 hour clear times) to present options for Town Code updates.
- Termination of SOE: The Local State of Emergency was formally terminated today, Feb 4, at 4:00 PM.

Next Steps

1. Conduct a Formal After-Action Report (AAR)
2. Modernize the Snow and Ice Ordinance
3. Explore all available avenues for reimbursement and cost recoveries from state and federal partners.
4. Conduct a Comprehensive Review of Snow Removal Budget & Contractor Support Framework

Staff Recommendations

- **Accept** the Emergency Management Update regarding Winter Storm Ferm and formally confirm the Declaration of a Local State of Emergency issued on January 22, 2026.
- **Direct** staff to develop a fiscal analysis of Winter Storm Ferm for the March meeting, outlining the budgetary impact of the emergency response and specifying the supplemental appropriations required to reconcile FY26 overtime and operational expenditures.
- **Recognize** the critical role that the FY26 and all future internal staff and capital asset investments play in maintaining public safety during a historic weather event.



Questions?