

The big cold snap will cost the United States billions of dollars

Expert provides advice to employers on dealing with extreme cold

Thursday, January 31, 2019 10:16 a.m. CST



A pedestrian stops to take a photo by Chicago River, as bitter cold phenomenon called the polar vortex has descended on much of the central

CHICAGO (KELO.com (<http://KELO.com>)) -- The polar vortex is freezing more than just the Northern Plains--experts say that we should expect the cold weather to freeze our profits as well.

“The last time the United States experienced a polar vortex in 2014, it cost the country \$5 billion,” says Rob Wilson, President of Employco USA. “In Chicago and other cities across the Midwest, we are going to experience a significant financial impact as a result of this week’s Antarctic temps.”

So how can employers help to cushion their companies against the bitter winds of the polar vortex?

“With warmer weather on the horizon, getting employees back to work is the first step,” says the human resources expert. “While safety and well-being of workers required many offices to shut down, and caused many people to change their travel plans or cancel services, we can expect things to return to normal by Friday.”

To prepare for that, Wilson encourages employers to remind people of the company’s emergency weather policy. “Send an email reminder from your human resources department that will outline whether these days off will come out of their PTO, or whether hourly workers will have opportunity to make up for lost wages in the future.”

Wilson also advises employers consider reminding employees about rules regarding space heaters and other electronic warming devices.

“Yes, people are going to want to be extra warm in the coming days, but space heaters can pose a significant risk,” says Wilson. “Not only do they use a lot of electricity, but they cause 450 deaths annually, not to mention the financial burden to companies and homes which are impacted by these units.”

If possible, Wilson suggests perks like ordering in coffee, snacks, or even lunch for workers, which will have a dual purpose.

“They won’t have to face the bitter cold in order to get their food or caffeine fix,” says Wilson. “And you can make up for some of the lost productivity from the past week.”

(Bridget Sharkey, Prime Media Management, provided this report.)