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Polar Vortex Returns for Another Unwelcome Visit

From Aprilaire, the experts in indoor air quality: As the U.S. prepares for another polar plunge, humidity control is an important aspect of indoor comfort.

Madison, WI--

In the first week of a new year, much of the nation has seen temperatures plunge as frigid arctic air dips south. Early predictions by [AccuWeather](#) suggest the polar vortex will slip down for multiple blasts of cold air this winter, delivering weather very reminiscent of early 2014. The one bit of good news is that the mass of arctic air should march in and then retreat on several occasions, as opposed to lingering over the country for months.

However, it's only early January and record lows have been shattered across the country and nearly 50 percent of the contiguous U.S. is covered in snow – the highest percentage since NOAA began tracking the figure, according to [The Weather Channel](#).

Protecting Loved Ones from Frigid Winter Weather

While the polar vortex will make heading outside a miserable experience, it takes its toll indoors as well. Families should prepare now for what will be another long winter. Homeowners who have not had their furnace system checked and cleaned need to do so – and also consider how they will deal with [low humidity levels](#). Humidity refers to the amount of moisture that is in the air. As the relative humidity (RH) drops, the air begins to pull moisture out of anything that it can – including people.

When cold outdoor air is brought into the home and heated, indoor relative humidity drops significantly. Because the furnace runs so often during a polar vortex, homes get very dry. [Dry air](#) causes a host of health and comfort issues, including:

- Itchy, dry eyes
- Cracked and itchy skin
- Static shocks
- Dry, itchy noses
- Nosebleeds
- Sore throat

Don't Hang Your House Out To Dry

[Humidity control](#) is also integral to protecting a house and keeping heating bills down. Adding humidity when heating allows people to feel comfortable at lower temperatures. [Energy.gov](#) states that turning a thermostat back 10 – 15 degrees for eight hours can reduce heating bills by 5 – 15 percent a year – a savings of as much as 1 percent for each degree. During a polar vortex, keeping the thermostat down a few degrees could quickly add up to big savings.

Just like people, a house also “feels” the pressures of a polar vortex. Dry air can cause expensive electronic devices to fail, create cracks in [wood floors](#) and damage instruments and furniture. Ensuring that dry air doesn't suck the life out of a house requires adding moisture throughout the heating season. A family's daily routines, such as cooking, bathing and doing laundry add some moisture to the home each day – but not enough to maintain optimal levels.

How to Control the Humidity in Your Home

Humidifiers are designed to efficiently and effectively control indoor RH during the winter months. Some people sleep with a small humidifier by their bed to prevent a dry throat in the morning, or purchase larger units to raise the RH in an entire room.

Many homeowners can also benefit from [whole-house humidification](#) solutions. A whole-home humidifier adds moisture to every room by using the duct system of the furnace. Installed by an HVAC contractor, whole-house humidification products can also automatically change the amount of moisture being added depending on variables such as indoor and outdoor temperature. By continually monitoring and controlling how much humidity is added, automatic humidifiers raise RH without causing condensation to form on windows or walls.

About Aprilaire:

We have been a brand leader in IAQ for more than 60 years, delivering a wide range of whole-home systems that improve comfort, health and energy efficiency. Our brand products are sold through and installed by HVAC contractors across the United States and Canada. Visit [Aprilaire.com](#) to learn more about whole-house air cleaners and total comfort solutions to purity, humidity, freshness and temperature. Find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/Aprilaire](#).

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