

In an Unpredictable Climate, Businesses May Find the Need to Prepare for the Worst

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Sub-zero temperatures and crippling wind chills hit large parts of the Midwest and East Coast this past week, as schools, businesses, and government services [shut down](#) in the face of hostile weather conditions. While cities like Chicago, where temperatures reached as low as negative twenty degrees Fahrenheit with a wind chill bringing that number closer to negative fifty degrees, are used to bitterly cold winters, the intensity and irregularity of these conditions represent a major threat to businesses in the affected areas. [Climate data](#) from the last half-century suggests that these cold snaps are and will continue to be less frequent. While on the surface this might bode well for those cities in the path of these cold snaps, just the opposite is true; a volatile climate makes these temperature drops all the more devastating, as businesses struggle to acclimate quickly enough to a new norm yielded by a changing climate. Further aggravating this problem is a rising threat of conflicting misinformation disseminating from the highest levels of government. President Trump took to twitter on January 20 with a message that poked fun at the concept of global warming; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, was [unable to respond](#) to the President's tweet, as it was closed during the partial government shutdown.

Moreover, the damage that cold snaps cause cannot be overstated. In addition to an inexcusable loss of life, the cold forced small business and major manufacturers to close shop or significantly reduce production. Following a [fire at a Southeastern Michigan natural gas facility](#), the big three automotive manufacturers, Ford (NYSE:F), General Motors (NYSE:GM), and Fiat Chrysler (NYSE:FCAU), suspended some operations for fear that energy supplies would not satisfy the greatly increased energy demand needed to heat their factories. Automotive manufacturers were not alone in making changes to accommodate the cold reality of the week. American Airlines (NASDAQ:AAL) resorted to using tanker trucks to refuel its planes; the freezing temperatures had disabled its underground refueling systems. As hope for a "green new deal" driven by improved environmental, regulatory frameworks and government incentives for green technologies looms over the horizon, business may find themselves facing eerily similar problems. Wind farmers across the central United States were [forced to close](#) as less renewable, more expensive coal facilities were activated when the extreme cold threatened to shatter fiber-glass wind turbines and seize up lubricated bearings.

As climate change continues to affect weather patterns, governments and businesses face the daunting task of preparing for a climate that facilitates sudden, potential catastrophe. Their ability to work together, to work quickly, and to work with a mind toward possible future events may shape numerous industries and the lives of countless people.

