

DES MOINES MUTUAL AID DEADLY WEATHER DISPATCH

January 15th, 2024

Government Homeless Response to Blizzard and Dangerous Temps: “Freeze and Die”

Des Moines Mutual Aid stands against every camp eviction. We know that the local government’s “Extreme Temperature” resource list is an empty gesture of “compassion.” We believe housing is a human right which can and should be provided by expropriating the rich, whose wealth is built on theft and exploitation. To hell with the cops, city, and gentrifiers, solidarity with the houseless.

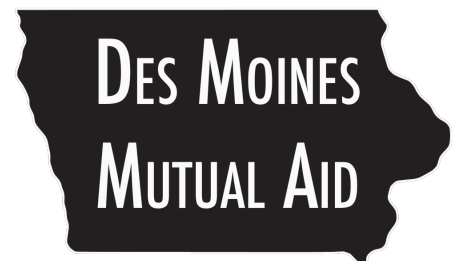
Every year, people die of exposure - *freeze to death* - in Des Moines. Every year, county and city officials trumpet their compassion for the homeless and dispatch press releases listing the “resources” they have provided for them; CISS graciously opens its doors to everyone it previously kicked out for being homeless for too long. These lists, however, are not worth the paper they’re printed on, and CISS’s “amnesty” is a cruel joke. The death of homeless people in Des Moines is not a tragedy: it is a crime committed by the local government and the class it represents, a crime in which do-gooder nonprofits with nothing to say about the system which creates homelessness are complicit. Below, we will dispense with the government’s propaganda and point towards obvious solutions.

- The warming centers the government tout are all closed by 8pm, at least 13 out of 24 hours of each day, and critically, through the coldest part of the night. Really, QT does a better job than the city.
- Overnight shelters except for CISS are private, religious, and/or have identity-based restrictions. Only CISS actually lets anyone in - to abhorrent conditions.
- Because of CISS’ convoluted “time-out” system, many people seeking shelter will be kicked out the day after “weather amnesty.” People cannot bring pets, forcing them to choose between leaving companions behind to freeze and risking death themselves. Further, CISS offers no storage space, so people seeking shelter are forced to leave behind their means of survival (tents, blankets, heaters) to be stolen by others or destroyed by city workers.
- The city’s feigned compassion is, simply put, cynical. The city dedicates a week to honoring the people they purposely and knowingly evict in the harshest weather conditions imaginable. There is no suspension of evictions on the basis of weather - there has never been one actively enforced - to our knowledge. There is no elegant way to criticize someone who says one thing and does another. We hope it suffices simply to point this out.

We are not interested in pleading with an impotent government to do something which it (and every other government in this cursed capitalist hellscape) will never be able to do. These bodies can not solve homelessness through very straightforward and relatively inexpensive means by giving everyone a safe, clean home.

We are not making suggestions for city councilors to take up. The economic forces of capitalist society leave city governments functionally powerless and we do not respect powerlessness. We hope ordinary people will withdraw their faith, energy, and pleas from the cynical charlatans who make a living pretending that one day, without explanation, the circumstances will magically make it possible for them to solve the problem. We consider world revolution to be more likely than Melissa O’Neal and your city councilor ending homelessness in Des Moines.

Mutual aid organizations in every city are already doing precisely what is possible. If you want to solve homelessness by political intervention, then you are advocating for a fundamentally different world from this one. We have that in common, and we invite you to join us.



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