

DGS' Annual Transition from Cooling to Heating Systems

What to Expect as DGS Prepares District Buildings for Winter

The Department of General Services (DGS) prepares District-owned and managed buildings each year for the colder months as part of our annual Fall and Winter Readiness Operations. To get ready for the winter temperatures, DGS will collaborate with all District of Columbia government properties to transition from air conditioning (HVAC) systems to heating systems.

Starting October 15, the Department of General Services (DGS) will begin the seasonal transition from cooling to heating in all DC government facilities. This process typically takes about 30 to 45 days, depending on weather conditions and the readiness of the heating systems. DGS will make efforts to adjust the indoor temperatures to align with the outside temperatures at the beginning of this transition, based on the boiler inspections approved by the DC Department of Buildings (DOB).

In recent years, warmer temperatures have extended into early autumn due to climate change, delaying the need for heating in some facilities. DGS adjusts the switchover schedule each year to match outdoor conditions accordingly.

Please note that as we transition to heating at large industrial-sized facilities, such as schools and recreation centers, it may take a day to switch the system from cooling to heating. Unlike in residential properties, such as your home, large building systems cannot quickly switch back and forth between cooling and heating. Once heating begins, cooling is no longer available until the following spring. During this time, temperatures may fluctuate 30 degrees within a 24-hour period, impacting target comfort levels.

When a switchover occurs, the system does not circulate heated air until the temperature drops below the level set by the thermostat—similar to how heating works in one's home. To help keep buildings comfortable during this transition, we ask for your support:

What You Can Do During This Time

- Set the thermostats to the proper settings between 68°F and 74°F.
- Remove items blocking vents or air handling units.
- Keep windows closed once heating is active.
- Stay hydrated by bringing a refillable water bottle, if possible.
- Notify your on-site facility maintenance staff if concerns arise.
- For heating concerns, call 202-576-7676.

The Department of General Services (DGS) is committed to providing safe, efficient, and comfortable environments in all District buildings. Thank you for your cooperation and patience during the annual seasonal switchover.