



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Monday, August 17, 2009

**NEW YORK CITY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND
HEALTH DEPARTMENT ADVISE NEW YORKERS OF EXTREME HEAT**

Cooling Centers Open Monday and Tuesday in all Five Boroughs

The New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) today advised that extremely hot weather is forecast for Monday and Tuesday. OEM and DOHMH urge New Yorkers to take steps to prevent serious illness that can result from the heat, especially among vulnerable individuals such as seniors and those with chronic medical conditions.

To assist New Yorkers, the City will open cooling centers in all five boroughs on Monday and Tuesday. Cooling centers are public places, such as Department for the Aging (DFTA) senior centers and New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) community centers where air conditioning is available. New Yorkers can call 311 (TTY: 212-504-4115) or log on to www.nyc.gov/oem to find the nearest cooling center.

Heat illness is serious. For some, it can be life-threatening. You can avoid it by staying in an air-conditioned environment.

The risk for getting sick during a heat wave is increased for people who:

- Are younger than 5, or older than 64
- Have chronic medical or mental health conditions
- Take medications, which can disrupt the regulation of body temperature
- Are confined to their beds or unable to leave their homes
- Are overweight

If you have a medical condition or take medications, check with your physician about precautions during hot weather. Family, friends, and neighbors who are at high risk will need extra help during this period of extreme heat. Think about how you can help someone you know get to an air-conditioned place.

Ready New York - Beat the Heat Tips:

- Use an air conditioner if you have one.
- If you do not have an air conditioner, go to a cooler place such as an air-conditioned store, mall, museum or movie theater, or visit a cooling center.
- Fans can help if the air is not too hot. They work best at night to bring in cooler air from outside. Use a fan only when the air conditioner is on or the windows are open.

- Drink plenty of water or other fluids, even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid beverages containing alcohol, caffeine, or high amounts of sugar.
- If possible, stay out of the sun. When you're in the sun, wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing that covers as much of your skin as possible, wear a hat to protect your face and head, and use sunscreen (at least SPF 15) to protect exposed skin.
- Never leave children, pets, or those who require special care in a parked car.
- Avoid strenuous activity, or plan it for the coolest part of the day, usually in the morning between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m.
- Be careful if you take a cold shower to stay cool – sudden temperature changes can make you feel dizzy or sick.

Prolonged exposure to the heat can be harmful and potentially fatal. Look for symptoms of heat illness:

- Hot, dry skin or cold, clammy skin
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- Confusion, hallucinations, disorientation

The added stress caused by heat can also aggravate heart or lung disease even without symptoms of heat illness. Call your doctor or go to the emergency room right away if you have these symptoms.

Spray Caps & Fire Hydrants:

Opening fire hydrants without spray caps is wasteful and dangerous. Illegally opened hydrants can lower water pressure, which can cause problems at hospitals and other medical facilities and hinder fire-fighting by reducing the flow of water to hoses and pumps. The powerful force of an open hydrant without a spray cap can also push children into oncoming traffic. Call 311 to report an open hydrant.

Hydrants can be opened legally if equipped with a City-approved spray cap. One illegally opened hydrant wastes up to 1,000 gallons of water per minute, while a hydrant with a spray cap only puts out around 25 gallons per minute. Spray caps can be obtained by someone 18 or over, free of charge at local firehouses.

Conserve Energy:

During periods of extremely hot and humid weather, electricity use rises, which can cause power disruptions.

- Don't set your air conditioner thermostat lower than 78 degrees.
- Use air conditioners only when you're home, and only in rooms you're using. If you want to cool your home before you return, set a timer that turns on no more than 30 minutes before you arrive.
- Turn off nonessential appliances.

For more information on coping with extreme heat, see the *Ready New York: Beat the Heat* guide at www.nyc.gov/oem. For more information on the health effects associated with extreme heat visit www.nyc.gov/health.

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