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City H.E.A.T. Campaign Warns of Dangers of Illegally Opening Fire Hydrants



Illegally Opened Fire Hydrants Reduce Water Pressure, Making Fire Fighting More Difficult; Waste 1,000 Gallons of Water Per Minute

HEAT Outreach Program has Helped Reduce Reports of Illegally Opened Hydrants by More Than 50 Percent Over Last 10 Years

Photos of the HEAT Program Can be Viewed on [DEP's Flickr Page](#)

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has launched the 2018 Hydrant Education Action Team (HEAT) program, a fire hydrant abuse prevention campaign that deploys teams of teens hired through the Department of Youth and Community Development's Summer Youth Employment Program to inform New Yorkers about the dangers of illegally opening fire hydrants. Illegally opened fire hydrants release more than 1,000 gallons of water per minute and can reduce water pressure in neighborhoods making it difficult to fight fires. After ten years of successful HEAT outreach campaigns, reports of illegally opened hydrants have fallen by more than 50 percent during June and July. Hydrants can be opened legally if equipped with a City-approved spray cap, which releases only 20 to 25 gallons per minute, ensuring adequate water pressure and reducing the risk that a child could be knocked over and injured by the force of the water. Spray caps can be requested by an adult 18 or over, free of charge, at local firehouses.

"Through our partnership with communities in northern Manhattan and the south Bronx, we've seen a significant decrease in reports of illegally opened fire hydrants over the past decade," said **DEP Commissioner Vincent Sapienza**. "By reminding people that there is a safe and legal way to use hydrants to cool off during the hot summer months, the young New Yorkers who participate in the

More Information

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HEAT program help keep their neighbors and our first responders safe.”

“The Department’s distribution of spray caps and the HEAT program help New Yorkers escape the summer heat responsibly,” said **Fire Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro**. “New Yorkers in communities throughout the city can request a spray cap from their nearest firehouse to ensure that children and those cooling off from the heat do so safely, without compromising the most important resource Firefighters need to fight fires.”

Opening a hydrant illegally can result in fines of up to \$1,000, imprisonment for up to 30 days, or both. New Yorkers are urged to report illegally opened fire hydrants to 311 immediately.

A better way to beat the heat this summer is to check out one of over 600 spray showers in City parks (many of which are now equipped with [water-saving timers and push buttons](#), take a dip in one of the City’s 53 [outdoor pools](#), enjoy more than 14 miles of [City beaches](#), or visit a [cooling center](#), offered in neighborhoods citywide during heatwaves.

The HEAT program is run in partnership with the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (SoBRO) and deploys four teams of 10–12 young adults who distribute literature, posters, and other informational materials about fire hydrant safety at community events, parades, greenmarkets, churches, and libraries. The outreach campaign focuses on neighborhoods in northern Manhattan and the Bronx that have historically seen high rates of unauthorized fire hydrant use during heat waves. In addition to literature, the teams will distribute reusable water bottles and other souvenirs that promote the safe operation of fire hydrants.

“The Hydrant Education Action Team (HEAT) Program continues to impact the lives of Bronx and Manhattan residents by educating them on fire hydrant safety. The HEAT program doesn’t intend to stop New York City’s summer tradition of keeping cool with fire hydrants, but advocates for the use of spray caps as a safe and legal way to use hydrants,” said **SoBRO HEAT Coordinator Sandy Ramirez**. “The youth responsible for spreading this message learn a wonderful lesson in community advocacy—they see how their voices can make a positive change in their communities, borough, city and beyond.”

“The HEAT program instills confidence and helps our Summer Youth Employment Program participants learn the invaluable skill of leadership by educating their neighbors on the environmental and safety hazards of fire hydrant misuse. Each year, our young people are empowered to become advocates in their community as they learn professional outreach skills that will benefit them throughout their adult lives” said **Department of Youth and Community Development Commissioner Bill Chong**.

“We want all New Yorkers to keep cool during the summer months, but we need them to do so safely,” said **NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver, FAICP**. “At NYC Parks, we offer 53 outdoor pools, 8 beaches, and more than 600 spray showers to make sure that everyone can have fun while being safe.”

“Spray caps are a safe way to use fire hydrants to beat the heat during the summer. The teens in the HEAT program are being good neighbors by informing their communities about the dangers of using hydrants illegally,” said **NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito**.

“Engaging our youth in a successful grassroots public education campaign that is preserving an essential natural resource, HEAT is having a long term impact on the quality of life that all New Yorkers share,” **Assemblywoman Latoya Joyner (D-Bronx, 77th AD)** said. “New York City’s Department of Environmental Protection has a history of being in the forefront of initiatives that engage the community in protecting our environment and I congratulate them on continuing that commitment.”

Assemblymember Victor M. Pichardo said, “Most of us would do almost anything to beat the heat during the dog days of summer. But illegally tampering

with a fire hydrant is not the answer—the water pressure can be dangerously high and it can prevent firefighters from doing their job effectively. That's why the HEAT program is so important. By educating community members and distributing thousands of spray caps, city leaders are helping ensure that New Yorkers remain safe and cool all summer long.”

“It's crucial that residents do not illegally open fire hydrants and help protect public safety. While it is tempting to open up a hydrant during the heat wave, the public should refrain from doing seek and stay cool in other ways,” said **Councilman Ritchie Torres**.

Opening fire hydrants might seem like a good way to cool down on a hot day, but doing so without a special spray cap can hurt your whole community. I commend the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Youth and Community Development, and of course our young people employed by SYEP for this interagency awareness effort and for promoting fire hydrant and community safety. Instead of illegally opening hydrants, I encourage everyone to visit our pools and beaches, locate their local heating center, or contact the city for a hydrant spray cap. With your help, we can all have a safe and cool summer,” said Council Member Vanessa L. Gibson.

“The HEAT program is a vital resource for our community and the ability for our children to safely cool off and play is very important,” said **Bronx Community Board 5 District Manager Ken Brown**. “In addition to making our neighborhoods safer, the program is also an opportunity to build neighborliness among the youth who participate in the program and residents. It provides a great opportunity to build better relations among neighbors.”


SoBro, a not-for-profit community development corporation, has been serving the South Bronx since 1972. SoBro's programs include adult education and workforce training, real estate and community development, technical and financial assistance for businesses, and an array of programs for youth. For additional information about SoBro, visit sobro.org.

DYCD supports New York City's afterschool and youth workforce development programs throughout the five boroughs. The agency also oversees funding for anti-poverty programs, such as adult literacy and immigrant services. For more information, please go to nyc.gov/dycd or follow DYCD on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

FDNY is the largest Fire Department in the United States and universally is recognized as the world's busiest and most highly skilled emergency response agency. The Department's main goal is to provide fire protection and other critical public safety services to residents and visitors in the five boroughs. The Department also works to continually educate the public in fire, life safety and disaster preparedness, along with enforcing public safety codes. Since its inception in 1865, FDNY has helped lead efforts to make New York the safest big city in the nation. This accomplishment requires a steadfast and daily commitment to maintaining the Department's core values. To that end, FDNY members are sworn to serve and protect life and property. FDNY not only responds to more than a million emergencies every year, its personnel also strive to prevent them by continually educating the public in fire, life safety and disaster preparedness, along with enforcing public safety codes. For more information, visit nyc.gov/fdny or follow FDNY on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing approximately 1 billion gallons of high quality drinking water each day to more than 9.6 million residents, including 8.6 million in New York City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program, with a planned \$19.1 billion in investments over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us

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