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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT URGE NEW YORKERS TO PREPARE FOR HOT WEATHER AND HELP THE VULNERABLE AS TEMPERATURES WARM THIS WEEK AND THROUGHOUT SUMMER

July 2, 2014 — The New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and The Health Department today urged New Yorkers to prepare for hot summer weather and to check on vulnerable family, friends, and neighbors. The National Weather Service forecasts temperatures in the upper 80s to lower 90s with heat indices in the low-to-mid 90s on Wednesday, July 2nd and Thursday, July 3rd. OEM and The Health Department urge New Yorkers to take precautions to prevent serious illness that can result from the heat over the next two days and throughout the summer, especially among vulnerable individuals such as seniors and those with chronic health problems. New Yorkers who are vulnerable should use air conditioning to stay cool, go to a place that has air conditioning if it is not available at home, drink water at regular intervals, and limit strenuous activity, especially during the hottest parts of the day.

“Extreme heat affects people of all ages, but some New Yorkers are more vulnerable than others, especially the elderly, people with chronic medical conditions, and those taking certain medications,” said OEM Commissioner Joseph Esposito. “We urge New Yorkers to understand the risks and to take steps to protect themselves from excessive heat this summer. Information, preparedness, and looking out for neighbors are the most powerful tools New Yorkers possess to combat heat-related illnesses this season.”

“With temperatures and heat indices expected to rise over the next couple of days, we want to remind New Yorkers that hot and humid weather is more than just uncomfortable. It can cause heat illness and even death, especially among older adults, people with chronic medical or serious mental health conditions, and those with limited mobility. For people who are vulnerable, the best way to prevent heat illness is to stay in an air conditioned place,” said Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett. “As we enter the peak summer months, we urge New Yorkers to check on family, friends or neighbors who are vulnerable to make sure they are able to get to a cool place and drink plenty of water. We also encourage health care providers to talk with their vulnerable patients throughout the summer season about ways to keep cool and stay safe in hot weather.”

New Yorkers can download the “Beat the Heat” guide at nyc.gov/BeatTheHeat to learn how to prepare for extreme heat this summer and visit nyc.gov/health/heat to learn more about heat illness prevention. OEM continues to monitor the weather and encourages New Yorkers to take the following steps to beat the heat this week and throughout the summer months:

CHECK ON THOSE PARTICULARLY VUNERABLE TO THE HEAT

A small but crucial gesture can help ensure that we all have a safe and healthy summer: Get to know your neighbors, and contact neighbors and relatives—in person or by phone—at least twice a day during heat waves.

- Pay special attention to the elderly, the very young, and anyone with a pre-existing medical condition. New Yorkers should check in on older neighbors who may be isolated from friends and family.
- Air conditioning is the best way to keep cool when it is hot outside, but some people do not have an air conditioner or do not turn it on when they need it. Encourage them to use air conditioning. Help them get to an air-conditioned place if they cannot stay cool at home. Make sure they are drinking enough water.

ADDITIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY TIPS FOR PROTECTION AGAINST THE HEAT:

- Stay out of the sun—avoid extreme temperature changes.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors reflect some of the sun’s energy.
- Drink fluids—particularly water—even if you do not feel thirsty. Your body needs water to keep cool. (Those on fluid-restricted diets or taking diuretics should first consult their physician.)
- Water is the safest liquid to drink during heat emergencies. Avoid beverages containing alcohol and/or caffeine.
- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Avoid strenuous activity, especially during the sun’s peak hours—11 A.M. to 4 P.M. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4 A.M. and 7 A.M.
- If possible, go to an air-conditioned building for several hours during the hottest parts of the day.
- New York City may open cooling centers around the five boroughs when temperatures reach dangerous levels. When cooling centers do open, call 311 or go to nyc.gov to find the nearest center.
- Cool down with a cool bath or shower.
- Participate in activities that will keep you cool, such as going to the movies, shopping at a mall, or swimming at a pool or beach.
- Cover all exposed skin with an SPF sunscreen (15 or above); wear a wide-brimmed hat to protect your face and head.
- Never leave your children or pets in the car.

IMPROPER FIRE HYDRANT USE

The improper opening of fire hydrants wastes 1,000 gallons of water per minute, causes flooding on City streets, and can lower water pressure to dangerous levels and hamper the ability of FDNY to fight fire safely and quickly. Properly used “spray caps” reduce hydrant output to a safe 25 gallons per minute while still providing relief from the heat. To obtain a spray cap, an adult 18 years or older with proper identification can go to his or her local firehouse and request one.

ENERGY-SAVING TIPS

During periods of intense electrical usage, such as on hot, humid days, it is important to conserve energy as much as possible to avoid brownouts and other electrical disruptions. While diminishing your power usage may seem like an inconvenience, your cooperation will help to ensure that utilities are able to continue to provide uninterrupted electrical service to you and your neighbors.

- Set air conditioners at 78 degrees Fahrenheit. (A 75F setting uses 18% more electricity and a 72F setting uses 39% more electricity.) This setting allows for sufficient cooling while still conserving electric power.
- Use an air conditioner only when home. If you want to cool your room before you arrive home, use a timer to have it come on no more than one-half hour before you arrive.

Facts about heat illness

Heat illness is serious. Prolonged exposure to the heat can be harmful and potentially fatal. The added stress caused by heat can also aggravate heart or lung disease even without symptoms of heat illness. The risk for getting sick during a heat wave is increased for people who:

- Do not have or do not use air conditioning
- Are age 65 or older
- Have chronic medical or mental health conditions
- Take certain medications, which can disrupt the regulation of body temperature
- Are confined to their beds, have trouble with being mobile, or are unable to leave their homes
- Are overweight
- Consume alcohol or illegal drugs

Know the warning signs of heat stress:

If you (or someone you know) feels weak or faint, go to a cool place and drink water. If there is no improvement, call a doctor or 911.

Call 911 immediately if you have, or someone you know has:

- Hot dry skin OR cold clammy skin
- Trouble breathing
- Rapid heartbeat
- Confusion, disorientation, or dizziness

- Nausea and vomiting

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