

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT URGES NEW YORKERS TO PREPARE FOR
EXTREME COLD**

Frigid weather expected to end the week, as temperatures dive into the twenties with single digit wind chills Thursday and Friday

The unsheltered homeless, older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at increased risk of health problems from the extreme cold

December 14, 2016 — The New York City Emergency Management Department today urged New Yorkers to prepare for upcoming extreme cold weather.

“New York City is expecting the coldest temperatures and lowest wind chills of the season on Thursday and Friday,” said **NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito**. “These temperatures will be dangerous for New Yorkers. During this blast of arctic cold, stay indoors, and if you have to go out, bundle up. Remember to check in on your family, neighbors, the elderly, or others with increased health risks to make sure they are protected from the extreme cold.”

An arctic blast accompanied by strong winds is forecast to bring bitterly cold weather to the New York City area Thursday and Friday. High temperatures Thursday will be in the twenties. Temperatures Thursday night will drop into the teens, with wind chill values as low as zero degrees. Sustained winds Thursday are expected to be between 25 mph – 30 mph, with gusts as high as 40 mph. Winds Friday are expected to be between 10 mph – 15 mph, with gusts up to 25 mph. Daytime temperatures Friday are forecast to stay below freezing, as highs are expected to be in the mid-twenties with wind chill values as low as single digits. Temperatures remain in the mid-twenties Friday night and will warm up Saturday, with highs expected to be in the mid-forties.

New Yorkers are advised to check on their neighbors, friends, and relatives. People most at increased risk include those who lack shelter, drink heavily or use drugs, or live in homes without heat, and:

- Are 65 years of age or older.
- Have chronic medical conditions such as heart or lung disease.
- Have serious mental illness or developmental disabilities.
- Are socially isolated, have limited mobility, or are unable to leave the house.

Safety Tips

New Yorkers are also encouraged to take the following precautions during extreme cold:

- Stay indoors as much as possible.
- If you have to go outdoors, wear dry, warm clothing and cover exposed skin. Keep fingertips, earlobes, and noses covered.
- Wear a hat, hood, or scarf, as most heat is lost through the head.
- Shivering is an important first sign that the body is losing heat. Shivering is a signal to return indoors.
- Drinking alcohol may make you think you feel warmer, but it actually increases your chances of hypothermia and frostbite.
- Follow your doctor's advice about performing hard work in the cold if you have heart disease or high blood pressure. Cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart. Remember, your body is already working hard just to stay warm, so don't overdo it.
- Workers in construction and utilities, and others who spend a lot of time outdoors are at risk for cold-related disorders. Employers should implement safe work practices, provide appropriate protective equipment, and train workers on health effects of cold weather, proper prevention techniques, and treatment of cold-related disorders.

Health problems resulting from prolonged exposure to cold include hypothermia, frostbite and exacerbation of chronic heart and lung conditions. If you suspect a person is suffering from frostbite or hypothermia, call 911 to get medical help. While waiting for assistance, help the person by getting them to a warm place if possible, removing any damp clothing and covering them with warm blankets. Recognize the signs and symptoms of hypothermia and frostbite:

- **Hypothermia** is a life-threatening condition where the body temperature is abnormally low. Symptoms can begin gradually and get worse without the person realizing how serious it is. Early symptoms include shivering, dizziness, trouble speaking and lack of coordination. Signs of moderate to severe hypothermia include sluggishness, drowsiness, unusual behavior, confusion, and shallow breathing.
- **Frostbite** is a serious injury to a body part frozen from exposure to the cold. It most often affects extremities like fingers and toes or exposed areas such as ears or parts of the face. Redness and pain may be the first warning of frostbite. Other symptoms include numbness or skin that appears pale, firm, or waxy.

Homeless Services

A Code Blue Weather Emergency notice is issued when the temperature drops to 32 degrees or below. No one seeking shelter in New York City will be denied. Anyone who sees a homeless individual or family out in the cold should call 311 immediately and an outreach team will be dispatched to assist them. Code Blue Weather Emergencies includes the following options for the homeless:

- **Shelters:** During a Code Blue, unsheltered homeless adults can access any shelter location for single individuals. Shelter is available system-wide to accommodate anyone brought in by outreach teams or walk-ins.

- Drop-in centers: All drop-in centers are open 24 hours a day when Code Blue procedures are in effect, taking in as many as people as possible for the duration of inclement weather. Drop-in staff can also make arrangements for homeless individuals at other citywide facilities.
- Safe havens and stabilization beds: Chronically homeless individuals may be transported to these low-threshold housing options, where they may go directly from the street to a bed.

Safe Home Heating Tips

Improper use of portable heating equipment can lead to fire or dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. Take precautions to ensure you are heating your home safely.

Fire safety tips:

- Make sure you have a working smoke alarm in every room. Test them at least once a month and change the batteries twice a year.
- Use only portable heating equipment that is approved for indoor use. Space heaters are temporary heating devices and should only be used for a limited time each day.
- Keep combustible materials, including furniture, drapes, and carpeting at least three feet away from the heat source. Never drape clothes over a space heater to dry them.
- Never leave running space heaters unattended, especially around children. Always keep an eye on heating equipment. Turn it off when you are unable to closely monitor it.
- Plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet. Never use an extension cord or power strip. Do not plug anything else into the same outlet when the space heater is in use. Do not use space heaters with frayed or damaged cords.
- If you are going to use an electric blanket, only use one that is less than 10 years old from the date of purchase. Also avoid tucking the electric blanket in at the sides of the bed. Only purchase blankets with an automatic safety shut-off.

Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Carbon monoxide comes from the burning of fuel. Therefore, make sure all fuel-burning devices such as furnaces, boilers, hot water heaters, and clothes dryers are properly vented to the outdoors and operating properly. If you are not sure, contact a professional to inspect and make necessary repairs.
- Make sure you have a working carbon monoxide detector. Most homes and residential buildings in New York City are required by law to have carbon monoxide detectors installed near all sleeping areas. Owners are responsible for installing approved carbon monoxide detectors. Occupants are responsible for keeping and maintaining the carbon monoxide detectors in good repair.
- If you have a working fireplace keep chimneys clean and clear of debris.

- Never heat your home with a gas stove or oven, charcoal barbecue grill, kerosene, propane, or oil-burning heaters. Kerosene heaters and propane space heaters are illegal in New York City.
- The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are non-specific and include headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, sleepiness, trouble breathing, and loss of consciousness. Severe poisonings may result in permanent injury or death.

If a carbon monoxide detector goes off in your home get outside immediately and call 911. If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, get outside immediately and call 911.

What to Do if You Lose Heat or Hot Water at Home

Building owners are legally required to provide heat and hot water to their tenants. Hot water must be provided 365 days per year at a constant minimum temperature of 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Heat must be provided during the “Heat Season”, between October 1st and May 31st under the following conditions:

- Between the hours of 6 AM and 10 PM, if the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees, the inside temperature is required to be at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Between the hours of 10 PM and 6 AM, if the outside temperature falls below 40 degrees, the inside temperature is required to be at least 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

Any New York City tenant without adequate heat or hot water should first speak with the building owner, manager, or superintendent. If the problem is not corrected, tenants should call 311. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (212) 504-4115. The center is open 24-hours a day, seven-days a week. You may also file a complaint via mobile app, 311MOBILE, or online at 311ONLINE.

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) will take measures to ensure that the building owner is complying with the law. This may include contacting the building’s owner and/or sending an inspector to verify the complaint and issue a violation directing the owner to restore heat and hot water if appropriate. If the owner fails to comply and does not restore service, HPD may initiate repairs through its Emergency Repair Program and bill the landlord for the cost of the work. HPD also may initiate legal action against properties that are issued heat violations, and owners who incur multiple heat violations are subject to litigation seeking maximum litigation penalties and to continued scrutiny on heat and other code deficiencies.

Take measures to trap existing warm air and safely stay warm until heat returns, including:

- Insulate your home as much as possible. Hang blankets over windows and doorways and stay in a well-insulated room while the heat is out.
- Dress warmly. Wear hats, scarves, gloves, and layered clothing.
- If you have a well-maintained working fireplace and use it for heat and light, be sure to keep the damper open for ventilation. Never use a fireplace without a screen.

- If the cold persists and your heat is not restored call family, neighbors, or friends to see if you can stay with them.
- Do not use your oven or fuel-burning space heaters to heat your home. These can release carbon monoxide, a deadly gas that you cannot see or smell.
- Open your faucets to a steady drip so pipes do not freeze.

If You Need Emergency Heating Assistance

The Human Resources Administration (HRA) administers the federal Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), which can help low-income renters and homeowners with heating bills and other energy expenses. HEAP can help with:

- Regular heating bills from a variety of heat sources (even if heat is included in your rent or you live in subsidized housing).
- Emergency payments to keep you from losing your heat.
- Replacing damaged furnaces, boilers and heating units.

Eligibility for HEAP is based on your household income, family size and energy costs. If you are homebound and need help with your heating bills, you can call the NYC Heat Line at 212-331-3150 to arrange a home visit. For more information, call 311.

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