



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**AS THE OFFICIAL START OF WINTER NEARS NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
ENCOURAGES NEW YORKERS TO GET READY FOR THE COLD SEASON**

New [video](#) offers safety tips to help New Yorkers prepare for the winter season

December 19, 2014 — Winter is here and New York City Emergency Management has launched a new public service announcement to prepare New Yorkers for the cold weather ahead. From battling frigid temperatures to travel safety and snow removal, Commissioner Joseph Esposito headlines a new [video](#) that offers New Yorkers tips on staying safe this winter.

“Winter can be a dangerous season here in the city,” said Commissioner Esposito. “Not only do we experience bone-chilling temperatures, but sometimes we get lots of snow. This [video](#) reminds New Yorkers what to do when they have to go out and face the elements. We want to make sure everyone is prepared and stays safe.”

New York City Emergency Management also reminds New Yorkers to help others who may be at increased risk of health problems. Homeless individuals not in shelters, people working outdoors, and those in homes or apartments with inadequate heat are most likely to be exposed to dangerous cold. Seniors, infants, people with chronic cardiovascular or lung conditions, people using alcohol or drugs and people with cognitive impairments such as dementia, serious mental illness or developmental disability are at increased risk.

New Yorkers should take the following precautions:

Prepare for Winter’s Arrival

- Make sure your [Household Disaster Plan](#) is ready and all members of your household are familiar with how to contact one another in an emergency.
- Winterize your [Go Bag](#) by adding a blanket, warm socks and gloves.
- Your [Emergency Supply Kit](#) should be fully-stocked to allow you to sustain yourself for up to three days without power, or in the event you are unable to travel far from home. You may wish to include additional items such as extra blankets, additional warm clothing, and a battery-operated NOAA Weather Radio to monitor weather conditions during a storm.

Winterize Your Home

- Install storm shutters, doors and windows; clean out gutters; repair any roof leaks; and have a contractor check the stability of your roof in the event of a large accumulation of snow.
- Insulate walls and attic. Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows. Install storm windows, or cover windows with plastic from the inside.

- Have safe emergency heating equipment available. For residences with functioning fireplaces, keep an ample supply of wood. Utilize portable electric space heaters. Keep a fire extinguisher on hand.
- Install and check batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Make sure you have sufficient heating fuel; you may have difficulty obtaining fuel in the immediate aftermath of a bad storm.
- Service snow removal equipment, and have rock salt on hand to melt ice on walkways. Kitty litter can be used to generate temporary traction.

Winterize Your Car

- Before winter sets in, have a mechanic check the following items on your vehicle:
- Battery
- Antifreeze
- Windshield wipers and washer fluid
- Ignition system
- Thermostat
- Lights (headlamps and hazard lights)
- Exhaust system, heater, brakes, defroster
- Oil level (if necessary, replace oil with a winter oil or SAE 10w/30 variety)

Install good winter tires that have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions. However, some jurisdictions require vehicles to be equipped with chains or snow tires with studs.

Regardless of the season, it's a good idea to prepare for an in-car emergency. Assemble an [Emergency Supply Kit](#) for your vehicle, and consider adding the following items for winter conditions:

- Blankets, sleeping bags, extra newspapers for insulation
- Plastic bags (for sanitation)
- Extra mittens, socks, scarves and hat, raingear and extra clothes
- Sack of sand or kitty litter for gaining traction under wheels, small shovel
- Set of tire chains or traction mats
- Working jack and lug wrench, spare tire
- Windshield scraper, broom
- Small tools (pliers, wrench, screwdriver)
- Booster cables
- Brightly colored cloth to use as a flag, flares or reflective triangles

Tips for Staying Warm

Exposure to cold can cause life-threatening health conditions. Avoid serious conditions such as frostbite and hypothermia, by keeping warm.

- Wear a hat, hood, or scarf, as most heat is lost through the head.
- Wear layers, as they provide better insulation and warmth.

- Keep fingertips, earlobes, and noses covered if you go outside.
- Keep clothing dry; if a layer becomes wet, remove it.

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

The “Heat Season” began on October 1, 2014, and continues through May 31, 2015. During heat season, residential owners with tenants are required by law to maintain an indoor temperature of at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit between 6 AM and 10 PM when the outdoor temperature falls below 55 degrees. Between 10 PM and 6 AM, building owners must maintain an indoor temperature of 55 degrees when the outside temperature falls below 40 degrees. Hot water is required to be maintained at 120 degrees.

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 at 311ONLINE for heat and hot water conditions.

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.

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 children alone in the room where a space heater is running. 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.

Carbon monoxide safety tips:

- 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, or kerosene, propane, or oil-burning heaters.
- 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 you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, call 911, get the victim to fresh air immediately, and open windows.

If a carbon monoxide detector goes off in your home, call 911, quickly open a nearby window, and go outside for fresh air immediately.

Staying in Touch with OEM

New York City Emergency Management communicates directly with the public through a variety of tools, including Notify NYC. This is just one way the City of New York communicates urgent information to city residents. In addition to sending e-mails, text messages, and phone calls, the emergency notification office has the ability to activate NYC's Emergency Alert System (EAS), which sends information immediately via television and radio. Residents can also visit Facebook, Twitter, and the agency's website, nyc.gov/oem for more information. The public can sign up for Notify NYC by calling 311 or going to www.NYC.gov/notifynyc.

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