

For Immediate Release

#55-17

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

Temperatures forecast to stay 10 to 15 degrees below normal through the weekend

Unsheltered homeless individuals, infants, older adults and people with certain chronic medical conditions are at an increased risk

December 26, 2017 – The New York City Emergency Management Department today urged New Yorkers to prepare for bitterly cold temperatures and wind chills through the rest of the week. According to the National Weather Service forecast, temperatures will stay below freezing this week with an average forecast temperature of 19 degrees for the next seven days.

“With an arctic chill in our area through New Year’s weekend, make sure you bundle up outside and wear a hat, scarf and gloves,” said **NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito**. “Stay indoors as much as possible, and help others to stay safe by checking on elderly family members, neighbors, and people with increased health risks.”

Throughout the week, daytime temperatures will generally reach into the teens to mid-20s, while lows will drop into the single digits and teens. Single digit wind chills are expected during the overnight hours through the weekend.

Cold weather can cause or worsen health problems. Certain individuals, including the unsheltered homeless, people with disabilities and those with access and functional needs are at an increased risk for injuries, illness or death. Others at an increased risk also include people who drink heavily or use drugs and become incapacitated outdoors, or those who live in homes without heat, and:

- Are 65 years of age or older.
- Are infants.
- Have certain medical conditions such as heart or lung disease, high blood pressure, diabetes.
- Have serious mental health conditions or developmental disabilities.
- Have disabilities or access and functional needs (e.g. limited mobility, trouble leaving home).

New Yorkers are also encouraged to check on neighbors, friends, and relatives. Please take the following precautions:

Safety Tips

- 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, scarf, and gloves.
- Shivering is an important first sign that the body is losing heat. Shivering is a signal to return indoors.
- Be safe at work. Workers who spend a lot of time outdoors are at risk for cold-related health impacts. If you are an employer, implement safe work practices, provide appropriate protective equipment, and train workers on how to stay safe during cold and winter weather.
- Limit alcohol intake. Drinking alcohol may make you feel warmer but it causes your body to lose heat faster. Alcohol also impairs your judgment which limits your ability to take appropriate precautions or remove yourself from a dangerously cold environment in time. As a result, alcohol actually increases your chances of hypothermia and frostbite.

Prolonged exposure to cold can lead to hypothermia, frostbite, and can worsen existing medical conditions such as heart and lung diseases.

Hypothermia occurs when the body temperature drops to a dangerously low level. It can lead to death. Symptoms include:

- Intense shivering
- Dizziness
- Trouble speaking
- Lack of coordination
- Sluggishness
- Drowsiness
- Confusion
- Shallow breathing

Frostbite occurs when parts of the body freeze, such as finger, toes, ears, nose, and cheeks. It can cause permanent damage. Symptoms include:

- Red or painful skin
- Pale skin
- Unusually firm or waxy skin
- Numbness

Call 911 and follow instructions, or go to the emergency room if you see symptoms of hypothermia or frostbite.

Department of Social Services

A Code Blue Weather Emergency notice is issued when the temperature is forecast to drop to 32 degrees Fahrenheit or less between 4 p.m. and 8 a.m., including National Weather Service calculations for wind chill values. No one who is homeless and seeking shelter in New York City during a Code Blue will be denied. Should you see an individual who appears to be homeless and in need out in the cold, please call 311 and an outreach team will be dispatched to offer assistance. During Code Blue Weather emergencies, experienced outreach teams work to connect homeless New Yorkers with the following resources:

- **Shelters:** During a Code Blue, shelter is available system-wide to accommodate anyone who is reasonably believed to be homeless and is brought to a shelter by outreach teams. Accommodations are also available for walk-ins.
- **Drop-in centers:** All drop-in centers are open 24-hours per day, including when Code Blue procedures are in effect, and will assist as many people as possible for the duration of the emergency. Drop-in staff and the dedicated outreach teams they work closely with each and every day can also make arrangements for homeless individuals at other citywide facilities.
- **Safe havens and stabilization beds:** Chronically homeless individuals may be transported directly to these low-threshold housing programs.
- **Street homeless outreach:** Teams will contact vulnerable individuals on their Code Blue Priority Lists a minimum of once every four (4) hours beginning at 8 p.m. during Code Blue Alerts and once every two (2) hours beginning at 8 p.m. for Enhanced Code Blue Alerts to encourage them to accept services, including transportation to a shelter placement. DSS coordinates borough-level Code Blue efforts directly with partner City agencies, including but not limited to NYPD, DSNY, and the Parks Department.

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.
- Keep fireplace 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. For more fire safety information, visit [FDNYsmart.org](https://fdnysmart.org).

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

Living without heat can increase health risks, especially for those most at risk. 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 1 and May 31 under the following conditions:

- Between the hours of 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., 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 p.m. and 6 a.m., 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 may also 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 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. For information on HEAP, click [here](#). 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.

For more information, visit nyc.gov/emergencymanagement. New Yorkers are encouraged to sign up for Notify NYC, the City's free emergency communications program. To sign up for Notify NYC, download the [free mobile application](#), visit NYC.gov/NotifyNYC, call 311, or follow @NotifyNYC on Twitter.

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