
For Immediate Release

#2-19

**NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT ADVISE
NEW YORKERS TO PREPARE FOR COLD WEATHER THROUGH THE WEEKEND**

January 11, 2019 — The New York City Emergency Management Department and the Health Department advise individuals to prepare for cold temperatures through the weekend. According to the latest National Weather Service (NWS) forecast, temperatures Friday night will be in the low 20s, with wind chill values in the lower to mid-teens. Temperatures Saturday and Sunday will hover around freezing, with wind chill values making it feel as low as the teens. A chance of light snow is in the forecast late Saturday night into mid-morning Sunday, with a dusting to an inch and a half of snow accumulation possible.

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.

To learn more about winter weather safety, visit the Health Department's interactive [online infographic](#).

Prolonged exposure to cold can lead to frostbite – which often results in red and painful or pale skin – and hypothermia. Symptoms of hypothermia include:

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

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

NYC Emergency Management will continue to work closely with NWS to monitor the weather and any potential impacts associated with the light snow. The Department of Sanitation (DSNY) is readying 695 salt spreaders across the five boroughs, and will activate PlowNYC and dispatch plows if more than two inches of snow accumulates on roadways. New Yorkers should prepare for slippery road conditions, and exercise caution when driving, walking, or biking.

“With the low temperatures and wind chills we are expecting this weekend, be sure to bundle up if you plan to go out. Check in on elderly family members and others who may be at risk due to the cold weather,” said **NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito**.

“Light snow may cause slippery conditions overnight Saturday into Sunday morning, and we advise you to take caution and allow for extra travel time.”

“Extremely cold temperatures can be very dangerous for anyone, but especially those at higher risk for hypothermia, such as those who are homeless, those without heat at home, and those who drink heavily or use drugs and become incapacitated outdoors,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot**. “We recommend New Yorkers stay inside as much as possible this weekend, but if you do have to go outside, please bundle up and dress warmly. If you are without heat at home, call 311. Stay alert for signs of hypothermia, like intense shivering or dizziness, and if you experience them, seek medical attention or call 911.”

Safety Tips

- If you go outdoors, wear dry, warm clothing and cover exposed skin. Keep fingertips, earlobes, and noses covered. Wear a hat, hood, scarf, and gloves.
- Take care when walking on snow and ice, especially if you are an older adult. Wear sturdy boots that provide traction to reduce slipping. Use handrails when using stairs.
- Have heightened awareness of cars, particularly when approaching or crossing intersections.
- 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.
- Drive slowly. Vehicles take longer to stop on snow and ice than on dry pavement.
- Four-wheel drive vehicles may make it easier to drive on snow-covered roads, but they stop less quickly than other vehicles.
- Use major streets or highways for travel whenever possible.
- Know your vehicle’s braking system. Vehicles with anti-lock brakes require a different braking technique than vehicles without anti-lock brakes in snowy conditions.

- If you are driving and begin to skid, ease your foot off the gas and steer in the direction you want the front of the car to go. Straighten the wheel when the car moves in the desired direction. If you have an anti-lock braking system (ABS), apply steady pressure to the brake pedal. Never pump the brakes on an ABS equipped vehicle.
- Try to keep your vehicle's gas tank as full as possible.

Code Blue

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 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.

Housing Preservation and Development

Residential building owners are legally required to maintain indoor temperatures at 68 degrees when the temperatures fall below 55 degrees outside during the day and a minimum of 62 degrees indoors overnight, regardless of outdoor temperatures. If an apartment lacks appropriate heat, a tenant should first attempt to notify the building owner, managing agent or superintendent. If heat is not restored, the tenant should register an official complaint via 311. Tenants can call 311, visit 311 online at [NYC.gov/311](https://nyc.gov/311), or use the 311 mobile application (311MOBILE on Android and iOS devices) to file a complaint. Hearing-impaired tenants can register complaints via a Touchtone Device for the Deaf TDD at (212) 504-4115. The center is open 24-hours a day, seven-days a week.

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. 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.

For more safety tips, visit [NYC.gov/EmergencyManagement](https://nyc.gov/EmergencyManagement). New Yorkers are also encouraged to download the Notify NYC mobile application, which is available for free download from iTunes or Google Play. Notify NYC is the City's free emergency notification system. Through Notify NYC, New Yorkers can also receive phone calls, text messages, and/or email alerts about weather conditions and other emergencies. To learn more about the Notify NYC program or to sign up, visit [NYC.gov/NotifyNYC](https://nyc.gov/NotifyNYC) or call 311. You can also follow @NotifyNYC on Twitter.

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NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

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