



NEW YORK CITY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Office of Public Information

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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CITY OF NEW YORK CITY OFFERS COLD WEATHER SAFETY TIPS

With temperatures expected to remain below freezing for the next several days, the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has convened a working group to coordinate the City's response to the cold weather.

"The City urges New Yorkers to take necessary steps to protect their families and homes from the dangers associated with extreme cold," said Calvin Drayton, acting OEM Commissioner. "OEM, in conjunction with several City agencies, including the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Homeless Services, Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Department of Environmental Protection, Fire Department, Human Resources Administration, and the American Red Cross, has compiled a number of tips to help residents better prepare and protect themselves. We urge all New Yorkers to stay warm and safe during this period of cold temperatures."

The City recommends residents heed the following cold weather safety tips to ensure they are adequately protected.

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 clothing dry; if a layer becomes wet, remove it.

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.



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Fire Safety:

- Use only portable heating equipment that is approved for indoor use.
- 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.
- Always keep an eye on heating equipment. Never leave children alone in the room where a space heater is running. Turn it off when you are unable to closely monitor it.
- Be careful not to overload electrical circuits.
- Make sure you have a working smoke detector in every room. Check and change batteries often.

Carbon Monoxide Safety:

- Make sure all fuel-burning items – such as furnaces, boilers, hot water heaters, and clothes dryers – are operating properly, ventilated and regularly inspected by a professional in order to prevent unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning.
- If you have a working fireplace, keep chimneys clean and clear of debris, and maintain chimney flues.
- Never turn on your oven to heat your kitchen, or operate gas or charcoal barbecue grills, kerosene- or oil-burning heater in an enclosed space.
- Recognize signs of carbon monoxide poisoning:

The most common symptom is HEADACHE. However, symptoms may also include dizziness, chest pain, nausea and vomiting. In severe cases, people can become increasingly irritable, agitated and confused, eventually becoming lethargic and lapsing into unconsciousness.

- If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, call 911, and get the victim to fresh air immediately, and open windows.
- Make sure you have a working carbon monoxide detector. Check and change batteries often.

What to Do If You Lose Heat

Residential building owners are required by law to provide tenants with 24-hour hot water and heat whenever outdoor temperatures warrant. During heat season, owners of privately owned multiple dwellings citywide are required to maintain an indoor temperature of at least 68 degrees



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Fahrenheit between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. when the outdoor temperature falls below 55 degrees. Between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., building owners must maintain an indoor temperature of 55 degrees when the outside temperature falls below 40 degrees.

Tenants without adequate heat or hot water should first speak with the building owner, manager, or superintendent. If the problem is not corrected, dial 311.

If you lose heat, take measures to trap existing warm air, and safely stay warm until heat returns:

- Insulate your home as much as possible. Hang blankets over windows and doorways and stay in a well-insulated room while power is out.
- Dress warmly. Wear hats, scarves, gloves and layered clothing.
- If you have a working fireplace, use it for heat and light, but be sure to keep the damper open for ventilation.
- If the cold persists and your heat is not restored, call family, neighbors or friends to see if you can stay with them.
- Open your faucets to a steady drip so pipes do not freeze.

If your service line, pipes or water meters freeze:

- Open a faucet near the frozen point to release vapor from melting ice.
- Direct a hair dryer or heat lamp at the frozen section, or put a small space heater nearby.
- NEVER thaw a frozen pipe or meter with an open flame; this could lead to fire or cause a steam explosion.
- If your meter is damaged or your pipes burst, call 311.

If you lose power, call your power provider immediately to report the outage. Extra crews are on standby during periods of extremely cold weather.

- Con Edison 24-hour hotline: 1-800-75-CONED (752-6633)
- KeySpan 24-hour hotline: 1-718-643-4050

If You Need Emergency Heating Assistance

The Human Resources Administration (HRA) administers the federal Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), which provides low-income people with emergency heating assistance. Eligible residents will receive a payment for fuel delivery, or HRA will arrange for fuel delivery or boiler repair. Emergency assistance is given to those who qualify only once per heating season. Call 311 for more information.



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How to Help Others

- Infants and the elderly are at increased risk of hypothermia and frostbite. Check on vulnerable friends, relatives and neighbors to ensure they are adequately protected from the cold.
- Community members that identify someone on the street they believe needs assistance should call 311 and ask for the Mobile Outreach Response Team. The Department of Homeless Services will send an outreach team to the location to assess the individual's condition and take appropriate action.
- Recognize symptoms of cold weather illnesses such as frostbite and hypothermia.

Hypothermia: symptoms include slurred speech, sluggishness, confusion, dizziness, shallow breathing, unusual behavior, and slow, irregular heartbeat.

Frostbite: symptoms include gray, white or yellow skin discoloration, numbness, and waxy feeling skin.

- If you suspect a person is suffering from frostbite or hypothermia, bring him or her someplace warm and seek medical help immediately or call 911.
- If medical help is unavailable, re-warm the person, starting at the core of their body. Warming arms and legs first can increase circulation of cold blood to the heart, which can lead to heart failure. Use a blanket, or if necessary, your own body heat to warm the person.
- Do not give a person suffering frostbite or hypothermia alcohol or caffeine, both of which can worsen the condition. Instead, give the patient a cup of warm broth.