

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#10-16

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

Frigid Weather Expected Thursday night through Monday, with temperatures plummeting to single digits with sub-zero wind chills Saturday night through Sunday

Seniors, infants, the homeless, and those with chronic medical conditions are at increased risk of health problems from the extreme cold

February 10, 2016 — The New York City Emergency Management Department today urged New Yorkers to prepare for upcoming extreme cold weather.

“New York City is expecting dangerously cold weather this weekend, temperatures we haven’t experienced this season,” said NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito. “We are urging New Yorkers not to take these bone chilling temperatures lightly. 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 is forecast to bring bitterly cold weather to the New York City area Thursday night through Monday. High temperatures Thursday will be at or below freezing. Temperatures drop to the teens Thursday night, with wind chill values in the single digits. Daytime temperatures are forecast to stay below freezing Friday, and continue to drop Friday night into Saturday, with temperatures in the teens and wind chill values near zero. Saturday night temperatures drop to single digits, and wind chill values are expected to plummet to as low as 15 degrees below zero. Wind chill values are expected to remain below zero through Sunday morning, slightly increasing to single digits Sunday night through early Monday morning. Temperatures should begin to moderate Monday afternoon, with highs expected to be around freezing through Monday night.

New Yorkers are advised to check on their neighbors, friends, and relatives — especially the elderly and those with disabilities and access and functional needs — during periods of extreme cold. People most likely to be exposed to dangerous cold include those who lack shelter, work outdoors and/or live in homes with malfunctioning or inadequate heat. Seniors, infants, people with chronic cardiovascular or lung conditions, people using alcohol or drugs and people with cognitive impairments (like dementia, serious mental illness or developmental disability) are at increased risk.

Safety Tips

New Yorkers are also encouraged to take the following precautions:

- Stay indoors as much as possible.
- Prolonged exposure to extreme cold weather can be dangerous. 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.
- When outdoors, wear warm clothing and cover exposed skin. Use multiple layers to maintain warmth.
- Wear a hat, hood, or scarf, as most heat is lost through the head.
- Keep fingertips, earlobes, and noses covered if you go outside.
- Keep clothing dry; if a layer becomes wet, remove it.
- 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.
- Cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart. If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's advice about performing hard work in the cold. 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. Recognize the signs and symptoms of hypothermia and frostbite:

- **Hypothermia** is a life-threatening condition where the body temperature is abnormally low. Symptoms may include shivering, slurred speech, sluggishness, drowsiness, unusual behavior, confusion, dizziness, and shallow breathing. Some people, such as infants, seniors, and those with chronic diseases and substance abuse problems can get sick quicker. Check on friends, relatives, and neighbors who may need assistance to ensure they are adequately protected from the cold.
- **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 weather 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, homeless adults can access any shelter location for single individuals. Beds are 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 also can 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.

Heating Tips

- Report any loss of heat or hot water to property managers immediately, and call 311.
- Never heat your home with a gas stove or oven, charcoal barbecue grill, or kerosene, propane, generator or oil-burning heaters.
- Electric space heaters are the only kind of space heaters legal in New York City and should turn off automatically when tipped over. They should be kept far from water and combustible and flammable objects.

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.
- 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.

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 or 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 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 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.

More Information

For more cold weather safety tips, view NYC Emergency Management’s public service [video announcement](#) or visit NYC.gov/EmergencyManagement. New Yorkers are also encouraged to sign up for Notify NYC, the City’s free emergency notification system. Through Notify NYC, New Yorkers can receive phone calls, text messages, and/or emails alerts about weather conditions and other emergencies. To sign up for Notify NYC, call 311, visit NYC.gov/notifynyc, or follow @NotifyNYC on Twitter.

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