

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND THE NEXT HEAT EMERGENCY:
ACTIVATING THE COOLING CENTER FINDER**

New York City Emergency Management partners with City agencies and community organizations to provide air-conditioned facilities to the public during extreme heat

August 7, 2018 – Extreme heat is a significant hazard. Exposure to extreme heat over an extended period can lead to heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, sunburn, heat rash, even death. Older adults, individuals with chronic health conditions, and people who use certain medications or abuse drugs or alcohol are among those at risk for heat-related illness. According to the National Weather Service, there were [107 fatalities across the United States related to heat in 2017](#), more than the deaths related to tornados, hurricanes, and cold weather combined.

The New York City Emergency Management Department works closely with the National Weather Service to monitor extreme heat and related threats that can affect the five boroughs.

To help New Yorkers avoid the adverse effects of extreme heat, New York City established a network of cooling centers. Cooling centers are air-conditioned spaces such as senior centers, community centers, public libraries, and other public facilities that typically operate during normal business hours. Through partnerships with City agencies and organizations such as the New York City Department for the Aging, New York City Parks Department, New York City Housing Authority, The Salvation Army, and New York Public Library, these spaces are available to the public during a heat emergency.

Prior to each summer, New York City Emergency Management collaborates with City agencies and organizations to identify potential cooling center facilities throughout the five boroughs.

“Much of our work is in identifying air-conditioned spaces that are already being utilized by community members such as senior centers and libraries,” said **New York City Emergency Management Advance Warning System Program Manager Christopher Pagnotta**.

“Residents are more likely to go to facilities that they know and trust. Many of these facilities also have daily programs and activities to engage the public and provide them relief from the heat.”

New York City Emergency Management provides signage to cooling center facilities in multiple languages, helping the public identify the locations in their neighborhood.

Cooling center signage is just one of many strategies New York City Emergency Management use to inform the more than 8.5 million New Yorkers of cooling center sites in their neighborhood and the dangers of extreme heat.

Each summer New York City Emergency Management engages the public with the [Beat the Heat](#) Campaign, which encourages New Yorkers to beat the heat by knowing the hazards they may face, having a plan, and staying informed. The campaign includes print and digital ads featuring personal preparedness tips from older New Yorkers.

New York City Emergency Management also works to inform the public about the hazards of extreme heat through [Notify NYC](#). Notify NYC is the city's free, official source for information about emergency events and important city services. Notify NYC alerts include information about National Weather Service – issued heat advisories, which provide New Yorkers with safety tips and general information about the hazards associated with the emergency. New Yorkers can download the app via [iTunes](#) or [Google Play](#).

New York City works to get information to vulnerable populations through the [Advance Warning System \(AWS\)](#). The Advance Warning System allows New York City Emergency Management to communicate directly with organizations that serve people with disabilities and access and functional needs before, during, and after an emergency.

During extreme heat, New York City Emergency Management urges the public to remain indoors in an air-conditioned space to protect themselves from heat-related illnesses. For New Yorkers who may not have access to an air-conditioned space, the City offers cooling center sites throughout the five boroughs. To help New Yorkers locate cooling centers in their communities, New York City Emergency Management created the Cooling Center Finder.

The Cooling Center Finder is an online portal that allows New Yorkers to view available cooling centers in their area. Once The City of New York determines the need for cooling centers, New York City Emergency Management activates the Cooling Center Finder for public access. The department's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) division activates the portal and is responsible for all mapping and data needs. GIS also works with cooling center partners to provide real-time updates to the Cooling Center Finder Application.

“The Cooling Center Finder is a map-based online tool that allows New Yorkers to get up-to-date information on cooling centers in their area,” said **New York City Emergency Management Geographic Information Systems Director Joshua Friedman**. “The online portal can be activated instantaneously and is a great tool in combatting extreme heat for those without air-conditioners.”

New York City Emergency Management is in constant contact with cooling center facilities, frequently updating the roster based on changes in availability. For example, if the air-conditioner at a cooling site is out of order, the location is immediately removed from the Cooling Center Finder. The public can find their nearest cooling center by going to the [Cooling Center Finder](#) or contacting 3-1-1 (212-639-9675 for Video Relay Service, or 212-504-4115 for TTY). The Cooling Center Finder is only activated during a heat emergency.

1. Weather Fatalities 2017. The National Weather Service. (2018, April 25). Retrieved June 26, 2018, from <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/hazstats.shtml>

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