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Office of Emergency Management, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Department of Environmental Protection Urge New Yorkers to Take Precautions During Extreme Heat

More than 500 Cooling Centers Open Citywide Today

Environmental New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno today joined Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Commissioner Dr. Thomas Farley, Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway, and Fire Department EMS Brooklyn Division Commander, Chief Robert Hannafey at a DEP Water-On-the-Go fountain at Brooklyn Borough Hall to urge New Yorkers to take precautions during the extreme heat expected over the next few days. According to the National Weather Service the heat index could reach 104 degrees today, 108 degrees on Friday and 101 degrees on Saturday.

City cooling centers will remain open through at least Saturday and many will have extended evening hours. Cooling centers are public places, such as Department for the Aging (DFTA) senior centers and New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and Salvation Army community centers, where air conditioning is available. To find the cooling center closest to you, call 311 (TTY: 212-504-4115) or visit OEM's Cooling Center Finder at www.nyc.gov/oem.

"We are asking every New Yorker to take common sense steps to stay safe during this extreme heat event: look out for your own health, check in on vulnerable neighbors, and listen to your utility company's appeals for energy conservation," said OEM Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno "And to ensure that every New Yorker has a place to stay cool, the City has opened more than 500 cooling centers – public places that are open to anyone who needs a place to take a break from the heat and cool off."

"Prolonged heat can put you at risk for serious health

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consequences," said Commissioner Farley. "For anyone who is elderly or living with a chronic health condition, a series of hot days can lead to heat exhaustion, heat stroke – even death. The people at greatest risk often live alone and have difficulty traveling to a cooler place. Fortunately, these heat-related health risks are preventable. Staying in an air-conditioned place is the best protection from the heat, so check on your elderly relatives, friends, and neighbors – particularly those who live alone – and see if you can help them get to cooler places on these extremely hot days. New York City is full of air-conditioned spaces. By helping a vulnerable person find a cool spot, you may save a life. And when you exercise on these hot days make sure you're doing so in the coolest parts of the day and that you're staying hydrated."

"Keeping cool on hot summer days is essential, and one of the best ways to do that is by drinking plenty of refreshing NYC Water," said Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway. "Our city's water is some of the best in the world, a fact that all New Yorkers can take pride in. To help make it even more available, our Water-On-the-Go fountains will be deployed at high-traffic locations throughout the summer—eight of which are set up today—to offer free and delicious water to anyone who needs a drink. We also want to remind New Yorkers that opening a fire hydrant without a spray cap is illegal and potentially dangerous. Improperly opened hydrants can hamper firefighting operations and harm small children. Before you cool off, stop by a local firehouse and get an approved spray cap, so you can beat the heat in the safest way possible."

"When the heat climbs to extreme temperatures, as it will over the next several days, our firefighters, EMTs and Paramedics are put to the test. FDNY EMS, the busiest Emergency Medical System in the world sees a substantial increase in call volume, and the job of fighting fires becomes that much more difficult in the sweltering heat," said Fire Commissioner Salvatore J. Cassano. "We're asking all New Yorkers to help us by not illegally opening fire hydrants, which denies our firefighters the water they need to extinguish fires, and please save calling EMS for true emergencies. We want everyone to stay cool, and stay safe."

FACTS ABOUT HEAT ILLNESS

Heat illness is serious. Prolonged exposure to the heat can be harmful and potentially fatal. The added stress caused by heat can also aggravate heart or lung disease even without symptoms of heat illness. Call your doctor or go to the emergency room right away if you have these symptoms:

- ▶ Hot, dry skin or cold, clammy skin
- ▶ Weakness
- ▶ Dizziness
- ▶ Nausea or vomiting
- ▶ Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- ▶ Confusion, hallucinations, disorientation

The risk for getting sick during a heat wave is increased for people who:

- ▶ Are younger than five, or older than 64
- ▶ Have chronic medical or mental health conditions
- ▶ Take medications, which can disrupt the regulation of

body temperature

- ▶ Are confined to their beds or unable to leave their homes
- ▶ Are overweight

If you have a medical condition or take medications, check with your physician about precautions during hot weather. Family, friends, and neighbors who are at high risk will need extra help during this period of extreme heat. Think about how you can help someone you know get to an air-conditioned place.

READY NEW YORK – TIPS TO BEAT THE HEAT

- ▶ Use an air conditioner if you have one.
- ▶ If you do not have an air conditioner, go to a cooler place such as an air-conditioned store, mall, museum or movie theater. Or, visit a cooling center.
- ▶ Use a fan if the air is not too hot. Fans work best at night to bring in cooler air from outside.
- ▶ Use a fan only when the air conditioner is on or the windows are open.
- ▶ Drink plenty of water or other fluids, even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid beverages containing alcohol, caffeine, or high amounts of sugar.
- ▶ If possible, stay out of the sun. When you're in the sun, wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing that covers as much of your skin as possible, wear a hat to protect your face and head, and use sunscreen (at least SPF 15) to protect exposed skin.
- ▶ Never leave children, pets, or those who require special care in a parked car.
- ▶ Avoid strenuous activity, or plan it for the coolest part of the day, usually in the morning between 4 AM and 7 AM.
- ▶ Be careful if you take a cold shower to stay cool – sudden temperature changes can make you feel dizzy or sick.

STAY HYDRATED – DEP's WATER-ON-THE-GO PROGRAM

In 2011, DEP launched an expanded Water-On-the-Go program for the second consecutive summer to make New York City drinking water easily available at outdoor public locations and events throughout the city. The program will continue through Labor Day weekend with water fountains set up in all five boroughs at public plazas, city parks, greenmarkets and special events. The fountains are outdoor drinking water stations, connected to fire hydrants, with six faucets for direct drinking or for filling a water bottle. All fountains also feature separate bowls of water for pets. A complete schedule for Water-On-the-Go fountains can be viewed at www.nyc.gov/dep.

New York City drinking water is world-renowned for its quality. New York City is one of only five large cities in the country that is allowed to run a largely unfiltered water system due to the city's comprehensive watershed protection programs. The Department of Environmental Protection also performs more than 1,000 tests daily, 31,000 monthly, and 375,000 on an annual basis from up to 1,000 sampling locations throughout New York City. This work is in addition to 225,000 tests performed in the watershed.

OUTDOOR EVENTS

If you are organizing an outdoor public event, be sure to provide an area—air conditioning or shade—where participants can take a break from the heat to cool off, and ample access to drinking water. If these are not available, consider rescheduling your event to be sure people are safe. Be aware of the signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses and when to seek medical attention.

FIRE HYDRANT SAFETY – SPRAY CAPS

Opening fire hydrants without spray caps is wasteful and dangerous. Illegally opened hydrants can lower water pressure, which can cause problems at hospitals and other medical facilities and hinder fire-fighting by reducing the flow of water to hoses and pumps. The powerful force of an open hydrant without a spray cap can also push children into oncoming traffic. Call 311 to report an open hydrant.

Hydrants can be opened legally if equipped with a City-approved spray cap. One illegally opened hydrant wastes up to 1,000 gallons of water per minute, while a hydrant with a spray cap only puts out around 25 gallons per minute. Spray caps can be obtained by someone 18 or over, free of charge at local firehouses.

CONSERVE ENERGY

- ▶ During periods of extremely hot and humid weather, electricity use rises, which can cause power disruptions.
- ▶ Don't set your air conditioner thermostat lower than 78 degrees.
Use air conditioners only when you're home, and only in rooms you're using. If you want to cool your home before you return, set a timer that turns on no more than 30 minutes before you arrive.
- ▶ Turn off nonessential appliances.

For more information on coping with extreme heat, see the *Ready New York: Beat the Heat* guide at www.nyc.gov/oem. For more information on the health effects associated with extreme heat visit www.nyc.gov/health. For information on spray caps or DEP's Water-On-the-Go program visit www.nyc.gov/dep.

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