



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND MENTAL HYGIENE  
Dave A. Chokshi, MD MSc  
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## HEALTH DEPARTMENT REMINDS NEW YORKERS THAT CLIMATE CHANGE IS A PUBLIC HEALTH AND RACIAL JUSTICE ISSUE

*The Health Department has a number of resources and programs to help New Yorkers learn and respond to climate change*

**September 22, 2021** – The Health Department today marks [Climate Week NYC](#) and reminds New Yorkers that climate change is a public health, environmental and racial justice priority in New York City. Heat and heat waves pose one of the biggest threats to New Yorkers' health. Hot weather is related to [roughly 350 New Yorkers dying each year](#), and heat impacts disproportionately affect Black and low-income New Yorkers.

“Climate-related deaths are preventable, and New York City is leading the way on combatting climate change,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi**. “After a summer of extreme weather including five heat emergencies and two tropical storms, addressing climate change is more urgent than ever. We thank the Mayor for implementing bold initiatives to keep New Yorkers safe.”

The Health Department launched a [Climate & Health Hub](#) to bring together key data and resources, including a recently released an interactive data story on the [Urban Heat Island Effect](#) in NYC, for New Yorkers interested in learning more about the impacts climate change has on NYC.

The Department also partnered with design firm Interboro Partners and community-based organizations The POINT Community Development Corporation and Southeast Bronx Community Organization (SEBCO) in the Bronx this summer to provide **Community Hosted Outdoor Cooling Stations**. The outdoor cooling stations helped residents stay cool, reconnect with friends and community members after a long period of social distancing, and attend weekly local performances as well as other events hosted by community partners.



Residents seated at a group cooling fan location  
(Credit: Dean Kaufman and Interboro Partners)

The **Be A Buddy Program** has identified over 1,300 New Yorkers who are at higher risk during extreme heat emergencies. The Health Department partners with neighborhood-based organizations to enlist volunteers who conduct wellness checks on their high-risk neighbors, many of whom are socially isolated due to mental, physical, or social constraints. Buddies help neighbors locate local resources, like meal delivery, or help them find a space to cool off in if they lack air conditioning. Buddies surveyed reported the program has made them feel more supported and appreciated by their community and increased the number of local relationships. Forty-six percent (46%) of volunteer buddies reported calling 20 or more high-risk neighbors during weather or other emergencies since the program's inception in 2018. The Be A Buddy Program originated from [Cool Neighborhoods NYC](#), a city-wide heat protection strategy, in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Climate Resiliency led by community partner organizations The POINT Community Development Corporation in Hunts Point, Brooklyn Community Services in Brownsville, and Union Settlement in East Harlem.

Health Department staff are participating in Climate Week NYC events to highlight the public health and justice implications of climate change:

- Monday, September 20, 2021: [\*"Injustice Anywhere: Why Climate Justice is Reproductive Justice"\* \(recorded\)](#)
- Wednesday, September 22, 2021: [\*"Integrative Environmental Justice"\*](#)
- Thursday, September 23, 2021: [\*"Protecting the Planet, Protecting Pregnancies: Strategies for Combating the Climate Crisis"\*](#)

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