



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#5-14

**OEM ISSUES HAZARDOUS TRAVEL ADVISORY
FOR TODAY AND WEDNESDAY**

Tuesday PM and Wednesday AM Rushes Most Impacted

Dangerously cold temperatures expected tonight through Friday

January 21, 2014 — The New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) today issued a Hazardous Travel Advisory for today and Wednesday. The National Weather Service has forecasted 8 to 12 inches of snow accumulation through Wednesday. Light snow will develop this morning with the heaviest snow between 4 PM today and 10 PM tonight. Blizzard-like conditions could occur during the heaviest periods of snow. Snow will begin to taper off by late this evening and end tomorrow morning. Temperatures are not expected to break the freezing mark through Friday. Overnight lows tonight are expected to be in the single digits with wind chills of -5 degrees. On Wednesday, temperatures will be near 20 degrees with wind chills in the single digits. The Department of Sanitation has issued a Snow Alert for today. The plow tracker is available at nyc.gov/severeweather. OEM encourages New Yorkers to take the following precautions:

For Motorists

- If you must drive a vehicle, monitor weather and traffic reports for the latest road conditions. Use mass transportation whenever possible.
- Use major streets or highways for travel whenever possible as these roadways will be cleared first.
- Drive slowly. Vehicles, including those with 4-wheel drive, take longer to stop on snow and ice than on dry pavement.
- Keep the name and phone number of at least one local towing service in your car in case you break down or become stuck in the snow.
- If you get stuck on the road stay with your car and contact a towing company.

For Pedestrians

- Exercise caution and avoid slippery surfaces; some ice may not be visible.
- Wear layers including a hat, gloves and scarf to stay protected from the cold. And, keep clothes and shoes dry.
- Keep fingertips, earlobes, and noses covered if you go outside.
- Have heightened awareness of cars, particularly when approaching or crossing intersections.

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, and scarf.
- Wear layers, as they provide better insulation and warmth.
- Keep fingertips, earlobes, and noses covered if you go outside.
- Keep clothing dry; if a layer becomes wet, remove it.

Check on Neighbors, Friends, Relatives and Clients

- Home visiting and social service agencies should activate their cold emergency plans, and reach out in advance to their clients to make sure they're aware of the cold and snow.
- If you are concerned about someone on the street who may be homeless and in need of assistance 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.
- If your building is cold, check on your neighbors. If you know someone who is vulnerable and lacking heat, help them get to warm places and notify the building manager and/or call 311 to get heat restored. If you see someone with signs of hypothermia such as confusion, shivering, slurred speech, drowsiness call 911 for help and help the person get warm while waiting for help.
- Landlords and building managers should check their building systems to ensure heat, and check on vulnerable people

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.

Provide first aid:

- If you suspect a person is suffering from frostbite or hypothermia, call 911 to get medical help.
- While waiting for assistance to arrive, help the person get warm by getting them to a warm place if possible, removing any damp clothing and covering them with warm blankets.

What to Do if You Lose Heat or Hot Water at Home

The heat season began on October 1, 2013, and continues through May 31, 2014. During heat season, residential owners with tenants are required by law to maintain an indoor temperature of at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit between 6 AM and 10 PM when the outdoor temperature falls below 55 degrees. Between 10 PM and 6 AM, building owners must maintain an indoor temperature of 55 degrees when the outside temperature falls below 40 degrees. Hot water is required to be maintained at 120 degrees.

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. 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 also may 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, but 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.

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.

Fire safety tips:

- Make sure you have a working smoke alarm in every room. Test them at least once a month and change the batteries twice a year.
- Use only portable heating equipment that is approved for indoor use. Space heaters are temporary heating devices and should only be used for a limited time each day.
- 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 them.
- Never leave children alone in the room where a space heater is running. Always keep an eye on heating equipment. Turn it off when you are unable to closely monitor it.
- Plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet. Never use an extension cord or power strip. Do not plug anything else into the same outlet when the space heater is in use. Do not use space heaters with frayed or damaged cords.
- If you are going to use an electric blanket, only use one that is less than 10 years old from the date of purchase. Also avoid tucking the electric blanket in at the sides of the bed. Only purchase blankets with an automatic safety shut-off.

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.
- Never heat your home with a gas stove or oven, charcoal barbecue grill, or kerosene, propane, or oil-burning heaters.
- 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.

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.

Homeless Outreach

The Department of Homeless Services (DHS) continues to use its Cold Weather Emergency Procedure, called Code Blue, to protect unsheltered individuals, who are more at risk for exposure deaths during the cold winter months. During Code Blue conditions DHS doubles its outreach efforts. Community members that identify someone on the street they believe needs assistance should call 311 and ask for the Mobile Outreach Response Team; in any emergency community members should call 911. The Department of Homeless Services will send an outreach team to the location to assess the individual's condition and take appropriate action.

Outreach workers are on the streets 24 hours a day, seven days a week and are trained to:

- Identify and regularly monitor individuals who may be at risk during cold weather.
- Engage at-risk individuals and persuade them to voluntarily come indoors.

During a Code Blue Cold Weather Emergency, housing options for the homeless include the following:

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.

For more information about cold weather safety and how you can prepare for emergencies call 311 or visit www.nyc.gov/oem.

Staying in Touch with OEM

The Office of Emergency Management communicates directly with the public through a variety of tools, including Notify NYC. This is just one way the City of New York communicates urgent information to city residents. In addition to sending e-mails, text messages, and phone calls, the emergency notification office has the ability to activate NYC's Emergency Alert System (EAS), which sends information immediately via television and radio. Residents can also visit Facebook, Twitter, and the agency's website, nyc.gov/oem for more information. The public can sign up for Notify NYC by calling 311 or going to www.NYC.gov/notifynyc.

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