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## **NYC OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMISSIONER JOSEPH F. BRUNO'S STATEMENT ON DOHMH HEAT WAVE REPORT**

Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno today announced that OEM will begin to explore the use of the coastal storm advanced warning system (AWS) to alert vulnerable New Yorkers about impending heat waves. The AWS links government agencies and not-for-profit entities with a pre-existing client base in the elderly and disabled community and gives them the ability to warn these populations 24 to 48 hours in advance of an impending emergency. OEM will test the use of the AWS in the 2007 heat season. In addition, OEM will increase pre-season community outreach and revise current "Beat the Heat" messaging for populations most at-risk for heat-related deaths, such as seniors and individuals with pre-existing medical conditions. Today's announcement was made in conjunction with findings from the City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) which showed that risk factors for heat-related deaths included old age and pre-existing medical conditions.

"As a result of the DOHMH Heat Wave Report, OEM along with partner agencies will explore the use of the coastal storm advanced warning system to alert the most vulnerable New Yorkers about impending heat waves," said Commissioner Bruno. "Information is a powerful tool and ensuring that our most vulnerable communities have the most advanced warning of an impending heat emergency is critical. In addition, we will increase targeted pre-season messaging to vulnerable populations through OEM's 'Beat the Heat' program."

The Citywide Heat Contingency Plan utilizes City agencies, as well as not for profit and private sector partners, to provide relief from extreme heat for those most at-risk and ensures the continued delivery of essential services. The plan provides for the opening of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and cooling centers, as well as enhanced monitoring of heat related public health indicators. Each season, OEM conducts an intense public information campaign, as well as targeted outreach, to inform New Yorkers about the dangers posed by excessive heat. Additionally, the plan works with large energy consumers to conserve power during peak usage periods and reduce strain on the overall network.

OEM's revised "Ready New York: Beat the Heat" tips include the following:

- Preparations should include maintaining a well-functioning air conditioner.
- When the heat index is predicted to be dangerously high, New York City opens cooling centers in air-conditioned public facilities to offer people relief. During a heat wave, individuals and families should identify a nearby cooling center and

make plans to relocate those at high risk for heat stroke and their families in the event that home air-conditioning is not available.

- Clinicians and community organizations can educate at-risk persons and their families about their risks and ways to prevent and identify symptoms of heat stroke and heat-related deaths.
- If you have family members, friends or neighbors who are more vulnerable to heat-related illness due to age or chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular or respiratory disease, check on them frequently and help them stay cool.
- Seniors and people with special needs who are able should contact family, friends or neighbors at least twice a day by phone or in person.
- During period of extreme heat, use an air conditioner if you have one. Set the thermostat no lower than 78 degrees.

To get a copy of OEM's **Ready New York: Beat the Heat** guide, in multiple languages, and for information about heat-related hazards and the Ready New York campaign, visit **NYC.gov/oem** or call **311**.

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