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NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE OFFER TIPS FOR NEW YORKERS TO BEAT THE HEAT

Latest [‘Prep Talk’](#) Podcast Episode Highlights The Dangers Of Extreme Heat

July 5, 2023 — With warmer days signaling the beginning of the summer months, the New York City Emergency Management Department and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene encourage New Yorkers to beat the heat by knowing the hazards they may face during periods of extreme heat, preparing a plan, learning who is most at risk, and how to stay informed.

The City is prioritizing neighborhoods facing the greatest health risks from heat — as outlined in the [NYC Heat Vulnerability Index \(HVI\)](#) — by updating public cooling elements and refining existing programs to serve more residents during extreme heat events. Extreme heat can be deadly, resulting in over 100 deaths in NYC on average each year. People without access to air conditioning and who have chronic health conditions including heart, kidney and lung disease, mental health conditions, substance or alcohol abuse, and are older adults are more likely to experience adverse effects from extreme heat. As people get older, their ability to maintain a safe body temperature declines — resulting in an increased risk for heat-related illness. New York City urges residents to take steps to protect themselves and help others who may be at increased risk from the heat.

Visit the [NYC Heat Vulnerability Index \(HVI\)](#) to understand how health risks during and immediately after extreme heat events compare across NYC neighborhoods, and how the HVI helps the City identify and direct resources to neighborhoods at higher risk during extreme heat.

NYC Emergency Management activates the Cooling Center Finder when the National Weather Service issues a heat advisory, with a forecasted heat index of 95°F or higher for two or more days or 100°F for any period. When the Cooling Center Finder is active, you can find your nearest cooling center by calling 311 or visiting [NYC.gov/beattheheat](#). To prevent the spread of COVID-19, individuals are reminded to stay at home if they are feeling sick or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.

“New York City and many parts of the country have seen increases in long periods of extreme heat due to climate change that can significantly impact the environment, our infrastructure, and our health. As New Yorkers prepare to spend more time outdoors in the summer months, it is important to be aware of the health risks due to extreme heat and make a plan for your family, friends, neighbors, and pets,” **said New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol**. “New York City Emergency Management and its partners will make cooling centers available again this summer to provide relief from the heat. We encourage New Yorkers to take advantage of all the free resources available from the city to beat the heat and enjoy the summer.”

“Climate change is already making our summers hotter and more deadly,” **said Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan.** “Heat-related deaths are preventable. We can protect New Yorkers by making sure all who need it have access to air conditioning, which provides the best protection for those at risk.”

New Yorkers who do not have an air conditioner can call 311 or check [online](#) to find out whether they qualify for a free air conditioner/fan through the New York State Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP). To qualify for the cooling assistance program, households must meet certain income requirements, receive public benefits (such as CA, SNAP or Code A SSI), have received a HEAP benefit during the current HEAP year, or have a household member with a medical condition that is exacerbated by the heat.

As of 2020, New York State extended eligibility to include people living in public housing or who receive housing benefits or subsidies, and who also meet certain health qualifications. The program opened May 1, 2023, and applications will be accepted through August 31, 2023, or until funds are exhausted.

To discuss the dangers of extreme heat during the summer months, the latest episode of ‘Prep Talk’ features Cari Olson, assistant commissioner of the Bureau of Environmental Surveillance and Policy with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Ms. Olson shared what precautions New Yorkers should take to beat the heat, and how the city responds to heat emergencies.

“My team is responsible for building a foundation of environmental health data and research, that is then used to improve the health of all New Yorkers,” **said Cari Olson, assistant commissioner of the Bureau of Environmental Surveillance and Policy with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.** “For example, we track the health impacts of heat and who is most vulnerable. The triggers for a heat emergency issued by the National Weather Service and Emergency Management are based on data we compiled. As we began collecting data we observed that, once the heat index hits 95 or above, and that is a combination of heat and humidity, there was an exponential increase in deaths from heat in our vulnerable communities.”

NYC PARKS’ COOL IT! NYC MAP

To help New Yorkers stay cool, NYC Parks has highlighted cooling elements citywide with its Cool It! NYC map. By using the map, visitors will be able to find the locations of the closest outdoor pools, spray showers and water fountains in their neighborhood, and with the Leafiest Blocks and Park Tree Canopy categories, easily find NYC Parks’ recommendations for blocks and areas with the most shade to help stay cool this summer. During extreme heat events, the Cool It! NYC map will be updated as necessary.

NYC Parks also offers free swimming opportunities for New Yorkers at its 53 outdoor pools and eight public beaches across the city. New Yorkers can be notified about the status of their local beaches and pools with “Know Before You Go,” a free service available in 13 languages through

the Notify NYC system. To sign up for the new notifications, visit NYC.Gov/notifynyc. Only swim in designated lifeguarded sections, during operating hours.

CHECK ON THOSE MOST AT-RISK DURING EXTREME HEAT

- Encourage family, friends, and neighbors who are older or who have heart, kidney or lung disease or other health conditions, serious mental illness, or struggle with substance abuse to use air conditioning. Check on them during heat waves or extreme heat and help them get to an air-conditioned place if they cannot stay cool at home. During extreme heat, NYC opens cooling centers throughout the five boroughs where New Yorkers can go to cool off.
- If they do not have air conditioners, encourage family, friends, and neighbors at risk for heat-related illness to find out whether they qualify for a free air conditioner through the New York State Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) by calling the Department of Social Services/Human Resources Administration at 1-800-692-0557 or 311.

CODE RED

During extreme heat, the Department of Social Services (DSS) issues a Code Red Alert. During Code Reds, shelter is available to anyone experiencing homelessness, where those experiencing heat-related discomfort can access designated cooling areas. DSS staff and the agency's not-for-profit contracted outreach teams who engage with individuals experiencing homelessness 24/7/365 redouble their efforts during extreme heat, with a focus on connecting vulnerable unsheltered New Yorkers to services and shelter.

ADDITIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY TIPS FOR PROTECTION AGAINST THE HEAT

- Go to an air-conditioned location, even if for a few hours.
- Stay out of the sun and avoid extreme temperature changes.
- Avoid strenuous activity, especially during the sun's peak hours: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m.
- Drink water, rest, and locate shade if you are working outdoors or if your work is strenuous. Drink water every 15 minutes even if you are not thirsty, rest in the shade, and watch out for others on your team. Your employer is required to provide water, rest, and shade when work is being done during extreme heat.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing when inside without air conditioning or outside.
- Drink fluids, particularly water, even if you do not feel thirsty. Your body needs water to keep cool. Those on fluid-restricted diets or taking diuretics should first speak with their doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider. Avoid beverages containing alcohol or caffeine.

- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Cool down with a cool bath or shower.
- Participate in activities that will keep you cool, such as going to the movies, walking in an air-conditioned mall, or swimming at a pool or beach.
- Swimming in restricted areas or when a lifeguard is not on duty, where you see red flags, is strictly prohibited and very dangerous.
- When at the beach, pool, or park this summer, wear sunscreen, drink plenty of fluids, and wear light and loose-fitting clothing to stay cool. If you are in the water or on the beach and there is thunder or lightning, follow directions of lifeguards and beach staff and seek shelter in a building or vehicle.
- Rip currents are powerful channels of water flowing quickly away from shore, which occur most often at low spots or breaks in the sandbar and in the vicinity of structures such as groins, jetties and piers. All beachgoers should only swim in areas monitored by lifeguards, closely heed the instructions of lifeguards, and pay attention to any flags and posted signs.
- If you become caught in a rip current, don't panic. Try to remain calm and begin to swim parallel to shore. Once away from the force of the rip current, you can swim back to the beach. Do not attempt to swim directly against a rip current - even a strong swimmer can become exhausted quickly.
- Air conditioners in buildings more than six stories must be installed with brackets so they are secured and do not fall on someone below.
- Never leave your children or pets in the vehicle alone, even for a few minutes.

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS OF HEAT ILLNESS

Call 911 immediately if you or someone you know has:

- Hot dry skin
- Trouble breathing
- Rapid heartbeat
- Confusion, disorientation, or dizziness
- Nausea and vomiting

If you or someone you know feels weak or faint, go to a cool place and drink water. If there is no improvement, call a doctor or 911.

KEEPING YOUR PETS SAFE

- **Avoid dehydration:** Pets can dehydrate quickly, so give them plenty of fresh, clean water.
- **Walk your dog in the morning and evening:** When the temperature is very high, do not let your dog linger on hot asphalt. Your pet's body can heat up quickly, and sensitive paw pads can burn.

- **Know when your pet is in danger:** Symptoms of overheating in pets include excessive panting or difficulty breathing, increased heart and respiratory rate, drooling, mild weakness, unresponsiveness, or even collapse.

IMPROPER FIRE HYDRANT USE

The improper opening of fire hydrants wastes 1,000 gallons of water per minute, causes flooding on city streets, and lowers water pressure to dangerous levels, which hamper the ability of the Fire Department to fight fire safely and quickly.

Use “spray caps” to reduce hydrant output to a safe 25 gallons per minute while still providing relief from the heat. To obtain a spray cap, an adult 18 years or older with proper identification can go to his or her local firehouse and request one.

ENERGY-SAVING TIPS

During periods of intense electrical usage, such as on hot, humid days, it is important to conserve energy as much as possible to avoid brownouts and other electrical disruptions. While lowering your power usage may seem inconvenient, your cooperation will help ensure that utility providers are able to provide uninterrupted electrical service to you and your neighbors, particularly those who use electric powered medical equipment or are at risk of heat-related illness and death:

- Set your air conditioner to 78°F or “low.”
- Run appliances such as ovens, washing machines, dryers, and dishwashers in the early morning or late at night when it is cooler outside to reduce heat and moisture in your home.
- Close doors to keep cool air in and hot air out when the air conditioner is running.
- Keep shades, blinds, and curtains closed. About 40 percent of unwanted heat comes through windows.
- Turn off air conditioners, lights, and other appliances when not at home, and use a timer or smart technology to turn on your air conditioner about a half-hour before arriving home. Keep air conditioner filters clean.
- If you run a business, keep your door closed while the air conditioner is running.
- Tell your utility provider if you or someone you know depend on medical equipment that requires electricity.

For more information, visit [NYC.gov/beattheheat](https://nyc.gov/beattheheat). New Yorkers are also encouraged to stay informed by signing up for Notify NYC, the City's free emergency communications program, to receive free emergency alerts and updates in your preferred language and format by visiting [NYC.gov/NotifyNYC](https://nyc.gov/NotifyNYC), calling 311 (212-639-9675 for Video Relay Service, or TTY: 212-504-4115), following @NotifyNYC on Twitter, or getting the free Notify NYC mobile application for your Apple or Android device.

You can listen to the latest episode on [SoundCloud](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), and [Spreaker](#).



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