

For Immediate Release

#21-23

NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE URGE NEW YORKERS TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS AND PREPARE FOR POOR AIR QUALITY

July 17, 2023 — The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, together with NYC Emergency Management, today issued an advisory alerting New Yorkers to prepare for potential deteriorations in air quality. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s projected forecast places the Air Quality Index (AQI) at a level potentially unhealthy for at risk groups, with conditions anticipated to persist for the initial part of the upcoming week. Monday’s AQI of 120 indicates the necessity for targeted populations—specifically children, older adults, and individuals of all ages with respiratory or cardiac conditions—to exercise additional caution. With an AQI within the range of 101-150, these sensitive groups may experience adverse effects due to reduced air quality. When the AQI goes over 150, ALL New Yorkers should begin to take precautions.

While forecasting smoke conditions over the next few days presents a formidable challenge, indications suggest that smoke originating from regions north of the city is likely to impact air quality across the metropolitan area significantly. In light of this, NYC Emergency Management, the agency coordinating the city’s response to such environmental risks, is advocating for New Yorkers to increase their vigilance.

“We have a robust infrastructure in place and stand fully prepared to respond to air quality conditions,” said NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol. “While our teams work tirelessly behind the scenes, we urge all New Yorkers, especially those in high-risk categories, to adopt precautionary measures to safeguard their health. Alongside these actions, let us remember the power of community resilience. Times like these underscore the vital importance of looking out for one another, particularly for those of us who are more vulnerable to health risks.”

“While we may see fluctuation in the air quality in the coming days, we also have tools and guidance to help us navigate conditions,” said Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan. “Pay attention to airnow.gov, listen to your body and take action if you’re feeling the effects of poor air quality.”

NYC Emergency Management is proactively promoting a broad range of preventative measures. These efforts include distributing masks available at local public libraries, FDNY firehouses, and NYPD precincts, and urging New Yorkers to subscribe to the Notify NYC alert system. While Notify NYC remains a crucial conduit for relaying emergency communications about air quality conditions, it is complemented by coordinated efforts with community and faith-based leaders, and the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). Another specialized tool in the agency’s communication strategy is the Advance Warning System, a communication tool for organizations that serve people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. In

addition to these measures, public-private partnerships are being leveraged to enhance communication effectiveness. The Strengthening Communities plan is also being deployed, leveraging an extensive network of 35 community groups that have strategized communication plans for emergencies. Each of these diverse initiatives is a critical component of the agency's comprehensive strategy, purposefully designed to provide residents with the necessary tools and information to safely navigate this week's anticipated conditions.

The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and NYC Emergency Management, in concert with a broad spectrum of critical City agencies are committed to a strong interagency collaboration to ensure that all New Yorkers stay safe, informed, and prepared amidst any potential environmental shifts affecting the city's overall health.

Safety Tips

- Full guidance from the NYC Department of Health is available at <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/eode/aqi-guidelines-general.pdf>
- The best way to limit exposure to poor air quality is to reduce time outside and limit strenuous activities. The threshold to take these actions, depends on your individual level of risk.
- Call 911 if you or someone you're caring for has trouble breathing.
- Monitoring air quality conditions and being prepared. Visit the EPA's air quality website www.airnow.gov or download the AirNow mobile app.
- Now is a good time to pick up a mask, in case air quality deteriorates. The city is already making masks available at FDNY firehouses and NYPD precincts and is looking to expand supplies to more vulnerable communities.
- When air quality is poor, wearing a high-quality mask (e.g., N95) can reduce exposure to harmful pollutants. We will continue to communicate with New Yorkers about air quality through the summer. The situation will change regularly but we can be prepared for the months ahead.
- The City will provide alerts if conditions deteriorate further (e.g., AQI above 200), but warnings sent by your body are equally important. New Yorkers should listen to their body. Reactions to poor air quality can include watery eyes, scratchy throat, headaches, or shortness of breath.
- If you feel any of these conditions, go indoors and limit time outside.

New Yorkers are also encouraged to sign up for Notify NYC, the City's free emergency notification system, to stay informed about the latest weather updates and other emergencies. To learn more about the Notify NYC program or to sign up, visit NYC.gov/NotifyNYC, call 311, or download the free app for your Android or Apple device. You can also follow @NotifyNYC on Twitter.



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

NYC.gov/emergencymanagement

press@oem.nyc.gov

STAY CONNECTED: Twitter: @NotifyNYC (emergency notifications)

@nycemergency (emergency preparedness info)

Facebook: /NYCemergencymanagement