

NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFERS COLD WEATHER SAFETY TIPS

The homeless and vulnerable individuals living in homes without heat are at increased risk for cold-related health problems

In advance of the winter weather season, New York City Emergency Management reminds New Yorkers to protect themselves and help others who may be at risk during cold weather events. People most at risk for cold-related illness include:

- Homeless individuals not in shelters
- People who drink heavily or use drugs and become incapacitated outdoors
- People in homes without heat AND
 - Are 65 years or older
 - Use drugs or drink heavily
 - Have chronic medical conditions such as heart or respiratory disease
 - Have serious mental illness or developmental disabilities
 - Are socially isolated, have limited mobility, or are unable to leave the house

New Yorkers should remember to be prepared:

- Make sure your [household disaster plan](#) is ready and all members of your household are familiar with how to contact one another in an emergency.
- Winterize your [Go Bag](#) by adding a blanket, warm socks and gloves.
- Your [emergency supply kit](#) should be fully-stocked to allow you to sustain yourself for up to three days without power, or in the event you are unable to travel far from home. You may wish to include additional items such as extra blankets, additional warm clothing, and a battery-operated NOAA Weather Radio to monitor weather conditions during a storm.
- Install and check batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Make sure you have sufficient heating fuel; you may have difficulty obtaining fuel in the immediate aftermath of a bad storm.
- Service snow removal equipment, and have rock salt on hand to melt ice on walkways. Kitty litter can be used to generate temporary traction.
- Sign up for Notify NYC at www.NYC.gov/notifynyc or call 311 to receive emails, text messages or phone calls with emergency information.

Know what to do if you lose heat or hot water at home

Between October 1 and May 31 landlords must maintain an indoor temperature of at least 68° between 6 AM and 10 PM when the outdoor temperature falls below 55°. Between 10 PM and 6 AM, an indoor temperature must be at least 55° when the outside temperature falls below 40°. Hot water is required to be maintained at 120 degrees.

If you do not have heat or hot water in your home:

- Report the problem to the building owner, manager, or superintendent immediately; call 311 if the problem is not fixed. Call 311 if you are a homeowner and are having difficulty paying for heat or repairing heating equipment. The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) has opened application for monetary aid starting on November 16. HEAP is funded by the federal government and is overseen by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. Households may also be eligible for an emergency benefit if they are in danger of running out of heating fuel or having their utility service shut off. Applications for emergency benefits will be accepted beginning Monday, January 4, 2016. Households facing an energy emergency should call their local department of social services for assistance. [For more information click here](#)
- Stay with family or friends until heating is restored, if possible
- Insulate your home as much as possible such as by hanging blankets over windows and doorways
- Wear hats, scarves, gloves, and layered clothing
- Put a hat on your baby and cover their hands and feet if they are cold to the touch
- Open your faucets to a steady drip so pipes do not freeze
- Heat your home safely - do not use your oven or fuel-burning space heaters to heat your home as these can release carbon monoxide, a deadly gas that you cannot see or smell

Heat your home safely

Improper use of portable heating equipment can lead to fire or dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. During winter, home-heating equipment is the second leading cause of home fires. The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are general and include headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, sleepiness, trouble breathing, and loss of consciousness. Severe poisonings may result in permanent injury or death. Make sure your home has a working smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector on every floor. Test them at least once a month and change the batteries twice a year when clocks are changed (“change your clock, change your battery”). Install CO detectors within 15 feet of each bedroom, so that it can be heard if you are sleeping.

Fire safety tips:

- Use space heaters for a limited time each day; turn it off when you leave the room or go to sleep
- Never leave children alone in the room where a space heater is in use
- Keep combustible materials, including furniture, drapes, and carpeting at least three feet away from heaters; never drape clothes over a space heater to dry them
- Plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet
 - Use equipment that has the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) mark
 - Do not 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
- Use fireplaces only if they are well-maintained and have screens; make sure damper is open for ventilation
- Visit http://www.nyc.gov/html/fdny/html/safety/fire_safety_downloads.shtml for more information on fire safety

Carbon monoxide safety tips:

- 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; contact a professional to inspect if you are not sure or repairs are needed
- Use generators outdoors and away from doors, windows and vents; always follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Do not use a gas stove, or a charcoal or gas grill to heat your home
- Do not use a kerosene or propane space heater which are illegal in New York City
- Keep chimneys clean and clear of debris
- NEVER run your vehicle inside a garage as carbon monoxide levels can increase inside your car or garage
- Visit <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/environmental/carbon-monoxide.shtml> for more information on carbon monoxide safety

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