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## **MAYOR DE BLASIO JOINS OUTREACH EFFORTS IN SUBWAY TO ENCOURAGE HOMELESS NEW YORKERS TO GO TO SHELTER**

*Tells One Homeless Man He "Deserves Better" Than Subway & Streets*

**NEW YORK** —Following a weekend of dangerously low temperatures with life-threatening wind chills, Mayor Bill de Blasio joins outreach efforts in the City's subway system to encourage homeless New Yorkers to move to shelters for warmth and services to help them obtain permanent housing.

Mayor de Blasio deployed over 300 City workers to help homeless individuals and tenants who had complaints about heating and hot water. This number does not include NYPD, FDNY, OEM and other emergency personnel.

"With the dangerously cold weather we're experiencing this weekend, it was crucial for us to be front and center on helping the homeless and making sure heaters worked properly," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "It also was an opportunity to convince homeless individuals to come off the streets and get the help they need to find work and permanent housing."

Speaking with two homeless men at the Second Avenue and Houston Street subway stop, Mayor de Blasio urged them to seek shelter and use the services offered by the City's Department of Homeless Services outreach workers on hand for the conversation.

"You deserve better than sleeping in a subway station," **Mayor de Blasio** said to one man, who agreed to go to shelter with an outreach team.

Around 160 members of the City's homeless outreach teams have been on the streets encouraging homeless individuals to take their offers of shelter and services. NYCHA deployed a staff of over 100 to more than 20 housing developments to address major and minor issues with boilers and water tanks in the past 30 hours. The City's Housing and Preservation Department deployed over 150 staff to ensure private landlords corrected any issues immediately for tenants with heating and hot water problems.

People most likely to be exposed to dangerous cold include those who lack shelter, work

outdoors and/or live in homes with malfunctioning or inadequate heat. Seniors, infants, people with chronic cardiovascular or lung conditions, people using alcohol or drugs, and people with cognitive impairments (like dementia, serious mental illness or developmental disability) are at increased risk.

According to the National Weather Service, dangerously cold temperatures will continue throughout the day. Temperatures will rise into the teens later this afternoon, where they will remain tonight. A storm system is travelling up the east coast and will bring light snowfall into the city late tomorrow morning with one to two inches of accumulation. The snow is expected to change to a wintry mix before transitioning to regular rain late Tuesday. NYC Emergency Management will continue to monitor the weather in consultation with the National Weather Service.

### **Safety Tips**

New Yorkers are encouraged to take the following precautions:

Stay indoors as much as possible.

Do not allow children to play outdoors unsupervised or for long periods of time.

Prolonged exposure to extreme cold weather can be dangerous. If you suspect a person is suffering from frostbite or hypothermia, call 911 to get medical help. While waiting for assistance, help the person by getting them to a warm place if possible, removing any damp clothing and covering them with warm blankets.

When outdoors, wear warm clothing and cover exposed skin. Use multiple layers to maintain warmth.

Wear a hat, hood or scarf, as most heat is lost through the head.

Keep fingertips, earlobes, and noses covered if you go outside.

Keep clothing dry; if a layer becomes wet, remove it.

Shivering is an important first sign that the body is losing heat. Shivering is a signal to return indoors.

Drinking alcohol may make you think you feel warmer, but it actually increases your chances of hypothermia and frostbite.

Cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart. If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's advice about performing hard work in the cold. Remember, your body is already working hard just to stay warm, so don't overdo it.

Workers in construction and utilities, and others who spend a lot of time outdoors are at risk for cold-related disorders. Employers should implement safe work practices, provide appropriate

protective equipment, and train workers on health effects of cold weather, proper prevention techniques, and treatment of cold-related disorders.

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.

### **Agency Actions to Prepare for and Respond to Cold Weather Conditions**

#### **DHS**

DHS outreach teams have warned their own vulnerable clients to move indoors and have made placements all week leading up to the extreme weather (including some involuntarily) because of the risks.

DHS has been in enhanced outreach from 4PM – 8AM every day this weekend and will continue to have 24/7 coverage throughout the cold weather event, including twice as much coverage overnight than usual, with over 160 outreach workers out throughout the weekend.

Last night, 105 people were taken to shelters or hospitals by DHS outreach teams, including 1 involuntarily. Two hundred and eighty-eight individuals walked in to Health + Hospitals facilities to escape the cold.

A Code Blue Weather Emergency notice is issued when the weather drops to 32 degrees or below. No one seeking shelter in New York City will be denied. Anyone who sees a homeless individual or family out in the cold should call 311 immediately and an outreach team will be dispatched to assist them. Code Blue Weather Emergencies includes the following options for the homeless:

**Shelters:** During a Code Blue, homeless adults can access any shelter location for single individuals. Beds are available systemwide 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 people as possible for the duration of the 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.

## **FDNY**

Firefighters have encountered frozen hydrants this weekend and responded to 17 serious fires with no operational issues.

No significant increase in EMS call volume and response times were consistent with normal average.

## **NYPD**

In coordination with the increased homeless outreach units, police officers assisted if someone needed to be taken to the hospital.

## **DOHMH**

There was a moderate increase in cold-related Emergency Department visits compared to an average winter day, which is not unexpected for the time of year. Fewer visits were reported than during the recent winter storm and during extreme cold episodes in prior years.

There was no unusual increase in Emergency Department visits for carbon monoxide exposures.

## **NYCHA**

There is one heat/hot water outage currently, but NYCHA expects to have it corrected soon. Contractors are on standby to respond to emergencies that may arise as a result of the extreme temperatures.

NYCHA is closely monitoring nearly 2,000 boilers, including 21 mobile boiler plants at Sandy-impacted sites. Mobile boilers have been pre-treated and winterized to help prevent against freeze damage and outages.

24-hour watch teams will be monitoring mobile boilers through the weekend.

NYCHA performed inspections of boiler rooms earlier this week to identify any equipment or maintenance issues to be addressed ahead of the cold weather front.

## **HOUSING PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

HPD has added an additional 50 staff from its Office of Enforcement and Neighborhood Services (ENS) in response to the extreme cold forecast this weekend to respond to heat-related complaints. This staffing is in addition to the approximately 100 already on duty.

## **SANITATION**

A fleet of 579 salt spreaders is loaded and ready for deployment should icing conditions occur on streets in any of the five boroughs.

## **BUILDINGS**

Lifted restrictions on crane operations beginning Sunday afternoon as winds have diminished.

## **PARKS**

Monitoring lakes and ponds and ensured that ice rescue equipment is operational.

Surveying park areas for homeless individuals.

## **NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

Convening the City's Winter Weather Steering Committee daily to coordinate City agency preparedness and response actions to the cold weather.

Continues constant communication with the National Weather Service to monitor the extreme cold weather and update City agencies on expected conditions.

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

Building owners are legally required to provide heat and hot water to their tenants. Hot water must be provided 365 days per year at a constant minimum temperature of 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Heat must be provided during the "Heat Season", between October 1st and May 31st under the following conditions:

- Between the hours of 6:00 AM and 10:00 PM, if the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees, the inside temperature is required to be at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Between the hours of 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM, if the outside temperature falls below 40 degrees, the inside temperature is required to be at least 55 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 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 or file a complaint at 311ONLINE for heat and hot water conditions.
- The Department of Housing Preservation and Development 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 may also 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, 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.

### **If You Need Emergency Heating Assistance**

The Human Resources Administration (HRA) administers the federal Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), which can help low-income renters and homeowners with heating bills and other energy expenses. HEAP can help with:

- Regular heating bills from a variety of heat sources (even if heat is included in your rent or you live in subsidized housing).

- Emergency payments to keep you from losing your heat.

- Replacing damaged furnaces, boilers and heating units.

- Eligibility for HEAP is based on your household income, family size and energy costs. If you are homebound and need help with your heating bills, you can call the NYC Heat Line at 212-331-3150 to arrange a home visit. For more information, call 311.

### **Fire and Carbon Monoxide Safety Tips**

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

Electric space heaters are the only kind of space heaters legal in New York City and should turn off automatically when tipped over. They should be kept far from water and combustible and flammable objects.

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.

The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are non-specific and include headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, sleepiness, trouble breathing, and loss of consciousness. Severe poisoning 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.

### **More Information**

For more cold weather safety tips, view NYC Emergency Management's public service video announcement or visit [NYC.gov/EmergencyManagement](https://www.nyc.gov/EmergencyManagement). New Yorkers are also encouraged to sign up for Notify NYC, the City's free emergency notification system. Through Notify NYC, New Yorkers can receive phone calls, text messages, and/or emails alerts about weather conditions and other emergencies. To sign up for Notify NYC, call 311, visit [NYC.gov/notifynyc](https://www.nyc.gov/notifynyc), or follow @NotifyNYC on Twitter.

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