



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION SUMMER HEAT PLAN 2020

INTRODUCTION:

Maintaining the safety and well-being of all individuals in custody and all staff who work in New York City Department of Correction (Department) facilities is a critical responsibility of the Department. The Department takes the necessary steps throughout the year to prepare protocols that are in effect for extended periods of summer heat and extreme heat days which exceed 85 degrees. This plan summarizes a number of those preparations and details certain policies and practices that have proven effective for the safety of all people in DOC facilities during the summer months.

HEAT SENSITIVE HOUSING AND FACILITY OPERATIONS:

Several current Department facilities are over sixty years old, with one facility constructed as early as 1935. While the Department looks forward to modern borough facilities with state-of-the-art centralized cooling systems, the reality of the Department's current infrastructure is that many operational facilities were not built with centralized cooling and climate control systems or the infrastructure to install such systems. The Department currently operates two facilities with centralized cooling systems, and the Department has and continues to make every effort to install air conditioning systems where feasible and to house as many individuals as possible, with a focus on those who are heat sensitive as clinically determined by CHS, in air-conditioned housing (also referred to as "heat sensitive housing"). As of May 31, 2020, the majority of people in Department custody (58%) are housed in air-conditioned housing units.

In conjunction with NYC Health and Hospitals Correctional Health Services (CHS), the Department created a process for individuals who need to be placed in air-conditioned units due to a medical need to be aptly identified as heat sensitive by medical staff and housed appropriately by the Department. The Department's heat sensitivity report, which is generated each evening, includes a list of newly designated heat sensitive individuals in custody, a list of heat sensitive individuals who require rehousing in heat sensitive housing, and newly designated heat sensitive forms. All Department facilities receive a copy of this report and in response, are expected to distribute necessary forms, and transfer individuals to appropriate housing on a daily basis. The Department's Health Affairs Division and New Admission Movement Control Unit (NAMCU) are expected to review the report daily and conduct outreach to custody management and facility staff for appropriate action to be taken regarding any individual who requires transfer to appropriate heat sensitive housing.

There are occasions when an individual who has been identified as heat sensitive cannot be placed in any air-conditioned housing areas due to serious security or safety concerns. Facilities forward requests and relevant supporting documentation for heat sensitive overrides to the Department's Health Affairs



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Division. Health Affairs reviews the information, determines a disposition, and formally communicates it to the respective facility, Facility Operations, and Custody Management through a completed Override Request Form.

As of June 2, 2020, there are 804 heat-sensitive individuals in the Department's custody. Nearly 600 heat sensitive individuals (approx. 73%) are housed in heat-sensitive (air-conditioned) housing. Of the remaining individuals, 162 individuals (approx. 20%) refused to be transferred from their current housing area to heat sensitive housing and signed a refusal form in the presence of a clinician, 43 individuals (approx. 5%) received an approved housing override, and the few remaining individuals (approx. 1%) are pending transfer to heat sensitive housing. While certain heat sensitive individuals cannot be housed in heat sensitive housing due to their refusal to be transferred or their involvement in violent or disruptive behavior, the Department provides alternative means to address heat sensitivity. In addition, the Department has focused efforts on improving facilities, operations, and processes to provide air-conditioned housing to as many people in custody as possible, whether they are medically designated as heat-sensitive or not. For example, over the past year, the Department has installed air-conditioning to housing units, resulting in an additional 145 beds with air-conditioning that will be available this summer. The Department has made every effort to find suitable air-conditioned housing for all heat sensitive individuals and is committed to continuing those efforts.

Staff in every housing area are responsible for monitoring individuals for signs of heat-related illnesses, not just those with heat sensitivity or security overrides. Teletypes are issued to staff and information is posted for individuals in custody identifying and explaining symptoms of heat-illness. Additionally, CHS is available 24/7 to care for patients who are experiencing heat-related symptoms or who wish to clarify their heat sensitive status. An individual may become newly designated as heat sensitive following a clinical encounter upon the determination of medical staff. When this occurs, medical staff complete the necessary documentation and notify the individual, that if applicable, their designation may necessitate a housing transfer. However, individuals may refuse the medically recommended transfer; this refusal must be documented by the clinical staff. The Department's Health Affairs staff is in regular communication with clinic area captains to review this process so that individuals who wish to be seen by medical staff for a purpose related to heat sensitivity are able to do so in a timely manner.

To assess the compliance of all facilities with the requirements of these protocols, Health Affairs conducts monthly reviews of randomly selected heat sensitive individuals. This review includes reviewing all required documentation of the individual's medical needs, housing transfers, and continual monitoring. The findings of the monthly reviews are shared with each command to address areas for improvement. Health Affairs has reviewed this protocol with CHS and has regular discussions and planning meetings concerning potential ways to improve or enhance the current process outlined herein.



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TEMPERATURE MONITORING AND HIGH-HEAT PROTOCOLS:

The Department continually monitors temperatures inside Department facilities so appropriate attention is given to staff and people in custody. On June 3rd, 2020, the Department issued a teletype instructing all staff of temperature monitoring procedures for the summer season temperature monitoring program. During the summer season, temperature reports are expected to be submitted daily to monitor the heat levels in Department facilities. The Department monitors air-conditioned housing area temperatures, and additionally records temperatures in select non-air-conditioned housing areas in multiple locations of both dorm and cell housing units and dayrooms. Department procedure provides that staff log temperature readings in the report and include the number of heat-sensitive individuals in any particular housing unit. This report is then submitted to tour commanders and the Department's Environmental Health Unit for review. If any temperature reaches or exceeds 80 degrees, appropriate action is taken by housing area staff to mitigate heat effects, such as encouraging cool showers and additional rest periods. If the ambient temperature reaches 80 degrees in an air-conditioned area, maintenance is immediately contacted to address the issue. If the ambient temperature exceeds 85 degrees in any non air-conditioned unit, staff are advised to provide additional attention to monitoring the health and safety of individuals in such units, with special consideration for any heat-sensitive individuals who may reside there.

In addition to these monitoring measures, the Department enacts several policies so that individuals in custody are safe and as comfortable as possible during the hot summer months. These policies include, but are not limited to, providing access to showers between 5am and 8:45pm during lockout periods and the regular availability of cambros of ice between 12pm and 4pm. Water temperatures in individual showers in Department facilities are not adjustable. However, the Department's policy is to set at least one shower in every housing area without air conditioning to provide cool water during the summer months. The Department also has policies for high heat days which include delivering ice to individuals in punitive segregation units at least every two hours between 12pm and 8pm and providing additional ice upon request. All staff are instructed to encourage individuals in custody to drink plenty of fluids and take cool showers as needed. Staff are also instructed to monitor individuals for any symptoms of overheating such as weakness, shortness of breath, headaches, lethargy, or confusion. As mentioned, the Department issues posters to advise both staff and incarcerated individuals on the precautions for heat-related illness and identification of symptoms. Staff are instructed to seek immediate medical attention for any individual in custody who appears to be suffering from heat-related illness and to notify CHS of any medical emergency, heat-related or otherwise, for emergency response if necessary.

Department staff and leadership who regularly tour facilities and housing areas under regular circumstances are additionally expected to increase their presence in the facilities on high heat days and during heat emergencies. The July 2019 heat emergency serves as an example of such efforts, when the Commissioner, the Chief of the Department, the Chief of Staff, Wardens, Tour Commanders, and Area Supervisors toured facilities regularly throughout the period of high heat to discuss efforts and conditions with staff and people in custody in order to ensure compliance with the Department's heat plan and high heat protocols.



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HEAT-RELATED SUPPLY DISTRIBUTION AND MAINTENANCE:

Maintaining the health of all individuals in custody and all staff who work in our facilities is a critical responsibility of the Department. Unfortunately, many current Department facilities lack air conditioning infrastructure. While the Department has worked determinedly over the past year to install additional air conditioning in housing areas, the Department is unable to provide all individuals in custody housing in air-conditioned housing units. Despite this challenge, the Department works so that that individuals in non-air-conditioned units are as comfortable as possible in the wake of high temperatures. This includes providing fans, ice deliveries, and distributing short-sleeved summer clothing.

As of May 29, 2020, the Department had an additional 170 pedestal fans in stock and was identifying additional fans for distribution to the facilities, prioritizing placement in non-air-conditioned units. An additional 13 fans were installed in May of 2020 to supplement the 200 fans that were installed between June and August of last year and remain in the facilities. Additional fans will be installed wherever necessary in the coming weeks.

Currently, all non-air-conditioned housing units have at least two industrial pedestal fans designed to create cooling airflow in large spaces, and many have three or four. Furthermore, all common areas such as kitchens, programming areas, law libraries, and others that are located in facilities without air conditioning have between 2 to 6 fans installed. The Department will continue to monitor the availability and operability of fans across facilities and housing areas without air-conditioning through regular audits and will take appropriate steps to further increase the availability and use of fans where necessary.

As the summer months approach, the Department has taken a proactive approach in ordering summer lightweight short-sleeved clothing. As of May 29, 2020, the Department has 12,636 tan short sleeve shirts, 26,573 tan shorts, 2,470 green short sleeve shirts, and 3,422 green shorts in its inventory. The Department received an additional order of 25,000 tan short sleeve shirts, 7,000 tan shorts 5,000 green short sleeve shirts, and 2,300 green shorts at the end of June. The Department is confident there is more than enough short-sleeve clothing in stock to fulfill appropriate clothing needs throughout the summer.

The distribution of clothing will take place according to the existing practice with facilities submitting a survey by the second week each month with the requested clothing needs. Facilities began receiving short sleeve clothing with their monthly clothing orders the week of May 22nd and the next clothing order with summer clothing available will be distributed the week of June 15th. Facilities will begin distributing short sleeve clothing to the population beginning the week of June 8th. All individuals in custody who would like short sleeve clothing will be provided short sleeve clothing.



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INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS AND HOUSING PLAN:

The Department remains committed to prioritizing heat sensitive housing placements for all individuals who require it. As of June 1, 2020, heat-sensitive individuals are properly housed, awaiting imminent transfer to appropriate housing, or retain the appropriate security override or refusal documentation regarding their housing placement. The heat sensitivity housing report is reviewed regularly by multiple Department divisions to monitor routine compliance. Most impressively, the Department has been able to achieve this compliance while simultaneously prioritizing housing determinations in conjunction with CHS as they relate to the robust COVID-19 response underway in Department facilities.

The Department continues to monitor COVID-19 housing priorities and does not intend to make any changes to its current housing strategies that have been effective at mitigating the spread of the virus. Identifying, monitoring and separating individuals who may be potential virus carriers will continue. Individuals with heat sensitivities will be moved into open units in facilities with air conditioning that are currently under capacity in a manner that is safe and in line with the Department and CHS' COVID-19 housing strategy. VCBC's general population dorms, for example, are running at approximately 46% occupancy, with space for heat-sensitive individuals as the Department continues to stabilize COVID-19 housing.

The Facility Maintenance and Repair Division (FMRD) has been proactive during the winter and spring so the Department is well-equipped to handle the high temperatures of the summer months. The Department has evaluated the readiness of each individual facility and is in the process of remedying any identified issues related to air-conditioned housing. Several Department facilities received infrastructure updates regarding their heat preparedness since last summer, which are detailed below.

- ▶ **VCBC and MDC:** The Department has made multiple repairs to VCBC and MDC over the past several months in anticipation of higher temperatures. The air conditioning systems at both facilities have been running continuously since early May. A mobile chiller has also been relocated from Rikers Island to MDC as back up to the existing building chiller for additional support if necessary. Engineering Staff has also been relocated to both MDC and VCBC to provide full coverage at these two facilities during the summer months.
- ▶ **WF:** FMRD has tested the equipment and performed required maintenance in preparation for the summer.
- ▶ **AMKC:** FMRD has installed new air conditioning equipment in four housing units.
- ▶ **RNDC:** Staff has equipped an additional building with air conditioning that will be available for the upcoming summer months. These efforts mean that two additional housing units at the facility will be air-conditioned this summer.
- ▶ **GRVC:** Repairs are in process to add over thirty beds in air-conditioned housing areas.



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COMMUNICATIONS PLAN:

To ensure that those in custody are aware of the preventative measures of heat-related illness and the symptoms that would require medical attention, the Department is distributing posters to be posted throughout its facilities, and using internal communication channels such as DOC TV, the intranet, email, and the Department's website for staff to acquire critical information. Area supervisors will additionally provide verbal information in housing areas and answer questions from people in custody regarding the Department's heat plan, which has proven to be an effective communications strategy during the Department's COVID-19 response.

Aside from internal communications, the Department understands the need to share information with the public about its policies and procedures as they relate to its response to high temperatures. The Department knows the summer months come with a great deal of anxiety and concern over the safety and well-being of those in custody. In preparation, this heat action plan has been posted to the Department's website. The Department is additionally creating a DOC Heat Protocol Q/A document to provide information, and information outlining DOC's hot weather protocols will be shared via social media along with any related statements from Department leadership. The Department will update all materials as necessary and will continue to provide real-time information as any related incidents arise and are addressed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

The Department thanks its staff, who work tirelessly all year, but particularly during the summer months when they work in full uniform in non-air-conditioned facilities to keep those in the Department's care safe and well; CHS, who provides premier clinical care to people in Department custody; the community and family members of those in Department custody, who advocate on their behalf and raise concerns to the Department's attention; and the Department's oversight agencies who additionally work to ensure accountability.

The Department asks for the support from all of its stakeholders in advance of the summer months and looks forward to engaging in productive discussions regarding the DOC Summer 2020 Heat Plan and all preparations in place to ensure the safety and well-being of every person who works or resides in the Department's facilities.