



# OFFICE OF POLICY, PROCEDURES AND TRAINING

**DHS-PB-2024-010**  
(Replaces DHS-PB-2023-009)

<b>Policy Subject:</b>  Code Red	<b>Applicable To:</b>  All Directly operated or Contracted Street Homeless Solutions, Single Adult, Adult Family, and Families with Children Facilities/Programs Serving Individuals who are Homeless, DSS and DHS Staff, and Collaborating Agencies	<b>Effective Date:</b>  June 12, 2024
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<b>Administered By:</b>  Adult Services, Family Services, Street Homeless Solutions, and Emergency Management	<b>Approved By:</b>  Joslyn Carter, Administrator Department of Homeless Services
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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that people experiencing homelessness are appropriately served during extremely hot weather. It provides instruction concerning DHS’ Street Homeless Solutions (SHS) and emergency shelter operations and outlines support provided by DSS’ Emergency Management (EM).

## POLICY

### Declaration of Code Red

NYC Emergency Management (NYCEM) activates the Heat Emergency Plan during periods of extreme heat and humidity, as defined by the National Weather Service (NWS). This policy is consistent with NYCEM’s Heat Plan activation triggers which include the following:

**Code Red Level 1:** declared when NYCEM activates the Heat Emergency Plan. This is done when a Heat Advisory is issued by the National Weather Service. The triggers for activation are met when:

- the forecasted heat index reaches 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher for one day or more
- or heat indices are forecasted to reach 95 degrees Fahrenheit or higher at any point for two consecutive days or more.

**Important Note:** Code Red Level 1 is in effect from 12:00 PM (noon) to 8:00 PM on the day for which it is to be implemented. Code Red will be issued no later than 4:00 pm the day prior to Code Red activation.

**Code Red Level 2:** declared when NYCEM activates the Heat Emergency Plan and issues an Excessive Heat Watch or Warning. This is done when an Excessive Heat Watch or an Excessive Heat Warning is issued by the National Weather Service. The triggers for activation are met when:

- the forecasted heat index reaches 105 degrees or more Fahrenheit for any duration or
- heat indices are forecasted to reach 95 degrees Fahrenheit for four days or more.

**Important Note:** Code Red Level 2 outreach is *continually* in effect, day and night, until DSS EM issues a notification ending the Excessive Heat event and Code Red Level 2.

**Note:** In the event of simultaneous extreme heat and air quality events, the heat mitigation and response actions in this procedure take precedence.

## BACKGROUND

Minimum annual review of this policy and any changes will be completed in collaboration among DHS, DSS Emergency Management, and as needed with additional stakeholders.

SHS will meet with Outreach (OR) teams to review and plan for the season in the spring. OR teams will maintain and submit lists of clients who are vulnerable to SHS as well as report during alerts how many current clients are vulnerable for the Code duration as well as identify locations or subway stations that may be particularly hot and require checking during activation.

## AGENCY REQUIREMENTS

### Activation & Coordination of Code Red

DSS/DHS' Code Red policy is activated by DSS EM when the above criteria are met. DSS/DHS will take the following steps for activating and coordinating Code Red:

Code Red Alerts are to be issued by the DSS EM to the Code Alert Distribution List as soon as it is issued, but not later than 4 PM on the day prior to the onset of Code Red activation. All efforts will be made to do this by 4 PM but if there's a change in weather, DSS EM will issue it. For last-minute forecast changes, DSS EM will disseminate the notification as soon as possible.

- DSS Emergency Management will input the activation into CARES.
- Adult Services, SHS, and SHS Contracted Providers will coordinate the following subtasks:
  1. Ensure that OR staffing levels are sufficient and deploy them to the field (**Note:** This task does not apply to Adult Services).
  2. Identify and regularly monitor clients who may be at risk for heat-related injuries during hot weather.
  3. Assist at-risk clients to voluntarily come indoors to facilities/locations that are adequately cooled and well-ventilated
  4. Arrange for voluntary (or involuntary, as indicated) transport of individuals suffering from heat-related illness or injury to a hospital emergency department.
  5. Assist and engage at-risk clients in accessing citywide heat-related interventions, such as cooling centers, open hydrants, public pools, cool public spaces, etc.
  6. Encourage clients to hydrate themselves with plain water.
- All outreach (OR) teams will submit their reports to the Street Homeless Solutions (SHS) division by 8:00 AM of the day following a Code Red event. Reporting for Code Red Level 2 runs from the start time until 7 AM the following day. The second reporting period runs from 7 AM the previous day until 7 AM the second day. This pattern continues until the final day of the Code Red Level 2 when the reporting period runs from 7 AM the previous day until the end of the Code Red Level 2. DSS EM will share data with NYCEM via e-mail.
- DSS EM will share Outreach reporting data with NYCEM via e-mail. It is important to note that:
  1. Data shared is the same data DSS EM receives from Outreach after Code Red is completed.
  2. The On-Call DSS EM coordinator will send data to NYCEM.
  3. While data is sent internally to DSS EM, the expectation is that the data will be sent by DSS EM to NYCEM upon a NYCEM Activation and when there are data inquiries.

### **Code Red Operations – Outreach**

For outreach, safe havens, and shelters, DSS Central and DSS/DHS will take the following steps for activating and coordinating Code Red:

**Code Red Level 1:** SHS teams will attempt to contact clients on the priority list at least once during the Code Red period. They are also responsible for the following:

- SHS subway teams will check on their priority stations at least once during the Code Red period and where the Code Red period spans multiple days SHS subways teams will check their priority stations at least once per day.
- When necessary, teams will call the Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) for assistance when entering secluded or dangerous areas to check on clients who are at risk.
- To reduce the risk of heat-related injury for clients who are not at imminent risk but who refuse to go indoors/access a cool space, OR teams will distribute supplies, such as water and sunscreen. OR will encourage all clients to be transported to a safe, cool place.<sup>1</sup>

**Code Red Level 2:** SHS teams will attempt to contact clients on the priority lists at least two times per shift during a Code Red Level 2. They will also be expected to continue to monitor clients throughout the duration of the Code Red Level 2. They are also responsible for the following:

- SHS subway teams will check on their priority stations at least two times per shift during a Code Red Level 2. They will also be expected to continue to monitor these stations throughout the duration of the Code Red Level 2.
- All OR teams are required to submit a 24-hour coverage plan that ensures adequate staff coverage during Heat Emergencies with the most intensive coverage during daytime hours.
- All SHS OR teams will submit the Code Red Report to DSS/DHS Emergency Management, Street Homeless Solutions, Adult Services, and Families with Children, and when needed, other stakeholders by 9:00 AM of the day following a Code Red Level 2.
- SHS OR leadership will be informed by DSS EM of NYCEM resources available during a Heat Emergency, such as cooling centers, and offer these to clients they encounter.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B

**Drop-In Centers and Shelters**

During a Heat Emergency, DHS conducts additional outreach to New Yorkers who are unsheltered encouraging them to visit DHS drop-in centers where a cool space will be open to serve as many clients as possible. People who are homeless and experiencing heat-related discomfort will also be able to access the designated cooling area at any shelter. During a Code Red Emergency, the following applies:

- During Code Red Levels 1 & 2, shelters will not suspend, discontinue, or transfer from shelter any individuals currently in the shelter system. In instances where it is necessary, and consistent with DHS policy, NYPD may still be called in order to protect the safety of clients and staff.
- During Code Red Levels 1 & 2, Single Adult clients can access any Adult shelter, not only the client's "official shelter." The shelter will confirm with Vacancy Control to determine if a vacancy exists and, if so, the client will be given a bed. If no bed is available, the client will be given the option to remain in the current facility without an assigned bed or be transferred to another shelter where an overnight bed exists.
- Vacancy Control and Outreach must ensure there is sufficient space to safely accommodate the client in the designated cooling area(s) prior to making the referral. Shelter staff are responsible for ensuring safe conditions within the designated cooling areas and must report overages to Vacancy Control & the Program Administrator. Clients with or suspected of having a communicable disease (e.g., chicken pox, tuberculosis [TB], etc.) will be treated as per the specific communicable disease protocols.
- Single adult shelters will make available any beds within the system to accommodate all clients brought in by outreach or those who walk in during Code Red Levels 1 & 2. Shelter staff will engage all clients brought to shelter by SHS OR teams during a Code Red the following morning to encourage them to remain indoors using the available cool space and to access various services.
- Shelters will store clients' belongings overnight during a Code Red Level 2.
- Families with children and adult families determined ineligible for shelter can request transportation to a cooling center with available capacity during Code Red Level 1 and will be granted overnight or conditional placement during Code Red Level 2.
- Families with children and adult families determined ineligible for shelter will not be logged out of shelter during Code Red Level 2.

### **Collaboration Among City Agencies & Supporting Community Organizations**

During a Citywide Heat Emergency activation, the following City agencies assist with identifying and reporting on clients experiencing homelessness who are potentially at risk for exposure (and involuntary removals, if appropriate):

- MTA-NYC Transit
- NYC Parks Department-Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP)
- NYC Department of Sanitation (for encampment cleaning)
- NYC Department of Transportation

As needed, the following City agencies and other organizations may be requested to assist with the identification and reporting on homeless clients who are potentially at risk for exposure (and involuntary removals, if appropriate):

- NYC Department of Education-Division of School Facilities (DSF)
- NYC Health + Hospitals (H + H) and private hospitals
- Greater New York Hospitals Association (GNYHA)
- NYC Emergency Management: Public-Private Initiatives (for private sector building and property issues)
- New York Public Library Security & Emergency Management
- Brooklyn Public Library
- Queens Public Library

### **Hospital Emergency Departments**

The DHS Medical Director's Office will release an annual memo to New York City Health + Hospitals (H+H) and the Greater New York Hospital Association to distribute to all NYC hospitals to request their cooperation during Code Red Plan activation.

During Code Red, hospital emergency departments throughout the city will accommodate people experiencing street homelessness who walk in or are brought by SHS OR teams. These individuals will be permitted to remain in emergency department waiting areas (or other spaces designated by the individual facility) for as long as possible and without being registered.

### **ACRONYMS**

- **DSF** - The Department of Education's Division of School Facilities; management of school buildings that should be contacted if there are homeless encamped on school premises
- **GNYHA** - The Greater New York Hospitals Association
- **OR** - Outreach
- **PEP** - Parks Department's Parks Enforcement Patrol peace officers
- **SHS** - Street Homeless Solutions

**Appendix I****Contact Information for DHS Outreach Teams**

Bronx 24-hour number: Director: Juan Rivera	BronxWorks 718- 893-3606 917-902-3882 <a href="mailto:jrivera@bronxworks.org">jrivera@bronxworks.org</a>
Brooklyn/Queens Street to Home 24-hour number: <u>Brooklyn</u> : Niesha Sergeant <u>Queens</u> : Paulique Medina	Breaking Ground 929-218-7360 718-360-8034 <a href="mailto:nsergeant@breakingground.org">nsergeant@breakingground.org</a> 929-218-7305 (ext. 179) <a href="mailto:pmedina@breakingground.org">pmedina@breakingground.org</a>
Manhattan Outreach Consortium 24-hour number: Director: Erica Strang	CUCS 212-222-9806 212-801-3340 <a href="mailto:estrang@cucs.org">estrang@cucs.org</a>
Staten Island 24-hour number: Deputy Director: Florence Lee	Project Hospitality 718-720-0079 (ext. 130) <a href="mailto:FLee@projecthospitality.org">FLee@projecthospitality.org</a>
Subway Outreach 24-hour number: Director: Tim Long	BRC 212-533-5151 <a href="mailto:tlong@brc.org">tlong@brc.org</a>



**Appendix B**

**Assessing Clients during a Heat Emergency**

**I. Preventing Heat Illness**

Hot and humid summer weather can cause serious illness and death. Air conditioning is the best way to keep cool when it's hot outside, but some people don't have an air conditioner or don't turn it on when they need it.

**A. What is Heat Illness?**

1. Heat illness occurs when the body cannot cool down.
  - a. The body normally cools itself by sweating and increasing blood flow to the skin.
  - b. When the body cannot keep cool, the brain and other organs can be damaged, causing illness and even death.
2. Heat illness includes health conditions which occur directly because of the hot weather. This includes illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke.
3. Keeping cool can be hard work for the body. This extra stress on the body can worsen other health conditions such as heart and lung disease.

**B. Heat Cramps/Heat Exhaustion/Heat Stroke**

HEAT RELATED ILLNESS	WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR	WHAT TO DO
Heat Cramps (Deficiency of water and sodium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain, cramps, or spasms in muscles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rest in shady place</li> <li>• Drink plenty of water</li> <li>• Stretch muscles</li> </ul> <p><b>Get medical attention immediately if:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cramps last longer than one hour</li> <li>• You're on a low sodium diet</li> <li>• You have heart problems</li> </ul>





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Commissioner's Office

Molly Wasour Park  
Commissioner

Fabienne Laraque  
Chief Medical Officer

33 Beaver Street, 13th fl  
New York, NY 10004

212 361 7930 tel

June 12, 2024

Dear Hospital Emergency Department Director:

As we enter the summer, the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) is as usual concerned about the risks that unsheltered New Yorkers experiencing homelessness face during the hot weather months in NYC. Many have chronic conditions that put them at higher risk of heat-related injuries and death.

Similar to prior years, DHS will declare a Code Red Alert under the circumstances described in the attached Code Red procedure. As usual, we ask that hospitals allow individuals in need to use the hospital ED waiting room or other cool, indoor space with access to water while the alert is in effect during the times specified in the procedure.

In addition to the Code Red Alert, in light of last years unprecedented impact of the Canadian Wildfires on our air quality, a new Code Grey protocol has been established for extreme and hazardous air quality periods. DHS will declare a Code Grey Alert under the circumstances described in the attached Code Grey procedure. We ask that hospitals allow individuals in need to use the hospital ED waiting room or other properly ventilated indoor space while the alert is in effect during the times specified in the procedure.

If an individual experiencing homelessness presents to your hospital emergency department, does not need immediate medical care, and requests or accepts DHS services, please call the DHS Joint Command Center at 212-607-6040 or email [SHSCC@dhs.nyc.gov](mailto:SHSCC@dhs.nyc.gov).

On behalf of all New Yorkers, thank you for your help in assisting individuals experiencing homelessness during hot weather emergencies.

For any questions, related to DHS Code Red or Code Grey please contact: Jennifer Wilcox at [jwilcox@dhs.nyc.gov](mailto:jwilcox@dhs.nyc.gov).

We appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,

Fabienne Laraque, MD, MPH  
Medical Director