



## DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING

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Edwin Méndez-Santiago, LCSW  
Commissioner

To: Community Partners

From: Edwin Méndez-Santiago, LCSW  
Commissioner

Date: May 19, 2008

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### **Prepare Now for Heat Emergencies!**

Over the past summers, DFTA Cooling Centers have made a major contribution to the City's efforts to safeguard our most vulnerable populations. We are grateful for the care and dedication so many senior center directors and staff have demonstrated to meet the challenges of prolonged periods of high temperatures and humidity. With warm weather on the way, we need to prepare now for anticipated Summer Heat Emergencies.

When the heat index is forecast to reach 100° F for two or more consecutive days an alert will be sent out stating we expect to activate our cooling centers. We will do our best to provide you with as much advance notice as possible, especially for weekend heat events, but at times we need to react very quickly and without much notice. The key to being able to respond swiftly is preparation. Please begin now to discuss with staff the lessons learned from previous heat emergencies and plan how your center will meet this summer's challenges. The effects of Global Warming almost guarantee we will have several heat episodes this summer.

We are faxing a Heat Emergency check list to help prepare your Center, your members and your community. Take some time to go over this list with your staff and participants so you are ready when the hot weather arrives. Also, make sure your community knows your location operates as a Cooling Center and your normal operating hours. You will also receive an advance from DFTA to help with preparation and response to declared heat emergencies. Based on the air conditioner surveys you submitted in March, DFTA is working diligently to repair or replace units. Please contact your Program Officer to report any additional air conditioner related problems.

**Good communication during emergencies is critical.** If you have had any changes in your emergency contact information, including your email address and fax number, let Clint Best know now at 212-442-1174.

As always, if you need to reach DFTA to report problems during a Heat Emergency call Clint Best at (land line) 212-442-1174 (cell phone) 347-386-5216 and the Bureau of Senior Centers at 212-442-1160. We look forward to working closely with you this summer to keep older New Yorkers safe and cool!

*Attention Senior Centers:  
Now is the Time to Prepare for Heat Emergencies!*

**Preparation Checklist**

HEAT KILLS! During an average summer, 1,500 Americans die from excessive heat. And, older adults are particularly vulnerable. Air conditioning is one of the best protective factors against heat-related illness and death. But to be ready to function as a “Cooling Center” for residents of your community, you must prepare in advance. The time to prepare for a heat emergency is not when the heat wave is about to occur. It’s NOW!

Here are some tips for preparing for Summer 2008 heat emergencies:

**Prepare your center**

- Plan in advance how your center will respond during a Heat Emergency; put the plan in writing and share with staff, volunteers, and DFTA
- Check your air conditioning units and let DFTA know if there are any problems
- Make arrangements with your staff about coverage for the center in case of extended hours during heat emergencies
- Make arrangements with your landlord, if necessary, to stay open later and/or on weekends during heat emergencies
- Make sure you have a communication plan such as a calling tree with updated emergency contact information and current phone and cell phone numbers
- Decide what additional supplies you will need in a heat emergency and get them early
- Stock up on water and shelf-stable meals for use during extended hours

**Prepare seniors**

- Educate seniors in your community on the dangers of extreme heat and what they can do to protect themselves, including getting their air conditioners checked out early
- Let seniors in your center and your community know your center is a designated cooling center and what hours you will be open; educate them to confirm hours during emergencies
- Survey the members to find out who has air conditioning, and encourage those without A/C to come to the cooling center
- Organize seniors into friendly visiting teams, or establish buddy systems so everyone has someone checking on them during a heat emergency
- Create an Emergency Preparedness Committee of center members that can help educate others in your community about protecting themselves in heat emergencies, publicize your center as a cooling center, and maintain contact with seniors who are particularly vulnerable

**Prepare your community**

- Work with your interagency council and other service providers (e.g., police, fire, hospitals, libraries, etc.) in your community to develop a coordinated response on a local level
- Reach out to your community and let them know your center operates as a cooling center and that people of all ages are welcome during heat emergencies