

What are Cooling Centers?

The Cooling Center program was developed to provide New Yorkers with the opportunity to seek respite from the heat in a safe, free, and air-conditioned facility during extreme heat events. NYC Emergency Management (NYCEM) partners with over ten agencies and non-governmental organizations to open more than 500 Cooling Centers across the five boroughs during heat emergencies.

Cooling Centers are open to the public, particularly for individuals most vulnerable to extreme heat emergencies. At-risk individuals may include, but are not limited to people without air conditioning or who cannot afford to pay for air conditioning and are:

- Individuals 60 years and older
- Individuals with disabilities or access and functional needs
- Individuals with chronic health or mental health conditions or those who take certain medications that impair thermoregulation
- Individuals who misuse drugs or alcohol

When does New York City open Cooling Centers?

Cooling Centers are opened when weather forecasts predict that New York City will enter a period of extreme heat. This may occur when the heat index is 100°F for 1 day or more or when the heat index is 95°F or higher for 2 or more days. Heat index measures the apparent temperature of the air as it increases with relative humidity. Most Cooling Centers remain open during normal business through the length of the extreme heat and some centers may volunteer to open for extended hours.

Where can I find the nearest Cooling Center?

Cooling Center availability is made known through media, public messaging, and 311. When Cooling Centers are activated, locations can be found by calling 311 or using the Cool Options Finder available on the NYC Emergency Management Beat the Heat website: <http://www.NYC.gov/beattheheat>.

The Cool Options Finder displays a map of open centers, addresses, and operating hours. It also indicates the accessibility of the location for people with disabilities and shows pet-friendly facilities. Individuals are encouraged to check the finder each day for open locations and call ahead to confirm a center is open before traveling in the heat. The Cool Options Finder is available 24/7 to allow New Yorkers to plan ahead, however additional Cooling Centers are added during heat emergencies and monitored throughout the duration of the emergency to ensure their information is accurate. Complete lists of Cooling Centers are not distributed to avoid reliance on a facility that may not be open.

What are the requirements to become a Cooling Center?

To become an official Cooling Center, a facility must follow the below requirements:

- Must be free and open to the public
- Must be air-conditioned
- Must be able to provide drinking water (bottles or water fountain)
- Must have a point of contact, be staffed, and operate during daytime hours (operating hours must fall between 10am – 3pm at a minimum)
- Must be able to accommodate at least 10 visitors

Note: NYCEM does not provide funding for the Cooling Center program.