

CLIMATE, URBANIZATION

8 Ways NYC Can Help Vulnerable Communities Survive Summer Heat

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As extreme heat becomes an increasingly frequent threat, it is critical the City of New York take bolder action to ensure frontline communities stay safe and cool during the summer heat season. With the more frequent occurrence of global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change-induced extreme weather events, the City must prioritize addressing the cascading health risks these crises pose for New York City's most vulnerable populations.

We are part of a team that recently found that in the summer of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and extreme heat combined to exacerbate health risks for low-income communities of color. Our results have just been published in the *Journal of Extreme Events*, and our team is made up of researchers from the Earth Institute at Columbia University and experts from the environmental justice group WE ACT. Below, we share some of our findings and suggestions for how the City can better protect vulnerable communities during the hot weather to come.

COVID, Inequality, and Extreme Heat: A Deadly Combination

Extreme heat is the **number one weather-related killer** in the United States and New York City. According to a 2016 study, an average of **130 New Yorkers die from heat-related causes** every year. The urban heat island effect, where urban environments experience higher surface and air temperatures than rural and suburban areas, exacerbates the impacts of extreme heat events and makes people in cities such as

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Employ Legal Mechanisms to prioritize protecting heat vulnerable communities

New York

Policies such as the proposed City Council bills which codifies the City's cooling center program and the City Council law 1960-2022 in New York City, and which requires the city to submit a heat plan each year, need to be implemented with a core equity focus in order to allocate permanent resources and institutionalize these crucial-life saving programs.

Proposing City Council

Creating heat plans

Improve communication

life-saving programs

Strategies to cool d