Committee on Health

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**THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**BRIEFING PAPER AND COMMITTEE REPORT OF THE HUMAN SERVICES DIVISIONS**

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**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH**

*Hon. Mark Levine, Chair*

**July 28, 2020**

**INT. NO. 1945-A:** By Council Members Brannan, Ampry-Samuel, Lander, Kallos, Chin, Constantinides, Ayala, Vallone and Louis

**TITLE:** A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to annual reporting of heat vulnerability and heat-related deaths

**ADMINISTRATIVE CODE:** Adds a new section 17-199.14

**INT. NO. 1960-A:** Members Salamanca, Ampry-Samuel, Kallos, Chin, Koslowitz, Constantinides, Ayala, Vallone and Louis

**TITLE:** A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to a comprehensive cooling and communication plan

**ADMINISTRATIVE CODE:** Adds a new section 30-116

**RES. NO. 637-A:** Members Eugene, Ayala, Vallone and Louis

**TITLE:** Resolution calling on the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the New York State Department of Health to create a special commission to address health emergencies and infectious diseases

1. **INTRODUCTION**

On July 28, 2020, the Committee on Health, chaired by Council Member Mark Levine, held a hearing on Introduction 1945-A, a Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to annual reporting of heat vulnerability and heat-related deaths, sponsored by Council Member Brannan, Introduction 1960-A, a Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to a comprehensive cooling and communication plan, sponsored by Council Member Salamanca, and Resolution 637-A, resolution calling on the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the New York State Department of Health to create a special commission to address health emergencies and infectious diseases, sponsored by Council Member Eugene. The introductions were originally heard at a hearing of this Committee on May 26, 2020, at which the Committee received testimony from representatives from Con Ed, City agencies, consumer and environmental justice advocates, and other stakeholders. The resolution was originally heard at a hearing of this Committee on September 9, 2019, at which the Committee received testimony from representatives from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, advocates, and other stakeholders. On July 28, 2020, the Committee passed this legislation by a vote of seven in the affirmative, zero in the negative, and zero abstentions.

1. **BACKGROUND**

On March 7, 2020 Governor Andrew Cuomo declared a state of emergency in response to the spread of a novel coronavirus known as COVID-19. On March 20, the Governor ordered all non-essential businesses to close and residents to remain at home. With summer approaching and the COVID-19 crisis now forcing people to work from home, there are serious concerns that the City may not be sufficiently prepared to address the cooling needs of residents. Many of those most vulnerable to COVID-19, namely the elderly and those with underlying health conditions, are likewise prone to heat related illnesses and deaths.

In March, prior to the closure of non-essential businesses, the Speaker of the City Council released a policy paper, *Securing Our Future: Strategies For New York City in the Fight Against Climate Change*.[[1]](#footnote-1) As part of the policy paper’s analysis on the many impacts of climate change was a discussion on protecting the public health by mitigating and adapting to rising temperatures. As discussed in greater detail there, the majority of heat-related deaths in New York City are likely not direct and are instead deaths where heat was a contributing factor for individuals already weakened or with an underlying condition.[[2]](#footnote-2) Additionally, heat-related deaths are not distributed evenly among the City’s population. Black people were disproportionately represented, making up almost half of all heat-related deaths.[[3]](#footnote-3) Poverty may also be a contributing factor to heat-related deaths, particularly for persons who either do not have an air conditioner or who cannot afford the utility costs of its operation.[[4]](#footnote-4) Among the policy paper’s strategies were recommendations to develop a comprehensive cooling plan, to improve how the City measures deaths where heat is a contributing factor, and to increase cooling assistance, such as by funding air conditioner installation and operation for vulnerable populations.[[5]](#footnote-5) These strategies have since taken on greater importance, as cooling centers and public spaces may either be closed or restricted due to the need for social distancing, making the need for cooling assistance even greater.

Compounding these concerns, such cooling assistance requires a reliable electric grid. Yet, in the summer of 2019, New York City experienced numerous blackouts across the five boroughs despite assurances from Con Ed that it was prepared to handle the increased summer power demands. Another weather concern is that experts are predicting an active hurricane season this year, with projections significantly above normal. Experts forecast 16 named tropical storms,[[6]](#footnote-6) eight of which are expected to reach hurricane status with winds greater than 74 mph.[[7]](#footnote-7) An active storm season, coupled with rising temperatures, raises the specter that power outages this summer could pose even greater challenges for vulnerable New Yorkers.

1. **RECENT POWER OUTAGES AND FAILURES**

In July 2019, the United States and multiple countries in Europe experienced record temperatures, becoming the hottest month ever recorded in human history.[[8]](#footnote-8) On the weekend of July 20, a heat wave advisory was issued affecting numerous regions in the United States, including New York City.[[9]](#footnote-9) At least six deaths were attributed to the heatwave in other states.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Prior to the heat wave, Con Ed assured residents that it was prepared. The President of Con Ed, Tim Cawley, told reporters that Con Ed was “ready for what the heat will bring,” stating that Con Ed “[spent] a full year preparing for the high demand that summer brings,” and that they invested $1.5 billion in their energy-delivery systems. [[11]](#footnote-11) However, despite such assurances, the City experienced a number of serious power outages attributed to the heat, equipment failures and storm activity.

The first major outage hit the Upper West Side of Manhattan on July 13. The blackout affected at least 73,000 customers.[[12]](#footnote-12) On July 21, 2019, temperatures rose to 102 degrees Fahrenheit and parts of New York City began losing power, including Flushing and Richmond Hill in Queens, Park Slope, Flatbush and Brighton Beach in Brooklyn, and Lincoln Square in Manhattan. Smaller outages were also recorded in parts of the Bronx and Staten Island.[[13]](#footnote-13) In total, approximately 10,000 customers were affected across the five boroughs.[[14]](#footnote-14)

To cope with the increased demand, attend to repairs and prevent further outages, Con Ed intentionally cut power to certain Brooklyn neighborhoods and reduced the power output in others. On the hottest day of the year, Con Ed cut power to 30,000 customers in Canarsie, Mill Basin and Flatbush, and reduced voltage in Prospect Lefferts Gardens, Prospect Heights, Flatlands, Bergen Beach and Georgetown.[[15]](#footnote-15) According to the New York Times, this was due to cable failures at the substation serving the area. Five of the 19 cables failed, leaving 14 to handle a heavier-than-normal electricity flow, possibly resulting in a system-wide failure affecting the entire area.[[16]](#footnote-16) No explanation for the failure was given, other than the cuts being “necessary to prevent longer outages.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

In response, the City Council held an oversight hearing last fall to question Con Ed executives on the blackouts. When questioned over whether, in hindsight, Con Ed maintained they were prepared for the heatwave, David DeSanti, Vice President of Brooklyn and Queens Electric Operations for Con Ed replied “the outcomes are the outcomes.”[[18]](#footnote-18) Furthermore, when asked how Con Ed will prepare for increased demand, given that some of the blackouts occurred during non-peak times, Con Ed indicated that smart meters were their main solution. These meters would allow Con Ed to structure their pricing to encourage less use during peak demands.[[19]](#footnote-19) However, not all households will have the luxury of reducing their use of air conditioners, particularly now that most New Yorkers are confined to their homes due to the COVID-19 crisis.

* 1. Pattern of outages and infrastructure failures

The power outages experienced by New Yorkers in the summer of 2019 were, unfortunately, not a unique experience. Con Ed has a history of failing to meet the City’s demand for electricity, due to a raft of systemic failures. In 1999, hundreds of thousands of Con Ed’s customers lost power during a heat wave.[[20]](#footnote-20) The Attorney General’s office conducted an investigation and determined that Con Ed customers lost power because numerous elements of Con Ed’s electricity supply system failed and that their preparations for the heat wave were inadequate.[[21]](#footnote-21)

In 2003, an outage hit the whole City and lasted 29 hours. In 2006, there was another outage, which mainly hit Queens, and lasted eight days. In 2012, after Superstorm Sandy, numerous parts of the City experienced outages for days or weeks.[[22]](#footnote-22) Like the 1999 and 2019 outages, all of the blackouts in between were deemed to have been caused by various types of equipment failures.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Although Con Ed claims to have spent $1.5 billion in 2018 to upgrade its transformers and replace underground feeder cables, experts claim that such upgrades are routine maintenance projects that utilities need to conduct to ensure that the grid keeps functioning.[[24]](#footnote-24) Furthermore, Con Ed’s prioritization of projects and focus on replacing equipment appears insufficient to respond to the City’s increasing energy demands. In their testimony in the recent rate case before the Public Service Commission, witnesses testifying on behalf of the City expressed concern that Con Ed’s focus on replacing equipment was shortsighted, and called for a paradigm shift in the Company’s approach. Rather than focus on mere maintenance and equipment replacement, they testified that the Company must “examine opportunities to invest in research and development, demonstration projects and alternative solutions such as [non wire solutions or NWS] to replacing failed equipment.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

* 1. Con Ed’s Responses to the 2020 COVID-19 Emergency

To date, Con Ed’s COVID-19 response has primarily focused on assisting customers facing financial distress during this crisis. For instance, they have issued a moratorium on shut-offs so that no customer will have their power cut for a lack of payment.[[26]](#footnote-26) Additionally, Con Ed has said that they will waive all new late-payment fees and are offering customers an opportunity to negotiate payment extension plans.[[27]](#footnote-27) However, unlike other utilities,[[28]](#footnote-28) Con Ed has not announced that it is suspending its rate increase, which was recently approved by the Public Service Commission, increasing residential customer bills on average by $6.37 per month.[[29]](#footnote-29)

During this hearing, the committees look forward to examining how Con Ed plans to address the troubling weather forecasts for this summer, and particularly how it intends to ensure that vulnerable customers, such as the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions, will not face power shutoffs during this unprecedented time of need.

1. **CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19**

Temperatures have been rising more rapidly over the last century, and one in ten Americans are currently living in rapidly heating regions, including New York City.[[30]](#footnote-30) Heatwaves in the City are exacerbated by the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect, a phenomenon in which urban areas experience higher temperatures than surrounding suburban and rural areas, largely because of heat-retaining concrete and asphalt, less vegetation and more industrial functions.[[31]](#footnote-31) According to a study by the University of Maryland published last year, temperatures in New York City will be up to 5℃ warmer, with a climate similar to Jonesboro, Arkansas by 2080.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Urban areas can be up to 5.4 degrees Fahrenheit warmer during the day and up to 22 degrees Fahrenheit hotter at night than surrounding rural and suburban areas, affecting City residents’ quality of life and the City’s infrastructure.[[33]](#footnote-33) For example, buildings retain heat overnight, which prevents people from sleeping well, air pollution can be worse on hotter days and that may lead to respiratory problems, and warmer conditions may also lead to heavy rainfall causing flooding.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Over the last decade, the City has experienced some of its hottest summer months ever recorded,[[35]](#footnote-35) and heat waves like the one that hit the City in July 2019 are expected to become more frequent. The New York City Panel on Climate Change (NPCC) predicts that heat waves, which are defined as three or more days with temperatures at or above 90 degrees Fahrenheit, will be longer, hotter and more frequent especially in areas where the UHI effect is present, like many areas in the City.[[36]](#footnote-36) NPCC also predicts for the 2020s that the City will experience two to four heat waves per year, with each heat wave lasting four to six days.[[37]](#footnote-37) By 2050, the frequency of heat waves and the number of days above 90 degrees Fahrenheit is expected to nearly triple.[[38]](#footnote-38)

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of 13 City residents died each year from heat-related illnesses between 2000 and 2011. These deaths were primarily among people from poorer neighborhoods and with underlying health conditions.[[39]](#footnote-39) However, some studies indicate that this number may be much lower than the actual number of heat-related deaths because of how a “hot day” is defined.[[40]](#footnote-40) The City also reports an average of 115 excess heat-related deaths, 150 heat-related hospitalizations, and 450 heat-related emergency department visits each year.[[41]](#footnote-41) With rising temperatures because of climate change, the risk of extreme heat waves will become more acute each year.[[42]](#footnote-42)

* 1. Predictions for NYC’s 2020 Summer and COVID-19

Public health experts are warning that COVID-19 could make heat waves much deadlier, and disproportionately affect elderly and low-income residents, many of whom are less likely to have or use air conditioning units.[[43]](#footnote-43) The elderly and those with underlying health conditions are being urged to stay at home because of COVID-19. However, “the people who need to stay home the most are in the greatest danger of dying there during a heat wave.”[[44]](#footnote-44) In recent years, over 80 percent of heat-related deaths occurred in homes without air conditioning in New York City.[[45]](#footnote-45) Furthermore, new data released on the number of cases and deaths by zip code show a worrying overlap between the neighborhoods most affected by COVID-19 and those that lost power in the summer of 2019.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Typically, New Yorkers visit the City’s many pools, parks, beaches and cooling centers, to stay cool on hot days during the summer months.[[47]](#footnote-47) The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) operates and maintains over 60 public pools and approximately 14 miles of beaches.[[48]](#footnote-48) Beaches and pools are typically open for swimming from Memorial Day weekend through the week after Labor Day.[[49]](#footnote-49) City beaches host millions of visitors per year. It was reported that in 2018, approximately 16 million people visited DPR beaches, including 7.4 million visitors at Coney Island beaches and 5.5 million visitors in Rockaway beaches.[[50]](#footnote-50) In April 2020, the Mayor announced that all of the City’s pools will be closed for the summer because of COVID-19,[[51]](#footnote-51) and currently, there are no plans to open the City’s beaches this summer.[[52]](#footnote-52) DPR has also closed playgrounds, recreation centers, nature centers, the High Line, amusement parks and skate parks, and other places many residents seek refuge throughout the summer.[[53]](#footnote-53) However, the City Council is exploring ways to keep beaches open while maintaining social distancing.[[54]](#footnote-54) Speaker Corey Johnson stated that with the closure of playgrounds and pools, City residents will need a place to go during the summer months. Social distancing enforcement would be a difficult task, but the City is exploring limiting the number of people allowed on a beach at a time.[[55]](#footnote-55)

It is also unclear whether cooling centers will be open this summer. Cooling centers are facilities set up around the City, such as senior centers, libraries and community centers where people can stay cool during a heat emergency.[[56]](#footnote-56) Mayor de Blasio announced in mid-May 2020 that they would look to establish “non-traditional cooling centers”[[57]](#footnote-57) in spaces such as school classrooms, auditoriums and sporting venues.[[58]](#footnote-58) However, social distancing may become challenging even in these larger spaces. There are also concerns about air conditioners increasing the risk of spreading coronavirus amongst groups of people.[[59]](#footnote-59) Mayor de Blasio also announced that the City is creating a $55 million program to provide over 74,000 air conditioners to certain New Yorkers without air conditioning units, with approximately 22,000 of such units being distributed to NYCHA residents.[[60]](#footnote-60)

With State and City coffers taking a huge hit because of COVID-19, and budget cuts looming, securing funding to support the City’s various cooling initiatives is vital. The federal government provided the State with $28.8 million in stimulus money to provide low-income New Yorkers with assistance for their energy bills.[[61]](#footnote-61) New York City officials are now lobbying to ensure a “significant portion” of this funding can be used “for expanded cooling assistance this summer,” according to a letter to Governor Cuomo obtained by Politico.[[62]](#footnote-62) The signatories to this letter argue that the COVID-19 crisis “will create enormous new need for cooling assistance this summer” and thus the City requires adequate funding to address these needs.[[63]](#footnote-63)

1. **CONCLUSION**

History has shown that despite numerous inquiries, commitments, investments and increased rates, Con Ed has failed to address the significant flaws within its delivery system so that it can reliably meet the City’s electricity needs. With people now working from home during the COVID-19 emergency, the demand for air-conditioning over the summer will only increase. Pair this with rising temperatures, increased humidity and the urban heat island effect, and New York City’s grid is particularly vulnerable. Unfortunately, it is still unclear whether the utility has made the required adjustments to address these needs and ensure that New Yorkers have reliable and constant power through the upcoming summer months. It is also unclear whether the Mayor’s cooling plans will provide adequate protection for vulnerable New Yorkers most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. **BILL ANALYSIS**
	1. Introduction 1945-A, in relation to annual reporting of heat vulnerability and heat-related deaths

This legislation would require DOHMH to annually report on neighborhood heat vulnerability and the number of heat-related deaths, including direct heat stress deaths, and estimated indirect heat exacerbated deaths, a description of the methods used to derive heat vulnerability and estimate heat exacerbated deaths, a description of social and environmental factors used to determine heat vulnerability, and aggregate demographic information of heat stress deaths, including, but not limited to, the age, gender, neighborhood tabulation area and the race or ethnicity of the decedents. The legislation would also require DOHMH to utilize alternative modeling to address the potential undercounting of heat exacerbated deaths. Since the legislation was heard, technical changes were made to the definitions, and some of the deadlines were changed.

This bill would take effect immediately.

* 1. Introduction 1960-A, in relation to a comprehensive cooling and communication plan

 This bill would require the Office of Emergency Management, in consultation with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability, to prepare and submit an annual plan beginning on May 15, 2021, describing how the city would inform residents on the dangers of heat exposure, provide access to cooling, including cooling centers, and how vulnerable populations can stay cool during heat-related emergencies. The plan would also include measures for large office buildings to reduce stress on the electric grid during the summer months. The plan would be updated annually. Since the legislation was heard, some of the deadlines were changed and technical edits were made.

This bill would take effect immediately.

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Int. No. 1945-A

By Council Members Brannan, Ampry-Samuel, Lander, Kallos, Chin, Constantinides, Ayala, Vallone and Louis

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to annual reporting of heat vulnerability and heat-related deaths

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Chapter 1 of title 17 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 17-199.14 to read as follows:

§ 17-199.14 Report on heat vulnerability and heat-related deaths. a. Definitions. For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

Heat exacerbated death. The term “heat exacerbated death” means a natural cause death estimated by the department to have resulted from an existing health condition exacerbated by extreme, or near extreme, heat. Such estimation should be determined by the use of one or more statistical models by the department. Beginning with the report due pursuant to subdivision b no later than June 15, 2022, and continuing thereafter, at least one such model shall utilize sensitive statistical methods that assess daily temperature as a continuous variable in relation to daily mortality to estimate heat-exacerbated death, without the use of a qualifying temperature threshold.

Heat stress death. The term “heat stress death” means a death directly attributed to heat on a death certificate, or with an underlying or contributing cause of i) excessive natural heat or ii) effects of heat and light, as such conditions are described in the International Classification of Diseases Version 10 coding system.

Heat vulnerability. The term “heat vulnerability” means the estimated risk of heat stress deaths and heat exacerbated deaths occurring in a geographical area based on social and environmental factors identified by the department.

b. No later than June 15 of each year beginning in 2021, the commissioner shall submit to the mayor and the speaker of the council, and shall post conspicuously on the department’s website, an annual report of the most recent available data on the total number of heat stress deaths and heat exacerbated deaths in the city.

c. The annual report required by subdivision b of this section shall include:

1. the number of heat stress deaths in the most recent year available;

2. the estimation of past heat exacerbated deaths based on the most recent available years of data and the smallest interval of time that yields a reliable estimate;

3. a description of the relative heat vulnerability of each neighborhood tabulation area;

4. a description of reported data;

5. a description of social and environmental factors assessed by the department to determine heat vulnerability;

6. a description of methods used to derive heat vulnerability and estimate heat exacerbated deaths; and

7. aggregate demographic information of heat stress deaths, including, but not limited to, the age, gender, neighborhood tabulation area and the race or ethnicity of the decedents.

d. Except as otherwise provided in this section, no report required by subdivision b of this section shall contain personal identifying information.

e. The commissioner may promulgate such rules as may be necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

f. No later than April 15 of 2022, the department shall report to the mayor and the speaker of the council on its findings or progress regarding the development or adoption for use of any models for estimating the number of heat exacerbated deaths pursuant to the definition of such term in subdivision a.

§ 2. This local law takes effect immediately.

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| Int. No. 1960-A By Council Members Salamanca, Ampry-Samuel, Kallos, Chin, Koslowitz, Constantinides, Ayala, Vallone and Louis A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to a comprehensive cooling and communication plan Be it enacted by the Council as follows: Section 1. Chapter 1 of title 30 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 30-116 to read as follows:§ 30-116 Comprehensive cooling and communication plan. a. Definitions. For purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:Cooling center. The term “cooling center” means any facility that is designated by the city to provide air-conditioned relief to the public whenever a National Weather Service heat advisory triggers a citywide emergency response.Heat index. The term “heat index” means a measurement of the combined air temperature and relative humidity that estimates the human-perceived equivalent temperature.Heat-related emergency. The term “heat-related emergency” means a circumstance during which the National Weather Service issues its heat advisory products, or during which the level of the heat index is deemed to be unsafe or unhealthy for vulnerable populations, as determined by the commissioner of health and mental hygiene.Urban heat island effect. The term “urban heat island effect” means the increase in urban air temperature as compared to surrounding suburban and rural temperature.Vulnerable population. The term “vulnerable population” means any group of persons  at a greater risk of harm from a heat-related emergency than a person in the general population, as determined by the department of health and mental hygiene.b. On or before every May 15, beginning in 2021, the commissioner of emergency management in consultation with the commissioner of health and mental hygiene, the director of long-term planning and sustainability and any other office or agency they deem relevant, shall submit to the council and make available to the public on the city’s website a plan  describing how the city will provide individuals with information on the dangers of heat exposure, access to cooling, including the city’s cooling centers, and how vulnerable populations can stay cool during heat-related emergencies. Such plan shall include, but not be limited to, the following:1. a mechanism to assess the city’s cooling needs generally and the cooling needs of vulnerable populations during heat-related emergencies;2. a description of how the commissioner of emergency management and the commissioner of health and mental hygiene will communicate to residents the dangers of heat exposure, including information about the urban heat island effect, the heat index, heat-related emergencies and other relevant information pursuant to this section;3. a description of the temperature, heat index and other conditions under which the city will make cooling centers and other heat relief mechanisms available to the public;4. information regarding access to cooling centers and other heat relief mechanisms  including: (a) whether such cooling centers can be safely opened; (b) the feasibility of infection and disease control in such centers, including a description of any necessary procedures to promote infection and disease control and any appropriate cleaning, if applicable; (c) a list of potential locations of cooling centers by street address, cross streets, and ZIP code; (d) the potential hours of operations, maximum capacity, and accessibility for individuals with disabilities for each such center; (e) the link to the cooling center finder which also includes notation of which cooling centers are accessible; and (f) other citywide operational strategies for cooling such as spray caps and homeless outreach;5. a description of how the commissioner of emergency management and the commissioner of health and mental hygiene will communicate the information in paragraphs 3 and 4 of this subdivision to residents on or before June 1 of each year;6. if cooling centers are not expected to be open or if they will be insufficient to serve the needs of vulnerable populations, a description of how the city will provide such vulnerable populations with cooling during a heat-related emergency, including but not limited to the direct provision of, and support for, residential cooling mechanisms, and a description of how the commissioner of emergency management will communicate this information to vulnerable populations;7. a description of how the commissioner of emergency management and the commissioner of health and mental hygiene, or any other office or agency they deem relevant, will provide public communications, written or otherwise, in the designated citywide languages, as defined in section 23-1101, and whether communications in any additional languages are needed based on the demographics of current or anticipated vulnerable populations;8. an evaluation of the measures taken to reduce the impact of heat-related emergencies and the number of heat-related deaths during the previous summer seasons and a description of the measures the commissioner of emergency management and the commissioner of health and mental hygiene will take to further reduce the impact of heat-related emergencies and the number of heat-related deaths in the upcoming summer season; and9. a plan for office buildings to set thermostats at or above a specific temperature to reduce stress on the electric grid, including a description of the heat conditions during which such a plan would be recommended, a recommendation on the temperature or temperatures to which such thermostats should be set, and a description of how to promote compliance with such plan when recommended.c. The commissioner of emergency management and the commissioner of health and mental hygiene shall update the plan described in subdivision b of this section by May 15 of each year.§ 2. This local law takes effect immediately.JSA/SILLS #1389907/20/20 9:10 pm

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| Res. No. 637-A Resolution calling on the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the New York State Department of Health to create a special commission to address health emergencies and infectious diseases. By Council Members Eugene, Ayala, Vallone and Louis Whereas, Diseases know no borders, and a health crisis in one country could easily spread to several countries in the blink of an eye; andWhereas, In 2014, an Ebola Virus epidemic in Africa spread across the world over the course of the year, with 10 patients being treated in the United States; andWhereas, New York State was monitoring the spread of Ebola and had months to make preparations, yet many isolation units were still not prepared when Ebola struck New York; andWhereas, In recent years, the United States has seen potentially dangerous strains of avian flu and multidrug-resistant strains of tuberculosis take root in other countries; andWhereas, Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS, is a contagious disease first reported in 2012 in Saudi Arabia that has killed many, though little is known about it; andWhereas, In recent years, the U.S. experienced measles outbreaks, including large outbreaks in New York City; andWhereas, A novel coronavirus, called SARS-CoV-2, first emerged in late 2019 and spread rapidly around the world; andWhereas, The virus has greatly impacted New York City, which was the epicenter of the pandemic for months; andWhereas, As of July 19, 2020, 218,159 residents of New York City had tested positive for the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, called COVID-19, with over 55,000 hospitalized for treatment; andWhereas, Over 23,000 residents of New York City have died from COVID-19, with the virus disproportionately impacting New Yorkers who are Black, Latinx, and older; andWhereas, New diseases are constantly emerging and old ones adapt to resist current treatments; andWhereas, The next outbreak could develop unexpectedly and the United States and New York State need to be prepared to quickly identify, treat and contain infectious diseases and other health emergencies; now, therefore, be itResolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the New York State Department of Health to create a special commission to address health emergencies and infectious diseases. CP/EBLS# 183407/20/2020 |

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1. Securing Our Future: Strategies for New York City in the Fight Against Climate Change, available at: <http://council.nyc.gov/data/wp-content/uploads/sites/73/2020/03/Securing-our-Future_Report-2020.r4.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Id. at 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Id. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Id. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Id. at 50-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Some projections put the number at 17 named tropical storms. *See:* Judson Jones, “Experts Agree this Hurricane Season will be Above-Average, Maybe Even Extremely Active,” *CNN,* May 8, 2020, available at: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/08/weather/hurricane-season-2020-forecast-above-average/index.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Jeff Berardelli, “‘Above normal’ 2020 Atlantic hurricane season on tap, researchers forecast, *CBS News*, April 2, 2020, available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/2020-atlantic-hurricane-season-colorado-state-university-forecast-released-today-2020-04-02/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Brady Dennis and Andrew Freedman “Here’s how the hottest month in recorded history unfolded around the world”, *Washington Post*, August 5, 2019, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2019/08/05/heres-how-hottest-month-recorded-history-unfolded-around-globe/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Katie Reilly and Josiah Bates “An ‘extremely dangerous’ heat wave will hit 195 million Americans this weekend. Here’s how to stay safe”, *Time*, July 19, 2019, available at: <https://time.com/5628121/united-states-heat-wave-july/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Justin Carissimo “Massive heat wave blamed for at least 6 deaths”, *CBS News*, July 21, 2019, available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/live-news/heat-wave-2019-extreme-heat-advisory-warning-deaths-latest-weather-forecast-us-nyc-2019-07-20/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
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