



Legislation Text

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Int. No. 703

By Council Members Constantinides, Johnson, Kallos, Koo, Levine, Palma, Richards, Rose, Koslowitz, Espinal and Rosenthal

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to cooling centers.

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 17-198 to read as follows:

§ 17-198 Cooling centers. a. For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall mean:

1. “Air quality index” means the index established by the United States environmental protection agency for the purpose of reporting daily air quality.

2. “Cooling center” means any facility that is designated by the city to provide air-conditioned relief to the public whenever there is an occurrence or a forecast of a heat-related emergency.

3. “Heat index” means a measurement of the combined air temperature and relative humidity that attempts to determine the human-perceived equivalent temperature.

4. “Heat-related emergency” means the level at which the heat index is deemed to be unsafe or unhealthy for vulnerable populations as determined by the department by rule.

5. “Poor air quality index” means the level at which the air quality index is deemed to be unsafe or unhealthy for vulnerable populations as determined by the department by rule.

6. “Vulnerable population” means any group of persons that are sensitive to or otherwise at a greater health risk than the general population from a heat-related emergency or a poor air quality index.

b. The department, in consultation with the New York city office of emergency management, shall open,

maintain and operate cooling centers when there is a heat-related emergency or a poor air quality index in the city. The department shall determine by rule the number and locations of cooling centers to be located in the city, provided, however, that there shall be no fewer than the median number of locations that were operated on any given day that cooling centers were operated under the city's previous program during the year ending in two thousand fourteen. When determining establishing the locations of such centers, the department shall take into account the areas in which vulnerable populations reside and make best efforts to locate such centers in areas where such vulnerable populations would likely use such centers when they are in operation pursuant to this section.

c. The department shall post information on its website that contains information including, but not limited to, any health alerts triggered by heat-related emergencies or a poor air quality index, and the availability, hours of operation, and locations of cooling centers. The website shall list the availability, hours of operation, and locations of such cooling centers on or by May 1 of every year.

d. The department shall conduct a public education campaign on heat-related emergencies and poor air quality indexes, and how to prevent health risks associated with such conditions. Such education shall include, but not be limited to encouraging vulnerable populations to limit exposure and to remain inside an air conditioned building or dwelling during heat-related emergencies and to minimize being outdoors on days where there is a poor air quality index. The department shall display written educational materials in buildings designated by the department to be cooling centers; and conduct outreach to communities where vulnerable populations are likely to reside.

e. On or before June 1 of 2016 and every year thereafter, the department shall conduct a citywide survey to determine public awareness of the cooling centers.

f. On or before December 31 of 2016 and each year thereafter, the department shall submit an annual report to the council and the mayor detailing the department's efforts to inform the public of the availability and value of cooling centers.

1. Such annual report shall include: (i) the median number of cooling centers made available on days that such centers are open and intended for use pursuant to subdivision b; (ii) an estimate of the number of persons seeking relief at each cooling center over the course of each year covered by such report, disaggregated by age group and community board; (iii) the results from the citywide survey conducted pursuant to subdivision e of this section; and (iv) a discussion of any measures taken by the department for the education and/or outreach to the public regarding the health hazards posed by heat-related emergencies and the presence of a poor air quality index, the need to limit exposure to such conditions, and the availability, hours of operations, and locations of cooling centers.

2. Such report shall also include (i) an evaluation of the effectiveness of the department's programs or initiatives to inform the public of the availability and value of cooling centers; (ii) recommendations for new programs and/or strategies that could be implemented by the department, non-governmental organizations or other entities to improve public outreach and the utilization of cooling centers; and an estimate of any additional funding needed for the implementation of any such recommendations.

§ 2. This local law shall take effect 180 days after its enactment into law, provided that the commissioner of the department of health and mental hygiene, in consultation with the commissioner of the New York city office of emergency management, shall take such actions, including the promulgation of rules, as are necessary for timely implementation of this local law, prior to such effective date.

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