

SCHENECTADY COUNTY HEAT EMERGENCY PLAN 2023

Adopted By: The Schenectady County Legislature During the June 2023 Regular Meeting

Purpose

The purpose of the Heat Emergency Plan (HEP) is to provide a recommended set of actions for Schenectady County to protect the public against the health effects of excessive heat when a Heat Emergency occurs, and the National Weather Service (NWS) issues an “extreme heat warning” for our area. The Heat Emergency Plan provides information on our operations to help residents understand our response efforts.

The HEP supports the following functions of local emergency response efforts in the following ways:

- Maximize the protection of lives while minimizing morbidity and mortality related to excessive heat and humidity levels.
- Document strategies and procedures to respond to extreme health related emergencies.

This plan is designed to share the protocols defined by the Schenectady County Office of Emergency Management as well as to inform the public on the resources and services available in the event of Heat Emergencies.

Background

During times of excessive heat, the public is at an elevated risk of heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. In particular, the elderly and those without access to in-home air conditioning are particularly vulnerable. Data from the National Weather Service show that excessive heat caused more fatalities per year during the period from 1994 to 2003 than floods, lightning, tornadoes, and hurricanes combined. Temperatures in Schenectady County have exceeded 90°F in the past, especially during the months of June and July. To reduce illness and death during a Heat Advisory, Excessive Heat Warning, or other period of hot weather, Schenectady County has adopted these guidelines.

Heat Vulnerability Index:

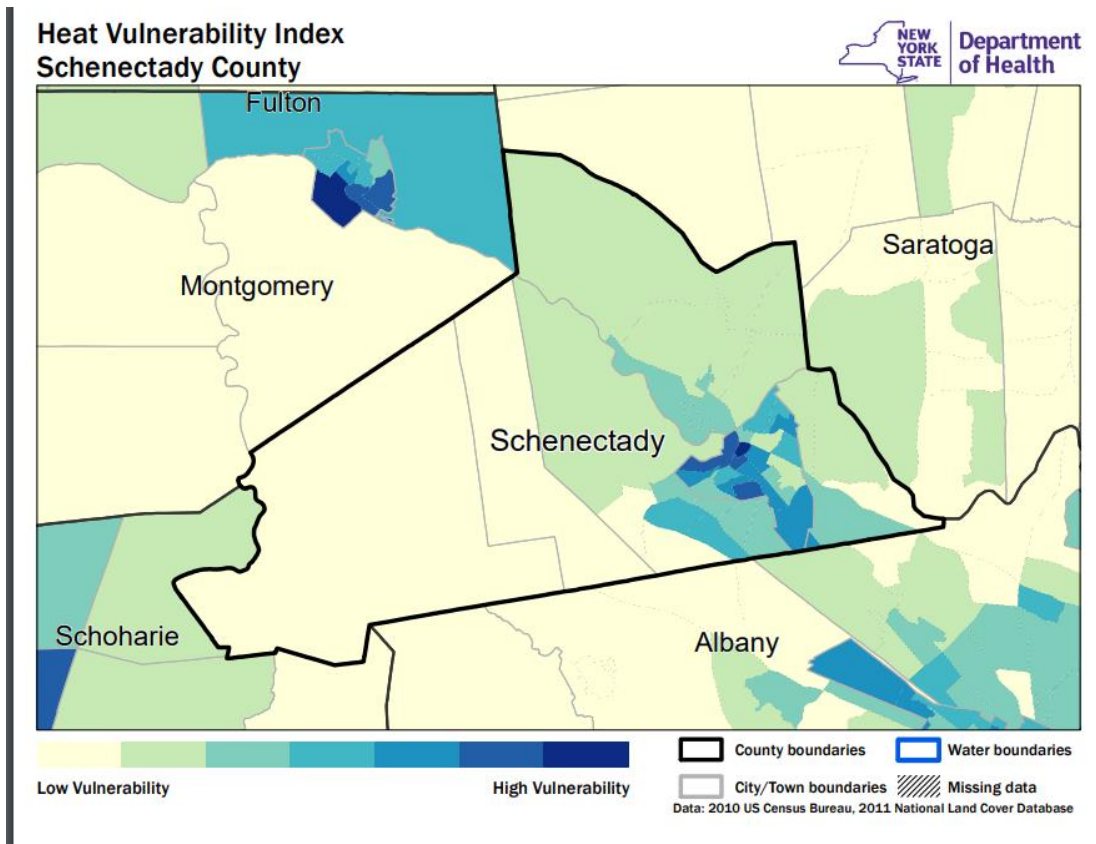
The Heat Vulnerability Index (HVI) helps to quickly identify heat-vulnerable populations. The New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) calculates a Heat Vulnerability Index for local communities using four categories of vulnerability:

Language Vulnerability	Among populations with limited understanding of English, language is commonly a barrier to accessing resources and understanding alert messages issued in English during heat events. Heat awareness messages should be announced in commonly spoken languages of the specific area to best communicate the risks of heat.
Socio-economic Vulnerability	Economic status of an individual and their community can affect how one copes with extreme heat. While recommendations to use air conditioners during hot days are commonly a part of cool-down messaging, this may not be an affordable option for low-income households. Community resources like cooling centers can help provide the public with a few hours of relief from hot weather. Public transportation to these facilities makes them accessible to families and individuals who may not have their own vehicle.
Environmental Vulnerability	Built environment and urban heat island effect contribute to heat vulnerability in urban areas. Unlike surfaces covered in vegetation, areas covered by sealed surfaces, such as asphalt and concrete (buildings and pavements) tend to retain heat. Developing parks, increasing green space, constructing green roofs, and using materials that cool rooftops and pavements can help with regional cooling.
Elderly Isolation/Elderly Vulnerability	Elderly people are often the first population to be affected by extreme heat. Elderly in rural areas are vulnerable if they are socially isolated from family and the community and face additional challenges including fewer options for healthcare and timely assistance. For these reasons, efforts to reduce the health effects of heat should also target elderly in these areas.

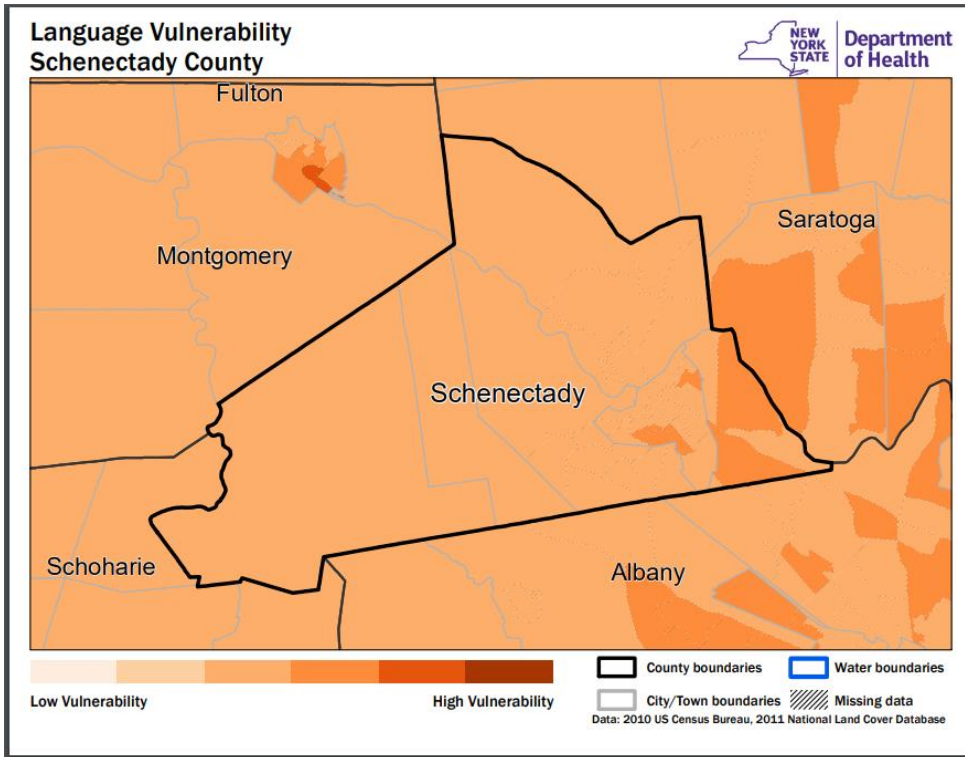
Source: https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/weather/vulnerability_index/docs/schenectady.pdf

The HVI helps to quickly identify heat-vulnerable populations in New York State using the four vulnerability categories to describe underlying causes of heat vulnerability. This can help inform interventions to target specific vulnerable populations. For example, local agencies can 1) set up more cooling centers in vulnerable areas where homes are less likely to have air conditioning; 2) provide transportation to and from cooling centers when public transportation is unavailable; 3) include risk communication and alerts in multiple languages for populations with low English proficiency; and 4) conduct additional outreach efforts to check on vulnerable populations (those with disabilities, elderly living alone, etc.).

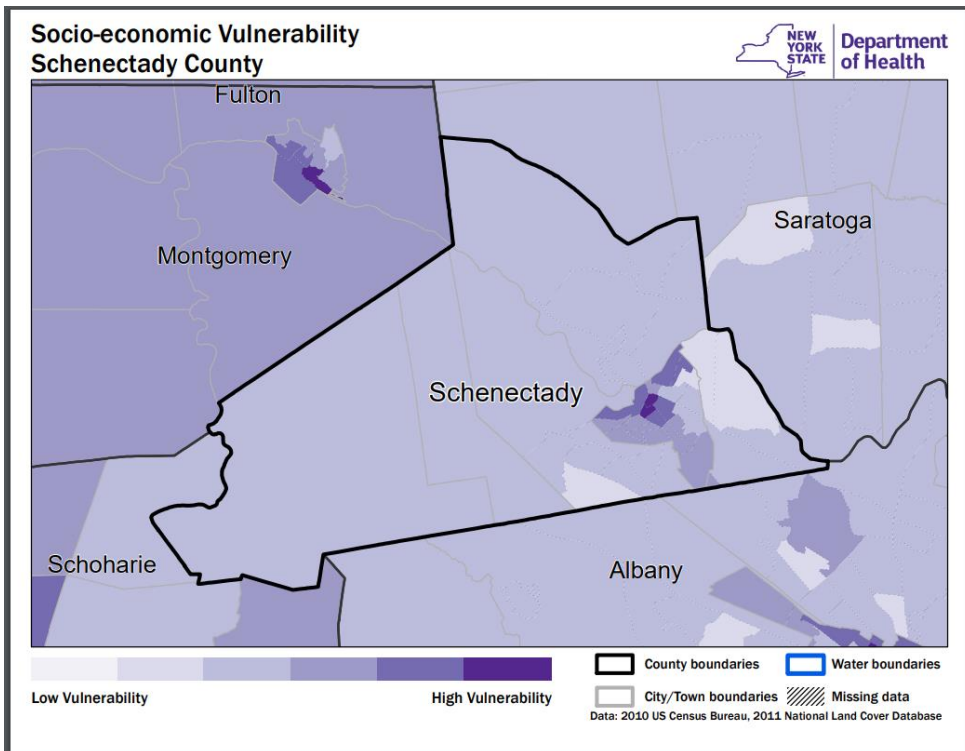
The following maps depict Schenectady County's vulnerability assessment. The county faces a relatively low to middle-level vulnerability index, except for the city of Schenectady and a small part of Niskayuna. These trends are apparent across the four categories of vulnerability. Regardless of these findings, it is still important to have a robust heat emergency plan in place, particularly in the face of climate change and greater unpredictability of weather patterns.



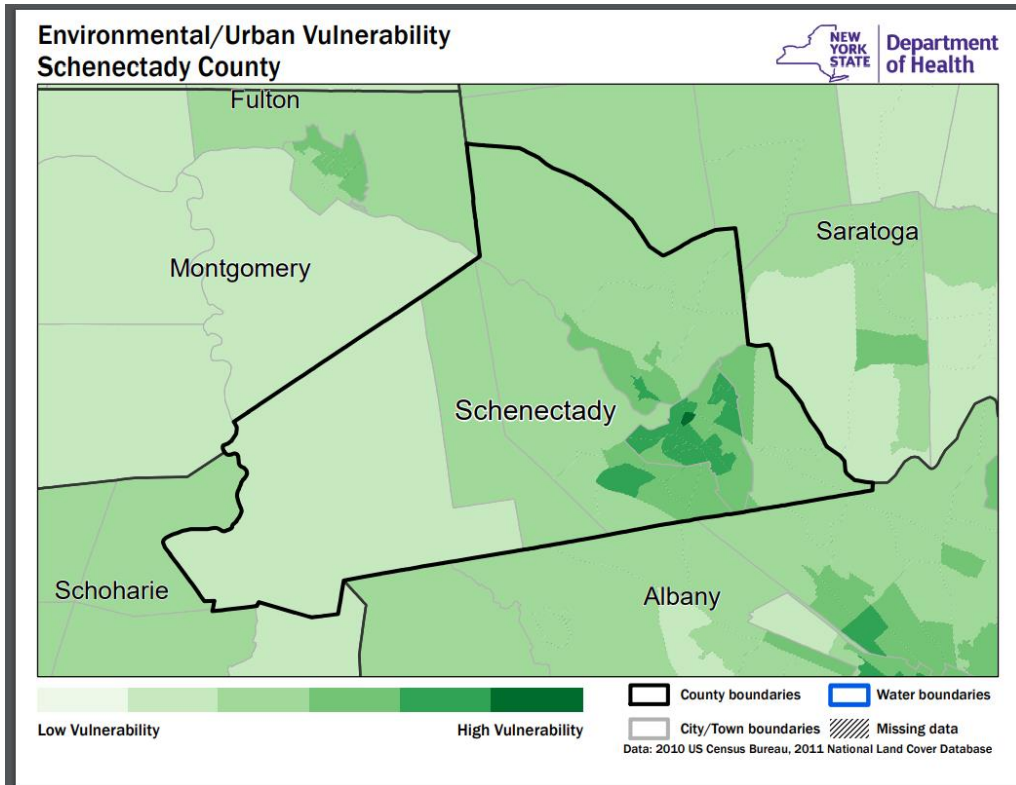
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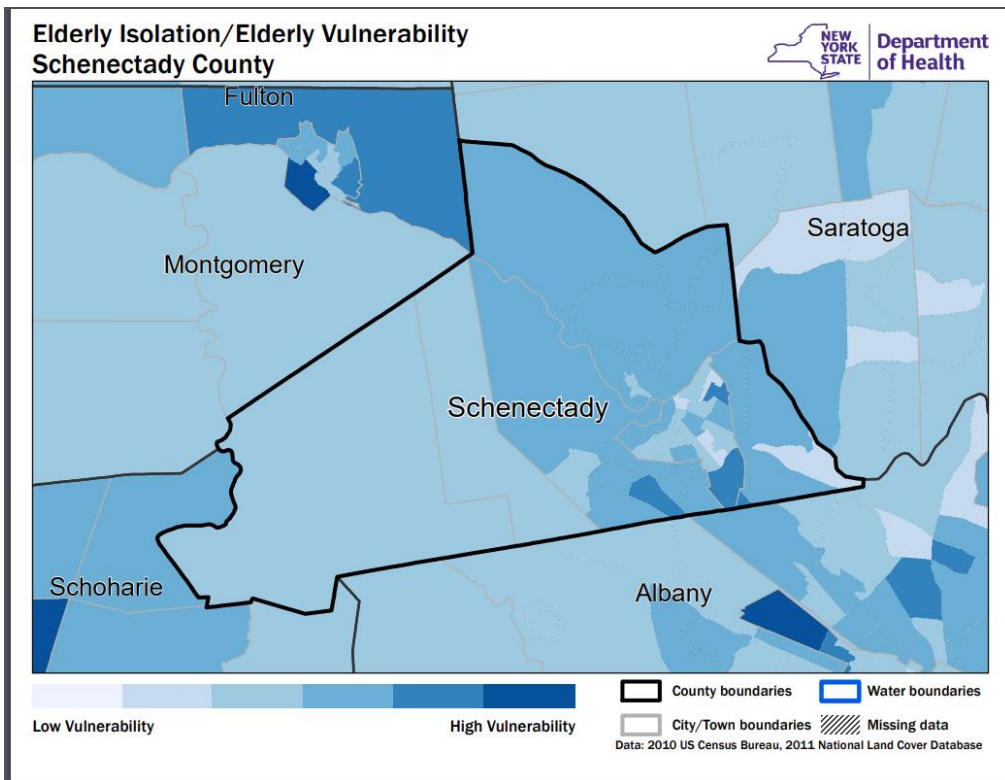
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Vulnerable Populations

Schenectady County has identified a number of vulnerable populations for outreach efforts as well as to ensure availability of cooling centers and other resources in the event of heat emergencies.

As of July 2022, the Census Bureau reports the following demographic characteristics for Schenectady County:

Demographic	Percent of Population	Vulnerability Category
Children Under 5	5.8%	At-Risk Population
People Aged 65 Years and Older	17.7%	Elderly Isolation
Hispanic or Latino	7.8%	Language
People in Poverty	12.9%	Socio-Economic

Source: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/schenectadycountynewyork/RHI625221#RHI625221>

The numbers above may be overstated because there will be overlap between the numbers, e.g., you can have people in poverty being senior citizens of Hispanic origin, etc.

Outreach

Schenectady County Alert is an emergency notification system enabling and empowering interested parties to be aware of extreme incidents in Schenectady County. Alerts will be sent via text and email. Schenectady County Alert is powered by Smart 911.

Schenectady County Emergency Notification System



In the event of an emergency, it is critically important for you to be prepared and for you to be informed. Schenectady County is taking a proactive approach to enabling its citizens to be aware of emergency situations that may impact individuals and businesses in Schenectady County. **Schenectady County Alert** is an emergency notification system enabling and empowering interested parties to be aware of extreme incidents in Schenectady County.

Schenectady County Alert is powered by Smart 911.

Procedure for Working with the Office of Emergency Management and Utility Companies

Notification of Elevated Heat Conditions

The National Weather Service Forecast Office in Albany will issue a Heat Advisory within 12 hours of expected conditions that include either a heat index of 105°F to 115°F for at most three hours during any day or a heat index above 80°F at night for at least two consecutive nights. The NWS will issue an Excessive Heat Warning when the NWS expects the heat index to exceed 105°F for more than three hours or exceed 115°F at any time. The NWS Warning Coordination Meteorologist will inform the Schenectady County Office of Emergency Management and the County Manager when a Heat Advisory or Excessive Heat Warning is issued for any area within Schenectady County.

Response

The Schenectady County Office of Emergency Management and the County Manager will issue a heat emergency for the county and will determine the availability of locations that may serve public cooling stations during their normal hours when there is a period of elevated heat that may cause heat-related illness. The Office of Emergency Management and County Manager will contact appropriate officials for each potential cooling station (see Appendix 1), and send a list of cooling stations, along with an excessive heat fact sheet (see Appendix 2), to the County's Public Information Office, Manager of Senior and Long-Term Care, County Director of Public Health, and each public safety access point (PSAP). During a severe heat emergency, the Office of Emergency Management or County Manager will seek authorization from the towns to have the cooling stations operate for extended hours and will publicize this information through the County Public Information Office.

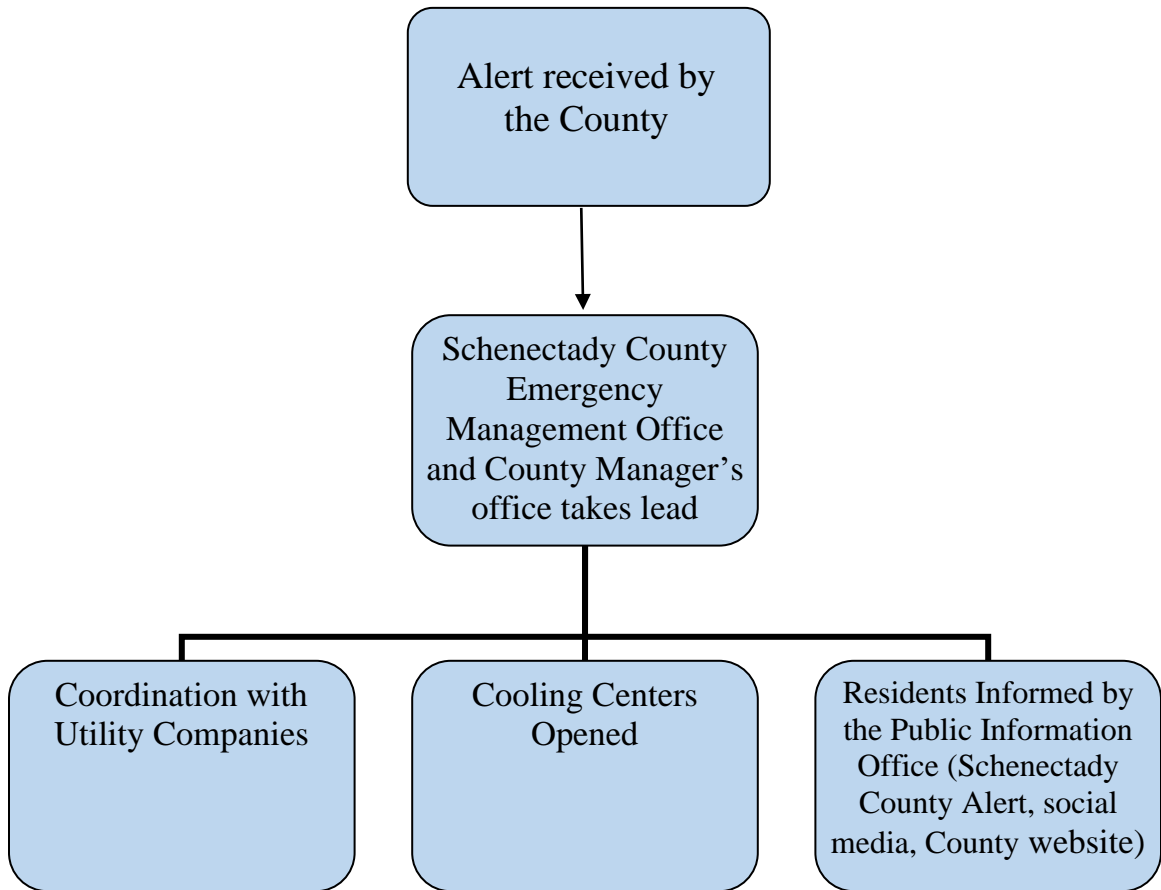
The County Public Information Office will publicize the locations and hours of the cooling stations and ask that people obtain a ride instead of walking to a cooling station. In addition, the Public Information Office will advise the public to avoid spending time outdoors, drink plenty of water, and check on the status of those who are at higher risk.

The Manager of Senior and Long-Term Care, County Director of Public Health, and the PSAPs will assist in communicating the cooling station locations and health tips.

Coordination with Utilities




National Grid (<https://www.nationalgridus.com/Upstate-NY-Home/Default.aspx>) supplies power to residents in the County. The County is in regular contact with officials at National Grid and there is direct communication during conditions that impact power/energy (storms, fire, heat, and snow advisories, etc.).

Triggers, Alerts, and Actions



Keeping County Residents Informed

Schenectady County uses several communications channels (Website, social media, TV station, Radio etc.) to keep resident informed, including on weather related matters:

Medium	Description
Website	https://www.schenectadycounty.com/
Schenectady County Alert	<p>Schenectady County Emergency Notification System</p>  <p>Smart911™</p> <p>In the event of an emergency, it is critically important for you to be prepared and for you to be informed. Schenectady County is taking a proactive approach to enabling its citizens to be aware of emergency situations that may impact individuals and businesses in Schenectady County. Schenectady County Alert is an emergency notification system enabling and empowering interested parties to be aware of extreme incidents in Schenectady County.</p> <p>Schenectady County Alert is powered by Smart 911.</p>
Facebook	 <p>The screenshot shows the Facebook profile for Schenectady County. The cover photo features the text "Schenectady County - PRESENTS - PEDALPADDLERUN" with a circular image of people participating in a run. The profile picture is the Schenectady County seal. The page has 9.9K followers and 100 following. Navigation tabs for Posts, About, Photos, and Videos are visible.</p>
Instagram	 <p>The screenshot shows the Instagram profile for schenectadycounty. The profile picture is the Schenectady County seal. The bio reads: "Schenectady County Local business A great place to live, work, raise a family, and visit over and over again! www.schenectadycounty.com". The profile has 233 posts, 1,309 followers, and 5 following. Buttons for "Follow" and "Message" are present.</p>

Twitter

← Schenectady County
4,006 Tweets



Schenectady County
is proud to be a
Purple Heart
Community

Schenectady County
@SchdyCountyNY

A great place to live, work, visit, and raise a family.

📍 Schenectady County, Upstate NY schenectadycounty.com
📅 Joined March 2009

116 Following 4,852 Followers

Tweets Replies Media Likes

Schenectady County @SchdyCountyNY · 22h ...
Investing in the arts can help spark creativity, imagination, and innovation.

Last night the County Legislature awarded a total of \$60,000 to 36 organizations whose activities promote the arts, historic preservation, or tourism.

Plan Updates and Revisions

The Schenectady County Heat Emergency Plan will be reviewed and updated as needed. It may be amended in the following situations:

- A determination by the Schenectady County Emergency Management Office to review the Plan (either post an extreme heat event or other contributing factor).
- New York State requirements and recommendations.
- County Manager's determination that a review is required.

Appendix 1: Cooling Station Locations and Contact Information

Glenville Location:

Glenville Senior Center

32 Worden Rd

(518) 374-0734

Hours: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Contact: Vicki Hillis, Director of Human Services, (518) 688-1220 ext. 9

Niskayuna Location:

Niskayuna Community Center

2682 Aqueduct Rd

(518) 372-2519

Hours: 9 a.m.-3 p.m. (Tuesday/Thursday for Senior Center)

Contact: Jaime Puccioni, Town Supervisor, (518) 386-4501

Rotterdam Location:

Rotterdam Town Senior Center

2639 Hamburg Street

(518) 356-1561

Hours: 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Contact: Mollie Collins, Town Supervisor, (518) 355-7575 ext.393

Schenectady Location:

Central Library

99 Clinton Street

(518) 388-4500

Hours: 9 a.m.-9 p.m.

Contact: No need to obtain permission for cooling stations at public libraries during normal library hours.

Public Safety Access Point Contacts:

Glenville: (518) 384-0141 (Fax)

Niskayuna: (518) 386-4594 (Fax)

Rotterdam: (518) 355-8068 (Fax)

Schenectady: In-person

Appendix 2: Fact Sheet

SCHENECTADY COUNTY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT & HOMELAND SECURITY COORDINATION

Mark LaViolette – Director

130 Princetown Plaza

Princetown, NY 12306

Phone: (518) 370-3113 Fax: (510) 370- 3115

Website: <http://www.schenectadycounty.com>

E-mail: EMO@schenectadycounty.com

FROM THE OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT -

National Weather Service data show that heat causes more per year than floods, lightning, tornadoes, and hurricanes combined. Based on the ten-year average from 1994 to 2003, excessive heat claimed 237 lives each year; by contrast, floods killed 84, tornadoes, 58, lightning, 63, and hurricanes, 18.

Quick Heat-Beating Tips

- If possible, stay out of the sun. When in the sun, wear sunscreen (at least SPF 15) and a hat to protect your face and head.
- Use an air conditioner if you have one. Set the thermostat no lower than 78 degrees.
- If you do not have an air conditioner, keep rooms well-ventilated with open windows and fans. Consider going to a public pool, air-conditioned store, mall, movie theater or Library.
- Fans work best at night, when they can bring in cooler air from outside.
- Make a special effort to check on your neighbors during a heat wave, especially if they are seniors, young children, and people with special needs. Many older New Yorkers live alone and could suffer unnecessarily in the heat because they are isolated from friends and family.
- Seniors and others who may be sensitive to extreme heat should contact friends, neighbors, or relatives at least twice a day during a heat wave.
- Drink fluids – particularly water – even if you do not feel thirsty.* Avoid beverages containing alcohol, caffeine, or high amounts of sugar.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose clothing that covers as much of your skin as possible.
- Never leave children, pets, or those who require special care in a parked car during periods of intense summer heat.
- Never leave pets outside for extended periods of time. Ensure pets have an ample supply of water.
- Avoid strenuous activity, especially during the sun's peak hours – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you must engage in strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day, usually in the morning between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m.

- Cool showers or baths may be helpful but avoid extreme temperature changes. Never take a shower immediately after becoming overheated – extreme temperature changes may make you ill, nauseated, or dizzy.
- During heat emergencies, cooling centers may be opened, listen to TV and radio news.

*People with heart, kidney or liver disease or on fluid restricted diets should check with their doctors before increasing fluid intake.

HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

Seek help if you feel symptoms of heat-related illness.

HEAT CRAMPS: Heat cramps are muscular pains and spasms, usually in the leg or stomach muscles, resulting from heavy exertion during extreme heat. Heat cramps usually occur when the [heat index](#) is between 90 and 105 degrees. Although heat cramps are the least severe of all heat-related health problems, they are often the first signal that the body is having trouble coping with the heat and should be treated immediately with rest and fluids. Stretching, gentle massaging of the spasms, or direct, firm pressure on cramps can reduce pain. Seek medical attention if pain is severe or nausea occurs.

HEAT EXHAUSTION: Heat exhaustion occurs when body fluids are lost through heavy sweating due to vigorous exercise or working in a hot, humid place. Blood flow to the skin increases, causing blood flow to vital organs to decrease. Symptoms include: sweating, pale and clammy skin, fatigue, headache, dizziness, shallow breaths, and a weak pulse.

Heat exhaustion should be treated with rest in a cool area, sipping water or electrolyte solutions, applying cool and wet cloths, elevating the feet 12 inches, and further medical treatment in severe cases. If not treated, the victim's condition may escalate to heat stroke. If the victim does not respond to basic treatment, seek medical attention. Heat exhaustion usually occurs when the heat index is between 90 and 105 degrees.

HEAT STROKE: Heat stroke — also called "sunstroke" — occurs when the victim's temperature control system, which produces perspiration to cool the body, stops working. The skin is flushed, hot and dry, and body temperature may be elevated. In fact, body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly. The victim may also be confused, develop seizures, breathe shallowly, and have a weak, rapid pulse.

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness and people exhibiting its symptoms should seek emergency medical attention. Heat stroke usually occurs when the heat index is 130 degrees or higher, but can occur when the heat index surpasses 105 degrees.