

Cooling Center Info Sheet

Adapted from State of New Hampshire DHHS Excessive Heat Emergency Response Plan

What is a cooling center?

- ◆ Cooling centers are a designated facility that can provide temporary and limited refuge from extreme heat. They are a valuable service for protecting vulnerable populations during extreme heat events. When cooling centers are activated by notification from the local Emergency Management Director, any member of the public is welcome.
- ◆ Cooling center facilities are managed by the facilities themselves, who determine each site's hours of operation and levels of accessibility. MOUs between the site, and local and state entities are encouraged to help clarify the roles and responsibilities. Members of the public are encouraged to contact a facility directly for questions about the specific amenities at a facility and the hours of operation.
- ◆ Local emergency managers will manage the list of any official cooling centers and may also advertise informal cooling centers, such as shopping malls and libraries, that are already open to the public and have air conditioning and other amenities.



Responsibilities & Procedures

- ◆ DHHS and DPHS will collaborate with the Public Health Region (PHR) Coordinators to determine the readiness and availability of resources, including pre-determined cooling centers and/or cooling stations (see below for criteria).
- ◆ Local Emergency Management Directors, in collaboration with PHR Coordinators, will be responsible for establishing cooling center locations.
- ◆ Local Emergency Management Directors will systematically close cooling centers.

Criteria for a Cooling Center

There are certain criteria a facility should have before agreeing to the commitment:

Critical Criteria

- ◆ Air conditioning
- ◆ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliant
- ◆ Seating for ten or more persons
- ◆ Available drinking water
- ◆ Continuous staffing (1-2 persons per facility)
- ◆ Communications, i.e. phone, computer
- ◆ Child friendly with materials for play
- ◆ Public restrooms continuously maintained and accessible to disabled

Suggested Criteria

- ◆ 24/7 capability
- ◆ Large capacity
- ◆ Toys and small furniture for children
- ◆ Available televisions, books, games
- ◆ Back-up generator
- ◆ Parking
- ◆ Proximity to public transit
- ◆ Transportation for those lacking their own
- ◆ Area for pets
- ◆ Follow-up resources for those in need of additional services, i.e. health care, social services, etc.

If your organization has any interest in volunteering as a cooling center during extreme heat scenarios, please contact the NH Department of Health and Human Services Division of Public Health Services at 603-271-4496 and your local emergency management director.

