

Coalition of Housing and Homeless Organizations (COHHO)

Access Housing, Inc.
Cheryl K. Barnes
Calvary Women's Services
Capital Hill Group Ministry
Catholic Charities of the
Archdiocese of Washington
Charlie's Place at St. Margaret's
Central Union Mission
Coalition for Nonprofit Housing
and Economic Development
Coalition for the Homeless
Community Council for the
Homeless at Friendship Place
Community Family
Life Services
Community for Creative
Non-violence (CCNV)
Community Partnership for the
Prevention of Homelessness
Community of Hope
Dinner Program
for Homeless Women
Downtown D.C. BID
For Love of Children (FLOC)
Foundation for the Advancement
of Accompanied Autorehab
House of Ruth
House of Imogene Shelter
JHP, Inc.
Yvonne Keyes
Miriam's Kitchen
Neighbor' Consejo
New Endeavors By Women
Project Northstar
So Others Might Eat (SOME)
Washington Legal Clinic
for the Homeless

July 16, 2003

Mr. Peter LaPorte, Director
Emergency Management Agency
2000 14th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. LaPorte,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Coalition of Housing and Homeless Organizations concerning the adequacy of the District Government's effort to protect persons who are homeless on hyperthermic days this summer. As you know, hyperthermic days are those where the temperature or the heat index rises above 95 degrees. While much attention is focused on hypothermia prevention every winter, common knowledge suggests that extreme heat poses at least as great a threat to health. Your office has announced that several buildings in the city will serve as cooling centers and we applaud this decision. However, we are concerned about the lack of publicity for this vital effort.

Also, we are concerned that there is a lack of hyperthermic services in the certain areas of the city that experience a high homeless population—specifically, the areas around the National Mall and surrounding downtown areas. I am therefore urging that your agency take the following immediate steps to ensure public safety:

1. Establish two or more water distribution stations on and around the National Mall and surrounding areas. COHHO suggests a street corner or park near 15th and Constitution, the Reagan Building Plaza and the HUD Plaza.
2. Designate at least two indoor cooling stations both north and south of the National Mall. COHHO suggests the following as possibilities: The Reagan Building, The Wilson Building (this has served as a hypothermia center in the past), The White House Visitors Center and The US Department of Housing and Urban Development Lobby.
3. Immediately launch an aggressive public awareness campaign outlining the threat that extreme heat poses and services that are available. As a model of an effective campaign, we offer the effort that DHS coordinated with regard to hypothermia this past winter.

Every year countless numbers of homeless citizens suffer severe health crisis and death as a result of exposure to extreme heat. Your office is obligated to make every effort to alleviate this threat. While the services that have been announced are steps in the right direction, significant gaps remain. We ask that you adopt the three measures suggested here and move to implement them expeditiously. I will contact your office on xxxxxxxx if I have not heard from you before then.

Sincerely,