



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

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To: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

From: Brian P. Murphy, Assistant City Manager for Community
Development *BPM*

Date: May 18, 2011

Re: City Council Order O-9 dated 4/25/11 concerning preparation for
heat waves and providing air conditioners to low-income residents

In response to the above referenced Council Order, the Community Development Department reports as follows.

Increased frequency and intensity of heat waves is one of the impacts that scientists expect with climate change and is one of the issues that will be examined in the climate change vulnerability assessment that City departments will conduct in the coming fiscal year. An interdepartmental committee, including Community Development, Public Health, Public Works, and Human Services, will work together to assess the risks to the community related to climate change and will begin charting actions to increase Cambridge's resilience. The City's current practice is to open cooling centers to help residents cope with extreme heat events.

Expanded use of air conditioners may be one of the responses to increased frequency and intensity of extreme heat events. As the City moves forward with climate change adaptation planning, various means of ensuring that residents are protected from extreme heat will be considered, including initiatives to install air conditioning.

One negative impact of expanding air conditioner use is the associated increase in energy consumption. Currently, the Cambridge Energy Alliance (CEA), with funding from the City's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant, is conducting a window air conditioner swap program. These funds are dedicated to reducing energy consumption. Residents who turn in an inefficient air conditioner through the Public Works large item pick up program can receive a voucher for \$125 that can be applied toward the purchase of an Energy Star rated window air conditioner at participating retail stores. The participating stores are TAGS, Economy Hardware, Pill Hardware, Dickson Brothers Hardware, and Sears. Residents will be able to apply for a voucher through July 31, 2011. Applications are available on the CEA website (<http://www.cambridgeenergyalliance.org>) and at the Public Works Department front counter. CEA is working with the Cambridge Housing Authority and other housing agencies to market the program to low-income residents.