Environmental Protection
Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
Carter Strickland, Commissioner

WEEKLY PIPELINE

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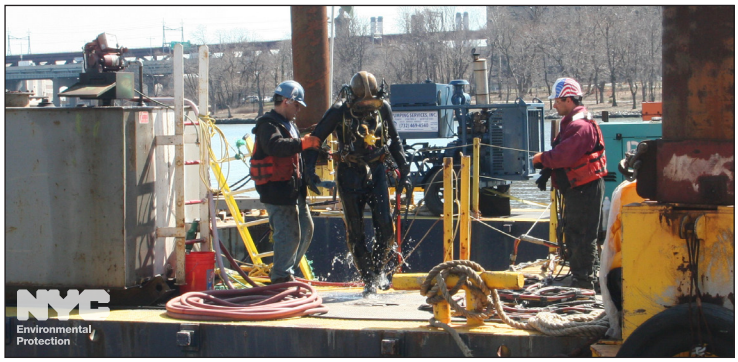
This Repair Was 'Main'ly All Wet!



DEP recently completed an underwater repair to a water main that runs beneath the East River near 111th street in Manhattan. The $700,000 project restored a critical water service line that connects Manhattan to Wards and Randall's Islands, and provides water to the Wards Island Wastewater Treatment Plant, various sports fields, and office buildings. The underwater repair began in late January and required a specialized 5-man crew that included two underwater divers.

"Repairing a nearly century old pipe buried 21 feet below the East River requires versatility, experience, and expertise. The success of this project demonstrates a remarkable amount of planning and coordination," said **Jim Moran**, Chief of Construction for the Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations.

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Spotlight on Safety

DEP Wins Safety Award

Last week, we learned the City will receive the 2013 "Wendell R. LaDue Utility Safety Award" from the American Water Works Association (AWWA). The award recognizes the organization that has established health program best practices and maintained a top safety record over the previous five years. DEP has driven down recordable injuries by 38 percent since 2010. DEP was recognized for:

- Regular Employee Health and Safety audits of every facility.
- Establishment of a hands-on water and sewer training facility with all the features of a city street including sewers, catch basins, water mains, and fire hydrants.
- Open lines of anonymous communication are maintained to address safety and compliance issues including surveys, a hotline, email, or through DEP's safety officers.
- DEP works closely with contractors to embed health and safety into every project. Over the last six years more than 14,000 inspections have been conducted to ensure compliance.

Read the entire announcement here.

At DEP, everyone is responsible for safety. If you or anyone on your team is concerned about your working conditions, it's okay to ask your supervisor or your bureau's EHS liaison how they can help. If you've still got questions, you can call the EHS Employee Concerns Hotline. It's DEP's responsibility to acknowledge and fix unsafe situations, procedures, and practices. With your help, we'll not only get the job done, we'll make it safer for ourselves, our coworkers, our families, and our city.

CALL (800) 897-9677 OR SEND A MESSAGE THROUGH PIPELINE. HELP IS ON THE WAY.

Commissioner's Corner

On Friday, I presented our Fiscal Year 2014 water rate proposal for a 5.6 percent increase to the Water Board. You can see my presentation here. This is the lowest water rate proposal in eight years and will keep water and wastewater services affordable for our ratepayers; among typical expenses (housing, cable, electricity, oil/gas), water and wastewater costs alone are below the national average. Yet we will still be able to make the investments necessary to ensure the continued quality of our water supply and wastewater services, with nearly 100 more employees on board than we had a decade ago and a $14.4 billion capital plan. And our workplace is safer than ever (see the AWWA award in the Spotlight on Safety).

The proposed rate is nearly a third lower than what we thought we were going to have to charge just a few years ago, and represents continued progress in efficiency and fiscal stewardship. We have been able to reallocate operating resources to meet new needs such as staffing our new UV and water filtration plants, and through the *Operational Excellence (OpX)* program we have identified millions of dollars in recurring annual savings through efforts such as renegotiating chemical contracts, eliminating unused mobile devices, replacing large meters, and optimizing the operation of our HAZMAT program. Already these efforts will save DEP and our ratepayers more than $16 million every year and by the end of the year we project more than $26 million in recurring savings that can be invested in the water system.

We are taking a number of steps to contain our largest annual cost, which is repaying our outstanding debt incurred for our capital program. Over the past five we have saved more than $700 million by taking advantage of current low interest rates and refinancing more than $5.3 billion in higher cost debt. In addition, we are also working closely with our regulators to ensure our largest investments make sense for New York City. From 2002 through 2012, 65 percent of DEP's capital spending was for largely unfunded mandates like the $3.2 billion Croton Water Filtration Plant and the $1.6 billion Ultraviolet Disinfection Facility. In many cases, these were necessary investments for the long-term protection of the City's water supply but with little control over the timing our requests for bids were on the market at the same time that private projects were commanding high prices. Unfunded mandates represent over a quarter of the average homeowner's bill and displaced other projects. That's why DEP has been aggressively working with regulators to reduce future mandates. Through careful planning, we have eliminated or deferred a $3.4 billion dollar mandate for handling combined sewer overflows by replacing costly gray infrastructure projects with green infrastructure and deferred $1.6 billion for construction of a Hillview Reservoir cover.

Finally, our collections efforts in the Bureau of Customer Services have been strong, aided by the completion of the Automated Meter Reading (AMR) program. AMR has reduced estimated billing by more than 62 percent and reduced billing disputes by 16 percent. In addition, the AMR program has helped save our customers more than $31 million through our Leak Notification Program, which alerts New Yorkers when their water consumption spikes because of unexpected problems like running toilets or hidden leaks.

Thanks to the hard work of our nearly 6,000 dedicated employees, DEP continues to keep rates affordable for our customers and provide exactly what New Yorkers deserve: the best water utility in the nation.

Focus on the Field

Environmental Analyst **Sydney Mescher** has had a wide-ranging experience during her three and a half years at DEP, working for the Bureaus of Engineering, Design and Construction; Wastewater Treatment; and most recently Environmental Planning and Analysis (BEPA). She has worked on a multitude of different initiatives including demand management for the Water for the Future program and green infrastructure planning as part of the Long Term Control Plan (LTCP) development. Mescher welcomes the variety of assignments and notes, "It is amazing to see the progress of a project from conception to design to completion."

Mescher is especially proud of her contribution to the Hurricane Sandy Impact and Recovery report. Over the past few months she has been working with DEP's operating bureaus to compile information on the impacts that Sandy had on the department's infrastructure, mainly the wastewater treatment plants. "Sydney was instrumental in ensuring that the 'Sandy Case Study' provides a comprehensive overview of the impact on wastewater infrastructure, blue belts, and natural areas," said BEPA Director **Pinar Balci**. "Her 'can do attitude,' diligent work, and analytic ability are always acknowledged by her peers as well as her managers."

Mescher has recently become BEPA's project manager for the wastewater treatment plant "Water Challenge," where she will help to identify opportunities for water conservation. Additionally, Mescher has been engaged in climate resiliency planning, a department-wide initiative to identify adaptation strategies and areas for improvement in light of the lessons learned from Hurricane Sandy

Mescher was born in New York City, raised in the watershed, and returned to her birthplace to attend Columbia University. An avid swimmer, she raced on her high school varsity team and recently spent two weeks scuba diving in Honduras' Bay Islands.

Welcome Home!

Environmental Police Officer (EPO) **Joseph T. Colby** recently returned from a 12-month mobilization and deployment to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. EPO Colby is a Staff Sergeant in The United States Marine Corps Reserve and was deployed to the Middle East with his unit, Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 452. Colby spent time in Kuwait as well as other Middle Eastern Countries and his unit supported numerous operations throughout the Middle Eastern Theater and in the Global War on Terror.

Colby has been with the DEP Police for the last seven years and is a member of the Emergency Service Unit based out of the Ashokan Precinct. He hails from Ulster County and he and his Marine Reserves Unit stay sharp by drilling each month at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, New York.

(This Repair Was 'Main'ly All Wet!… continued)

The water main was first installed in 1927 and had been disconnected since last September, when a New York City Park's Department contractor reported unusual swirling and bubbling along the surface of the East River in the vicinity of 111th Street. A DEP investigation, which included feeding a video camera through the main, revealed a 15-inch long by 4-inch wide hole in the 14-inch cast iron pipe, which was buried 21 feet beneath the riverbed.

Due to the East River's murky water, visibility was limited and divers excavated and repaired the water main primarily by touch, communicating with crews at the surface using radios in their scuba masks. After replacing a 16 foot section of the cast iron water main with a ductile conduit, workers pressurized the pipe and performed a final video inspection to check for leaks.

Welcome Aboard

Yesterday, 18 new employees attended orientation and were given an overview of the department by Chief Financial Officer **Steve Lawitts** and Deputy Commissioner **Diana Jones Ritter**. As they begin their new assignments we hope everyone will take a moment to say hello and welcome them to DEP!

David Carlin, **Michael K. Gallagher**, **Rheuben Henry**, **Enai Joseph**, and **Chin-Win Hwang** with BWT; **Balahi Balasubramaniam**, **Chelsea Cawley**, **Annie DiCaterino**, and **Jean-Claude Joseph** with BWSO; **Marlene Cohen**, **Lainie Diaz**, **Kaiya Freeman**, and **Addae Oliver** with BCS; **Robert De La Hoz** and **Diego Estrella Jr.** with OIT; **Reginal J. Askew Jr.** with BEDC; **Rowena R. Garcia** with Engineering Audits; and **Fabian Heras** with ACCO.

We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: newsletter@dep.nyc.gov.