

STWs: Safeguarding The Waterways

The workers at New York City's 14 wastewater treatment plants and two collection facilities have an inside look at the rhythms and patterns of urban life, including the famous diurnal pattern that shows how water use spikes as we get up in the morning and again when we return home from work and school in the evening. But the city doesn't often have a chance to get an inside look at what happens at the wastewater treatment plant. DEP's sewage treatment workers, or STWs, are the exception.

What qualifies this group to fulfill such an important task? Incoming STWs arrive at DEP with a mechanical background and an interest in the environment and receive several weeks of hands-on training, including extensive environmental, health & safety and practical safety courses. Although most incoming STWs are plumbers, electricians and maintenance workers are also common. During training, specific courses include



training about scaffolding, forklifts/aerial lifts, burning, pumps, pipe fitting, rigging and cranes, basic wastewater, laboratory procedures, Right-to-Know, and personal protective equipment. Confined spaces training prepares the team to work in tanks, pits, and the underground vaults that store equipment, and daily quizzes ensure that each person learns the material as he or she goes and has an opportunity to study and practice before taking on the full responsibilities

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Spotlight on Safety

Green jobs are good all around, right?

Yes, they are, but they are not inherently safe, just because they are "green"! Green jobs are being defined broadly as jobs that help to improve the environment. These jobs also create opportunities to help revitalize our economy and get people back to work. Green jobs do not necessarily mean that they are safe jobs. Workers in the green industries may face hazards that are commonly known in traditional work processes—such as lock out/tag out, falls, confined spaces, electrical, fire, and other similar hazards. These hazards may be new to many workers who are moving into these fast grow-

ing green industries. Additionally, workers may be exposed to new hazards which may not have been previously identified. For example, workers in the solar energy industry may be exposed to Cadmium Telluride, a known carcinogen, if adequate controls are not implemented.

As our forays into a sustainable based economy increase, it is increasingly important to assess these new jobs and tasks for hazards, just as we do for our routine and non-routine tasks in existing processes.

To read the full article, click here

Special Guest Commissioner's Corner

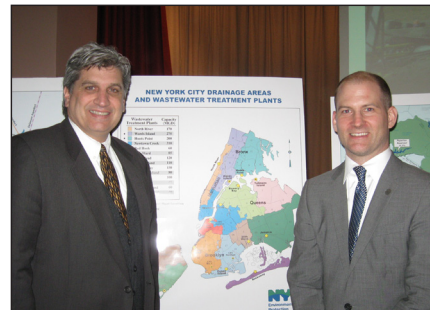
Domenic M. Recchia, Jr., City Council Member, is a guest commentator this week.

This past year has been full of good news from DEP. For years, New Yorkers have had to grapple with double-digit water rate increases. And this year, thanks to the hard work of Commissioner **Cas Holloway** and everyone at the Department of Environmental Protection, we are giving them some much needed relief.

This year's proposed single-digit rate increase is the smallest in six years. That's a huge achievement, and a clear signal to New Yorkers: We understand they're struggling to make ends meet, and we want to help. Especially in times of economic hardship, government needs to do more with less. As chairman of the City Council's Finance Committee, I appreciate that DEP is embracing this idea, that you want to work with us, and that we can achieve real, substantial agreements that protect New Yorkers.

Another victory was the successful passage of the Lien Sale Reform and Reauthorization Act. This important legislation, the product of numerous meetings and hearings, serves the dual purpose of assisting homeowners who have fallen behind on their water and sewer bills, while at the same time generating increased revenue for the city.

That's not the only good news to come out of DEP recently. The recently opened Paerdegat Basin Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Facility is a testament to years of planning and hard work by DEP's architects, engineers and wastewater treatment experts. This will do a great deal of good for the Brooklyn community, improving the water quality in Paerdegat Basin and Jamaica Bay, while making much needed improvements to our ability to handle heavy rainstorms. We're a growing city, and it's important



that our infrastructure matches our growth.

And speaking of infrastructure, I'm very excited about DEP's allocation and support in initiating the design and construction of a drainage plan in Coney Island. For years, we've had issues with poor drainage, and these improvements are desperately needed. This work is incredibly important to the rezoning of Coney Island in order to handle the influx of visitors and residents.

I have full confidence that this project will significantly improve the quality of life for the 50,000 people who live in Coney Island, and the millions of people who visit every year. My confidence is rooted not just in Commissioner Holloway, but in the dedicated men and women at DEP who have proven, time and again, that they are capable, knowledgeable, dedicated, and committed to working on behalf of the people of New York City.

As you know, the City Council is committed to protecting and preserving the environment, and our job is made that much easier with the amazing team at DEP. If we continue to work together like we have done this past year, we will leave behind a legacy that we can all be proud of: pristine harbors, clean air, delicious drinking water, strong infrastructure, and water rates that are as low as possible.

If you'd like to stay up-to-date on issues related to my district and the Finance Committee, you can follow me on my website, www.drecchia.com or on Facebook and Twitter.

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.

Focus on the Field



The health of New York City's local waterways is the best it has been in the last 100 years – due primarily to the work done by the 14 wastewater treatment plants that clean and treat nearly 1.3 billion gallons of wastewater a day before it is released back into the environment. But how does the city deal with chemicals and other substances that cannot be removed by conventional treatment processes? That is where BWT's Industrial Pretreatment Program acts to ensure that industries that deal in toxic substances follow EPA regulations to prevent chemicals like perchloroethylene used in dry cleaning and cyanide used in the jewelry industry from entering the wastewater to begin with. And it is Supervisor of Initial Classification and Scavenger Unit **Dalkeith Wright's** job to see that these industries are in compliance with the regulations.

A typical day for Dalkeith might involve categorizing a business' processes to determine which federal standards apply and whether its treatment systems are in compliance. It also may find him doing a bit of detective work to make sure that toxic substances are disposed of properly when he's not on site. That can be as simple as checking that invoices for the purchased quantity of a regulated substance match the quantity removed by a hauler, or by sampling a company's wastewater to test for the chemical in question. The most challenging part of his job is, "getting companies to understand and comply with the rules and regulations that they are required to follow, and that when we enforce against them it is not personal," says Dalkeith. He enjoys the knowledge gained from visiting companies and learning about how products are made and the technologies involved. But he especially enjoys knowing that, "the work of the unit contributes to the health of the city's waterways by stopping pollution at its source."

Dalkeith attended the City University of New York, and worked in research and development for Stauffer Chemicals before joining DEP in 1988. In his spare time, he enjoys playing tennis and dominoes.

Kodak Moment



HISTORY IN THE MAKING: Above are the roughly 60 DEP Employees who participated in the chartering event for the Water for the Future program at Gracie Mansion last week.

StratChat ...with Natasha Harper, Collections Supervisor, BCS



100 Strategic Goals Through the Eyes of Our Employees

Initiative 4 – Develop a leak notification system for customers who want to know when their water use deviates from normal consumption patterns.

THE BENEFITS: "By proactively notifying customers of potential costly leaks in near real time, we are able to establish a better relationship with the customer. They are appreciative of the notification and their ability to make repairs and avoid unnecessary

costs. Some customers will call us back to thank us for letting them know about a problem sooner rather than later. They don't often realize the impact of a leak when they think about gallons used until we translate that information into dollars."

(STWs: Safeguarding The Waterways... continued)



of the job; this is especially important since so few incoming STWs have experience in the wastewater field.

Chief of the Training and Development Section **Walter Dobkowski** has worked at DEP for 26 years and knows what it takes to join this team from his time as an STW at the Rockaway Wastewater Treatment Plant and from 20 years of training incoming classes, including the largest class ever (more than 40 people) that completed orientation this past March. His career also exemplifies some of the most popular reasons for choosing to enter this field. "When the timing is right I've

seen individuals rise through the ranks to become plant chiefs in as few as 10 years," he says. But even without such fortuitous timing with the civil service schedule, steady work and regular opportunities for career advancement are two important factors that lead people to apply for this position.

After orientation, DEP offers classes to allow STWs to earn additional certificates or licenses applicable to the wastewater treatment industry, including certificates of fitness issued by FDNY and a wastewater operator's license issued by the New York State DEC. One thing that distinguishes New York City's STWs from their counterparts in other municipalities is that training prepares them to operate and maintain the plants, whereas the terms of the wastewater operator license reflects a practice in other municipalities to split these functions between two different teams. Walter says about New York City STWs, "This is a more skilled workforce because they can multi-task and are not limited to one task or trade, and are that much more valuable to the city."

Press Box

"The agency responsible for providing tap water and treating sewage has emerged as a model for transforming the government itself." – Crain's New York Business profile on DEP's latest innovative steps to improve operations, enhance customer service and keep water rates as low as possible 

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