

Special Guest *Commissioner's Corner*



John Petito, DEP's Acting Deputy Commissioner for the Bureau of Wastewater Treatment is a guest commentator for this week.

DEP's Bureau of Wastewater Treatment (BWT) includes nearly 1,800 highly skilled men and women who protect public health and the environment by properly treating the 1.3 billion gallons of wastewater produced in New York City every day. Last month, we held the 29th annual Operations Challenge competition at the Jamaica Wastewater Treatment Plant in Queens. The competition serves as a terrific opportunity for BWT employees to showcase their specialized skills and knowledge while also building camaraderie that will serve them well in the future. During the Challenge, teams of wastewater treatment plant operators compete in events that test the skills and expertise required to operate and maintain New York City's 14 wastewater treatment plants and 96 pump stations.

Teams this year included the North River Dirty Water Dawgs; the Coney Island Cyclones; the 26th Ward Unflushables; the Rockaway Rockafellaz; the Newtown Creek Eggheads; and the Jamaica Sludge Hustlers.

Each team competed in timed and judged events that represent a cross section of essential wastewater treatment operations, including:

- **Collections:** Teams responded to a leaking pipe and made repairs while it remained in service.
- **Maintenance:** Contestants removed damaged submersible pumps, made the necessary repairs and returned them to service.
- **Worker Safety:** Teams competed in a timed, confined space rescue of a fellow employee and performed CPR while checking air quality.
- **Pump Maintenance:** Teams competed to respond to a severe weather condition that resulted in a pumping outage. They restored the main pumps to service and programmed them for emergency use.
- **Wastewater Testing:** Teams performed tests on wastewater samples to determine if they meet discharge standards.
- **Wastewater Treatment Process:** Teams were tested on their knowledge of the wastewater treatment process.

At the conclusion of the competition, the two highest scoring teams were the Jamaica Sludge Hustlers and the 26th Ward Unflushables. These two teams will now advance to compete against teams from across the northeast in a regional contest. The winners of that event will go on to compete in the national competition, which will be held in New Orleans this fall. A team from DEP has advanced to the national competition in each of the last 20 years.

The Operations Challenge was developed by the Water Environment Federation, the largest professional organization representing the wastewater treatment industry. Our event was sponsored by the Water



Environment Association in conjunction with DEP.

I'd like to thank everyone in the Bureau of Wastewater Treatment for all of their hard work and dedication to DEP's mission. For all of their work on the Operations Challenge,

I'd especially like to thank **Howard Robinson** and **William Grandner**. And, best of luck at the regional competition to the teams from the Jamaica and 26th Ward treatment plants! [Click here](#) to see a video and more photos.

Spotlight on Safety

Poster Campaign Reminds Staff to Wear Hearing Protection

The Employee Suggestion Program received a submission to encourage the use of hearing protective devices in required locations. The Office of Environmental, Health and Safety responded by creating a "Life Is Worth Listening To" poster campaign to remind staff of the importance of wearing hearing protection. These posters were distributed in early April to DEP facilities with employees in the Hearing Conservation Program. This program is designed to prevent any temporary or permanent noise induced hearing loss to DEP employees and equip workers with the knowledge and hearing

protection devices necessary to protect them.

The DEP hearing protection campaign makes it clear: "There is No Cure" for permanent noise induced hearing loss—prevention is key! Wearing hearing protective devices such as ear plugs or earmuffs when being exposed to levels of noise equal or greater than 85 decibels averaged (dBA) for extended periods of time can prevent noise induced hearing loss in the workplace.

[Click here](#) for more information on DEP's Hearing Conservation Program and [click here](#) to view the Hearing Protection Posters.

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.

Out of the Archives



Photographed on April 28, 1915, this floating “boat”—a siphon drainage apparatus located 1,100 feet below the surface of the Hudson River—pumped water out of the Catskill Aqueduct during construction, sending it up through the central 10-inch pipe. [View more archive photos here.](#)

Next Gen DEP



Several DEP offices last week celebrated national Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day. By showing children what their parents do at work, the day aims to reinforce the importance of education, help children envision a path toward their own careers, and promote learning in an interactive environment. The national celebration dates back to 1993. Children of DEP employees in Grahamsville and Downsville, shown here, were treated to tours of a water quality laboratory, wastewater treatment plant, water supply control center and a hydroelectric facility. They also learned about field work and received a demonstration from one of the police dogs that works with DEP Police.

Spring Planting



With the arrival of May and warmer temperatures, Green Infrastructure maintenance crews with the Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations are fanning out across the city to clean bioswales and add new plantings. Bioswales are designed to capture stormwater from roadways before it can drain into a sewer and contribute to overflows. In order to function as designed, it is important for bioswales to include healthy plants which will help absorb the stormwater. To see a video of a bioswale collecting stormwater [go here.](#)

WebEX Brown Bag Lunch Sessions



Last month, the Bureau of Organizational Development & Human Resources (OD&HR) in collaboration with the Office of Information Technology (OIT), offered DEP’s very first WebEX-enabled brown bag lunchtime session. Through the innovative use of technology, many of DEP’s geographically dispersed employees had the ability to tune in to the brown bag session directly from their desktops. Employees who participated from their desktop were able to hear the presentations as well as send in questions that were repeated and addressed for everyone attending the workshop to hear. WebEX opens up new opportunities to access and engage the DEP workforce. A special thanks to OIT’s **Paul Park** for championing this breakthrough effort that will allow all of us to meet online, hold events and webinars, and teach or train remotely in real-time going forward.

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