

## Office of Engineering Audits Earns its Plaudits by Money Saved

Every month DEP pays millions of dollars to construction and engineering firms for the work they do to build critical infrastructure projects like the City Water Tunnel No. 3, and the UV Disinfection Facility. But with so many capital construction projects underway and so many different vendors involved, how does DEP make sure that its money is spent wisely and accurately? This is where the Office of Engineering Audits (OEA) comes in. Composed of 21 dedicated employees and led by Engineering Audit Officer **Aris Georgelis**, OEA is responsible for



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## Spotlight on Safety

### Wash Away Illness

#### How to prevent colds and flus—including H1N1

The second week of December is **National Hand Washing Awareness Week**. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, frequent and careful hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent infection—and to keep you healthy and on the job. It is important to note that the use of soap and water is as effective as using alcohol based sanitizers to prevent transmission of disease.

There is a right way to wash your hands effectively:

- Wet hands with clean running water (warm water if available) and apply soap.
- Rub hands together to make lather and scrub all surfaces. Pay particular attention to fingers, fingertips, around rings, and under fingernails where

germs love to breed. Palms are heavy germ zones, too.

- Continue rubbing hands for 15-20 seconds.
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry hands using a paper towel or air dryer. If drying hands with a paper towel, use it to turn off the faucet.

If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or sanitizer wipes to clean your hands. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers significantly reduce the number of germs on skin and are fast acting.

- Apply product to the palm of one hand.
- Rub hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of hands and fingers until hands are dry.

## Commissioner's Corner

Back in September we reported that in Fiscal Year 2010 DEP had the fewest water main breaks in recent memory. That great result is due to the dedicated team at BWSO responsible for the integrity and upkeep of approximately 6,600 miles of city water mains.

But water mains still break and the cold temperatures that winter brings increase the risk. Yesterday our BWSO field crews were tested by three water main breaks in Manhattan, and our crews showed that they are ready for the winter ahead. The first break was reported at 12:38 a.m. on 1st Avenue in the Upper East Side. The BWSO team—led by Citywide Night Manager **Pete Fahey**, Emergency Operations Manager **Paul Vilella**, Emergency Manager **Stephen Sforza** and Manhattan District Supervisor **Philip Mancino**—located a significant break in a 12-inch water main from 1917, which was restored to service before the evening rush hour. At 6:39 a.m., a second break occurred on Broadway and 105th Street. Emergency Manager **Jon Annunziata**, Repair Supervisor **Mike Tillman** and Water Maintenance Supervisor **Anthony Stio** led the response, which required the replacement of nine feet of pipe on a main dating from 1923. Service was restored by early evening, but BWSO's work was far from finished. At 2:03 p.m., a main in service since 1870 broke on East 2nd Street between 1st and 2nd Avenue. Emergency Manager **Thomas Votta** and a DEP crew were on scene and installed a stainless steel repair clamp. Thanks to BWSO for a very strong start to the season—I'm confident the positive momentum will continue through the cold months ahead.

After a stop by the 1st Avenue break early yesterday, I travelled to the Wards Island Wastewater Treatment plant to greet our newest class of sewage treatment workers on their first day at DEP. These 16 recruits will go through a six-week orientation program run by BWT Chief of Training **Walter Dobkowski**, where they'll learn the skills needed to operate and maintain our wastewater treatment facilities. My remarks focused on the



importance of worker safety, and BWT's critical role in protecting public health. Welcome aboard!

After Wards Island it was back to Lefrak to introduce the launch of a major reorganization in BEDC designed to give our skilled project managers the tools and authority they need to deliver capital projects on time and on budget. Deputy Commissioner **Kathryn Mallon** explained how the changes will increase manager accountability and speed up decision making, two improvements that are needed for BEDC to deliver DEP's ambitious capital program—including breaking ground on the bypass for the Rondout-West Branch Tunnel by 2013.

Finally, last Tuesday, I took part in the 2010 Waterfront Conference on a panel that was hosted by Deputy Mayor for Economic Development **Robert Steel**, and included Parks Commissioner **Adrian Benepe**, Long-Term Planning and Sustainability Director **David Bragdon**, NYC Planning Commission Chairwoman **Amanda Burden** and President of the Economic Development Corporation, **Seth Pinsky**. Renewing New York City's waterfront for recreation, commercial and industrial development, and residential living is a top priority for **Mayor Bloomberg**. More than 500 people attended the event—a fantastic turnout that shows how many New Yorkers have a stake in the city's waterfront—our sixth borough. I discussed DEP's vast and ongoing capital commitments to improve harbor water quality, including the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan, which will reduce CSO's and has the potential to transform and beautify the entire city. Congratulations to the Manhattan Waterfront Alliance for creating an outstanding event.

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



Many people say they feel DEP is a family, and that couldn't be more true for **Janet Singh** who grew up here—professionally that is. Janet started with DEP in 1995 as a summer college intern and enjoyed the experience so much that she joined full time in 1996 and hasn't looked back since. Now as Assistant Bureau Administrator in the Office of Engineering Audits (OEA), Janet works closely with Bureau Administrator **Linda Bedgood** and Director **Aris Georgelis**.

In addition to being Assistant Bureau Administrator, Janet also keeps busy filling other roles in the office including EHS Safety Officer and Database Adminis-

trator and is an asset to the operation. During her time as database administrator, OEA has completely changed the way it handles its filing and organization systems—due in large part to Janet. She designed databases that log all payments and change orders they receive and helped to eliminate a backlog that had accumulated over time. But Janet is quick to note that she is one part of the puzzle and that everyone in OEA works together to complete audits as soon as possible, whether that means making databases or doing other tasks that need to be done.

Even when Janet isn't at work, she is still doing great work. Several times since her tenure at Queens College, Janet has traveled abroad to various countries—from Jamaica and Trinidad to Guyana and India—to aid in providing help to doctors that provided free medical services to the underprivileged. In what's left of her time, Janet is working on a Masters Degree in speech pathology and spends time with her family.

## Out of the Archives

### “Stop That Leak!” Water Conservation Campaign Poster, c.1940



Water conservation campaign poster by illustrator and designer Fred Cooper. Starting in the 1940s, Cooper was the main illustrator for “The Subway Sun,” a regular poster feature from the NYC Board of Transportation that promoted subway safety and service announcements. This poster was created in response to a severe water shortage that began in the mid-1930s, resulting in an unprecedented amount of correspondence from concerned citizens. In order to let the public know that the Department was actively working to prevent water waste, all employees were provided with a supply of these posters, which they were to distribute to neighborhood stores on the way home from work. (Image: DEP Archive RS 1252)

## Kudos Corner

**Fred Chyke-Okpuzor**, Manager of BWSO's Health and Safety Section, passed the Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) exam. CIH is one of the highest professional achievements in the Environmental and Occupational Health field.

## Milestones

Best Wishes to the following employees who will be retiring in the month of December: **Larry Brincat**, BWT, 31 years; **Wilfredo Negron**, BWT, 22 years; **William Calbert**, BCS, 30 years; and **Myrtle Harding**, HR, 24 years.

Congratulations to the following DEP employees for their years of service: **Frank Munari**, BPS, 46 years; and **Daniel Cunningham**, BCS, 30 years of service.

## Event Calendar:

### DEP Blood Drive

Lefrak, 6th Floor training room: 12/7-12/9, 8:00 am to 1:30 pm. Please click [here](#) to see the memo from Commissioner Holloway.

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auditing payments and reviewing change orders for a wide range of capital projects and consultant contracts.

The OEA operates pursuant to a Comptroller directive, which requires all City agencies to monitor and audit payment vouchers for construction and consultant services. Essentially, the OEA acts as a fraud prevention unit by guarding against double billing, abuse of funds, and accounting mistakes. They work regularly with the Comptroller's Office and the NYC Law Department to ensure that the DEP's 835,000 customers are getting the best possible value for their dollar. Before any payment can be made to a vendor or before a change order can be approved, the OEA staff must review and audit the proposed payment to make sure that DEP is getting what it paid for. This often involves making field visits to construction sites to confirm the completion of construction milestones.

Each year, the Engineering Audit Office saves DEP millions of

dollars in overpayments, double billing, and other accounting mistakes. For example, OEA disallowed over \$500,000 in payments and change orders this past November. In addition to the millions of dollars saved each year, Engineering Audit Officer Aris Georgelis notes that OEA's “presence deters contractors from cutting corners...something you can't put a value on.” OEA's employees are passionate about their work and recognize the critical role they play in providing oversight to some of the largest and most expensive public works projects in the nation. For **Paul Marks**, an Engineer Auditor who has been with DEP for 22 years, the best part of working for OEA is being able to visit construction sites like City Water Tunnel No. 3. Working for OEA, he says, gives you “a greater appreciation for the vast infrastructure the City supports on a daily basis.” And thanks to employees like Paul we can be sure that DEP is receiving the best possible value for the money we spend.

**We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: [newsletter@dep.nyc.gov](mailto:newsletter@dep.nyc.gov).**