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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## DEP Offers Payment Incentive Program to Residential Account Holders

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection today announced that it is offering a one-time Payment Incentive Program (PIP) to more than 8,000 one-family residential account holders. Under this program, which began yesterday, DEP will eliminate the late payment charges of eligible customers who agree to immediately pay their water bill in full.

The PIP program offers a financial incentive for customers with long-standing disputes to settle their outstanding water bills. This payment program focuses on customers with balances of a \$1,000 or more with outstanding charges for over a year. For eligible customers the principal payment owed will be adjusted down to a settlement of \$2 per-day charge.

"The Payment Incentive Program will give delinquent customers a real break on their bills, so that they can settle their accounts before DEP is forced to take harsher steps, such as service termination," said DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd.

Eligible customers will have 90 days to make payments under Payment Incentive Program, and those who do not, will then be scheduled for service termination. DEP has begun notifying customers of their eligibility by mailing an initial notice letter informing them that their late-payment charges have been reduced.

All letters will include basic customer information, delinquent status information, PIP availability, deadline for customer response, and a call center phone number to call for questions. DEP will send a follow-up notice in the next two weeks for those who do not submit payments.

The Payment Incentive Program is a key component of DEP's ongoing transformation of its Bureau of Customer Service (BCS), the bureau responsible for metering water, issuing bills, and collecting revenue. The transformation, which began last summer, has two main parts: expanded customer assistance and a stronger set of enforcement tools and revenue collection strategies, such as service shut-offs and stand-alone lien sales for customers who do not pay.

### MORE INFORMATION

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Already, customer access has improved. DEP has expanded call center hours to be more convenient for customers, dramatically reduced customer call wait time, reduced the response time for written customer inquiries, added online bill payment to DEP's web site, begun notifying customers of unusual increases in water consumption, and reduced both the number and duration of disputes.

DEP is also piloting two automated meter reading technologies, and will begin city-wide installation in the spring of 2008. Automated meter reading is used throughout the country and will provide DEP and its customers with more comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate account information.