

The ABCs of Getting NYC More Zzzzs

In the city that never sleeps, DEP's Air and Noise Unit works nearly around the clock to achieve a balance between a vibrant and quiet city for Big Apple residents. Since the implementation of the new Noise Code in 2007, the unit, co-directed by Principal Air Pollution Control Inspectors **Ray Montalvo** and **Joseph Scafidi**, has not stopped making sure New York residents are in compliance with the revised code each and every day.

In 2004, **Mayor Bloomberg** ordered a review of the city's Noise Code—the first overhaul in more than 30 years. The main purpose was to manage the need for construction, development and an exciting nightlife with New Yorkers' well



deserved right to peace and quiet. Since then, noise complaints have gone down. In FY 2009—DEP received a total of 39,371 noise complaints compared to 31,778 in FY 2010, a 19.3% decrease.

(Continued on reverse side)

Spotlight on Safety

It's Noisy in Here!

Regular overexposure to noise is one of the leading causes of recordable workplace injuries. DEP has conducted noise assessments, and employees exposed to average noise levels greater than 85 dBA (decibels) must be included in DEP's hearing conservation program. However, serious noise exposure is just as likely to occur outside of work. Hearing loss can happen so gradually that it can go unnoticed. More than 30 million Americans and 13 out of every 100 school age children have some degree of hearing loss. The largest contributing factor is exposure to loud sounds over a period of time. Common sources are power equipment, surround sound, and high volume headsets. Every time you turn up the volume on your music or a movie, you may be risking your hearing and

beginning irreversible hearing loss. Likewise, every time you do not wear hearing protection or wear it improperly in noisy work environments, you are also risking hearing loss.

How do you know if an environment is "too noisy"? A general rule of thumb is if you have to raise your voice above a normal conversational tone, to talk to someone who is an arm's length away, then the noise is likely to be hazardous. The Centers for Disease Control website has an excellent noise safety resource page complete with an interactive noise meter to demonstrate everything from a mosquito (< 30 dBA) to a rocket launch (180 dBA) and many other noises in between. It is worth a look.

If you have any questions about noise in your workplace, contact your EHS representative.

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



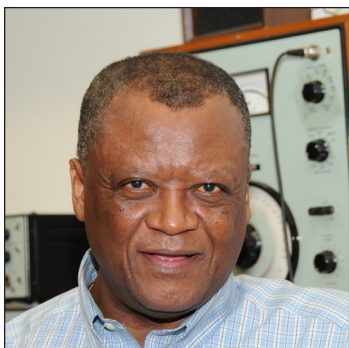
Yesterday, I participated in a conference on Water Resources and the Regional Economy hosted by Hudson River Estuary Coordinator **Frances Dunwell**, and Assistant Commissioner for Water Resources **Jim Tierney** from the State Department of Environmental Conservation. New York City's robust water supply has been critical to its sustained economic and population growth since the 17th century; the conference focused on how New York State's water resources can be harnessed to stimulate economic growth, while at the same time protecting water quality, which is essential to public health. I noted that **Mayor Bloomberg** has made it a priority to support economic development in the watershed that is consistent with watershed protection, and is committed to working with our many upstate partners. Just this month, DEP expanded boating access to year round for the final two Westchester reservoirs—an initiative that enhances the local quality of life and boosts tourism.

Last Wednesday, Deputy Commissioner **Vincent Sapienza** (pictured above) joined Kings County District Attorney **Charles J. Hynes** to announce the arrest of eight people and businesses, including Regal Cinemas multiplex movie theatre and TGI Friday's, who were indicted for discharging raw sewage and restaurant grease into Shell Bank Creek—which feeds into Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn. DEP's Shoreline Survey initially uncovered the source of the illegal sewage discharge, which it traced back to the movie theater,

and then alerted State DEC. Our notification got the ball rolling on the investigation that culminated in last week's indictments. The message to would-be-polluters is clear: make sure your sanitary sewer is functioning properly, or face the consequences. I'd like to thank District Attorney Hynes and his investigators for acting decisively to stop this illegal behavior, the State Department of Environmental Conservation for assisting in the investigation, and DEP's own **Mayank Shukla** and **Jorge Villacis** from the Shoreline Survey team for their work cracking this case.

Last week I also had the opportunity to thank the team that developed paperless billing and enabled us to launch it more than a year ahead of schedule. Paperless billing was a joint effort of the Bureau of Customer Service and the Office of Information Technology that included **Purna Movva**, **Ram Koluri**, **Christopher Senko**, **Inna Gurvits**, **John Olmo**, **Santosh Erukula**, and **Nagendra Koli-setty**. Their work is already paying off (literally)! In just the first month since it was launched, more than 2,200 customers have signed up for paperless billing. That equates to roughly \$4,500 of annual savings that would have been spent on mailing and processing costs. It's a great start, and we will continue to promote the program to convince even more of our customers that paperless billing is the most cost effective and environmentally-friendly way to pay their water bill.

Focus on the Field



Together with DEP's noise inspectors in the Bureau of Environmental Compliance, Assistant Electrical Engineer **Nerva Paul's** work to calibrate the noise level meters helps DEP to enforce the city's Noise Code. This is most often done by addressing noise complaints submitted through 311, but Nerva and his team also issues noise permits for construction projects and help develop Alternative Noise Mitigation plans that outline measures a contractor must follow to limit noise. DEP has different types of noise level meters to address the different types of noise one might find in the city, including some meters that measure noise as the human ear perceives it and others that measure individual bands that make up the complete sound spectrum. Nerva keeps our meters in good working

order by calibrating one at least twice a year, or as often as needed, since accurate readings are crucial to addressing problems as they occur in the field and for sustaining enforcement actions.

Nerva's institutional memory makes him a valuable employee beyond his technical expertise; arriving at DEP with no previous experience in noise measurement, he quickly found a mentor and learned on the job. In his 27 years at DEP, he remembers tape recording noise and returning to the lab to use a frequency analyzer to determine whether or not DEP should issue a violation. He also remembers working with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to measure noise levels at the property line of their developments to make recommendations for the most suitable type of window installation. Despite the changes in the technology and scope of his work, Nerva's focus remains the same: making this city a pleasant and enjoyable place to live for all New Yorkers.

In his free time, he enjoys watching sports with his son—a self-described “typical New Yorker,” he follows the Giants, Jets, Yankees, and Mets.

Press Box

“Last week ... city Department of Environmental Protection reported to homeowners and representatives that the work was proceeding according to plan. And, for the first time ever, elected officials and hailed the progress at Brookfield. ‘Everything appears to be in place,’ Borough President James Molinaro told the Advance. ‘They are on schedule and meeting all their time markers. I am satisfied.’”
— Staten Island Advance editorial on the progress of the Brookfield remediation; December 7, 2010 📄

Milestones

Congratulations to **Riham Ishak**, BEDC, and her husband **Hany** on the birth of their son **Peter Michael** on November 15. Mother and baby are both doing well.

Congratulations to **Mahendra Ramnarine**, BPS, and his wife **Christina** on the birth of their son **Surya** on December 1. All are doing well.

Best wishes to **Joseph Garibaldi**, BWT, who is retiring on December 17, after 32 years of service.

DEP Holiday Toy Drive

Please take part in DEP's Holiday Toy Drive by donating new and unwrapped toys. Please click [here](#) to see the flyer 📄 for toy drop-off locations. The final day to donate toys is Friday, December 17.

A Kodak Moment



Photo of city view taken by **Kristen Artz**, City Hall photographer.

Kudos Corner

Last week's DEP Blood Drive collection totaled 517 pints for all locations. The total for the year came to 1,970 pints. Thanks to all who made this such a successful effort, including Director of Employee Benefits **Arlene Siegel-Fishman**; Supervisor for Workers' Compensation **Malini Strickland**; **Paula Miritello** of BWS who coordinated all the BWS blood drive locations; and all the blood captains. Thanks also to the Facilities Management staff who made sure the rooms were cleaned and set up before and after the drive.

(The ABCs of Getting NYC More Zzzzs... continued)

The Noise Code covers jackhammers, barking dogs, music and other noises—even the ice cream truck has to comply. “Since the new Noise Code was enacted, DEP's staff has worked diligently to provide the residents of NYC a service to enhance their quality of life,” said Scafidi.

The 45-member DEP Noise Unit responds to noise complaints in a variety of ways. Most commonly, inspectors respond to complaints which may require that they schedule an appointment with the complainant to evaluate and assess the situation. Once they are at the location, sound level readings are taken with a noise meter and compared with the sound levels of the problem noise to determine if it has exceeded Noise Code standards. If warranted, a notice of violation is written. DEP also works closely with the Police Department in responding to complaints. Noise coming from auto and motorcycle mufflers, horn honking and boom boxes is generally responded to by the Police Department since an offending vehicle has to be pulled over to the side of the road and uni-

formed police officers are trained to do this.

Since the implementation of the Noise Code, DEP has also worked with industries to transition into new ways of doing business and complying with the new noise regulations. The construction industry must now develop comprehensive noise mitigation plans prior to commencing construction. Also, under the new code, a bar or a club that plays music can be fined if the music is plainly audible to an inspector measured from 15 feet outside the business. However, businesses can avoid the steep fines if they submit a noise mitigation proposal and take concrete steps to alter their acoustics. As for ice cream trucks, they are now required to stop playing the jingle when they are parked on a neighborhood street. “We will continue to work with the public to inform and protect NYC from unreasonable noise,” said Scafidi.

New York City is a very busy urban environment, so it is nice to know that someone is looking out for our peace and quiet.

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