

5th Ave Water Main Break



Crews continue to make repairs to a 36-inch water main on 5th Avenue near Union Square, in Manhattan. Although work continues, water service was restored to all customers late last week. The project is highlighted in today's Commissioner's Corner and Focus on the Field. For additional photos of the repair work [click here](#).

Spotlight on Safety

Winter Weather Precautions

We all know there are serious safety concerns working outside in the winter. As the temperature drops and as the wind speed increases, heat can leave your body more rapidly causing hypothermia and frostbite. With ice and snow accumulation, slips and falls can occur. In addition, the snow can limit visibility and drivers can skid on ice.

DEP employees should use extreme caution while working outside during these winter weather conditions:

- Inspect your vehicle prior to use. If any vehicle system is not working properly, contact your supervisor.
- If working in a traffic work zone use required traffic controls. Remember to wear the appropriate high visibility vest at all times.

- If you are stranded in a vehicle, stay in the vehicle. Call for emergency assistance if needed.
- Use caution while shoveling snow and take frequent breaks in warm areas. Keep the back straight, lift with the legs and do not turn or twist the body.
- To prevent slips, trips, and falls, clear walking surfaces of snow and ice, and spread deicer after a winter storm.
- Be aware of damaged power lines.
- Wear proper PPE and footwear.

Follow the safety guidelines in DEP's "Exposure to Extreme Heat and Cold" Guidance. [Hot Cold Weather Guide](#)). Also, for more information please see OSHA's: [Winter Weather Hazards/Precautions](#).

Commissioner's Corner



Over the last several years, we have made employee safety a top priority at every level of the department, and our efforts are paying off. In the last four years, we have reduced reportable injuries by more than 63 percent and DEP's injury incident rate is well below the industry average. Our commitment to employee safety was on display last week when a 36-inch water main broke on 5th Avenue, near Union Square in Manhattan. Faced with an unusually located break, our Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations (BWSO) devised a creative plan to restore water service to customers and allow crews to safely work in the excavation site. In addition, through close coordination with Con Edison, our Environmental, Health, and Safety (EHS) staff, and BWSO supervisors successfully identified a potential asbestos hazard and kept our employees and contractors safe during the abatement process.

When a water main breaks, crews isolate the section of broken pipe by operating a series of valves that control the flow of water. In the case of last week's break on 5th Avenue, a number of key valves were located very close to the break site. This presented a potential hazard for workers because the enormous pressure on the closed valve could cause sections of unrestrained pipe to separate and flood the excavation site. Under normal circumstances, crews would close valves further away from the break site, allowing work to continue safely. However, in this case, the next closest valves

were blocks away and if they had to be closed, additional customers would temporarily lose water. The restoration of service to customers in the immediate area of the break would also be delayed.

To get all of our customers back online quickly, prevent additional service disruptions, and allow crews to safely access the excavation site, BWSO came up with a plan to install five temporary gate valves on the distribution mains around the break site. In addition, crews installed thrust blocks to keep the unrestrained water mains from moving. This innovative, safety-minded approach restored water to all of our customers and ensured that crews working to remove and repair the broken 36-inch water main could do their work safely.

In another example of DEP's culture of safety, BWSO EHS Supervisor **Jacqueline Hincapie-Gioia**, was dispatched to the scene within hours of the midnight break. One of the department's primary safety concerns at the time was a Con Edison steam main that, because of its age, might expose workers to asbestos. After investigating the steam main located on the east side of the excavation site, the concrete enclosure that houses the steam pipe did not appear disturbed, allowing work to continue. However, during excavation to install one of the temporary gate valves, crews discovered that the concrete casing around the steam main at that location was disturbed, and EHS staff were again called in to ensure DEP's workers and contractors remained safe during the abatement work.

These are just two examples that illustrate the importance of approaching all of the work we do with safety in mind. As we work through the second snow storm of the season and frigid temperatures this week, I encourage all of you to focus on safety, especially those of you who are working outside or driving over the next few days.

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



emergency, and she responded to the water main break on 5th Avenue last Wednesday.

“The safety of employees is our number one priority,” said Hincapie-Gioia. “During emergency situations it is important that we quickly establish close coordination amongst DEP, our contractors, the utilities, and all responding agencies to ensure a safe environment for the workers and the public.”

The Bureau of Water and Sewer Operation’s (BWSO) approximately 1,300 employees work every day to deliver more than 1 billion gallons of high quality drinking water to 8.4 million New Yorkers, and collect and deliver wastewater and stormwater to treatment plants. This work is essential to public health and the environment, and **Jacqueline Hincapie-Gioia** is one of the 24 BWSO Environmental, Health and Safety (EHS) professionals who work to ensure the safety of the bureau’s workforce.

Hincapie-Gioia was born in Colombia and came to the United States in 2001 to finish her studies. She settled in Queens and earned a bachelor’s degree in environmental health science from York College before joining DEP in 2007 as a Health and Safety Specialist. Thereafter, she continued her studies at night and received a master’s degree in environmental and occupational health from Hunter College.

As a Supervisor for the bureau’s EHS staff, Hincapie-Gioia oversees Field Operations’ Safety Officers located in Queens, Manhattan, and Staten Island. On a day-to-day basis, the team will investigate work-related injuries, conduct facility inspections, and respond to fuel or chemical spills. Hincapie-Gioia is also one of a group of rotating EHS employees who are on call in the event of an

Hincapie-Gioia and the BWSO EHS team, including **Fernando Park** and **Melissa Whitley**, ensured that DEP employees were using Personal Protective Equipment, including steel toed boots, hard hats, and vests, and that a safe work zone was established. Additionally, one of the main concerns during this type of emergency response work is ensuring that proper excavation and trenching techniques are followed and that employees are not exposed to utilities that may pose a hazard. In this case, EHS ensured that an old steam pipe found to contain asbestos was properly abated by Con Edison before DEP workers were allowed to resume repairs to the water main.

“Jacqui and the entire BWSO EHS team perform often unheralded—but essential—work to ensure that our employees go home safely every day,” said **Fred Chyke-Okpuzor**, Acting EHS Director for BWSO. “Thanks to their dedication to the safety of their fellow employees, there have been no injuries associated with the repairs to the water main break on 5th Avenue.”

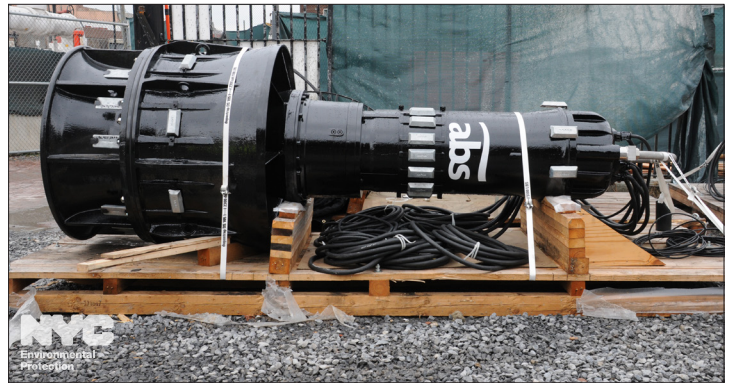
Outside of the office, and when she’s not responding to emergencies, Hincapie-Gioia enjoys spending time with her husband, reading, and looks forward to catching up on some of the Oscar-nominated movies.

Press Box

WATER IS HIS LIFE, PARTICULARLY WHEN IT STARTS GUSHING IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES: “Mr. Roberts, deputy commissioner for water and sewer operations for the New York City Department of Environment Protection, rushed from his home in Nassau County, listening in his car to updates on a city communications channel. As he drove, the wheels in his mind turned. His job was to figure out what to do and in what order to do it.” – [Click here](#) to read the rest of the article

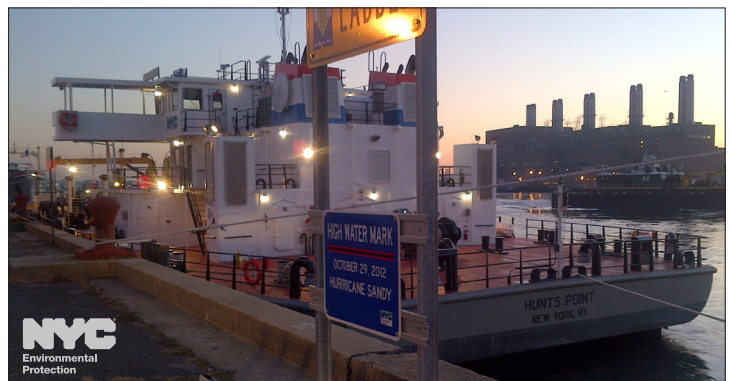
We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: newsletter@dep.nyc.gov.

Sneak Peek Gowanus Flushing Tunnel



Last month, DEP installed and activated the first of three new submersible turbine pumps at the Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel. As part of the comprehensive \$158 million upgrade, the first pump is now bringing up to 100 million gallons of highly oxygenated water from Buttermilk Channel to the head of the Canal each day. By the spring, when all three pumps will be in service, the Tunnel will bring up to 252 million gallons of water to the Canal each day, a roughly 30 percent increase over its previous capacity. The rehabilitation work began in 2009 and it is expected that the re-activation of the Tunnel will dramatically improve the aesthetics of the Canal and provide a more suitable habitat for plant and aquatic life. [Click here](#) for more information and [here](#) to see more photos.

Hunts Point Arrives at Wards Island



DEP’s newest sludge vessel, the M/V Hunts Point has arrived at Wards Island. Over the next few weeks, DEP’s Marine Unit will do a final check on the boat’s systems, operational procedures will be reviewed, and crews will receive some final training. Stay tuned for updates on an event being planned to mark the boat’s first day in service.

OST Predicting Storage in Reservoirs



Last week, Commissioner Strickland announced that an innovative reservoir management system, known as the Operations Support Tool (OST), has been integrated into the daily operations of New York City’s reservoir system. The OST predicts future storage in the reservoir system by accounting for dozens of variables such as weather forecasts, current demand for water, and myriad changes to the operation of the water supply. For more information on the OST, [click here](#).