

## Commissioner's Corner



DEP has implemented a number of initiatives to gauge employee views about career development and engagement in our critical work for the past few years. You provided feedback through a variety of sources, including the 2012 employee survey, the annual EHS Survey, OpX meetings, and now the Employee Suggestion Program. The recent strategic planning sessions have involved over 1,600 employees in 30 separate meetings and generated a lot of good ideas. Thanks to your feedback, we are expanding

our professional development and training initiatives to help accomplish our strategic plan goals, reinforce our values, and increase employee engagement, productivity, and retention.

The first strategic planning meetings were held with employees in our BWT, who suggested that our electricians needed more up-to-date training, similar to that provided at the Con Ed Training Center. DEP has been able to arrange two week-long training sessions at Con Ed

that will be held in January 2014, and electrical safety programs are under development for additional DEP field personnel. In other sessions BWT employees identified the need for additional welding training. Last Friday we conducted our first welding training session in nearly 2 ½ years, and another class is scheduled in two weeks. We're actively assessing the training needs of all of our field operations and ramping up our investments to make sure employees have the skills they need to do their jobs.

Many of our field staff also said that they could benefit from "Computer 101" training. As a result, we are updating the computers in our plants and yards and sending trainers out to the field to teach employees how to navigate The Source, Employee Self-Service, NYCAPS and other resources that help employees stay engaged. That is only the beginning. Computer based training modules have been developed to allow for self-paced learning in a variety of subjects. OEHS' Remote Learning Unit has already developed computer based modules in Hazard Communication, Office Right to Know, Computer Ergonomics, the Employee Concerns Program, and the Family Medical & Leave Act. Conflict of Interest training is also currently in development.

In addition to providing training opportunities to our field staff, we are also developing programs to engage DEP's supervisory staff. To-date, 1,177 DEP supervisors, or 85 percent, have completed our first round of supervisory training. In 2014, we will offer training for all newly appointed supervisors and refresher training for those who need it. In addition, communications training will

continue to be given to every new employee and we will also offer new workshops on performance coaching and feedback, Microsoft Suite computer based training, and a brand new DEP Management Development Program.

As you all know, safety is our number one value. Last month OEHS coordinated a professional technical education series for DEP project managers, contract managers, trades staff, and EHS staff throughout the department. The three-part program featured presenters from the NYC Department of Buildings and covered construction safety, elevators, boilers, scaffolding, excavation, and other topics. On November 21st, the first EHS Forum will be held with **Chris Golden** of BEDC speaking about EHS Management Systems.

I want to acknowledge and thank all of you who play a role in making our training programs a success and not only the professional training staff but the supervisors and all the Bureau Administrators and Training Coordinators who make sure these classes happen, are attended, and provide the information that you need.

Finally, I am also pleased to announce that our brand new [DEP Development and Training Catalogue](#) is now available on The Source. This first version of the catalogue lets users browse agency-wide course offerings so that DEP's most valuable resource, our employees, can perform at their highest potential. More courses are on the horizon and will be included in future updates of this document. Employees also have the ability to provide feedback on the catalogue to make it even better for DEP!

## Spotlight on Safety

### Be Alert in the Zone

About one work zone injury occurs every 14 minutes and when a worker is struck by a vehicle or mobile equipment, the injuries can be fatal. Therefore, a proper traffic work zone set up is necessary to help ensure DEP employees' safety while working in areas with vehicular traffic. Work zones need traffic controls such as signs, cones, and barrels that can help drivers, workers on foot, and pedestrians understand the proper routes.

To keep safe within traffic work zones DEP employees should:

- Remain alert and be aware of moving equipment and vehicles
- Wear proper PPE
- Inform other employees when a vehicle is about to move
- Utilize back-up personnel when moving a vehicle in reverse

For more information please see DEP's Policy on [Traffic Work Zone Safety](#).

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. 🙌

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## Focus on the Field



Equipping DEP's nearly 6,000 employees with the knowledge and skills they need to do their job safely is one of the primary functions of the Office of Environmental, Health and Safety (OEHS). The Remote Learning Team, led by **Sabrina Sjaastad**, plays an important role in delivering up to date and convenient training formats for DEP employees. The team also provides computer based educational programs about DEP and city-wide policies. Developing and implementing the programs, and ensuring they meet the evolving needs of employees' keeps the whole team busy.

Born in Guyana, Sjaastad immigrated to the United States with her family in 1984 and settled in New York City. She attended Brooklyn Technical High School in Fort Greene and earned a bachelor's degree in English from Queens College. She also worked as a part-time college aide at the Environmental Control Board, which was then a part of DEP. After graduating, Sjaastad joined the City's Department of Education and taught English at schools in Brooklyn and Queens. She also continued her own education by taking night classes towards a master's degree in Literacy.

In 2007, Sjaastad was looking for new opportunities to fulfill her love of teaching and had the opportunity to return to DEP as an EHS Training Specialist, where she primarily focused on safety training. In 2011, OEHS was reorganized and began to incorporate more remote, or computer based training (CBT).

"CBT provides employees with the flexibility to take courses at their desk, on their own time,

around their busy work schedules," said Sjaastad.

As the project lead for the remote learning team, Sjaastad works closely with her colleagues **Jennifer Bishop**, who handles much of the graphic design work, and **Riyu Azumaya**, the technology guru, to develop the programs from conception to reality. This process begins with a heavy dose of research on a particular topic, including outreach to the subject matter experts both here at DEP and other government agencies, writing the script for the program, developing graphics, recording audio, and ensuring the program runs smoothly on the technology side.

Over the last few years the team has developed numerous programs, including Office Ergonomics, Hazard Communication Right-to-Know, and the Family and Medical Leave Act.

"There is nothing more important than going home safely after a day of work and our team takes great pride in helping to ensure that DEP personnel have the skills they need to do just that," said Sjaastad.

"Sabrina and her team stay current with technology to bring a professional product to our workforce and we have received rave reviews from our users about the content and format of our CBTs, and now other city agencies are reaching out to us for guidance," said **Doreen Johann**, Director of Training & Professional Development.

Sjaastad recently moved from Brooklyn to the Hollis neighborhood of Queens and spends much of her time outside of the office working with her husband to raise their two year old son.

## A Note From Commissioner Strickland



Yesterday, the nation celebrated Veteran's Day. On behalf of the entire agency, I want to thank the hundreds of DEP employees who have served or continue to serve in the military. Please take some time over the course of the next few days to thank your colleagues who have served in the military for their selfless contribution to keeping all of us safe.

## Welcome Aboard



This morning, 12 new employees attended orientation and received an overview of the department from Chief Financial Officer **Steve Lawitts** and Deputy Commissioner for Organizational Development **Diana Jones Ritter**. We hope everyone will join us in welcoming them to DEP!

**Lon R. Ames, Dwayne Spencer, and Eric Thomann** with Sustainability; **David M. Montoya, Deshawn Nicholson, and Patrick Wright** with BWSO; **Irwin Pascal and Trevoy Ross** with BEDC; **Alysha Alfieri** with BEPA; **Rosita Cocorpus** with OIT; **Keith Harris Sr.** with BWT; and **Zacharius Winbush** with FMC.

## Giving Back in the Bronx



**Erica Spiritos**, a graduate of the Bronx High School of Science and an engineer with DEP's Bureau of Engineering, Design and Construction, returned to her alma mater last week to speak to Advanced Placement Environmental Science classes. In the interactive class, entitled "Planning for the Future," Spiritos

spoke about the programs DEP is implementing to protect NYC's vital freshwater resources and augment the current distribution system. She focused on the Croton Water Filtration Plant, land acquisition upstate, the Rondout-West Branch Bypass Tunnel, City Water Tunnel #3, and the Green Infrastructure program.

## Brooklyn School Goes Green



Last week, officials and students at Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School joined DEP's Green Infrastructure team to announce the installation of a 13,300 square foot green roof atop the school building, located in Brooklyn's Fort Greene neighborhood. The green roof was funded through a DEP Green Infrastructure Grant and will absorb more than 435,000 gallons of stormwater each year, which will help to reduce sewer overflows into the East River. The new roof will also provide a

hands-on science and environmental curriculum for the students. [Click here](#) for more information and [here](#) for more photos.

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