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**Six Teams Compete in the 20th Annual Operator's Challenge the 'Olympics of Sewage Treatment'**

Six teams of sewage treatment workers from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Bureau of Wastewater Treatment contended today for the honor of representing New York City in the 20th annual Operator's Challenge – "the Olympics of Sewage Treatment." Teams competed in five timed events and the two highest scoring teams will advance to the New York State finals in June. The national competition, including two teams from New York State, will be held in October.

Commissioner Lloyd said, "DEP's wastewater treatment plants and collections facilities operate 24 hours a day, pumping and treating daily approximately 1.2 billion gallons of raw sewage. This competition gives our treatment plant and collections operators and maintenance staff a chance to demonstrate their skills, as well as the high degree of competence and pride they bring to the complex, and essential tasks they perform," said Commissioner Lloyd. "Highlighting the role and functioning of New York City's 14 wastewater treatment plants and collections facilities is particularly important this year, as their work plays a critical role in Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC goal of opening 90% of New York City waterways for recreational use. The Department also values highly the role of the contest in highlighting the importance the Department places on environmental health and safety."

Contest events included:

- ▶ Collections: teams to fix a broken pipe and replace it with a new section;
- ▶ Laboratory: teams analyze a sample for biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), an indicator of pollution in the water, by following a standard method as outlined in a reference manual;
- ▶ Maintenance: teams test their skill at operating an emergency pump;
- ▶ Process: teams answer multiple choice questions to demonstrate their knowledge of wastewater treatment

**MORE INFORMATION**

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and process control at a wastewater treatment plant; and

- ▶ **Safety:** teams rescue a dummy by entering a confined space and bringing the dummy out. This involves using meters to check the air quality, and using safety devices including tripods, harnesses and self-retracting lifelines.

The names chosen by the six teams drawn from throughout the wastewater treatment system show that DEP wastewater treatment staff appreciates not only the serious side of their work, but also its lighter side. The teams that competed are:

- ▶ The Bowery Boys
- ▶ The Bowery Bay Bowl Busters
- ▶ The Tallman Island Collections Cobras
- ▶ The Wards Island Collections Ninja Turtles
- ▶ The Jamaica Jesters; and
- ▶ The Tallman Island Turd Surfers

The Operator's Challenge, a national competition, was developed by the Water Environment Federation (WEF) to formally recognize the expertise and skills of wastewater treatment plant operators. The New York Water Environment Association – the local chapter of the WEF - is sponsoring the event along with DEP. The WEF is the largest professional organization representing the wastewater treatment industry. Its membership comprises national and international wastewater professionals from the public, private and commercial sectors. The goal of the WEF is the preservation of the nation's water environment through effective water quality management and by promoting professional, public training and education programs.

DEP's Bureau of Wastewater Treatment has participated in the Operator's Challenge since 1987. The Program has afforded the Bureau an excellent opportunity to integrate its safety and training goals and at the same time to recognize the expertise and skills of wastewater treatment plant and collections operators as they safely and effectively operate their facilities.

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) protects the environmental health, welfare and natural resources of the City and its residents. The Department manages the City's water supply, serving more than half the population of New York State with over one billion gallons of quality drinking water daily. Nineteen reservoirs provide water to eight million City residents through a network grid of over 6,200 miles of water mains throughout the five boroughs as well as an additional one million consumers in four upstate counties. DEP manages 14 in-City wastewater treatment plants and 94 wastewater pumping stations, and an additional nine treatment plants upstate. DEP carries out federal Clean Water Act rules and regulations, handles hazardous materials emergencies and toxic site remediation, oversees asbestos monitoring and removal, enforces the City's air and noise codes, bills and collects City water and sewer accounts, provides educational materials and resources to City schools, and manages City-wide water conservation programs.