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## **DEP, OEM Announce Notify NYC Will Provide Advisories During and After Rain Events**

*New Yorkers Can Sign Up For Notify NYC By Calling 311, Going To [Nyc.Gov/Notifynyc](http://Nyc.Gov/Notifynyc);*

*DEP Website Provides Real-Time Information On 25 NYC Waterbodies*

Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Carter Strickland and Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno today announced that Notify NYC, New York City's official notification system, will now issue advisories when heavy rain causes untreated wastewater discharges into New York City waterways. Like other older urban areas, New York City is largely serviced by a combined sewer system where stormwater and wastewater are carried through a single pipe. During heavy rain storms, the system can exceed its capacity and must discharge a mix of stormwater and wastewater — called a combined sewer overflow (CSO) — into New York Harbor from approximately 420 combined sewer outfalls. The Notify NYC advisories will distribute information also featured on DEP's Waterbody Advisory webpage, a tool that displays real-time advisories for activities such as boating for 25 waterbodies. Notify NYC will alert subscribers by text message and/or e-mail when there is potential for untreated wastewater discharges. The notices will be tailored to each waterbody and will give the projected time that the advisories will end based on rainfall amounts, computer models of overflows, and the volume of each waterbody so that the public will know when to resume recreational activities. CSO Waterbody Advisories are separate from Public Health Notifications, which alert recipients to public beach closings.

"Under Mayor Bloomberg's leadership, the City has made remarkable investments not only to reduce CSOs but also to increase access to public information on the health and quality of New York's waterways," said Commissioner Strickland. "Providing CSO Waterbody Advisories through Notify NYC is an example of how the City is working diligently across agencies to keep New Yorkers safe and informed. I thank Commissioner Bruno for providing an efficient platform to distribute this information to all who request it."

"From school closures to water safety notifications, Notify NYC is committed to providing New Yorkers with reliable, real-time updates on emergency and quality-of-life issues," said Commissioner Bruno. "We're pleased to offer this new advisory as we prepare to deliver the 2,500<sup>th</sup> Notify NYC message later this fall."

"This notification system is a crucial tool for protecting the public from the dangers of sewage releases," said Debbie Mans, Baykeeper and Executive Director, NY/NJ Baykeeper. "The alerts will provide invaluable information to the kayakers, fishermen,

swimmers, and other recreational users of New York Harbor. People should not have to worry about becoming sick when using our waterways.”

Since 2002, New York City has invested approximately \$10 billion in CSO reduction and wastewater treatment plant upgrades to increase treatment capacity. Capital investments have included the construction of four CSO storage facilities with the capacity to hold approximately 120 million gallons of wastewater until it can be properly treated. These storage facilities reduced CSOs by more than 2.5 million gallons annually. Conservation methods and improved operational practices, such as lowering wet wells in anticipation of heavy storms and regular cleaning of interceptor sewers have also reduced CSO volumes. In June, DEP completed a two-year project to clean 26 miles of the city’s largest interceptor sewer pipes, removing nearly 29 million pounds of debris and sediment and providing roughly 1.9 million gallons of extra sewer capacity during wet weather; that effort will reduce untreated sewage discharges by an additional 100 million gallons annually. During this period, CSOs have also become more dilute, with the percentage of sanitary waste in CSO discharges decreasing from 30% in 1980 to approximately 12% today.

Under The NYC Green Infrastructure Plan launched by Mayor Bloomberg in 2010, DEP will invest more than \$187 million by 2015 and an estimated \$2.4 billion of public and private funds will be invested by 2030 to reduce CSOs by managing stormwater before it ever enters the city’s combined sewer system.

In addition to efforts to reduce CSOs, DEP has taken numerous steps in recent years to expand public access to information about harbor water quality:

- In February 2011, DEP finished replacing combined sewer outfall signs at a cost of \$1 million. The new signs not only meet the requirements of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, but are easier to read from a distance, have clearer warnings of wet weather events, and have graphic images that convey unambiguous warnings about recreational use to English and non-English speakers alike.
- In September 2011, DEP, for the first time, began posting weekly harbor water quality data online, available at [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep).
- In February 2012, DEP announced a pilot program to install remote sensors at five CSO outfall locations that monitor both wastewater elevation and the rate of flow, allowing DEP to calculate the CSO volumes released at the outfalls.

Notify NYC is a free emergency notification service that provides ZIP-code specific information about significant events in all five boroughs. Subscribers can choose to receive notifications by e-mail, SMS/text, and/or recorded telephone calls. Notifications are also available @NotifyNYC on Twitter. To date, Notify NYC has more than 138,500 subscribers. Notify NYC is a voluntary program. For more information about Notify NYC or to register, visit [www.nyc.gov/notify](http://www.nyc.gov/notify).

DEP manages the city’s water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,400 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP employs

nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. For more information, visit [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep), like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/nycwater](https://www.facebook.com/nycwater), or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/nycwater](https://www.twitter.com/nycwater).

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