

## New Code Will Air on the Side of Public Health

The last time the New York City Air Pollution Control Code (Air Code) was comprehensively updated, President Gerald Ford was in office; the Cincinnati Reds were World Series champions; “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest” won the Academy Award for Best Picture. Yes, the Air Code has stood mostly unaltered since 1975, and quite a few things have changed since then. Through Mayor Bloomberg’s groundbreaking PlaNYC initiative, the city has committed to giving New Yorkers the cleanest air of any large American city. Once completed, the updated Air Code will streamline compliance, encourage innovation, and maintain rigorous public health standards.

DEP has already made great strides in this landmark undertaking. New rules will phase out the dirtiest heating oils used in city build-



ings—Numbers 4 and 6 residual oils. Heating oil contributes 14% of all fine particulate matter to the city’s air, creating more soot pollution than all cars and trucks in the city combined. Through the help of the departments of Health, Buildings, the Mayor’s Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability,

(Continued on reverse side)

## Spotlight on Safety

### DEP Employees Speak Out on EHS

OEHS has completed the analysis of the 2011 EHS Employee Survey. The results were positive, including the response rates! We extend a very sincere thank you to all employees who took a few minutes to complete the survey. The overall response increased to 40% in 2011 from 33% in 2010. A few highlights:

- A higher percentage of employees (in 2011 vs. 2010) report improvements in:
  - o Feeling safe from retaliation.
  - o Management of injuries.
  - o Safe behavior by other employees.
  - o Responsiveness of supervisors to EHS concerns.
- About 80% of DEP employees report reading the Weekly Pipeline and EHS Matters.
- 90% of DEP employees believe that the agency does a good job of communicating EHS information.
- The top 5 areas of concern for DEP employees are:
  - o Getting injured.
  - o Indoor air quality.
  - o Ergonomics.
  - o Slips/trips and falls.
  - o Having the right equipment/safe equipment to do the job.
  - o Housekeeping.

For full results of the survey click here: [EHS Survey Report 2011](#)

Remember, if you have EHS ideas or questions, feel free to send them to [ehs@dep.nyc.gov](mailto:ehs@dep.nyc.gov).

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

Built in the early 1900s, the Hillview Reservoir is the balancing reservoir where DEP manages daily demand and pressure for water from the Catskill and Delaware aqueducts. Within the 90 acre basin—which looks down on the Yonkers Raceway—roughly 900 million gallons of water waits to be sent through City Water Tunnel Nos. 1, 2, and 3 for local distribution. I stopped by Hillview on my way upstate last week and met several members of BWSO, including Deputy Commissioner **Jim Roberts**, Director of Distribution Operations **Mike Farnan**, Chief of Reservoir Operations **Wilfredo Melendez** and Hillview Operations Section Head **Vijay Rao**. We observed the control works and mammoth sluice gates that control the flow of our city’s supply, and the treatment works that provide disinfection. It was inspiring to see how this marvel of 20th century engineering endures today. We discussed plans to update and upgrade the equipment, like new valves and controls that allow for more efficient operations through the use of supervisory control and data acquisition systems. Standing 300 feet above the height of City Hall gives you a great view, along with a sincere appreciation for the men and women who keep the water flowing.

Our operations at this and other reservoirs, combined with our extensive watershed protection program and our comprehensive testing regime, including more than 500,000 water quality tests every year, is the reason why our customers get the best water. Yet sometimes, even when our water quality is high, the plumbing in individual homes can affect tap water. Late in 2010, our lead testing program noticed an uptick in lead levels in at-risk homes with known lead service lines or lead plumbing. So we launched the Run Your Tap campaign to alert New Yorkers that running the tap for 30 seconds or until the water runs cold was a simple way to protect them and their families. Fast forward roughly one year, and two successive rounds of testing have shown that lead levels in those types of homes have returned to normal levels. That is good news, but it is

still always a good idea to follow this advice, especially for people in older homes. Please remember that anyone can call 311 and ask for a free lead test kit to send into DEP for analysis.

From what you drink to what you flush, this past week NY1 came out to visit the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant and aired a great segment with Deputy Commissioner **Vinny Sapienza** on an exciting new project we are getting ready to kick off – conversion of a waste product (sludge) to a resource (energy). **Mayor Bloomberg** featured this in the State of the City address a few weeks ago, noting that New York City will become one of the first cities in the country to convert wastewater gas into renewable energy. This is possible because our new digester eggs at the plant are highly efficient, meaning that the amount of methane produced as we treat sludge far outpaces what we already use at the site to heat the facility. Since burning off the excess is wasteful and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, we are looking to partner with National Grid to clean the methane into utility-grade natural gas that will be injected directly into local distribution, heating roughly 2,500 homes while reducing 15,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually. The long-term prospects for this idea are great as long as people keep using the restroom! Watch the NY1 piece here.



On a final note, we just appointed **Deborah Singer** as our new Director of Labor Relations. Deborah is an attorney who brings more than 14

years of experience in labor relations, most recently as Director of Grievances and Discipline for the MTA Bus Company and before then as in-house counsel and citywide grievance coordinator for the Teamsters, Local 237. She will oversee both the Labor Relations and Discipline units within the Bureau of Legal Affairs. Welcome to the team!

## Focus on the Field




**Gerry Kelpin** joined DEP more than 25 years ago as an intern working on environmental impact reviews. Gerry is the Director of the Air and Noise Enforcement and Policy Unit, which is responsible for enforcing the city's air and noise codes. Gerry is a passionate advocate of all things related to examining environmental issues and their impacts on people, and she is the driving force behind one of the most public facing units in DEP.

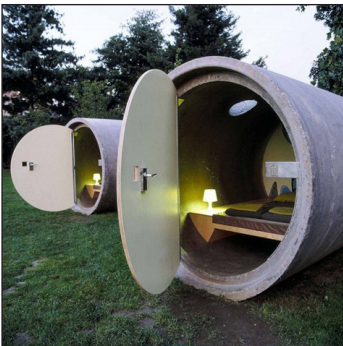
Gerry oversees a dedicated group of inspectors who can issue summonses for air and noise violations that carry fines ranging between \$350 and \$3,500. Her unit gets involved with a number of public events such as the planning of concerts in Central Park. Although managing air and noise issues surrounding high profile events is an important part of Gerry's job, the majority of citizens' complaints relate to construction, smoke from boilers, and barking dogs.

In spite of noisy dogs and incessant horn-honkers Gerry says she loves her job simply because it gives her the chance to learn something new every day. The monumental amount of work that goes into the clean air and (occasionally) quiet nights most people take for granted goes mostly unnoticed. But as we at DEP have learned, Gerry and her staff's work always comes through—loud and clear.

## Event Calendar


**VISITOR CENTER AT NEWTOWN CREEK:** Discussion and film screening event – Wednesday, February 8, 2012: Garbage Dreams (excerpt) and Gone Tomorrow: the Hidden Life of Garbage. For more information please click [here](#) .

## Beyond New York



At the Das Park Hotel in Austria you can stay overnight in a concrete sewer pipe on the banks of the River Danube. Five huge concrete drain pipes located in a public park in the Austrian city of Ottensheim are all that make up the Das Park Hotel. The hotel was built by designer **Andreas Strauss** in 2004. It was originally opened at Linz and later moved to nearby Ottensheim. A coat of varnish and wall paintings by the Austrian artist **Thomas Latzel Ochoa** is all that was needed to repurpose these pipes into living quarters. The five 10-ton pieces of concrete drainage pipe, which were converted into "sleep-pipes," are about six feet in diameter and 15 feet long, with a porthole to look out of, a front door to close and a cozy nest to snuggle into. The rooms are each furnished with a double bed, storage, light, power outlet, and blankets. Toilets, showers and a café are located in the surrounding public park, the site of a former water purification plant.

## Press Box

**NO DUMPING ON THIS PARK:** "An evolving spirit of partnership has begun transforming the site into a major New York City park, perhaps unique in the nation." - From a 1/24/12 Grist Magazine article  on DEP's restoration of the Brookfield Landfill on Staten Island into an ecologically functional wetland

## Kudos Corner

**ENVIRONMENTAL DEDICATION:** On January 26, 1987, EPA granted control authority to NYC to implement an Industrial Pretreatment Program (IPP). Two IPP staffers have been around for the entire 25-year run: **Leslie Lipton** and **Carol Neptune**. The hard work and dedication of this unit has resulted in remarkable improvements to the environment. Over that period, discharges of toxic metals from regulated industry into city sewers have decreased by more than 99%, helping our biosolids meet land-application standards; grease blockages caused by restaurants have declined significantly; and illegal connections to storm sewers, which once contributed more than three MGD of untreated sewage to local waterways, have nearly been eliminated. Congratulations to all on achieving this significant milestone.

**(New Code Will Air on the Side of Public Health... continued)**

and the New York City Council, these new regulations require that all boilers in New York City burn low-sulfur No. 2 oil or natural gas through a phased-in approach: any newly-installed boilers will be required to only burn low sulfur No. 2 oil, natural gas, or equivalent. But all boilers will be required to switch from No. 6 oil to the new low sulfur No. 4 heating oil by 2015, or to an equivalent cleaner fuel. Existing boilers that have not been replaced by 2030 must be modified to meet the equivalent emissions of burning low sulfur No. 2 oil or natural gas.

While changing the heating standards of city buildings is a substantial victory, it represents only one part of a larger process that began in earnest in 2010. Working with several stakeholder groups that have included the Urban Green Council, the Department of Buildings, and architectural and engineering industry stakeholders, DEP has been engaging various groups throughout the city. DEP has found industry stakeholders who are ready and willing to engage in a productive partnership. "We don't want to drive any businesses away," said **Mike Gilsenan**, Assistant Commissioner for Environmental Compliance. "We need those businesses in New York."

Many such businesses occupy mixed-use zones and properties, which must strike a balance be-

tween the needs of residential and business communities. With more than 5,000 automotive repair businesses in the city, DEP manages a permitting structure that must allow business to flourish while also maintaining the health standards of surrounding neighbors. Automotive repair garages are only one prominent example; the quality of the air inside is as important as what New Yorkers breathe outside. Together with the Health Department, DEP will ensure that emissions from businesses meet these same exacting standards. This is especially crucial given that countless New Yorkers live in multi-purpose buildings that contain businesses. It is therefore essential that DEP make compliance as streamlined as possible, while also accommodating various innovations in clean fuel technology since the Air Code's inception. The health of New Yorkers depends on striking that proper balance.

"The socioeconomic benefits are immeasurable," Mike said. "Our job is to make sure that all of our partners are on board with this." By the end of 2012, DEP and its partners within and without government will have completed a process that is long overdue—but welcome nonetheless. Thanks to those partnerships and the groundbreaking commitment of PlaNYC, the question of whether New Yorkers can breathe easy will no longer be up in the air.

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