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Department of Environmental Protection Holds 30th Annual Operations Challenge



Teams of Wastewater Treatment Workers Compete to Demonstrate Their Skills and Preparedness to Operate New York City's 14 Wastewater Treatment Plants

Photos of the Challenge Can be Viewed on [DEP's Flickr Page](#)

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Acting Commissioner Vincent Sapienza today kicked off the 30th annual Operations Challenge competition in which wastewater treatment plant operators compete to showcase the expertise and skills required to operate and maintain New York City's 14 wastewater treatment plants. Moreover, in a competition first, a team representing the upstate watershed will be participating and testing their mettle against their downstate colleagues. After competing in five events that represent a cross section of essential wastewater treatment operations, the two highest scoring teams will go on to compete in the statewide competition in June in Rochester, NY. From there, winners of the statewide contest will participate in the national competition to be held in Chicago in September. The morning-long event was held at the City's Jamaica Wastewater Treatment Plant, in Queens, and was sponsored by DEP and New York Water Environment Association.

"The Operations Challenge provides a unique opportunity for our sewage treatment workers to showcase the skills and knowledge required to treat more than a billion gallons of wastewater each day," said **DEP Acting Commissioner Vincent Sapienza**. "Congratulations to all the teams that participated in today's exciting competition. Additionally, I would like to thank the dedicated men and women who work every day in our wastewater treatment plants and pumping stations. Your efforts have helped make New York Harbor cleaner than it has been in more than 100 years."

"We need water to live, and we all create waste. Most people do not care or want

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to know what happens after they flush the toilet. The individuals competing in this event today are at the forefront of protecting public health and the environment and truly are silent heroes,” said **Executive Director of New York Water Environment Association Patricia Cerro-Reehil**. “We commend all of them for their hard work and appreciate the positive impact they have made on our society.”

This year’s five teams hail from the Bowery Bay, Jamaica, Hunts Point and North River wastewater treatment plants, as well as the Lower Hudson, representing the upstate watershed. Each team will compete in three timed and judged events, including:

- *Collections*: Teams respond to a leaking pipe and repair it while it remains in service.
- *Worker Safety*: Teams compete in a timed, confined space rescue of a fellow employee and perform CPR while checking air quality. They must also change a defective check valve.
- *Maintenance Event*: Teams compete to respond to a severe weather condition that results in a pumping outage. They must restore the main pumps to service, and program them for emergency use.

In addition, this year’s competition included two events which the teams completed earlier in the week:

- *Laboratory Event*: Teams perform tests on water samples to determine if it meets discharge standards.
- *Wastewater Treatment Process*: Teams are tested on their knowledge of the wastewater treatment process.

The Operations Challenge was developed by the Water Environment Federation, the largest professional organization representing the wastewater treatment industry. Today’s event at the Jamaica Wastewater Treatment Plant was sponsored by New York Water Environment Association Metro, a local chapter, in conjunction with DEP, which has participated in the Operations Challenge since 1987. A team from DEP has advanced to the national competition in 29 out of the last 30 years.

Over the past decade, DEP has invested more than \$10 billion in upgrades to wastewater treatment plants and related efforts to ensure that all the wastewater produced in the city is properly treated and, as a result, New York Harbor is cleaner and healthier than it has been in more than a century.

DEP manages New York City’s water supply, providing approximately 1 billion gallons of high quality drinking water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8.5 million in New York City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 21 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 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program, with a planned \$20.7 billion in investments over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit [nyc.gov/dep](#), like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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