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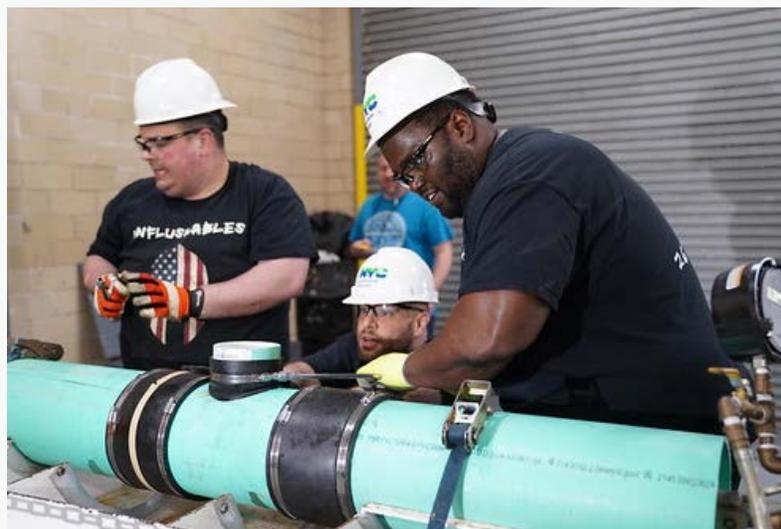
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New York City Wastewater Treatment Workers Compete in the 32nd Annual Operations Challenge



Workers Showcase Their Skills and Expertise in Wastewater Treatment Operations

Photos and Videos are Available on [DEP's Flickr Page](#)

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on Tuesday kicked off the 32nd 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 Resource Recovery Facilities. 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 Saratoga, NY. From there, winners of the statewide contest will participate in the national competition, to be held from Sept. 21 to 25 in Chicago. The morning-long event was held at the City's Rockaway Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility, in Queens, and was sponsored by DEP and New York Water Environment Association.

"The Operations Challenge provides an exciting opportunity for our sewage treatment workers to showcase the skillset and knowledge they use on a daily basis to treat more than 1 billion gallons of wastewater each day," said **DEP Commissioner Vincent Sapienza**. "I want to congratulate all of the teams that participated in today's competition."

"I would like to thank the dedicated men and women who work every day at our wastewater facilities, pumping stations and in the field," said **DEP Deputy Commissioner for Wastewater Treatment Pam Elardo**. "While the work is often done behind the scenes and out of sight, it has directly led to our local waterways being cleaner today than they have been in more than 100 years."

More Information

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“How do we bring awareness to the important work water quality professionals perform 24 hours a day, seven days a week? NYC DEP’s Operations Challenge is one way these environmental professionals showcase the skills, perseverance, and drive that it takes to be a water resource recovery operator. These individuals have rewarding careers knowing they protect public health and the environment,” said **Executive Director of New York Water Environment Association Patricia Cerro-Reehil**.

This year’s four teams hail from the Jamaica, Bowery Bay, 26th Ward, and Tallman Island Wastewater Resource Recovery Facilities.

Each team competed in four 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
- **Laboratory Event:** Teams perform tests on water samples to determine if it meets discharge standards

In addition, this year’s competition included one event that the teams completed earlier in the week:

- **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 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 31 out of the last 32 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 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 7,500 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 \$19.7 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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