

## Commissioner's Corner



The beginning of a new year is often a time that prompts reflection on the previous year's accomplishments and our resolutions moving forward. In 2013, we made a concerted effort to improve professional development and employee engagement across the department. Through our recent strategic plan engagement sessions, I have had the opportunity to speak with more than 3,000 of you about innovative ways to improve our services and incorporate our core values into the next version of DEP's strategic plan. It has been a privilege

to speak with so many of you and I am continually inspired by the extraordinary pride and dedication that you all put into the essential work you do each day.

DEP's first Organizational Health Index Survey was conducted in 2012 and since then we have incorporated much of the feedback into our daily operations to help improve the department's organizational health and culture. There has been an enthusiastic response to the many engagement opportunities we

have since pursued to enhance the employee experience from recruitment to retirement. Highlights include, but are not limited to:

- We rolled out DEP's mission statement and our vision to be the best water utility in the nation. Our mission—to protect public health and the environment by supplying clean drinking water, collecting and treating wastewater, and reducing air, noise, and hazardous materials pollution—unifies all of us within the DEP family from Staten Island to the Gilboa Dam.
- Began a series of DEP Experience Brown Bag Sessions, which are videoconferenced to upstate locations, to provide employees with a closer view of DEP's diverse and far-reaching operations.
- Opened the DEP Employee Store so that employees can showcase their department pride.
- Re-launched the DEP Suggestion Program to inspire innovation and new ideas with the promise of recognition and the possibility of cash incentives.
- Refreshed our New Hire Orientation to provide full support to our employees from the very beginning. We are also working to extend the orientation experience for a full year.
- Created The Source—our DEP portal—to significantly enhance internal communications.
- Increased the menu of skills training for field employees, including electrical, welding, and related training. We are also piloting a "fundamentals in desktop use" course, beginning with our field offices, so that employees can navigate ever-changing technology more comfortably.
- Hosted the well-attended Health Fair and Employee Recognition Day with the Quality of Work Life Joint Labor & Management Committee. We also worked with the QWL Committee to host more than 1,000 DEP employees at a Mets game for our first DEP Family & Friends Night at CitiField.
- Held our first Administrative Professional and National Diversity Day celebrations.
- Began a pilot program to interview our most seasoned and knowledgeable employees before they retire so that the next generation can benefit from their experience in critical jobs.

This list represents just the beginning of our efforts. Using the input we have heard and continue to seek out from employees across the agency, we will work to improve the 'DEP Employee Experience.' While there is certainly more to accomplish, I am confident that we will make significant strides forward in 2014, and I thank you for your continued support and hard work.

## Spotlight on Safety

### You Spoke and We Listened

Employee safety at DEP was a key topic of discussion during the employee engagement meetings held over the last few months. Safe working conditions, improved communication and awareness of DEP's safety time-out policy, and improved contractor accountability are a few of the concerns put forward by employees.

In order to continually improve working conditions for DEP employees the Office of Environmental, Health and Safety (OEHS) created an Audit division that performs EHS assessments at all DEP facilities. They also engage all levels of staff and provide guidance and assistance in improving EHS

programs in areas where risks can be eliminated.

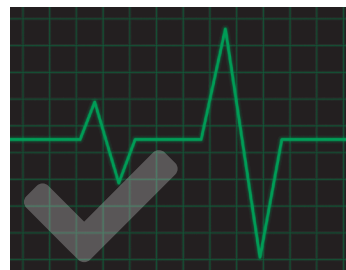
As a result of this particular initiative, working conditions continue to improve, including in critical EHS program areas such as emergency planning, fire systems, fall protection, and personal protective equipment. These particular areas were identified by employees and management and the safety improvements are the direct result of the implementation of EHS regulatory requirements, policies, guidelines and best practices.

OEHS values and makes use of your recommendations, so please get involved in the many and varied opportunities to give your feedback.

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. 

## Your Opinion Counts!



This Thursday you will receive an email invitation from [ohi@ohi-survey.com](mailto:ohi@ohi-survey.com). Please do not treat this as spam or junk email. The email will contain a link and access code that will direct you to the "DEP Employee Pulse Check Survey." Paper surveys will be distributed to employees who don't have easy access to computers.

The anonymous survey will be open January 16 – 29, 2014. Please take advantage of the opportunity to make your opinion known!

## Focus on the Field



**Jim Restrepo** has been fixing and wiring electrical components at DEP for more than 25 years. But, the veteran electrician will be the first one to tell you that he still learns new skills on the job every year.

“When I first started at DEP, I quickly realized how little I knew,” Restrepo said. “Especially in the wastewater treatment plants, where you get exposed to so many parts of the electrical trade.”

Restrepo was among the first group of DEP electricians to attend a three-day seminar hosted by Consolidated Edison, which focused on high-voltage splicing. The technique is important because many of the pumps and blowers that keep the City’s 14 wastewater treatment plants working run on high-voltage lines, which convey some 4,000 volts of electricity. That’s roughly 20 times as much as the lines that service the average home.

Working on lines that powerful is dangerous, but it’s also infrequent. Restrepo estimates that he’s only had to splice high-voltage lines about a dozen times during his career. That, he said, is why the training is so important. It refreshes skills that are vital but not used every day.

“This training really reinforces the knowledge,” he said. “A lot of us

knew how to splice high-voltage lines because we had done it before, but we didn’t understand the theories and mechanics behind it. It was also good for the new electricians because these are the guys we’ll pass the baton to.”

Important skills training such as this was recently initiated at the request of DEP employees during employee-development listening sessions.

Restrepo, who works at the 26th Ward Wastewater Treatment Plant, said skills like high-voltage splicing were especially important in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. The record storm surge inundated parts of the facility with seawater and he and other electricians rewired entire swaths of the plant and even improvised controls to get its most critical components working again.

Restrepo initially became interested in electrical work from his father, who was a building superintendent in the city. He later served four years in the Marine Corps, where he learned more about the trade in places like Okinawa and Korea. He now lives in Jackson Heights with his family and enjoys following the local sports teams, including the Giants and Yankees, and rooting on his son and daughter at their sporting events. Restrepo marked his 25th year at DEP on Jan. 9.



The Employee Store is taking a quick break while we restock our shelves and work to improve your online shopping experience. Thanks for a fantastic second season!

We will keep you updated via Pipeline, The Source, and posters around your facility.

See you soon!



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

### WE HEARD YOU ASK FOR...

### SINCE THEN, DEP IS...

– Additional technical training so that electricians can develop and enhance the skills needed to address the challenges of their work.

– Offering new training through a set of January sessions at the Con-Ed facility. This opportunity will allow 20 of our electricians to access more sophisticated training in specialized, mock-up environments.

– Opportunities to network with professional organizations, universities, and technical groups. Employees have expressed a particular interest in sharing and discussing knowledge acquired in professional conferences with their coworkers.

– Hosting a NYWEA week so that DEP employees attending the 86<sup>th</sup> NYWEA Annual Meeting & Exhibition this February can share their presentations and feedback through lunchtime Brown Bag sessions. These Brown Bags will be streamed to Kingston, Grahamsville, and Valhalla so that upstate employees have a chance to actively participate in the discussion.

– GPS units so that employees can easily navigate trips to upstate facilities, especially where mobile service and navigation may be otherwise limited.

– Ordering 28 new GPS units that will be made available at facilities throughout the watershed. DEP employees will be able to request these units when driving to unfamiliar areas upstate.

– Creative opportunities to enhance our customer service, such as keeping BCS offices open late one night per week to offer greater flexibility to our customers.

– Conducting a pilot in all BCS borough offices, which will remain open for an extra hour during the lien sale season starting in February 2014.

– Upgraded staff support facilities that are properly maintained and support the quality of work-life at DEP.

– In the midst of delivering more than 5,000 new, ergonomic task chairs to sites across the agency, an effort that will continue into this summer. We are also moving ahead to make significant improvements to our facilities, and we have asked field managers to identify potential projects.

## Welcome Aboard



Yesterday, 23 new employees attended orientation and received an overview of the department from Commissioner **Carter Strickland** and Deputy Commissioner for Organizational Development **Diana Jones Ritter**. We hope everyone will join us in welcoming them to DEP!

**John Amen, Nasima Akhter, Keith Bissoon, Patrick Dunn, Christopher Franco, Daniela Opruta, Daniel Piszczatowski, Sheldon Taylor, Daniel Weaverling, and Diego Vitale** with BWT; **Meredit Levine, Lauren Singer, Samantha Wright, and Kam Yin Wu** with BEDC; **Mark DelBalzo, Emily Pereira, and Susan Pujdak** with BWS; **Antonio Jha and Adam Maldonado Sr.** with BWSO; **Kristen Artz and Sivan Schleter** with BPA; **Amanda Duchesne** with BEPA; and **Phyllis Kam** with OEA.