NYC Environmental Protection
Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
Carter Strickland, Commissioner

WEEKLY PIPELINE

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Practice Makes Perfect…

As part of the ongoing $21.2 million project to connect the Catskill and Delaware Aqueducts for the first time, a 21-foot tall by 36-foot wide model of the Catskill Aqueduct is currently being built in Orange County. The full scale model will allow contractors to practice drilling large diameter pipe penetrations through the Catskill Aqueduct and ensure that the shutdown of the Aqueduct is kept to an absolute minimum during construction. When completed, the interconnect project will allow DEP to move as much as 365 million gallons of water each day from the Delaware Aqueduct into the Catskill Aqueduct, providing additional operational flexibility and another tool to reduce turbidity in the water supply system after large storms. Click here to see more photos.

Spotlight on Safety

Women in Construction

Women account for nearly 10 percent of the construction workforce in the U.S. and although some safety risks apply to both genders, there are some issues that are of greater concern for women. For instance, many women can have difficulty finding properly fitted personal protective equipment (PPE).

PPE is often designed for an average size man and in the past there has been a limited availability of a full range of sizes. Women in particular should test their PPE, and if uncomfortable or not suitable, they should report the condition to their supervisors. As more women have joined the construction field, there have been improvements in the availability of a full range of sizes and by working together we can ensure that each worker has PPE that fits properly and will most effectively protect against the hazard for which it was designed.

For more information please see: Safety and Health Topics | Women in Construction.

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

Last week, I joined Deputy Commissioner **Vincent Sapienza**, Newtown Creek Plant Superintendent **Jim Pynn**, Deputy Superintendent **Bobby Grander**, and Facilities Manager **Frank Loncar** to give a TV crew a firsthand look at one of the major challenges facing the nation's sewer and wastewater treatment plant operators—"flushable" sanitary wipes. Until recently, it was widely known that flushing wipes, paper towels, and other products could damage your plumbing. However, over the last few years, many companies have been marketing personal sanitary wipes as flushable. These new wipes may be safe for the plumbing in your home, but they have become a real problem for our sewer system and wastewater treatment plants.

Unlike traditional toilet paper that breaks up in the sewers, sanitary wipes, including those that claim to be flushable, can clog up the sewer system or reach our treatment plants intact. When flow from the sewers reaches our plants, one of the first steps in the treatment process is screening out the bottles, cans, and other litter that was discarded in the street and entered the sewer system. As more people have started flushing wipes, we have seen a growing problem of screens becoming clogged. When screens become clogged, it can reduce the amount of flow the plant is able to treat and result in raw sewage discharges and back-ups. The wipes can also cause damage to pumps and other critical equipment.

In addition to the damage wipes can cause, they are also costly for our ratepayers. Clearing them from the screens and repairing equipment is time consuming and labor intensive. The discarded wipes must also be collected and shipped to landfills—another significant cost. Consider this: over the last five years the number of companies advertising baby wipes as flushable has nearly doubled. During that same period, the amount of material collected and sent to landfills at our Wards Island Plant has also doubled.

Last week, INDA, the Association of the Nonwoven Fabrics Industry joined the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, the Water Environment Federation, and the American Public Works Association to announce that the groups are working together to address this issue. To assist companies with product flushability assessments and to provide guidance on proper labeling, INDA recently released a Code of Practice for manufacturers and marketers of wipes and other disposable products. The guidelines recommend that anything intended to be flushed should be subjected to seven rigorous tests before a flushable claim can be made. If a product is not designed to be flushed, but is used in a manner where it might be flushed, the new guidelines advise that the product packaging should prominently display a Do Not Flush logo.

We are also working to address the issue at a local level. Like many jurisdictions across the nation, we are exploring legislative action to prohibit companies from marketing wipes as flushable. Thanks to enormous investments in wastewater treatment plant upgrades, New York City's waterways are cleaner than they have been in a century, and we want to keep it that way. The best way you can help is to discard used wipes in the trash, even if the label says flushable.

Focus on the Field

DEP's Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations (BWSO) maintains New York City's 6,600 miles of water mains and helps to ensure reliable water service for 8.4 million residents. An average water main is 12 inches in diameter but they can range from 6 to 84 inches. Water main breaks by their nature are unpredictable and can occur at any time, and Associate Project Manager **Vincent Standardo** is part of BWSO's Emergency Water Main Reconstruction Unit. The unit is deployed nearly 200 times a year when a break causes extensive damage or the repair is complicated and requires outside resources. The unit supplements the work of the borough maintenance and repair crews.

When a water leak is reported, crews respond to the location and determine if a water main must be shut down in order to complete a repair. Next, the crews carefully excavate the roadway, working around the other subterranean infrastructure, to determine the source of the leak. Repairing a water main usually entails installing a clamp or replacing a section of damaged pipe. Once water service is restored, soil is replaced around the main, and the roadway is rebuilt.

Last week, Standardo coordinated the response to a break on a 12-inch water main located below the sidewalk adjacent to Horace Harding Expressway in Queens. The main serves parts of the large apartment complex near Lefrak headquarters and repairing it required shutting off water service for nearly 2,000 families. "Horace Harding Expressway is a busy street and our first concern was ensuring a safe work zone for the repair crews," recalls Standardo. "The borough maintenance and repair crews, along with the emergency contractor, then completed a timely repair and water service was restored to the impacted households."

Standardo's fieldwork typically includes overseeing the emergency contractor's team, which is usually about seven people. He also coordinates DEP's response with partner agencies, including NYPD and FDNY, utilities such as Con Edison and National Grid, as well as property owners and building superintendents. "I enjoy the varied nature of the job," said Standardo. "Each repair is unique in complexity and duration, and we want to make sure that appropriate resources are deployed in the most efficient manner."

"The expeditious water main repair under Vinny's supervision was a testament to his thorough knowledge of construction practices and his dedication to the City of New York," said Supervising Resident Engineer **Saurin Parikh**.

Following a two-year stint with the Marine Corps, Standardo attended Nassau Community College. He then worked at the Jamaica Water Supply Company before joining DEP more than 17 years ago. Born in Manhattan and raised in Queens, Standardo now calls the Levittown area of Nassau County home. Outside of work, Standardo enjoys spending time with his family, particularly his two grandsons.

Brown Bag this Thursday

During the last 18 months, DEP has released design standards for green infrastructure, promulgated new stormwater performance standards for new developments and redevelopments, completed construction on three neighborhood demonstration areas, oversaw the completion of numerous grant projects, initiated construction on area-wide contracts for the Flushing Bay and Bronx River drainage areas, and much more. To learn more about these exciting developments please join DEP's Deputy Commissioner for Sustainability **Angela Licata** for the next installment of the DEP Experience Brown Bag Luncheon this Thursday, September 26, at noon in the 3rd floor cafeteria at Lefrak.

DEP Isn't 'Play'ing Around

Last week, DEP celebrated the completion of the first "green" playground to be built through a partnership with the Trust for Public Land, the Department of Education, and the School Construction Authority. Over the next four years, the partnership will build up to 40 new school playgrounds that will include green infrastructure to capture stormwater when it rains, thereby easing pressure on the city's sewer system and improving the health of local waterways. The announcement was made during a ribbon-cutting celebration held at Brooklyn's P.S. 261, where the new playground will manage all the stormwater that falls on it, or nearly half a million gallons annually. Playground rennovations are being designed now that will help to improve the health and cleanliness of the Gowanus Canal, Newtown Creek, Westchester Creek, the Bronx River, Flushing Bay, and Jamaica Bay. Click here to see more photos.

Welcome Aboard

Yesterday, 16 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!

Paul Budnik, **Salvatore DiPressi**, **Francis Dollbaum III**, **Alexander N. Kozlowski Jr.**, **Jason Legault**, **Kevin D. McDonald**, **Sven Smith**, and **Johathan Tipa** with BWS; **Julie Besson**, **Johnny Felder**, and **Jannine McColgan** with BWSO; **Kate Mayo** and **Morlan T. Rogers** with BLA; **Krystal M. Peartree** with ACCO; **Isabella Wechsler** with Executive; and **Pakman Wong** with BWT.

Science & Technical Symposium

Last week, more than 120 DEP employees attended the New York Water Environment Association's 2013 annual conference at West Point. Special thanks to Deputy Commissioners **Jim Roberts** and **Paul Rush** for their successful effort to include the New York Section of the American Water Works Association, which made it an even better event. Click here for more information and to see a list of the presentations.

We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: newsletter@dep.nyc.gov.