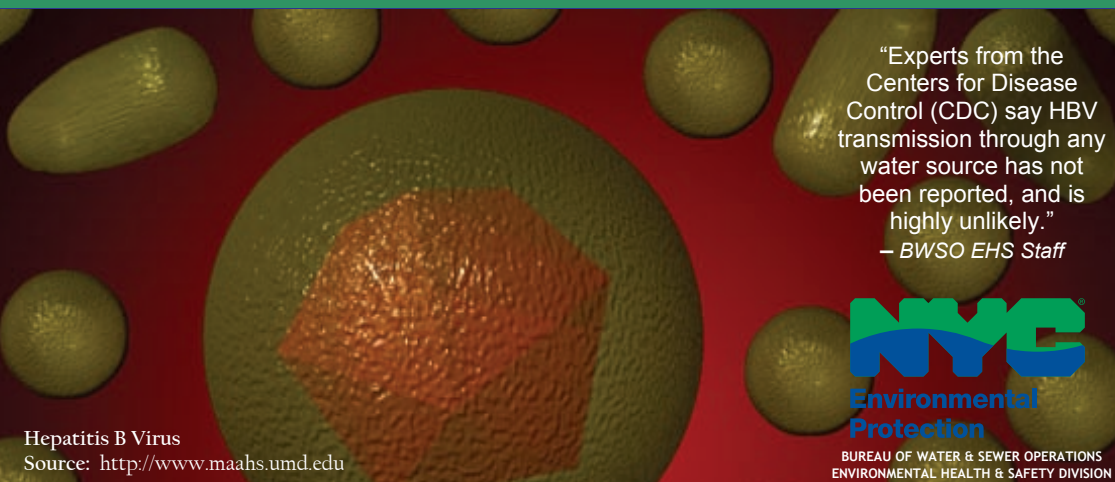


NYC Environmental Protection  
Bureau of Water & Sewer Operations, Environmental Health & Safety (EHS)

59-17 Junction Boulevard, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
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## Environmental Health & Safety News for BWSO



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### BWSO EHS Suggestion Program:

#### You Asked...Why don't Sewer Maintenance Workers get Hepatitis B Vaccinations?

A great question which we thought was worthy of a reply in The Conduit...

Bloodborne pathogens (BBP) are microorganisms that are present in human blood and can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's bloodborne pathogens standard (OSHA 1910.1030) covers workers with occupational exposures and can be defined as *reasonably anticipated* contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM) that may result from the performance of an employee's duties.

Exposure to bloodborne pathogens occur only through direct contact with blood or OPIM through mucous membranes, eyes, or cuts in the skin. HBV and HIV do not reproduce outside the human body and become highly diluted once they enter the sanitary sewer system. Experts from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) say, "HBV transmission through any water source has not been reported, and is highly unlikely." Unlike bacteria or fungi, viruses are unable to reproduce outside a living host, and any virus introduced into a water source would be greatly diluted and would likely become noninfectious.

Continued on Page 2

### Behind the Scenes of BWSO –

#### A Spotlight on the Support Units that keep our Operations Running!



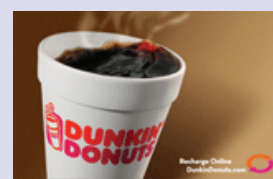
There's no doubt about it...a lot of us have been coming into work here at Lefrak, day in and day out, passing by the same faces for years, without ever really learning what it is these familiar people do for the Bureau of Water & Sewer Operations. That's why EHS reporters are making an effort to utilize The Conduit to not only get to know fellow BWSO colleagues and draw attention to the work that they do, but also to foster a friendly and team-oriented work environment. This month, EHS reporters had the privilege of getting together with expert colleagues from BWSO's Mapping Unit and Correspondence & Records Retention Unit—both located at the Agency's Lefrak City office in Flushing, Queens. What exactly do the professionals from these two units do to contribute to the overall mission of the Bureau of Water & Sewer Operations? Interested? Turn to page 3.

## Congratulations BWSO!

**"The end of probation is really just the beginning of a new momentum and reminds us that we all share the responsibility to not only maintain, but improve EHS performance in our own personal work situations, at our facilities and within our respective organizations."**

— Persis D. Luke, Director of Environmental Health & Safety

Read more on Page 3.



WIN A DUNKIN'  
DONUTS GIFT CARD!  
TAKE QUIZ ON PAGE 3

*"As covered in our Agency's Sanitation, Disease Prevention and Hygiene Policy, one should always take care to cover any open cuts or scratches with appropriate bandages or coverings prior to working." –BWSO EHS Staff*

The CDC also reports that for a bloodborne infection to be transmitted four conditions known as the "chain of infection" must be present:

- ❖ A susceptible host, or a person who is not immune;
- ❖ An opening through which the microorganism may enter the body;
- ❖ A microorganism that causes disease; and
- ❖ Sufficient numbers of the organism to cause infection.

The chance of all these events happening in sequence is infinitesimally small! For example, the use of PPE (face/eye protection, gloves and clothing) is designed to protect your body. As covered in our Agency's Sanitation, Disease Prevention and Hygiene Policy, one should always take care to cover any open cuts or scratches with appropriate bandages or coverings prior to working. The risk of transmission of a bloodborne disease through contaminated water supplies is very low and the primary way that bloodborne pathogens are transmitted is through needle-stick injuries. BWSO workers do not come in direct hand or body contact with needles or other objects contaminated by blood.

For bloodborne pathogens to survive outside the body, the only possibility of viability would occur in a controlled environment, such as in a laboratory or within a contaminated hypodermic

needle. In those environments, HBV can live for a few hours or possibly a few days. For this reason, as we all know, BWSO employees are not allowed to move or clean-up hypodermic needles – EHS has a contractor and a few trained volunteer EHS employees to pickup discovered needles. If you come across a needle while you are working, do not attempt to move it and contact EHS right away.

BWSO Sewer Maintenance, Sewer Analysis, Catch Basin Cleaning, and Sewer Flushing personnel have to work in proximity to sanitary sewers and catch basins. Safe work practice guidelines and personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, safety goggles, and face shields, are provided to them to prevent occupational exposure, however low the possibility of exposure may be.

Sewer workers in other municipalities, such as Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles and Philadelphia, are not routinely placed in a bloodborne pathogens program, or offered HBV vaccinations.

Our Agency's Bureau of Wastewater Treatment (BWT) workers who have potential direct contact with hypodermic needles, such as Sewage Treatment Workers (who may have to clean sludge pumps with needles lodged in them), are included in their BBP program. In addition, BWSO chainsaw users are included in our BBP program because they are also trained to be able to provide First Aid/CPR (as part of OSHA 1910.266 – Logging Operations standard).

*Remember to  
stay up to  
date with  
your regular  
vaccinations!*



Generally speaking, sewer workers are more likely to encounter non-bloodborne pathogens, and really should be more concerned with getting up-to-date shots for tetanus and diphtheria, and possibly the Hepatitis A vaccination. Even though it does not become a serious or chronic disease, Hepatitis A, unlike bloodborne pathogens (HBV & HIV), can survive outside the body for months, is more likely to be present in sewage, and may be transmitted through contaminated food.

When it comes to disease prevention, keeping up on your regular vaccinations, utilizing proper work practices and PPE, and maintaining good personal hygiene are always the best prevention. For more information, please refer to our Agency's [Sanitation, Disease Prevention and Hygiene Policy – Attachment A: Relevant Guidelines for Working in Proximity to Sewage.](#)

## Honeybees Bloom at Manhattan Repair

As a City populated with more than 8 million people, it is clear that New York City (NYC) is a popular place to live, work and play. BWSO EHS recently also learned that NYC is a great place to be a bee!

Back in September 2009 in the prime of bee season, a large and menacing bee nest was found in the backyard of our Bureau's Manhattan Repair facility. Being based in lower Manhattan, Manhattan Repair personnel are accustomed to tight quarters, but the addition of a bee colony in their already limited space clearly presented a challenge to the staff.

With the assistance of 311 personnel, EHS Safety Officer John Sloane and Manhattan Repair personnel were able to collaborate with the New York City Police Department (NYPD), which subsequently sent Police Officer and Beekeeper, Anthony Planakis to the rescue.

"After evaluation of the bee hive's size, Officer Planakis identified the insects as being Carniolan honeybees, a subspecies of the Western honeybee," Safety Officer Sloane reported.

The nest, as seen in the picture, had been assembled inside a small metal shed in the backyard of the Manhattan Repair facility. It was made up of 12 honeycomb curtains and was populated by about 10,000 bees! The majority, it turned out, were inside the nest and not visible from the outside. The nest was about 5 gallons in volume and was later estimated to weigh 10-20 pounds.

According to Safety Officer Sloane, in order to safely remove the nest, Officer Planakis had to carefully cut the nest into three sections, isolate the queen bee and group most of the remaining bees into a box. The bees were then transported to beehives in Connecticut.



"Officer Planakis first determined that the bees were relatively docile by blowing on them and by touching some that were left clinging to the outside of the comb. Since Planakis' main goal was to demolish the hive carefully while avoiding potential injuries, he had suited up in his beekeeper's gear before carrying out his plan with one other NYPD officer from the Agency's Emergency Services Unit (ESU) standing by," Sloane further reported.

Altogether several NYPD police officers and one EMT team from the FDNY responded. With the removal a success, all that remained was a small portion of the nest along with some residual bees.

## Strange But True – Attack of the White Fungus



**BATS!** The very thought of these creatures can create an impulsive feeling of fright and fear. Despite the many misleading perceptions, bats are extremely beneficial; they are nature's own insecticide. One bat can eat up to 600 small-sized insects per hour including mosquitoes, termites, gnats, and moths. Unfortunately, recent studies have shown that bats are dying in the northeast area by the thousands! Up to 90% of bats in some areas have died, and scientists are worried that the entire species of bats could be wiped out. Bats have been hit with outbreaks of a disease called the "white-nose syndrome," referring to a white fungus found on the noses of many affected bats. Affected bats do not always have the fungus, but look emaciated and disoriented. Some may display abnormal behaviors such as flying outside during the day in temperatures below freezing. Scientists do not entirely understand the disease or how it spreads and are still trying to determine the potential risks to humans from contact with affected bats.

*Do you have suggestions? Call us!*

## Thoughts on the End of Probation and EHS Sustainability

Dear BWSO Employees:

By now you should be aware that DEP's probation expired on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009 as directed by the Federal District Court.

As I watched Esther Rodriguez, Supervisor of EHS Program Development and Julie Bae, EHS Communications Specialist, rather unceremoniously remove the Federal Monitor postings from a 3<sup>rd</sup> floor bulletin board and replace them with Commissioner Holloway's memo announcing that our probation expired, it seemed, well, strangely uneventful... which is actually a good thing! It reinforces the idea that EHS is becoming a part of our regular work life and thinking. The end of probation is really just the beginning of a new momentum and reminds us that we all share the responsibility to not only maintain, but improve EHS performance in our own personal work situations, at our facilities and within our respective organizations. Our co-worker's safety can depend on our awareness and work decisions that we make as individuals. Although we have reached a high level of compliance, there is no "we have arrived" with EHS. EHS compliance is an on-going process of incremental improvements and greater "safety thinking". In the future months, Bureau EHS (BEHS) will be working with the other Bureaus to ensure that the EHS "message" remains central to all of our Agency's operations and is effectively communicated.

I have had many conversations with BWSO employees in all divisions and continue to be encouraged by their commitment to safety and by the high quality of questions and suggestions offered. All employees show a high level of interest in ensuring a safe environment not only for us, but for the public. The hardest part of it all for BEHS, is keeping up with you!! Keep up the great effort.

Sincerely,  
Persis D. Luke, Director, EHS

### UPCOMING TRAINING: February – March 2010

HAZWOPER 24-Hr Chlorine Specialist  
Grade A Compliant Laboratory Course  
Filtration (Water Treatment Plant)  
Traffic Work Zone Safety

### Questions?

Contact Nelson Leon (718) 595-5544

## Behind the Scenes of BWSO A Spotlight on the Support Units that keep our Operations Running!

### BWSO, Office of Technology Management, Mapping Unit

One critical role of the Mapping Unit is to aid BWSO during emergencies. These professionals are sometimes called upon to develop custom maps for Engineers with detailed information on the water and sewer systems below our beloved streets of NYC. With this responsive unit on our side, through collaborative teamwork, we are able to respond to emergencies in a quick and efficient manner.



**Top Left:** Andreea Vlaiconi, Nicholas Joseph, Magdalena Kloskowski, Stephanie Fowler, Lionel Dieudonne, Karolina Rybicka-Kosiec; Michael Padilla

**Top Right:** Bert Francois, Lionel Dieudonne, and Shambhu Mandal

**Bottom Left:** Vinod Kutwal, Phillip Miarmi, Claudia Tobon, Suanne Callegari, Larisa Treskunov, Irina Tolmacheva, Vladimir Khassin, and Vincent Soriano

**Not pictured:** Anatoly Zarzhevsky



### BWSO, Correspondence & Records Retention Unit

When the public has a water or sewer problem, complaints are forwarded to our Correspondence & Records Retention Unit for review. Once the complaints are logged into the CorrTrack computer system by the Correspondence Unit, the complaints are then assigned to one of our appropriate Superintendents where they get resolved within 10 business days! This unit's exceptional turnaround time on resolving our citizen's complaints is a noteworthy asset to our Bureau.



**Left to Right:** Beverly Johnson, Bruce Robinson, Carmen Barreto, Karen Johnson, Ava Green-Harris, Unice Buggs, and Moira Tittle **Not pictured:** Denise Merchant and Susan Horn

*Continue to Page 4 for more details...*

### TAKE THIS QUIZ: SUBMIT CORRECT ANSWERS FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A FREE GIFT CARD

BE SURE TO INCLUDE YOUR FULL NAME AND WORK ADDRESS. FAX: (718) 595-5541 AND/OR EMAIL: BWSOEHS\_suggestions@dep.nyc.gov

#### 1. Which HBV related statement is false?

- A) HBV requires a living host to reproduce
- B) HBV is a virus
- C) HBV can survive within a contaminated needle for up to two months
- D) Exposure to HBV can occur through direct contact with an individual's eyes

#### 2. Hazardous waste container labels must contain:

- A) The words "Hazardous Waste"
- B) A description of the specific waste stored within the container
- C) The waste generation start date
- D) All of the above
- E) A & C only

Answers for December 2009 Newsletter Quiz: 1) D 2) C 3) B

#### 3. Which of the following would not be considered a Recordable Injury or Illness according to OSHA?

- A) A DEP employee fell from a DEP truck while exiting the cab at the scene of a water main break and sprained his ankle. His doctor instructed him to stay home for 2 days to recuperate.
- B) A Reservoir Operations employee is exposed to a small chlorine release while on duty and oxygen was administered as a purely precautionary measure.
- C) While performing hot work in a DEP Machine Shop, an employee received a second degree burn on his hand when he lost the grip on his welding torch. The employee was prescribed pain killers by his doctor for the injury.
- D) An employee drives to their assigned DEP facility, parks in the facility parking lot, gets out of the car and slips on some ice and breaks her arm.



## Environmental Protection

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BWSO, Deputy Commissioner

**Persis D. Luke**  
Director, Environmental Health & Safety

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Co-editors: Karen Marino &  
Persis D. Luke

We'd love to hear  
from you!

E-mail us at:

BWSOEHS\_suggestions@dep.nyc.gov

## Behind the Scenes of BWSO

### A Spotlight on the Support Units that keep our Operations Running!

Magdalena Kloskowski joined the BWSO Engineering division in 2006. She is a busy Deputy Project Manager in the Mapping Unit and reports daily to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Low-rise Lefrak Agency office. A few of her tasks include supervising employees, digitizing sewer maps, updating and maintaining the geographic information system (GIS) for all of NYC sewers, and assisting with special projects when emergencies occur. Magdalena has a B.A. degree in Geographic Information Systems and Economics from Hunter College.



#### What made you choose a career at the DEP?

A friend of mine told me about DEP. After hearing about the position that was available in the Mapping Unit, I became more interested in the Sewer Mapping Project at BWSO. I also felt that DEP was a perfect fit for me because of my previous GIS experience. In addition I was also looking for a better opportunity, a bit of change, and a challenge!

#### What is your current job title and your responsibilities/role?

I am a Deputy Project Manager. The main project that I work on is the Sewer Mapping Project. Other projects include mapping out storm events for the City's five boroughs, sewer data maintenance, map productions, map updates, building custom maps, testing custom applications, and troubleshooting problems with any of the mapping applications.

#### What is a Geographical Information System?

A Geographical Information System (GIS) is a tool that allows the Mapping Unit for this Bureau to incorporate as-built and contract plans into the computer system by digitizing and capturing information, which allows us to produce maps. These maps are then made

accessible to our Bureau's Engineers. We also prepare custom maps of NYC infrastructures upon request.

#### What do you enjoy most about your job?

I love the independence that comes with working on different tasks. I enjoy the complexity of the projects, because they allow me to be a creative problem solver, and opportunities to work with the latest ESRI products and IT technology.

#### What types of EHS duties have you participated in?

I have participated in the annual training courses such as the Office Right-to-Know. I particularly enjoy the EHS trainings when Jenny Lai conducts them. She keeps the trainings interesting and thorough.

#### Have you achieved/met your career goals and if not, how satisfied are you?

Taking over (updating and maintaining) the most complex sewer system in the nation from the Consultants who started the GIS NYC Sewer Mapping Project is a big milestone for me.

#### Do you have any final words of wisdom, mottos or advice that you would like to share?

Follow your dreams. If you like something, go for it!

Unice Buggs began her career at DEP 22 years ago. Unice started as an Office Aide, later became an Office Associate, and is now a Principle Administrative Associate for the Correspondence & Records Retention Unit at BWSO. Throughout the years, as the department moved to various locations, Unice moved along as well. Her career started at 1250 Broadway and she now reports to work at our Agency's Lefrak office. On a typical day, Unice researches complaints that are received related to New York City's water and sewers.



#### What is your current job title and your responsibilities/role?

I am a Principal Administrative Associate. My primary responsibilities are assigning, researching, and closing out FOIL (freedom of information) requests, correspondence letters, and e-mails from various individuals - both from within and outside of the Agency. I also sometimes assist with requests for records from the NYC Law Department and the NYC Comptrollers office. After receiving complaints, I read them for accuracy and to get an overall understanding of what is being requested. The complaints are then researched using our Bureau's computerized complaint system (HANSEN). After all relevant materials are collected, they are checked for exactness and a file is prepared. If records exist, I bill the constituent and forward the records upon receipt of payment. I also close out correspondence letters and e-mails that were assigned to BWSO after they are completed.

#### What do you enjoy most about your job?

I take pleasure in helping the constituents with their freedom of information requests, and in doing so; I also gain more knowledge of the Field Operations processes.

#### What is the most memorable experience you have from your career at the Agency?

My most memorable moments come with when the Agency used to host annual family day picnics at Flushing Meadow Park. It was nice to see my co-workers and their families in a relaxed setting. Hopefully, one day family day picnics will be reinstated.

#### What do you consider your greatest achievements?

During my tenure at DEP, I have gained the respect of my co-workers. In turn, I have always returned the same respect that has been given to me.

#### Who do you admire the most and why?

I admire my younger sister. She has always said to me, "If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be where I am now". Today, my sister is Commissioner at the Inland Revenue Department in Antigua.

#### Do you have any final words of wisdom, mottos or advice that you would like to share?

Stay focused! Learn as much as possible. Take the job seriously and give it 100%. Hard work pays off.