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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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March 7, 2011

MAYOR BLOOMBERG, DEPUTY MAYOR GOLDSMITH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMISSIONER HOLLOWAY LAUNCH NEW PROGRAM TO SAVE HOMEOWNERS MONEY WITH PROACTIVE WATER LEAK NOTIFICATIONS

Water Leak Notification Program Detects Unknown Leaks by Monitoring Spikes in Usage; Program is Possible Due to the Installation of Wireless, Digital Water Meters Citywide

A 2011 State of the City Promise and Part of DEP's Strategic Plan

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Deputy Mayor for Operations Stephen Goldsmith and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Cas Holloway today launched a new program to save homeowners money by proactively notifying them of potential water leaks when unusual activity or spikes in usage are detected by DEP. The Leak Notification Program will enable homeowners to quickly respond to potential leaks and fix them before they become a costly problem. The program is made possible by the City's \$252 million investment in wireless meter readers, which provide water consumption data four times per day instead of once per quarter and allows homeowners, businesses and DEP to track water use in real time. Spikes in water use could indicate a leak that could substantially increase a homeowner's water bill if not quickly addressed. Mayor Bloomberg proposed the Leak Notification Program in his 2011 State of the City address and the initiative is a component of DEP's strategic plan. The program is part of the City's broader effort, called NYC Simplicity, to make government more customer-focused, innovative, and efficient. Spearheaded by Deputy Mayor Goldsmith, NYC Simplicity seeks to use technology and data to improve the customer experience, streamline operations and save taxpayer dollars. The Mayor made the announcement at DEP's Douglaston Pump Station, where he was joined by Lisha Li, a property owner from Flushing who was contacted by DEP about a spike in her water use that showed an increase from \$8 per day to \$100 per day. Ms. Li discovered a leak, which she quickly repaired.

"By applying the most up-to-date technology to one of our oldest and most basic city services, we can ensure homeowners prevent hundreds or even thousands of dollars from going down the drain," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Homeowners will no longer see a quarterly bill and be shocked by a wild increase caused by an unknown leak. It's all possible because of our constant commitment to finding ways

to use new technology to make government more efficient, innovative and customer-focused."

"NYC Simplicity is focused on using technology to improve New Yorkers' interactions with their government," said Deputy Mayor Goldsmith. "By alerting them to material increases in their water use, this leak notification program will keep customers informed and save them money in the process."

"Having a leak in your home is bad enough, but finding out about it months later and having to pay for all the wasted water is even worse," said Commissioner Holloway. "Thanks to the wireless meter readers we're installing at 835,000 locations around the City, customers who sign up for leak notifications will be alerted within a few days if their water use spikes, so they can figure out if they have a leak and fix it right away - saving time, money and heartache. This is the kind of real-time service that Mayor Bloomberg has continued to deliver to New Yorkers by leveraging the information that City agencies collect as part of our daily work. DEP will continue to develop new applications for wireless meter reading to help New Yorkers manage their water use, and make our core operations more transparent and efficient."

During the initial trial of the program, which began in December, approximately 1,300 alerts were made, saving New Yorkers an estimated several hundred thousand dollars. The notification to Ms. Li saved her up to several thousand dollars.

Eligible customers are owners of single-family and two- or three-family homes and homeowners interested in receiving notifications of potential leaks can sign up for email alerts at www.nyc.gov. Homeowners who do not sign up for email alerts are contacted directly by phone, or in writing. DEP is developing a text message alert system that will alert water system customers to possible leaks as well.

A spike in water use that triggers a leak notification does not necessarily mean that there is a leak. Sudden increases in water use could be triggered by a number of other factors, such as lawn-watering or having visitors. If customers do not believe their water consumption has significantly changed recently and that they may have an internal leak, DEP advises to first review their water use and check for discrepancies by going to www.nyc.gov. Customers then should do the following:

- Check toilets by looking for water movement in the bowl and the tank. Put a drop of food coloring in the tank and watch for the color to show up in the bowl - if it does, you have a slight leak;
- If you have water-using fixtures such as refrigerators, air conditioning units, or lawn sprinklers, check to ensure that they are turned off securely when not in use;
- Check any outside hose connection to ensure it is not leaking;
- Check your water meter. Read the dial and identify the "sweep hand" or small triangle that moves like a second hand on a watch. If it is moving and no one is actually using water, you may have a leak; and
- If you discover a leak, you should contact a licensed plumber for repair service.

Water customers with wireless water meters can track their water usage online. All water customers in New York City are expected to have wireless meters - and real-time, online access to their water bills - by January 2012, with between 7,000 and 9,000 customers added to the network each week. Approximately 615,000 customers are currently using wireless meters - 73 percent of all water

customers. New York City will be the largest City in the world to utilize wireless water meters citywide once installation is complete.

Customers with wireless meters can sign up to view their bills in real time at www.nyc.gov. Customers with wireless water meters using the online tracking tool will be able to see the dollar value of the water they have used as they use it, and view past billing and payment history. Most customers connected to the wireless network receive meter readings four times per day, with certain large buildings receiving information hourly. The wireless Automated Meter Reading system consists of small, low-power radio transmitters connected to individual water meters that send readings every six hours to a network of rooftop receivers throughout the City. The system is powered by the New York City Wireless Network (NYCWiN), maintained by the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications.

Leak notifications is the latest in a number of recent DEP customer service initiatives:

- Last November, Deputy Mayor Stephen Goldsmith and Commissioner Holloway announced the launch of a paperless billing option for water and sewer bills. Water and sewer customers can now sign up to receive their quarterly bills electronically, instead of by mail. The new program will reduce printing and mailing costs, and offer an easy-to-use and sustainable way for the Department of Environmental Protection's 835,000 customers to stay current on their account.
- Starting last summer, a two percent discount has been offered for customers who pay their water and sewer bills by direct debit. Direct debit offers an opportunity to pay by making scheduled payments, which can be drawn from a checking account, savings account, or credit card.

The Leak Notification Program is part of DEP's *Strategy 2011-2014*, a far-reaching strategic plan that lays out 100 distinct initiatives to make DEP the safest, most efficient, cost-effective, and transparent water utility in the nation. The new plan, the product of nearly one year of analysis and outreach, builds on *PlaNYC*, Mayor Bloomberg's comprehensive sustainability blueprint for New York City.

DEP manages the city's water supply, providing more than 1 billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8 million in New York City. New York City's water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, and comprises 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 7,400 miles of sewer lines take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov.

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