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Four Wastewater Treatment Teams Compete in the 22nd Annual Operator's Challenge

The Competition is Designed to Illustrate the Skills Required for Successful Operations

The NYC Department of Environmental Protection today held the 22nd Operator's Challenge event in which four teams of wastewater treatment operators competed to formally recognize the expertise and diverse skills required for the operation and maintenance of New York City's 14 wastewater treatment plants. This contest is part of a statewide and national competition developed by the Water Environment Federation (WEF). The New York City competition took place at the Jamaica Wastewater Treatment Plant in Queens.

"This competition gives our treatment plant operators the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and high degree of competence and pride they bring to the complex task of performing their everyday duties," said DEP Acting Commissioner Steven Lawitts. "DEP's 14 wastewater treatment plants treat 1.3 billion gallons of raw sewage a day. Harbor water quality has improved dramatically, and is now at its best in over 100 years, based on 100 years of scientific sampling data and the operators play a huge role in that success."

This year's contest includes:

1. **Collection:** Teams to connect a 4-inch PVC lateral sewer to an existing 8-inch PVC sewer pipe while in service.
2. **Lab:** Teams must perform all the steps to Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) analysis, an indicator of pollution in water by following a standard method as outlined in the reference manual.
3. **Maintenance:** Teams test their skills at responding to an emergency pump.
4. **Process:** Teams answer multiple choice questions to demonstrate their knowledge of wastewater treatment and process control at a wastewater treatment plant.
5. **Safety:** Teams rescue a dummy in a confined space. This involves meters to check the air quality, using

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safety devices, placement of air blower, recording oxygen, and decontamination procedures.

This year's competing teams are from the Bowery Bay, Wards Island, and Tallman Island (two teams) wastewater treatment plants. The two highest scoring teams will go on to compete in the statewide competition in June. From there, winners of the State contest will participate in a national competition in Orlando, Florida, in October. This event is sponsored by the Water Environment Federation WEF, local chapter and the DEP. The WEF is the largest professional organization representing the wastewater industry. Its membership includes national and international wastewater professionals from the public and private sector.

DEP manages the City's water supply, providing more than 1.1 billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents throughout New York State through a complex network of nineteen reservoirs, three controlled lakes and 6,200 miles of water pipes, tunnels and aqueducts. DEP is also responsible for managing storm water throughout the City and treating wastewater at 14 in-City wastewater treatment plants. DEP carries out federal Clean Water Act rules and regulations, handles hazardous materials emergencies and toxic site remediation, oversees asbestos monitoring and removal, enforces the City's air and noise codes, bills and collects on City water and sewer accounts, and manages city-wide water conservation programs.