

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 7, 2013

No. 75

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ISSUES SAFETY
ALERT ON OPENING FIRE HYDRANTS**

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) reminds New Yorkers that opening fire hydrants without spray caps is illegal, wasteful, and dangerous. Over the weekend there have been more than 200 reports of illegally opened hydrants city-wide and DEP is shifting staff from non-essential work to address these conditions and close open hydrants that have not yet been reported. Illegally opened hydrants can lower water pressure and can put lives at risk if there is a fire. Children can also be at serious risk, because the powerful force of an open hydrant without a spray cap can knock a child down, causing serious injury. New Yorkers are urged to report open fire hydrants to 311 immediately.

The unauthorized opening of New York City fire hydrants often spikes during heat waves. Opening a hydrant without a spray cap can lower water pressure and in some cases can hinder firefighting by reducing the flow of water to other hydrants in the area. A reduction in water pressure can also cause problems at hospitals and other medical facilities. Opening a hydrant illegally can result in fines of up to \$1,000, imprisonment for up to 30 days, or both.

Hydrants can be opened legally if equipped with a City-approved spray cap. One illegally opened hydrant generally releases more than 1,000 gallons of water per minute, while a hydrant with a spray cap releases 20 to 25 gallons per minute. Spray caps can be obtained by an adult 18 or over, free of charge, at local firehouses.

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 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 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program, with a planned \$14 billion in investments over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. This capital program is responsible for critical projects like City Water Tunnel No. 3; the Staten Island Bluebelt program, an ecologically sound and cost-effective stormwater management system; the city's Watershed Protection Program, which protects sensitive lands upstate near the city's reservoirs in order to maintain their high water quality; and the installation of more than 820,000 Automated Meter Reading devices, which allow customers to track their daily water use, more easily manage their accounts and be alerted to potential leaks on their properties. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on Facebook at facebook.com/nycwater, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/nycwater.

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