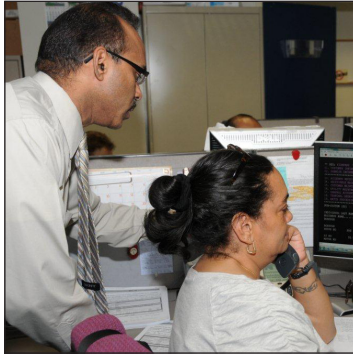


This Team's Work is Commenda-bill

As the installation of the Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) system in New York City enters its final phase, it is hard not to marvel at the scale and success of the project. Meters that only a few years ago had to be read by an onsite or drive-by inspection, today can transmit their data up to four times a day to a DEP data base. The AMR system has meant fewer estimated bills and now allows our customers to view their water consumption online.

The success of the project has been the result of an agency wide effort, much of which has already been chronicled in past issues of this publication. But like many of the successful projects conducted in the field by DEP, it takes an equally dedicated group of people behind the scenes to ensure its success. In the case of AMR, this work was carried out by a unit of the Bureau of Customer Services' (BCS) Billing Operations Team, headed by Director **Owen Marshall**.

At its foundation, the AMR system is simply a link between the meters



in the field and the Customer Information System (CIS) that stores these readings and issues bills to customers accordingly. If an accurate new meter reading is not relayed to the CIS before the next bill is set to be issued, DEP is forced to issue an estimated bill based on a complex formula that takes past meter readings and several other factors into account. Anytime an AMR device or a meter is either installed or replaced within the five boroughs, it must be assigned to a specially prepared account within

(Continued on reverse side)

Spotlight on Safety

Be Careful in There!

A confined space is any space that:

- is large enough and so configured that an employee can enter to perform work;
- has limited or restricted means for entry or exit (for example, tanks, vaults, aqueducts, and sewer lines);
- and is not designed for continuous occupancy.

Hazards associated with confined spaces have been responsible for many fatal and serious injuries in the workplace. The most serious hazard is not accounting for presence of hazardous atmospheres within the space

OEHS recently issued Revision 2 of its Confined Space Entry pro-


gram. This new policy was drafted and reviewed by a policy working group with members from all operating bureaus and BEDC. It clarifies procedures for classifying confined spaces, defines the responsibilities of individuals responsible for confined space entry, and outlines the training requirements for all those involved in confined space entry.

Employees should learn what a confined space is, where they are at their facilities, and what their responsibilities and training requirements are before undertaking any related work activities.

To read the full article, click here .

Commissioner's Corner

Over the last two years, DEP has become involved in two Superfund sites in NYC involving sediments contaminated by industrial and other discharges. In fall 2010, the EPA listed the Newtown Creek and its tributaries on its National Priorities List—a decision the city supported. Last Tuesday, I accompanied EPA Regional Administrator **Judith Enck**, EPA Superfund Director **Walter Mugdan**, Congress Members **Carolyn Maloney** and **Nydia Velazquez**, Assembly Member **Catherine Nolan**, Queens Borough President **Helen Marshall** and others on a tour of the creek. We discussed the challenges in cleaning up the more than a century's worth of heavy industrial and commercial pollution. The city is also addressing water quality impairments from CSOs and I pointed out the investments DEP has made at the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant to upgrade it to treat 700 million gallons a day during wet weather, as well as the aeration system in operation in English Kills. Since the city's comprehensive plan to reduce CSOs will take decades to complete, we need to inform residents and visitors about discharges so that they can take steps to minimize risks.

A month ago, Deputy Commissioner Kathryn Garcia testified in front of the City Council about DEP's outreach following the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant fire. This past week, I gave similar testimony to the New York State Senate Committee on Environmental Conservation, attended by Chairman **Mark Grisanti** and Senator **Adriano Espailat**. Since not much has changed since then, I will not go into it in detail but you can always read the current version here . However, we did announce a promising new RFP that we are about to finish. This fall, DEP will issue an RFP for a system of real-time monitoring of the volume of combined sewer overflows at five to-be-determined locations, which will supplement and enhance our current telemetry monitoring system at 108 outfalls that are close to beaches or on major outfalls. Having data about the volume of CSOs, which we can only estimate through models now, will allow us to better evaluate the impact on harbor water quality, to respond to developing emergencies, to enhance the existing public notification system




for overflow discharges during rain storms, and to optimize the existing sewer system.

This weekend we had a chance to tell the story of how we make New York a better place to live for all New Yorkers during Open House New York. Over the weekend, I stopped by the Visitor Center at the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant for one of the public tours, the third year our popular digester eggs have been part of the program. Like hundreds of other New Yorkers who took advantage of this off-the-beaten-path tour, I went to the top of the eggs—which help break down the solid byproducts from the roughly 240 million gallons a day that the plant treats—and saw an amazing view of the city. A special thanks to Plant Superintendent **Jim Pynn**, Deputy Plant Superintendent **Eric Klee**, Deputy Plant Superintendent **Anthony Fisher**, **Eileen Alter**, **Jessica Bergeron**, **Sara Pecker**, **Helene Amato**, **Lakeisha Bradshaw**, and **Rick Muller** for their help highlighting our infrastructure to all the visitors.

The more we can do to get communities invested in our critical infrastructure, the better we will be able to provide services. Yesterday I attended a ribbon cutting for the improved FieldTurf soccer field for FC Harlem. The land for the field, located at the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant, is owned by DEP, but we have no current use for it and so last year we agreed to let the community take advantage of it. At the time, Time Warner Cable Sports and Fox Soccer Plus donated a number of things, including scoreboards and an amazing mural. Since the grass didn't hold up, Major League Soccer and the U.S. Soccer Foundation stepped up to replace it. It really shows the great things that can happen when businesses, community organizations and government come together.

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. 

Focus on the Field



Since 1984, beginning as a college aide at DEP, **Dawn Banks** has held several positions handling water meter permitting, billing, and other customer service-related issues. Now a clerical associate IV, Dawn has worked at locations in the Bronx, Manhattan and most recently in Queens. During previous assignments, Dawn met with plumbers applying for a permit to install a water meter and spoke to customers contacting the agency call center to discuss billing concerns.

Banks is part of a team ensuring that customer accounts reflect

the most-up-to-date information under a range of scenarios. For example, an owner of a newly constructed single family home has a new water meter, but is awaiting a new automated meter reader. Once a new AMR device is installed, the billing information is updated to reflect the latest changes to the customer's account. There are other times where she may be involved in handling billing adjustments for customers that had estimated bills. And there are other times, when a customer had been billed using an automated meter reading that relied on telephone-based transmissions, before DEP made the leap to wireless technology.

Even when handling complicated billing complaints, Dawn maintains a positive attitude. "Although it may be difficult assisting customers with water bills, it is very gratifying knowing that I can help in resolving problems." In her spare time Dawn enjoys traveling, movies, and spending time with her family and Grand, her pet cat.

Beyond New York



The largest non-industrial green roof in North America is the Vancouver Convention Center in Canada.

It is the world's first LEED platinum certified convention center. During the XXI Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in 2010, the center served as the international broadcast and media hub.

The most extraordinary addition to the center is the five-acre living roof that is landscaped with more than 400,000 indigenous plants and grasses, and provides a natural habitat to birds, butterflies, insects, small mammals, and bees.

Event Calendar

VISITOR CENTER AT NEWTOWN CREEK FALL SPEAKER SERIES: Tuesday, October 25, 6:30-8:30 pm; Technology for Green Communities. For more information please click here [🔗](#).

DEP mourns the passing of BWSO staff member **Rocco Passarello**, on October 1, 2011.

StratChat ...with John Schwartz, BWS, Working Lands Section Chief



100 Strategic Goals Through the Eyes of Our Employees

Initiative 30—Support economic development compatible with watershed protection.

THE BENEFITS: "The NYC watershed is perhaps best known for providing safe, clean drinking water for nine million downstate consumers, but the watershed also serves as a foodshed for upstate and downstate residents interested in buying local foods, a woodshed for purchasing quality forest-based products (ranging from raw lumber to fine furniture), as well as a viewshed that supports natural resource-based recreation and tourism. Initiative 30 highlights these interconnections and reminds upstate watershed constituents that DEP is committed to working in partnership with local stakeholders to strengthen and promote these connections further."

(This Team's Work is Commenda-bill... continued)

CIS. Without this crucial step, even customers with fully installed AMR devices would still be billed on estimates.

The Billing Operations team is the missing piece of the puzzle that prepares the accounts in order to make sure that new developments in the field line up with the information stored in the CIS. Director Marshall describes the team as "...an essential part of the AMR program. Without the work that we do, customers simply would not be billed as accurately as they are today."

During the last two and a half years the team members have updated accounts associated with nearly 400,000 meters, connected thou-

sands of unregistered meters to accounts, performed upward or downward billing adjustments on accounts that were chronically estimating, and even helped customers convert from the old telephone based AMR system to the new wireless transmission units.

The Billing Operations team is one of many important reasons why day after day, the AMR system continues to fulfill its most essential function of providing accurate bills and consumption data to millions of New Yorkers. Their work is just one more thing to think about the next time you come across one of the hundreds of thousands of grey AMR boxes located throughout the city.

Kodak Moment



WINNING WALKERS: DEP employees, together with some friends and family, participating in the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk in Flushing Meadows Park on Sunday, October 16, include: **Jean Nunnally, Omar Ishak, Loncey Conyers, Laleta Conyers, Julia Bourdier, Linda Barghasheh, Wanda Cruz and Nancy Freeman.**

Click here [🔗](#) to see more photos and the names of other DEP staff members who participated in the walk.

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