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Department of Environmental Protection

Holds 27th Annual Operations Challenge

Teams of Wastewater Treatment Workers Compete to Demonstrate Their Skills and Preparedness to Operate New York City's 14 Wastewater Treatment Plants

Photos of the Challenge Can be Viewed on [DEP's Flickr page](#)

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Emily Lloyd today kicked off the 27th annual Operations Challenge competition in which wastewater treatment plant operators compete to showcase the expertise and skills required to operate and maintain New York City's 14 wastewater treatment plants. After competing in six events that represent a cross section of essential wastewater treatment operations, the two highest scoring teams will go on to compete in the statewide competition in June in Hauppauge, NY. From there, winners of the statewide contest will participate in the national competition in New Orleans, in September. The morning-long event was held at the City's Jamaica Wastewater Treatment Plant, in Queens, and was sponsored by DEP and the Water Environment Federation.

"Our sewage treatment workers protect the health of our waterways and the environment, and the Operations Challenge provides a unique opportunity to showcase what it takes to treat more than a billion gallons of wastewater each day," said DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd. "Thanks to the talent and dedication of the nearly 1,900 men and women who work in our wastewater treatment plants, New York Harbor is cleaner than it has been in a century."

"The Operations Challenge event is one way DEP works with NYWEA to bring attention to the important work that is carried out by wastewater system operations specialists. In today's world, these staff members are highly skilled and work around the clock to protect public health," said Executive Director of

More Information

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NY Water Environment Association Patricia Cerro-Reehil. “The Winners of this event get to compete in a regional challenge in Hauppauge on June 3rd and ultimately go to the national Water Environment Federation competition in New Orleans in October, 2014.”

This year's six teams hail from the North River, Coney Island, 26th Ward, Jamaica, and Hunts Point wastewater treatment plants. Each team will compete in four timed and judged events, including:

- Collections: Teams respond to a leaking pipe and repair it while it remains in service.
- Maintenance: Contestants remove damaged submersible pumps, make the necessary repairs and return them to service.
- Worker Safety: Teams compete in a timed, confined space rescue of a fellow employee and perform CPR while checking air quality.
- Pump Maintenance Event: Teams compete to respond to a severe weather condition that results in a pumping outage. They must restore the main pumps to service, and program them for emergency use.

In addition, this year's competition included two events which the teams completed earlier in the week.

- Water Quality Testing: Teams perform tests on water samples to determine if it meets discharge standards.
- Wastewater Treatment Process: Teams are tested on their knowledge of the wastewater treatment process.

The Operations Challenge was developed by the Water Environment Federation, the largest professional organization representing the wastewater treatment industry. Today's event at the Jamaica Wastewater Treatment Plant was sponsored by a local chapter of the organization in conjunction with DEP, which has participated in the Operations Challenge since 1987. A team from DEP has made it to the national competition for 17 straight years.

Over the past decade, DEP has invested more than \$10 billion in upgrades to wastewater treatment plants and related efforts to ensure that all the wastewater produced in the city is properly treated and, as a result, New York Harbor is cleaner and healthier than it has been in more than a century.

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. 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 will 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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