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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

07-24

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No PERC Detected in Queens Water Samples Taken Sunday, May 13th

Tetrachloroethylene (PERC) was not detected in any of the 21 water samples taken by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on Sunday, May 13th. The samples, taken from sections of the St. Albans, Hollis, Cambria Heights, and Queens Village neighborhoods in Queens, also indicate that no new PERC has entered the system. PERC levels began to decline late last week, with the daily sampling average already well below the US Environmental Protection Agency's maximum contaminant level of 5 ppb as early as Wednesday, May 9th.

Since Monday, May 7th, DEP has committed all available resources in response to minute amounts of PERC detected during routine water sampling early last week in sections of the St. Albans, Cambria Heights, Queens Village and Hollis neighborhoods in Queens. Citywide tests show no detectable PERC outside these localized areas. PERC is a chemical commonly used in dry cleaning and auto-body repair.

To date DEP has analyzed 206 samples from the relevant area. Of these:

- ▶ 149 samples detected no presence of PERC.
- ▶ 57 of the samples detected PERC, and 20 of these demonstrated levels of PERC above 5 ppb, though none of these have occurred since early Thursday.
- ▶ The average PERC level for these 185 samples was 1.2 ppb, far below the regulatory standard.

In addition, initial inspections of Cambria Car Wash, located at 208-15 Linden Boulevard in Queens, late Thursday evening revealed an illegal connection to the City's drinking water system. The owner of the car wash cooperated with DEP's efforts to determine the source of contamination, and voluntarily granted DEP permission to terminate the illegal connection and to test a groundwater well located on the premises. Samples taken by DEP on Friday showed PERC levels just at the regulatory limit. At those levels, it is unlikely that Cambria Car Wash is the sole source of PERC, though DEP cannot conclude this with certainty until additional samples are analyzed.

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DEP also found high PERC levels in samples taken from the well of a gas station at 216th Street and Hempstead Avenue late last week, however the business has proper backflow devices and testing data confirms that the facility is not a source of contamination.

To date, DEP has surveyed 410 businesses located in this area of southeast Queens and will continue further inspections. DEP is also developing a long-term inspection and testing strategy for the area that will mandate more frequent inspections and sampling in order to prevent future contamination.

DEP's efforts in the Queens area have included extensive public outreach, with flyers distributed to nearly all of the 12,000 residences in the potentially contaminated area; the flushing of hydrants to drain the contaminated water from the local distribution network; and the comprehensive inspection of local businesses to check for potentially faulty water/sewer connections, which led DEP inspectors to identify the illegal connection at Cambria Car Wash late last week.

DEP will continue to flush hydrants until Friday, May 18th, at which time the schedule will be reevaluated. As DEP phases out hydrant flushing and begins to normalize the water system in Queens, residents may temporarily experience brown, rusty or low pressure. Discolored water is only an aesthetic problem, and is caused when changes in system pressure stir up sediment in the City's pipes. Residents should not be alarmed, but are encouraged to report these conditions via the City's non-emergency help line at 3-1-1 so that DEP can identify and resolve any problems and efficiently restore the system to normal.

DEP has a resource center on site at Springfield Boulevard between 110th and 112th Avenues to provide information to local residents. Information is also available on DEP's website at nyc.gov/DEP. Residents with non-emergency questions can call the City's helpline at 3-1-1.

Any potential health effects would depend on the duration and concentration of exposure to PERC. No known long- or short-term health problems would be expected from the concentrations detected in Queens for people drinking, cooking or bathing in the water for a matter of weeks.