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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEP Issues Warning To Staten Island Homeowners To Beware Of Imposters Posing As "Water Department" Employees

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has learned that individuals have been posing as water meter inspectors or asking to take water samples for testing in order to gain entrance to homes in sections of Staten Island.

"Permitting unknown individuals into your home can have serious consequences," said Commissioner Christopher O. Ward. "Any persons who identify themselves as being from DEP or the water department, must either have made a previous appointment, which you can confirm with DEP, or be able to provide correct documentation.. Accordingly, we have outlined precautions that citizens should take to protect themselves from impostors who claim they need to inspect water quality, water meters or plumbing equipment."

DEP employees who are authorized to enter homes must carry and show photo I.D. cards and badges. Since impostors or others seeking access may have some form of identification, it is important to make sure that the I.D. card is from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

- ▶ Most water meters are read remotely from outside the home. DEP water use inspectors, however, may seek access without appointments for certain assignments, such as meter reading (if there is no remote or it does not work) and inspecting installations or repairs performed by DEP contractors.
- ▶ DEP water use inspectors wear uniforms and carry photo I.D. cards. Con Edison workers, who read water meters for DEP in all five boroughs, also wear uniforms and carry identification.
- ▶ Contractors installing water meters usually, but not always, make appointments in advance, wear uniforms,

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carry photo I.D cards, and drive trucks bearing company identification.

- ▶ DEP air and noise inspectors and water quality investigators do not wear uniforms, but they must carry and present photo I.D. cards and DEP inspector badges. When doing tests in buildings and homes at the request of citizens, they normally make appointments in advance.
- ▶ DEP employees who respond to emergency situations, such as hazardous material spills or leaks in water and sewer systems may need to gain access to buildings or homes to determine the source of a leak. They do not wear uniforms, but must carry and present photo I.D. cards whenever requesting access to a residence or building.
- ▶ No DEP employee is ever authorized to ask for cash money to perform any service or for payment of past due bills.

IF CITIZENS BELIEVE THAT PERSONS ARE MISREPRESENTING THEMSELVES AS DEP EMPLOYEES, THEY SHOULD PHONE THE LOCAL POLICE PRECINCT AND THE DEP HELP CENTER AT 718-DEP-HELP (718-337-4357).