

Home

Customer Services

- › Pay Online
- › Ways to Pay Your Bill
- › eBilling
- › Account Information
- › Customer Assistance
- › Service Line Protection Program
- › Water Rates
- › Property Managers & Trade Professionals

Water Utilities

- › Drinking Water
- › Wastewater
- › Stormwater
- › Harbor Water
- › Long Term Control Plan

The Watershed

- › Watershed Protection
- › Watershed Recreation

Citywide Initiatives

- › Regulatory Reform
- › Environmental Education
- › Conservation Programs
- › Air Pollution Control
- › Noise Codes & Complaints

Business and Professionals

- › Forms & Permits
- › Support for Businesses
- › Doing Business with DEP
- › Asbestos Abatement
- › Construction, Demolition & Abatement

About DEP

- › Inside DEP
- › News
- DEP Featured In...
- Stories from DEP
- Press Releases

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"Cease the Grease" Outreach Campaign Has Visited 50,000 Homes in Southeast Queens to Encourage Residents to Properly Dispose of Grease and Help Reduce Sewer Backups



Cease the Grease 2016
by NYC Water

Accumulation of Grease in Sewer Lines is Responsible for 60 Percent of Confirmed Sewer Backups in New York City

Photos and a Map of the Outreach Program are Available on [DEP's Flickr Page](#)

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced that outreach teams have knocked on the doors of 50,000 homes in southeast Queens to spread the message that improperly disposing of grease down kitchen drains can clog pipes and lead to sewer backups. The door-to-door campaign began last September and covered Community Boards 12 and 13, where there were more than 4,800 reports of sewer back-ups during the past five years. Investigations by DEP crews found that most of the backups were caused by grease blockages in the sewers. With help from interns with the Summer Youth Employment Program, the campaign has now reached 50,000 households and more than 1,000 food service establishments with grease education kits and compliance information. In addition, partnerships have been established with local schools, community boards, elected officials, business groups, and religious and neighborhood organizations to encourage New

More Information

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Public Notices

Testimony & Public Comments

- › [Capital Projects](#)
- › [Careers at DEP](#)
- › [Environmental Reviews](#)
- › [Interagency MOUs](#)
- › [A to Z Index](#)
- › [Contact Us](#)



Yorkers to [properly dispose of grease](#). Grease should never be poured down kitchen sinks or toilets, but should instead be placed in sealed non-recyclable containers and discarded with regular garbage.

"When grease is improperly poured down the drain it can block sewer lines and threaten public health and the environment," said **DEP Acting Commissioner Vincent Sapienza**. "By working with our community partners to ensure that grease is properly disposed of we can help to prevent costly problems for homeowners and businesses."

"We have all been guilty at one time or another of pouring kitchen grease down the sink drain, but doing so can clog pipes and sewers," said **State Senator James Sanders Jr.** "Every single person can make a difference when it comes to taking care of our environment and it can begin with something as small as disposing of your kitchen grease in the proper way. I commend the DEP for its Cease the Grease campaign and efforts to educate the public about this issue and providing residents with free specially lined bags for properly disposing of grease."

"As the Department of Environmental Protection continues to build out our sewer system in Southeast Queens, it is even more important that residents are aware of the damage grease can do to our infrastructure when it is improperly poured down the drain," said **Council Member Donovan Richards (D-Laurelton)**. "This campaign has helped to educate more than 50,000 households and business owners, in addition to its implementation in STEM lessons in elementary and middle school. I'd like to thank the entire DEP team for all of their hard work on the 'Cease the Grease' outreach campaign and their continued efforts to decrease the harmful effects of flooding that Southeast Queens has been dealing with for decades."

[Educational programs](#) have been developed for the schools in the area, including P.S. 176, P.S./I.S. 148 and I.S. 59, with interactive and multidisciplinary STEM (Science, Technology, English and Math) lessons. The curriculum introduces students and educators to New York City's drinking water and wastewater systems. In addition, information and grease education kits will continue to be made available at as many community events and meetings as possible, and on-site visits will continue to be made to commercial food establishments. The campaign also includes workshops at New York City Housing Authority developments, which include approximately 2,500 households within the two Community Boards.

DEP has embraced a data-driven, proactive approach to operate and maintain New York City's sewer system. By using a range of digital tools and innovative practices, DEP develops targeted programs to provide a high level of service to customers while focusing on investments that will prioritize maintenance in the areas where it is needed most. This approach led to the development of a comprehensive map and target grids for public outreach in southeast Queens.

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](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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