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Department of Environmental Protection Launches New Home Water Assistance Program

More than 12,500 Low-Income Homeowners to Receive Automatic Credit on their Next Water and Sewer Bill

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Emily Lloyd today announced the launch of a new program to provide lower income homeowners in New York City with an automatic credit to their water bills. The Home Water Assistance Program, first introduced in May when the de Blasio Administration announced the lowest water rate increase in nearly a decade, will provide a credit of \$115.89 to the water bills of more than 12,500 homeowners. DEP has partnered with the Human Resources Administration (HRA), which administers the Federal Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), to identify qualified one to four family homeowners that received a HEAP benefit during the 2013-2014 heating season. The credit will appear on the next water and sewer bill for qualified customers. The program follows an initiative to freeze the minimum charge for homeowners who use less than 100 gallons of water each day, which resulted in more than 25 percent of DEP customers, many of them senior citizens, receiving no increase in their water bills this year.

“The Home Water Assistance Program is another example of how DEP is following through on Mayor de Blasio’s promise to help low-income customers, while still keeping water and sewer rates affordable for all New Yorkers,” **said DEP Commissioner Lloyd.**

“The Human Resources Administration is committed to providing services that fight poverty and prevent homelessness. Partnering with DEP to launch the Home Water Assistance Program is one of the many ways that we are working to achieve these goals,” **said HRA Commissioner Banks.**

As part of DEP’s commitment to providing the highest quality service while ensuring effective and fair revenue collection, a number of initiatives have been implemented since 2011. These programs include the completion of a network of Automated Meter Reading devices that ensure water bills are based on actual consumption and that allow customers to access data about their water use in near real time, a leak detection system that has already saved customers more than \$55 million, the Water Debt Assistance program which helps property owners at risk of foreclosure manage their water and sewer debt, and the replacement of thousands of large meters on industry-recommended cycles.

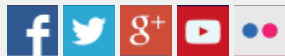
Earlier this year, DEP also adopted a number of customer service improvements that were approved by the New York City Water Board in May. They include:

- **Freezing the minimum charge** - DEP set the minimum charge for customers who use less than 100 gallons of water each day at last year’s rate. As a

More Information

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result, roughly 25 percent of single family homes—many of them owned by seniors—saw no water rate increase this year.

- **Expanding the leak forgiveness program** - Through the Leak Notification Program DEP has saved customers more than \$55 million in leak-related charges since 2011. Until recently, leaks on maintainable fixtures, such as toilets and faucets, were not included in DEP’s leak forgiveness program. To encourage a quick response to those leaks, DEP has extended partial forgiveness of leak-related charges to any customer who fixes a leak that resulted in a high bill within 120 days.
- **Extending the deadline for customers to file an appeal with the Water Board** – Until recently, customers had 30 days to file an appeal with the Water Board. DEP has extended that deadline to 60 days.
- **Halting the lien sale process for customers with a pending appeal** - DEP will exclude any customer from the lien sale list who has a pending appeal on the date the 90-day list is published. The change will ensure customers have a fair shot to appeal a bill they believe is unwarranted.
- **Suspending interest for customers with a “catch-up” bill after Automated Meter Reader (AMR) installation** - DEP now grants customers who are issued a “catch-up” bill after the installation of AMR 90 days to pay their bill, interest free. The change will reduce unanticipated charges on customers’ bills.

Providing the highest quality service to its customers is one of the goals outlined in *Strategy 2011-2014*, a far-reaching strategic plan that lays out 100 distinct initiatives to make DEP the safest, most efficient, cost-effective, and transparent water utility in the nation. For more information, customers should visit nyc.gov/dep.

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. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program, with nearly \$14 billion in investments planned 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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