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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MORE INFORMATION

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Drought Continues, Water Conservation Urged

Commissioner Christopher O. Ward of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced today that the City continues to be in a Stage I Drought Emergency. The Commissioner reminded all New Yorkers that water use restrictions remain in effect with reservoir levels at only 83.8% of capacity, while normal levels for July 17th are 93%. He also announced one modification of the rules to address potential public health concerns and clarified some related issues.

"Only one quarter of an inch of rain has fallen on the watersheds of New York City's reservoirs so far in July," said Commissioner Ward. "Normal rainfall for the month is expected to be over four inches. Reservoir levels, which never reached their normal capacity this year, are going down again, and all residents, businesses and governmental entities in New York City must continue to comply with the Stage I Drought Emergency rules.

"However, the City is in the midst of a very hot summer," Commissioner Ward continued. "In such weather, the health and safety problems posed by animal and human wastes and garbage on City streets are greatly exacerbated. In many instances, if not cleaned properly, the wastes may pose a serious health threat. Accordingly, I am issuing a modification of the Rules with respect to the washing of sidewalks, streets, driveways, outdoor areaways and outdoor steps to remove animal and human wastes and garbage, subject to specific conditions."

In addition to announcing the modification of the sidewalk-washing rule, Commissioner Ward clarified some other water use issues. "It is permissible under the rules to water trees on the street, on private property, in parks and other public areas. Trees are of vital importance in our urban environment. They help to clean air; provide cooling shade and aesthetic amenities. It is also permissible under the rules to operate a sprinkler so that children may cool off and play.

"I want to stress, however, that use of the sidewalk washing modification or other provisions of the rules to evade the general restrictions on sidewalk washing and lawn watering will not be tolerated. DEP is continuing aggressive enforcement of the Stage I Drought Emergency

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Rules. Any person caught violating those rules will be served with a Notice of Violation. Fines under the rules range between \$100 to \$1,000."

The illegal opening of fire hydrants continues to be a problem during hot weather, and DEP advises that the fine for tampering with a hydrant is \$750. To report illegally opened hydrants or other water or sewer complaints, people should call the DEP's 24-Hour Help Center: 1-718-DEP-HELP (1-718-337-4357). For more information on water conservation, see the How Can I Save Water? section of DEP's Web site at www.nyc.gov/dep.

Conditions of the Rule Modification

1. The washing of sidewalks, streets, driveways, outdoor areaways and outdoor steps may only be performed when a true health or safety hazard is present. The variance does not extend to use of water for other reasons (aesthetic improvements, regular cleaning, etc.). To the extent that such water use is prohibited by the Rules, it remains prohibited.
2. The cleaning may only be performed from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., in accordance with the following schedule:
 - a. At even-numbered addresses, on even-numbered days of the month.
 - b. At odd-numbered addresses, on odd-numbered days of the month.
3. Non-potable water must be used to the maximum extent practicable.
4. The cleaning must be performed with the following equipment: hand-held hoses equipped with nozzle tips or in-line hose flow regulators which effectively limit water output to a maximum flow rate of 5 gallons per minute; or high-powered pressure washers that limit water output to 3 gallons per minute.
5. Only the amount of water reasonably necessary to accomplish the cleaning may be used (amounts in excess thereof are considered waste and are prohibited).
6. DEP reserves the right to inspect any property where water is being used to ensure that these conditions are being observed. Any failure to observe these conditions shall be deemed a violation of the Rules and shall subject the violator to the penalties associated with violations of the Rules.
7. DEP reserves the right to modify or withdraw this variance if, in its opinion, the circumstances so warrant, including, but not limited to, the declaration of a higher stage of drought emergency.