

## Transformation BCS:

### Improving Customer Service Through Technology

**T**he Bureau of Customer Services (BCS), led by Deputy Commissioner **Joe Singleton**, is responsible for metering water, issuing bills, and collecting revenue - and technology is an important piece to the puzzle. The Bureau's ongoing transformation includes improved customer assistance, expanded call center hours for customer convenience, dramatically reduced customer call wait time, and reduced response time for written customer inquiries. In short, customers get faster, friendlier service, and with the installation of automated meter reading (AMR) technology city-wide, which enables BCS to provide its customers with more accurate account information, BCS is on the cutting edge of technology as well.

So far, over 205,000 AMR devices have been installed, and when completed, 834,000 customers citywide will be connected. Soon New York will be the largest city in the world to use wireless technology in water metering. AMR technology will end the use of estimated water bills giving



customers the ability to identify how they can conserve water and reduce costs. Instead of meters being read four times a year, as is now the case, they'll be automatically read four times a day. AMR systems consist of small, low-power radio transmitters connected to individual water meters that send readings to a network of rooftop receivers throughout the city. BCS is using state-of-the-art technology to continue to improve service to our customers.

Last Thursday BCS launched an on-line payment feature to make it easier for DEP's customers to pay and track their bills and Call Center supervisor **Gloria Williams** knew how beneficial that would be to her

(Continued on reverse side)

## Spotlight on Safety

### Preventing Cold-Related Illnesses


Prolonged exposure to low temperatures, wind or moisture can result in cold-related illnesses such as frostbite and hypothermia. Here are some tips to help prevent these illnesses:

- Avoid frostbite and hypothermia when you are exposed to cold temperatures by wearing layered clothing,

- Wear a hat, scarf and turtleneck sweater to protect your head, neck, face, ears and nose.
- Eat a well-balanced diet, and drink warm, non-alcoholic, caffeine-free liquids to maintain fluid levels and retain heat.
- Avoid becoming wet, as wet clothing loses 90 percent of its insulating value.

Click here for more information. 

At DEP, everyone is responsible for safety. If you or anyone on your team is concerned about your working conditions, it's okay to ask your supervisor or your bureau's EHS liaison how they can help. If you've still got questions, you can call the EHS Employee Concerns Hotline. It's DEP's responsibility to acknowledge and fix unsafe situations, procedures, and practices. With your help, we'll not only get the job done, we'll make it safer for ourselves, our coworkers, our families, and our city.

CALL (800) 897-9677 OR SEND A MESSAGE THROUGH PIPELINE.   
HELP IS ON THE WAY.

## Commissioner's Corner



Yesterday BCS Deputy Commissioner **Joe Singleton** and I joined **Mayor Bloomberg** to launch the Water Debt Assistance Program, a new initiative that will temporarily relieve homeowners at risk of foreclosure of past-due water and sewer debt. The program is a component of Mayor Bloomberg's 2010 State of the City pledge to launch the most ambitious home foreclosure prevention effort of any city in the nation. Homeowners at risk of foreclosure whose properties are also on the 90-day lien sale list can apply for the program. If the homeowner qualifies, DEP will remove their property from the upcoming lien sale and defer their outstanding debt until the property is sold, refinanced or the owner has the ability to pay the debt. Homeowners would be required to pay all subsequent water bills on time to remain in the program.

The announcement took place at an office of the Pratt Area Community Council in Brooklyn, one of the Centers for NYC Neighborhoods' community partners in providing foreclosure prevention counseling. We were joined by HPD Commissioner **Rafael Cestero** and Council Members **Albert Vann**, **Leroy Comrie**, and **Thomas White, Jr.** and Executive Director of the Pratt Area Community Council **Deborah Howard**.

Last Wednesday I was given a tour of the Kingston Laboratory by **Steven Schindler**, Director of Water Quality, **Lori Emery**, Chief, Watershed Water Quality Operations, **Andy Bader**, Deputy Chief, West

of Hudson Water Quality Operation, and **Kirsten Lewis**, Section Chief, Kingston Water Quality.

I learned about new systems to improve overall efficiency and traceability of sampling from Scientist Water Ecologist **David VanValkenburg**; **Karen Moore**, Kingston Field Director, explained field monitoring programs and showed me a sample of cryptosporidium; and I observed **Chris Nadareski**, Section Chief, Wildlife Studies, dissect a Ruddy duck. I also learned about DEP's procedures for the analysis of pathogens from **Lisa Blancero**, the Pathogen Laboratory Director. The Kingston team is on the front lines making sure our drinking water is safe everyday.

### The Winners Are...

Thanks to all who participated in the contest to name the four meeting rooms. The entries demonstrated tremendous thoughtfulness, creativity, and pride in the work of the Agency as well as a bit of humor, a dose of philosophy, and a sense of history. That said, the winning names are:

Commissioner's conference room: **Neversink** - a big expansive reservoir...its name also has an inspirational undertone. **Ryan Schnupp** - OEHS

The Breakout rooms:

**Bluebelt** - for award-winning, creative, ecologically sound, and cost-effective solutions. **Seena Sweet** - BCIA

**Valve Chamber** - a mysterious and integral part of the water delivery system infrastructure. **Jeffrey Hurley** - BWS

**Grit Chamber** - for those down and dirty meetings where the heavy matters settle out. **Anonymous**.

## Focus on the Field



While working as a consultant for DEP in 2007, management had the foresight to convince **Kathryn Mallon, P.E.** to leave MWH, an international water and environmental engineering services company she was with for 18 years, and to bring her experience, supported by a B.S. in Civil Engineering and a Master's in Environmental Engineering, to DEP. In the fall of 2008 Kathryn came on board as **Assistant Commissioner of In-House Design and Support** in BEDC, reporting to DC **James Mueller**. In her position she manages over 200 people in the In-House Design, Contract Support, Engineering Support, and Project Controls Divisions. "One of my biggest goals" Kathryn said, "is to build back the capacity of our in-house design group and reduce our dependency on consultants." Kathryn is also

spearheading a number of new initiatives to foster efficient, consistent, and performance-based project delivery. This has included centralizing critical support functions such as cost-estimating and permitting services, preparing new manuals and standard operating procedures for how BEDC manages projects, and establishing accountability for on-time and on-budget delivery.

"The investment that BEDC has made over the past few years to change the way we do business" Kathryn continued, "is starting to pay dividends. Permit violations have gone way down; cost estimates have improved; for the first time, we have a Master Schedule showing the status of projects in the Bureau's Capital Program." She said, "It's been exciting to see the growing transformation in the culture of BEDC -- people slowly coming around to doing business differently and focusing more on the critical success factors." With these engineering, design and construction reforms underway, and others planned for the future, DEP is establishing a 21<sup>st</sup> century management style.

## DEP: Then & Now



**Then:** A ¾ inch Neptune Trident Water Meter, Dial Type, measures in cubic feet. (Circa 1900's).

Removed in 1998, commercial account, Manhattan.



**Now:** A ¾ inch Elster InVision Water Meter, Encoder Type, measures in cubic feet. A radio frequency (RF), Meter Transmission Unit (MTU) by Aclara Technologies is attached as the latest style of Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) equipment.

## Ask Cas

askcas@dep.nyc.gov 

**Q.** I read the report "Drilling Around the Law" which identified current regulatory weaknesses in New York State regarding hydraulic fracturing. An official in US EPA stated that the Region II office "does not regulate fracturing and does not check on what fluids are used." Is the City pressing any of these issues with the Feds?  
- **Stacey Moriates, DrPH, Director-QA/QC, BEC**

**A.** DEP's Bureau of Water Supply has been very involved in the issue of natural gas drilling in the watershed. DEP hired a consultant to assist in the evaluation of potential impacts to the water supply from natural gas drilling, including the chemicals you mentioned. This past December DEP released a final report, which is available on the DEP website. The assessment greatly informed our comments on NYS-DEC's draft environmental review and helped shape the City's policy on natural gas drilling in the watershed. As this process moves forward, DEP will continue to be vigilant!

## Did You Know?

... that the Ashokan Reservoir is 9.3 mi<sup>2</sup>, or 40% of the size of Manhattan (23 mi<sup>2</sup>). Manhattan would be inundated by more than 25 feet of water to match the capacity of the Ashokan Reservoir.

(Transformation BCS,... - continued)

callers. This new feature allows her customers to better manage their payments by scheduling their bills to be paid by direct debit. Having served in DEP's Call Center when it opened 16 years ago, Gloria said, "It is rewarding to see the ongoing improvements in technology." The Call Center is run by **Steven Barry**, who joined DEP from the City's 311 headquarters. He and his staff of three supervisors, and over three dozen employees, handle almost 400,000

calls each year. Steven, also appreciates the value of technology in improving customer service. "Our reps work with two screens on their desks, and can retrieve twice as much information at the same time, including billing history and Department of Finance records." Steven also credits training and a dedicated team of Customer Service Representatives as contributing factors to customer service improvements.

## Milestones

Congratulations to the following employees: **Burjor Kharivala**, BEDC on 42 Years of Service; **Dolores Love**, BWS for 40 Years of Service; **Anna Lopez**, BCS for 35 Years of Service; **Grigory Faybushevich**, BEDC, **Richard Prado**, BWSO and **William Haberland**, BWT on 30 Years of Service each.

## Event Calendar:

**Fashion Week** - Feb. 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 8am-3pm. Aveda is partnering with DEP to provide free NYC water at select Manhattan locations throughout Fall/Winter 2010 Fashion Week. Guests will be able to fill their own reusable water bottles with NYC tap water from free "Water on the Go" stations around New York City.

### African-American Heritage/Black History Month

Weekly movies-3rd. Fl. Cafeteria 12-2pm; displays of biographies of notable African-Americans, various arts donated by DEP employees- 3rd. Fl. corridor near cafeteria entrance.

**We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at:**  
[newsletter@dep.nyc.gov](mailto:newsletter@dep.nyc.gov) 