

Special Guest Commissioner's Corner

James Roberts, DEP's Deputy Commissioner for the Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations, is a guest commentator this week.

Earlier today, DEP launched the 2015 Hydrant Education Action Team (HEAT) program, a fire hydrant abuse prevention campaign that deploys teams of teens hired through the Department of Youth and Community Development's Summer Youth Employment Program to inform New Yorkers about the dangers of illegally opening fire hydrants. Illegally opened fire hydrants can release more



than 1,000 gallons of water per minute and reduce water pressure in neighborhoods, making

Spotlight on Safety

Working Safely Outdoors

During the warmer months, workers who spend a lot of time outdoors can be exposed to numerous hazards, including poisonous plants and deer ticks.

When poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac come in contact with the skin they can cause itching, swelling, blisters or a rash. If you come in contact with a poisonous plant, immediately rinse skin with rubbing alcohol or degreasing soap (such as dishwashing soap), and lots of water. Apply wet compresses, calamine lotion, or hydrocortisone cream to the skin to reduce itching and blistering. See a doctor if you are having a more severe allergic reaction.

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection caused by the bite of an infected deer tick, which are concentrated mostly in the northeast and upper midwest. Workers should continuously inspect skin and clothing so that a tick bite does not go unnoticed.

If you find a tick on your person, remove it as soon as possible with fine-tipped tweezers. If the tick has been attached to you for less than 24 hours, the risk of Lyme disease is relatively small. If you experience any symptoms such as a spreading rash at the site of the bite, body-wide itching, chills or fever, see a doctor. Left untreated, the disease can affect the skin, nervous system, heart and/or joints.

Employees who work outdoors should take the following protective measures:

- wear light colored clothing (long pants and sleeves) to be able to better spot ticks
- tuck pants legs into socks
- apply insect repellent to clothing

For more information, visit [CDC: Lyme Disease](#) and [CDC: Poisonous Plants](#).

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.



it difficult to fight fires or lower water pressure in nearby buildings. Since the HEAT outreach campaign began in 2007, reports of illegally opened hydrants during the summer months have fallen by more than 60 percent.

Hydrants can be opened legally if equipped with a City-approved spray cap, which release only 20 to 25 gallons per minute, ensuring adequate water pressure and reducing the risk of a child being knocked over and injured by the force of the water. Spray caps can be obtained by an adult 18 or over, free of charge, at local firehouses. New Yorkers are urged to report illegally opened fire hydrants to 311 immediately. Opening a hydrant illegally can also result in fines of up to \$1,000, imprisonment for up to 30 days, or both.

The HEAT program is run in partnership with the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation and deploys four teams of 10 -12 young adults who distribute literature, posters, and other informational ma-

terials about fire hydrant safety at community events, parades, greenmarkets, churches, and libraries. The outreach campaign focuses on neighborhoods in northern Manhattan and the Bronx that have historically seen high rates of unauthorized fire hydrant use during heat waves. In addition to literature, the teams will distribute reusable water bottles and other souvenirs that promote the safe operation of fire hydrants.

As the weather heats up this week all New Yorkers are going to be looking for ways to cool off, and approved spray caps are a great way to beat the heat. However, illegally opened fire hydrants are a real threat to public safety. I want to thank the young leaders who are hitting the streets to help us ensure that New Yorkers will be able to enjoy a break from the hot weather and that our first responders have the water they need to protect public safety.

Photos of the HEAT Teams can be viewed on [DEP's Flickr Page](#).



Welcome to the Catskills!



Last week, DEP joined the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and numerous local officials to cut a ribbon and officially open the Maurice D. Hinchey Catskill Interpretive Center. Located on Route 28 in the Town of Shandaken in Ulster County, the facility will serve as a gateway for visitors to the Catskills Forest Preserve where they can learn about the recreational opportunities in the area as well as the region's rich history and ecology. The Center is named in honor of retired Congressman Maurice D. Hinchey, who championed the Center for decades. DEP has committed \$100,000 towards operating expenses for the Center.

The Center features a topographic floor map display with projected images from above that highlights the natural resources and other interesting assets in the region. Visitors will

be able to explore the Catskill's extraordinary recreational, cultural and historic opportunities as well as a variety of tourist services through the Center's iPads and wall displays. The Center's displays, activities and staff will advance environmental education, cultural and natural resource stewardship and outdoor recreational opportunities that enhance the Catskill region and promote economic development opportunities.

The Friends of the Catskill Interpretive Center, working under the umbrella of the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development, will operate the Center seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Center is staffed through a partnership including the Catskill Center, the NY-NJ Trail Conference, Catskill Mountain Club, Ulster County Tourism and Catskill Mountainkeeper. DEC will also build interpretive trails at the site. For more information, visit catskillinterpretivecenter.org.



Join DEP's Dragon Boat Team!



DEP is entering a boat in the annual Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival, held in nearby Flushing Meadows Corona Park, where the team will compete against other NYC agencies. There are 12 paddlers, a helmsperson and a drummer in each race boat. The Festival will be held on August 8, and the first practice will be held at Corona Park this Sunday, July 12 at 11am. The only requirement is that participants are willing to work as a team, are not afraid to get wet, and are prepared to have boatloads of fun! For more information, please contact Michael Shum at mshum@dep.nyc.gov or Raymond Palmares at rpalmares@dep.nyc.gov.

Did You Know



...that DEP leases 64 acres of upstate watershed land for maple tapping projects, including approximately 1,475 taps? During the 2015 season New York State maple farmers produced a modern state record of more than 601,000 gallons of syrup from more than 2.3 million taps. Maple syrup production in the state reached its highest level in 71 years, ensuring New York's standing as the second-ranking producer of maple syrup, behind only Vermont, at 1.39 million gallons. New York's comeback began in 2008 when vacuum pumping systems began to replace the metal tree taps and hanging buckets that have been used for maple syrup farming for centuries. Similar to New York City's water system, most maple producers in the watershed rely on gravity to do the work for them, arranging their taps and lines so that the natural contour of the land delivers the syrup from the trees to their sugar houses.

We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: newsletter@dep.nyc.gov.