

The Sit Rep

Newsletter of the NYC Office of Emergency Management

The Remains of the Day

Last October, Con Edison workers discovered human remains in a manhole near Ground Zero. Upon the discovery, Mayor Bloomberg asked OEM to coordinate the personnel and resources from more than a dozen City agencies and other organizations to resume the search for human remains around and beneath Ground Zero.

The World Trade Center (WTC) remains project began as a simple search of peripheral manholes, but has grown so extensive teams have relocated pedestrian bridges to search the earth beneath their foundations. The project includes members of the Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), the Police Department, the Fire Department, the Department of Design and Construction, the Department of Sanitation, Verizon, Con Edison, the Port Authority, and specialized contractors.

The planning staff combines expertise from buildings, environmental protection, transportation, and sanitation. They calculate project progress and coordinate the resources necessary to keep everything moving forward. OEM staff has played a number of different roles in the WTC remains project for more than eight



Steve Vassi at Ground Zero

months. Read on to learn more about their experiences.

What's Happening at Ground Zero

After September 11th, Ground Zero was completely inaccessible. The first step to recovery was to build a road into the heart of the wreckage to extract the large debris. In this early stage, responders were searching for bodies, not fragments. Five years later, "Haul Road" became the center of attention once again. Responders divided it into grids and contractors excavated the earth beneath it in search of remains so small, they may have gone undetected.

Through the winter winds, OEM responders stood alongside archeologists and forensic anthropologists as they dug test trenches to examine the soil stratigraphy and determine how deep construction crews should dig. The trenches vary from two feet to eight feet deep and spread across the site like a miniature, inverted skyline.

Contractors work from sunrise to sunset extracting earth by hand and with the aid of heavy equipment. OEM's John Buneta has been the lead on-site coordinator for most of the project along with Steve Vassi, who has been on loan from Watch Command. In addition, *(continued on page 2)*

Editor's Note

After a brief hiatus, OEM's newsletter is back and better than ever. The new title, contributed by Jim McConnell, offers a new take on a familiar phrase. *Sit* back and enjoy!

The unforeseen delay that accompanied this issue has left us scrambling to fit in everything that's happened since the last issue. In addition to major events like the Mayor's Office moving in upstairs, the past few months have been the most productive baby months in OEM history. Seven babies joined the health plan this issue!

OEM also recently implemented a new employee evaluation policy, for which the standards must be in place by August 1st. For more details speak with your director.

This issue also explains the changes to the health benefits enrollment program and welcomes 12 new staffers to the ranks. Enjoy the news, smile at the babies, and congratulate your colleagues. The Sit Rep is back.

The Remains of the Day (continued from page 1)

virtually all OEM Operations staff have supported various aspects of the job or backfilled for others assigned to the project. OEM's role is to make sure its partners have everything they need to their jobs: equipment, tools, and cooperation, and to enforce the rigid protocol set by OCME.

Vassi credits the professionalism of the dozens of City employees and contractors on the site for making his job possible. "Most of them have been working here since October. Their eyes are as experienced their hands, and knowing what to look for can make all the difference in this project," Vassi explains. Everyone tolerated the long hours and freezing winter conditions with remarkable grace and the employee turnover was very low. "These guys believe in the work they do and everyday they get better at their job," says Vassi.

When the sun sets operations move underground. The project team collects debris from over 600 underground structures using special tools and enhanced cameras. Many of the structures, including four access ramps, lie under the West Side Highway, and are impossible to access during the day. All excavated material, surface and subterranean, is taken to a site in Brooklyn for further searching.

What's Happening on 39th Street

The main fixture at the 39th Street site in Brooklyn is a massive green machine that would be more at home on the Great Plains than in a city. It is called a trommel and it is as big as a tractor trailer. A trommel is an agricultural machine that separates mate-

rial by size. Excavators use them to isolate top soil or sift different sizes of mined material. For the WTC remains project, the trommel separates material that may hide human remains from very fine material, like grains of sand, which is too small to be of any value. The remaining material, the portion still large enough to hide human remains, goes over to 11 Water Street for sifting by hand.

What's Happening at 11 Water Street

The cacophony of fork lifts, conveyor belts, rock hammers, and pressurized hoses that echo through our former home at 11 Water Street drown out the project statistics. OEM responder Brian Hastings shouts. The building has undergone an extensive makeover. Teams of plastic-suited, hard-hat-wearing con-

tractors, bend over sifting stations in the space that once held pallets of Ready New York guides. The metallic stations are accented by bright orange buckets that await any remains or personal artifacts believed to come from the towers.

The Brooklyn team specializes in the minutiae of searching for human remains and, like Ground Zero, the team is full of veterans. They move through their tasks with ease and efficiency. The rigid OCME protocol has become second nature to everyone involved. Strangely, human chatter does not accompany the heavy din of the machines. Perhaps the occasional piece of jewelry or monogrammed pen that clicks into an orange bucket says everything there is to say.

"Sometimes a job can get bogged down because people question if the work they're doing is good work," Hastings says. "We don't have that problem here. We know exactly why we are here. We see it every time the family of a victim tours the site. They are stunned by the scale of the commitment we have made to them. They realize that when we say we are doing everything that we can, we mean it."

The City has recovered 21,381 remains to date and identified 10,967 of them. Advances in forensic and DNA science may allow specialists to identify more victims in the future, but the possibility of new, presently identifiable remains is staggering for victims' friends and families. "Everyone finds closure is his own way. All we can do is the best job we can and hope that the victims' families appreciate the respect we have for our work," Hastings says.



Brian Hastings at the 11 Water Street in Brooklyn

OEM NEWS

Blood Drive

Friday the 13th lived up to its gory stigma in April as 27 pints of blood spilled from the veins of OEMers. The blood did not go to waste though, and the pastel bandages helped remind



Calvin Drayton donates blood

everyone it was for a good cause.

OEM hosts a blood drive every quarter to help the NY Blood Center collect the 2000 pints of blood NYC needs every day. OEM's donations may have saved up to 135 lives. The next blood drive is in August 2007. Remember, if you donate, you'll get a cookie.

Take Your Child To Work

On April 24th, OEM hosted 20 children for the annual Take Your Children To Work Day. Annette Santiago organized a day of activities for the mini-OEMers including a tour of the building, lessons about fire trucks, a visit with a bomb-sniffing dog and robot, and pictures with Commissioner Bruno.

SARA Award

OEM's new headquarters continues to grab headlines: this month it won an award of excellence from the Society of American Registered Architects at its 2007 Design Awards. This is the third award lavished upon our headquarters.

New Neighbors

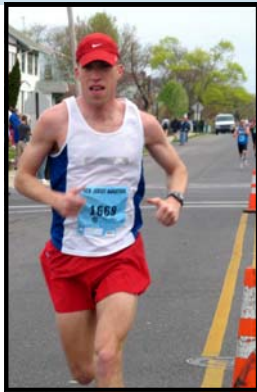
On July 20th, our new neighbors vacated the EOC to return to their newly remodeled offices at City Hall. Their presence was marked by heightened security and a well stocked kitchen. At least one of these will be sorely missed.



Little Lauren O'Keefe learns how to use a fire hose.

Employee Milestones

On April 29th, **Jake Cooper** won second place in the New Jersey marathon for the second year in a row. He finished the race with a time of 2:33:49, a new personal best. He finished just a minute and 23 seconds behind the leader and a full three minutes and 11 seconds ahead of the 3rd place runner. Congratulations Jake!



Jake Cooper running the NJ marathon

On June 14th, **Virginia Mewborn** was honored at the Disaster Chaplaincy Services' Inaugural Tribute Partnership Event. Funds raised by the event went to benefit the Disaster Chaplaincy Services, a program Virginia helped develop during her time with the American Red Cross in Greater New York. Congratulations Virginia!



Virginia Mewborn and Commissioner Bruno at the DCS Tribute Event

Baby Boom



Danielle Mandelbaum
Girl, 7lbs 6oz,
20.5"
Born 3/6/07 to
Natan and Ana
Mandelbaum



Olivia Julia Farrell
Girl, 7lbs 9oz,
20.5"
Born 3/19/07 to
Christina and
Timmy Farrell



Jake Robert Ferraro
Boy, 6lbs 2 oz
Born 4/2/07 to
John and Emily
Ferraro (grandson of
Jim McConnell)



Sophia Isabel Inoa
Diaz
Girl, 5lbs 14oz
Born 4/29/07 to
Mariel and Romer
Diaz



Ettore (Eddie) Iain
Guarna
Boy, 6lbs 3oz
Born 5/4/2007 to
Jon and Caitlin
Guarna
(grandson of
Stella Guarna)



Evan James Conroy
Boy, 8lbs 1oz,
20.5"
Born 5/26/07 to
Johanna and
Dennis Conroy



Cody Richard
Doskocil
Boy, 8lbs 2oz, 22"
Born 5/29/07 to
Wessley and
Maria Doskocil



News from the Admin Department

The New York City Office of Labor Relations Employee Health Benefits Program, in cooperation with the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), has authorized a centralization of the Health Benefits Enrollment process. You will now be able to contact NYCAPS Central to handle all enrollment needs including:

- Enrolling in New York City health benefits
- Updating enrollment information after a qualifying event
- Updating dependent information
- Inquiring about enrollment status and eligibility

How This Impacts You:

You must contact NYCAPS Central, via phone, fax or email instead of your Agency Health Benefits Representative, for all questions regarding your health benefits.

- **Phone:** (212) 487-0500 weekdays (9 AM-5 PM EST). Please have your 7-digit Employee ID # available (located in the "Reference # Box" on your pay stub).
- **Fax:** (212) 313-3411
- **Email:** EmployeeSupport@dcas.nyc.gov

Helpful Information About Your Health Benefits:

The NYC Summary Program Description (SPD) provides complete information to assist you in understanding your New York City health benefits. You can access the most current version of the SPD at www.nyc.gov/olr under the **Health Benefits Program** section. Newly hired City employees will automatically receive a personalized Enrollment Form and Confirmation Statement from NYCAPS Central when they are hired and select their health benefits elections.

New Faces That Grace Us



Hassan Adekoya
GIS



Robert Maldonado
Training & Exercises



Carlin Andrus
GIS



Randolph Pullen
GIS Specialist



Christopher Bak
NYPD Responder



Christian Quintanilla
CERT Coordinator



Timothie Biggs
GIS Specialist



Elizabeth Rothstein
Planning & Preparedness



Chris Conversano
NYPD Responder



Al Villacara
Human Services



Onofrio DeMattia
Technology Coordinator



Cecil Waithe
NYPD Responder

Profiles: Logistics Group



This issue, the Sit Rep takes a closer look at one of OEM's newest units, the logistics group. The Logistics group is tasked with developing a logistics plan to support response and recovery operations after a coastal storm or other large-scale emergency in an urban environment.

This month, the group submitted a Post-Storm Commodity Distribution Concept of Operations (CONOPS) plan that details how the City will obtain emergency food and drinking water and distribute it to up to four million people a day through 200 commodity distribution points.

The group partnered with NYPD Aviation and mapped the best possible routes for supply lines into the City using helicopters as well as satellite imagery.

The group reports to Alex Markowski, Director of Logistics, and consists of Leo Chiang (Project Leader) Joan Thomas, Elvis Rosario, Marianna Carvalho, Richard Leon, and Megan Medina.