NYC Environmental Protection
Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
Carter Strickland, Commissioner

WEEKLY PIPELINE

January 15, 2013

Volume IV • Issue 158

New Program Best Medicine for Service Line Headaches

A significant majority of water infrastructure leaks that DEP responds to involve private service lines that connect customer properties to DEP's distribution system. Property owners in New York City are responsible for maintaining their water and sewer service lines, which are buried underground and run from a building to the city-owned mains under the street. On average, it costs New York City property owners between $3,000 and $5,000 to repair a water line break and between $10,000 and $15,000 to repair a sewer line break and these costs are typically not covered by a homeowner's insurance policy.

DEP recognized the risk that the high costs of service line breaks present to property owners and in 2011 it made the establishment of a protection program a key component of *Strategy 2011-2014*. Thereafter, the New York City Water Board issued a Request for Proposals from qualified providers for service line protection programs and, after a thorough review, in 2012 American Water Resources (AWR) was awarded a contract to administer service line protection programs for roughly 670,000 eligible properties in New York City. AWR has been providing service line programs to homeowners in 35 states and has an A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau.

The service line protection pro-

(Continued on reverse side)

Spotlight on Safety

It's Flu Season!

According to the Centers for Disease Control, the peak of the flu season is quickly approaching. In New York, Governor Cuomo has declared a public health emergency which will make it easier for residents to get a flu shot. Flu is primarily spread through droplets that are released when infected people sneeze or cough or from touching affected surfaces. Here are some every day steps that you can take to stop the spread of germs:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Try to avoid close contact with people who may be sick.
- Practice good health habits. Get plenty of sleep and exercise, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat healthy food.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- If you are sick with a flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever has passed without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

For additional information, see: http://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm

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

The nearly 6,000 men and women who work at DEP are the foundation that makes our organization one of the leading water and wastewater utilities in the country. And, last week, I had the privilege of joining Chief Operating Officer **Kathryn Garcia**, Deputy Commissioner **Vincent Sapienza**, and Assistant Commissioner **John Petito** in welcoming our newest class of Sewage Treatment Workers at a graduation ceremony at the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. The 72 graduates completed an intense, six-week orientation that covered a wide variety of topics including worker safety, wastewater treatment plant operations, and maintenance. The orientation also included hands-on training at the Red Hook, 26th Ward, Newtown Creek, and Wards Island Wastewater Treatment Plants. I am happy to welcome these new graduates who have joined a proud tradition of dedication to the environmental and public health of New York City. They are the newest group to join the ranks of more than 650 Sewage Treatment Workers who are responsible for treating more than 1.3 billion gallons of wastewater each day and ensuring the health of New York City's waterways.

Another reason DEP is an industry leader is our dedication to customer service. And, last Thursday, we announced one of DEP's most important customer service initiatives to date, and a key component of the agency's strategic plan, *Strategy 2011-2014*. DEP has partnered with American Water Resources to offer water and sewer service line protection programs for residential properties throughout the five boroughs. On average, it costs property owners between $3,000 and $5,000 to repair a water line break and between $10,000 and $15,000 to repair a sewer line break. Now, for a small monthly fee, more than 670,000 DEP customers can enroll in programs to protect against the high cost of repairing service lines that break due to normal wear and tear.

In addition to providing the best possible customers service to our water and sewer customers, DEP works diligently with our partners in the Watershed to promote tourism and environmentally responsible economic development in the communities that are home to our reservoirs. This spring, DEP will launch a pilot program that will allow for the use of electric trolling motors for permitted fishing boats at the Cannonsville Reservoir. The pilot program is great news for fishing enthusiasts and comes after last year's successful expansion of DEP's recreational boating program. Last year, for the first time, we opened five reservoirs to non-motorized recreational boating and issued a record 983 boating tags—including many to tourists visiting the Watershed, some from as far away as Kentucky, Georgia, and Florida. Water quality monitoring during DEP's four-year recreational boating pilot has demonstrated that the regulations we put in place, including mandatory steam cleaning of boats, resulted in no negative effects to water quality and no indication of invasive species in the reservoirs—key indications that the limited use of boats on the reservoirs does not affect DEP's ability to provide high quality drinking water.

On all fronts, DEP is making significant progress toward becoming the safest, most efficient, cost-effective, and transparent water utility in the nation. These three examples are just a few of the dozens of Strategy 2011-2014 initiatives we have completed since we launched our strategic plan in 2011. I look forward to continuing to update you about our progress and thank you all for the hard work and dedication you have demonstrated to help make DEP the leading water and wastewater utility in the country.

Focus on the Field

In 1985, **Winston Shirley** joined the Bureau of Customer Services as a Water Meter Reader in the Bronx. Twenty-eight years later, Winston has moved up through the ranks to his current position as Chief Inspector for the borough of Queens. As the Chief Inspector, Winston is responsible for managing the 28 Inspectors who install, inspect, and repair water meters and automated meter reading (AMR) devices throughout the borough. Winston is also responsible for reviewing permit applications for water main connections and water meter installations. For particularly complicated permits, Winston may visit the site with an engineer to ensure that all Plumbing Code requirements are met.

After Hurricane Sandy, the Bureau of Customer Services deployed Inspectors to hard hit areas, including the Rockaways, to assess and repair damage to water meters and AMR devices. "Over the past twenty-eight years, I thought I had seen it all," Winston said. "But nothing could compare to the damage I saw in the Rockaways in the days following Hurricane Sandy."

"Shortly after Hurricane Sandy we needed to deploy inspectors to support Rapid Repairs," said **Michael Moran**, Chief of Operations in the Bureau of Customer Services. "I called Winston over the Veteran's Day weekend and he was able to identify and deploy five Inspectors to support the Rapid Repairs effort for that Monday. His fast response is typical of the dedication he brings to the job every day."

Volunteer Opportunity

Parts of the Staten Island Bluebelts were heavily littered with debris in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. In an effort to restore these vital wetland areas to their natural beauty, DEP is organizing volunteer cleanup days on Saturday, January 19 and Saturday, January 26. The events are from 9:30AM to 1:30PM and volunteers are asked to meet at the corner of Jefferson Avenue and Father Capodanno Boulevard along the Midland Beach Boardwalk in Staten Island.

If you wish to participate in this important volunteer effort, please email your RSVP to DEPVolunteerDay@dep.nyc.gov and indicate which date(s) you can attend. If you have any questions, please call us at (718) 595-6599.

We look forward to hearing from you!

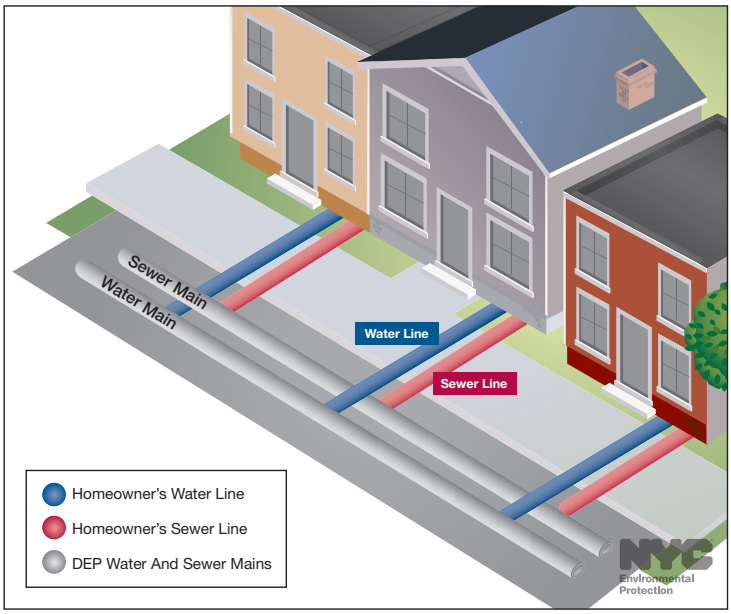
The Bluebelt Cleanup Team

Press Box

"Steve Askew concisely sums up the challenge of running New York City's North River Wastewater Treatment Plant: 'We're a 28-acre, $2 billion piece of concrete, processing millions of gallons of wastewater every day, 500 feet away from tens of thousands of people on Manhattan's West Side.' Askew, the plant's superintendent and chief operator, meets that and more specific challenges daily with expert help from a staff of 125, all but about 20 under his supervision."

– Read the entire Treatment Plant Operator article here

(New Program Best Medicine for Service Line Headaches… continued)



grams provide unlimited protection for covered repairs from normal wear and tear and basic restoration of affected property. They will also provide for an unlimited number of claims, 24/7 customer service, and quick response time by NYC-Licensed Master Plumbers who are pre-qualified to perform needed repairs. For the convenience of those who choose to participate, there are no claim forms to submit and no deductibles, and the protection programs fee will be itemized and included on each participating customer's regular DEP water and sewer bill.

Customers may participate in the service line protection programs at a present rate of $3.99 per month for water line protection and $7.99 per month for sewer line protection. For future years, the New York City Water Board will approve annual rates for the service line protection programs at the same time it adopts DEP water and sewer service charges. Customers who choose to join the programs may elect to protect both their water and sewer lines, or one or the other. They may also discontinue their involvement with the programs at any time if they no longer wish to participate

At no cost to the city and an affordable cost to the customer, AWR will fully manage the protection programs—from educating homeowners about their responsibility to maintain their water and sewer service lines, to establishing a local contractor network and providing 24-hour customer service. AWR's local contractor network is composed of NYC-Licensed Master Plumbers, including their affiliated staff of more than 200 local workers, who will be on-call to respond to the service line issues of participating customers.

"The service line protection programs are a key component of our ongoing effort to provide the best possible customer service," said **Commissioner Strickland**. "By informing property owners about their responsibilities and providing an optional and affordable way to protect them from unexpected repair costs, the Programs offer a valuable service to our ratepayers throughout the City."

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