

## At ECC, Communication Is Their Middle Name

Thanks to its 24-hour Emergency Communication Center (ECC), DEP's emergency response, like the Post Office, is not deterred by snow, rain, or heat. The ECC came into being nearly 10 years ago when **Mayor Bloomberg** announced plans for the creation of a 311 Citizen Service Center. 311 was developed to make New York City government more accessible by enabling people to request and receive information and connect to city government services by calling one simple number. In early 2003, DEP—like its sister agencies Buildings, Housing Preservation and Development, Sanitation, and Transportation—transferred its call center hotline as part of a move and consolidation to become the main 311 Call Center in Lower Manhattan. On Sunday, March 9, 2003, the 311 phone line was activated.



While DEP's complaint function for its constituents was absorbed by the new citywide 311 call center, the agency still had to handle emergency calls and the ECC was developed and launched at the Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations' (BWSO) 38th Street yard in Manhattan. ECC is the agency's communications hub for emergencies and its staff members are proficient in dealing with multiple calls while working on two monitors and accessing several databases on their com-

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## Spotlight on Safety

### ROUTINE INSPECTIONS:

#### Don't wait for it to become an audit finding

EHS audits are structured assessments which are a critical component of DEP's EHS program. In the past, OEHS Auditors would search from top to bottom, identifying items which might be out of compliance. A newly realigned audit program now encompasses expanded planning, representative sampling and a collaborative evaluation with bureau input. Success of an EHS program and continuous improvement requires that both audits and inspections be done on a regular basis.

Facility staff is responsible for conducting ongoing inspections to en-

sure that the facility itself is in compliance with all EHS requirements. Results of facility based inspections are critical to identify oversights and gaps before they become audit findings, generate a regulatory violation or cause an accident.

More importantly, it is every employee's responsibility to be observant and report anything that doesn't look safe, including broken, missing, or improperly stored equipment to a supervisor or safety officer. Don't wait until it becomes an audit finding! Read the full article here [👉](#).

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

Now that 2011 is over and we are three days into 2012, let's take a look back at some of the highlights from the past year. Though the year went by so fast, it was eventful.

The bread and butter of DEP is delivering clean, reliable drinking water, managing stormwater, and protecting harbor water quality. These core functions are often times unnoticed by New Yorkers—generally a good thing since it means we are doing our job well. Still, New Yorkers love the finished product. This past summer, about 200,000 people stopped by to grab a quick drink from our Water-On-the-Go fountains across the city. We also received preliminary approval from DEC to move forward with our NYC Green Infrastructure Plan, a groundbreaking program to improve harbor water quality and make our city a more sustainable place. Perhaps the biggest achievement this year was convincing DEC to officially ban hydrofracking within the city's watershed. It was the right thing to do and we thank the State for recognizing this priority.

We shouldn't forget the other ways we touch on the lives of every day residents. New home heating oil regulations to ban the dirtiest of heating oils were approved—perhaps the biggest single step to improving air quality and the health of New Yorkers since the smoking ban went into place. And since we are a customer service agency, this year we launched a new program to save homeowners money by proactively notifying them of potential water leaks thanks to our wireless meter readers that have been installed at more than 93% of our customers' properties. Finally, we continue to make available thousands of DEP permits online, saving the professionals who work with us time and money.

Part of that customer service is keeping the rate down and this past year was one of our best on that front. The water rate increase was 7.5%—our first single digit hike in five years. The adoption of the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan also resulted in \$1.4 billion in savings through eliminated grey infrastructure projects plus \$2 billion in deferred ones. We also kicked off our OpX program, which will find ways to reduce costs in a smarter way that looks to streamline workflows, boost productivity and

find efficiencies while protecting our existing workforce.

If anything, 2011 may be ultimately remembered for the summer's emergencies. Hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, floods... you name it and we probably dealt with it. First, DEP worked around the clock to restore operations after a fire at North River Wastewater Treatment Plant. The poise and professionalism that DEP workers and contractors displayed minimizing the impact was impressive. Only a week later, DEP workers quickly responded to fix a massive water main break on Jerome Avenue in the Bronx. The importance of our work didn't go unnoticed, with one reporter writing a column "Without Department of Environmental Protection, There is No New York." To top it all off, upstate was hit hard by Hurricane Irene and then Tropical Storm Lee. Our work with local communities to assist in the recovery and rebuilding while making sure to protect the watershed was a shining reminder about the value we place on the relationship we have with our neighbors upstate.

With \$13.2 billion in design and construction over the next decade, our capital plan is a major economic engine in the region. This past year, we completed two combined sewer overflow facilities—Paerdegat Basin (\$422 million) and Alley Creek (\$130 million). We also continued to take steps in our Water for the Future program, unveiled in 2010, including developing a charter that lays out the goals of our #1 capital priority over the next decade.

We also had some significant changes within the agency. We started the year by unveiling Strategy 2011-2014, our far-reaching strategic plan that lays out 100 distinct initiatives to make DEP the safest, most efficient, cost-effective, and transparent water utility in the nation. Finally, our former DEP Commissioner **Cas Holloway** was named Deputy Mayor, where he is bringing the same energy to City Hall that he showed here, and I was named Commissioner after having been Deputy Commissioner for Sustainability since 2010. It has certainly been a challenge, but the experienced staff here has made the transition seamless.

Though it seems hard to top all of this, I know we will do even better things in 2012!

## Focus on the Field



As the supervisor of 15 employees at the Emergency Communications Center and also supervisor for Water Maintenance in Manhattan, **Robert Giddens** never knows what the day is going to bring. It could be a water main break in one of Manhattan's busiest streets or it could be information that needs to be distributed in a timely manner and constantly updated. In any case, Robert faces a variety of challenging situations daily. Talking to different city agencies during emergencies, supervising notifications, making sure employees are inputting data accurately and making a sound judgment is what demonstrates Robert's professionalism in coordinating effective action plans. The constantly evolving scenarios that arise at DEP over a 24-hour period produce daily challenges and Robert always responds and offers good service no matter the time or the

day. His priority includes having the correct information before he conveys it to DEP employees. "The water main break at Jerome Avenue over the summer is a good example because we dealt with constantly changing information and we needed to make sure it was the right information. I interact with a variety of dedicated personnel who work in the field making sure DEP operations run smoothly and they have issues that must be dealt with right away," said Robert, who has been working for this agency for 19 years.

Robert is always moving and creating something for the day. One of his favorite pastimes is finding discarded objects and morphing them into other uses. He also designs and builds pieces of furniture, which "is about the process of creating and changing things, making it as creative and challenging for me as my day job is," said Robert. He recently built a TV table out of metal and wood found on his way to work. "I hope to do this commercially one day, but we'll see," he said.

At the end of the day, Robert focuses on reading mystery novels and relaxes by sipping on a good glass of Malbec. He knows that in a few hours his routine starts all over again and he will face new challenges, but he will be ready for them.

## Kudos Corner

The annual citywide Excellence in Technology Awards Program (ETAP) was established in 2001 to salute IT professionals in New York City government for their hard work and contributions in creating transformational change using information technology. DEP was well represented by winning a number of awards at the 2011 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Awards Ceremony.

Best Mobile or Wireless Project: **Eduardo Hernandez, Robert De la Hoz, Jose Garcia, Carlstien Lutchmedial, Jeffrey Mendez**

Best Application Serving an Agency's Business Needs: **Christopher Smith, Shinique Edwards, Bernadette McCallion**

Excellence in IT Service and Support - Manager Award: **Michael Weinberg**

Excellence in IT Service and Support - Staff Award: **Paul Park**

The Overall Excellence in Technology Award recognized the Construction, Demolition & Abatement Data Integration project and the DEP team of: **Krish Radhakrishnan, Eduardo Hernandez, Steve Camaio, Carlstien Lutchmedial, and Charles Sturcken.**

OIT's Assistant Commissioner **Jin Chang, Christopher Smith, Eduardo Hernandez** and **Gary Leunis** also presented at the event.

## Press Box

**COMMITTED TO HELP:** "The catastrophic flooding from Irene and Lee exposed planning gaps in small towns that are hard-pressed to pay for the engineering studies and sophisticated stream modification projects needed to reduce the devastation. Here in New York's Catskill Mountains, a unique relationship with New York City brings top-level expertise and millions of dollars in construction cash to towns crisscrossed by flood-prone creeks." — From an Associated Press story on DEP's announcement that it has committed \$7 million to improving flood studies and flood plain maps in the watershed west of the Hudson River to limit damage from major storms. Read the full story here [🔗](#)

(At ECC, Communication Is Their Middle Name... continued)

puters. The set-up enables quick handling of information including fielding calls and email messages from within DEP, and from many city agencies including the Office of Emergency Management, Fire, Police, Health and Transportation. Information also comes from state and federal agencies in the environmental and transportation arena and utilities such as Con Edison and National Grid.

ECC handles a broad range of calls about numerous events including street flooding and leaks, water main breaks, street cave-ins, accidents, fires, chemical releases or spills, and steam pipe explosions. Staff can look up complaint history by location, if it has previously been entered into Hansen, DEP's tracking system. Information from the alerts collected by ECC helps in deploying staff and sharing information about impact, for example, on vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and public transportation on surface or subway.

In 2010, ECC was part of a comprehensive reorganization by the bureau. Deputy Commissioner **Jim Roberts** revamped the operation to help DEP respond faster and smarter to emergencies. For example, if construction laborers are responding to a street leak and observe a significant flow of water coming from the valve chamber of a water main, they immediately contact their supervisor and district supervisor for assistance, as well as the ECC. The ECC will notify the borough manager about the developing situation.

For a water main break, the information ECC transmits can

include the size and year of the main, the impact on street and traffic, if a shut-down is necessary, and how many residents are affected. A brief transmission may look like this: "North 15 found break on 8" water main (year 1870). Main is connected to 16" main. North 15 made emergency notification and shutdown on the 16" main." ECC staff notifies and updates senior, supervisory, and other relevant staff with event status including its location, the time the incident was reported, and the responding unit. ECC also provides information about upcoming weather conditions that may affect operations that may look like this: "Synopsis: Rain Tuesday evening followed by windy conditions Wednesday. Timing: The heaviest rain will impact the NYC area after 1700 hours on Tuesday and will start to taper off around midnight."

ECC staff member **Malarie Gilmore**, who worked in BWSO's field office before joining the unit, enjoys talking about her colleagues and the value of ECC. "As one of ECC's original members still here, it has always been a pleasure coming to work. I have seen an expanded role for ECC in notification since 9/11 and am also able to interact with many agencies including New York City Housing Authority and Sanitation, where I had previously worked."

ECC is a critical part of DEP's capacity to respond to emergencies quickly, safely, and effectively to ensure that appropriate resources are deployed in the most optimal way.

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