

Riding Out the Heat Wave

Millions across the country did their best to dodge the heat last week as temperatures skyrocketed. For residents of New York, this was no exception. The brunt of the heat began on Wednesday, July 21, and peaked as temperatures reached over 100 degrees by Friday. As New Yorkers turned up the AC and did their best to stay hydrated, DEP was busy keeping our water system running and helping the public cool off.

On Thursday, **Commissioner Holloway** joined other city leaders at a DEP Water-On-the-Go fountain at Brooklyn Borough Hall to urge New Yorkers to take precautions during the extreme heat and to take advantage of the 500 cooling centers opened to the public. Meanwhile, DEP's Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations (BWSO) was in communities leading efforts to respond to open fire hydrants.

At the peak, BWSO organized 54 crews to report to three command posts that were set up in Manhattan and the Bronx as the number of open fire hydrants grew. The outdoor stations have generators to support laptops used for tracking crews, monitoring the Hansen complaint system and system



FDNY-Approved Hydrant Spray Cap

maps, checking emails, and receiving hourly complaints, tunnel flows, and pumping reports. On Friday, 2,021 open hydrant complaints were filed. Helping manage the effort, BWSO Chief of Central Services **Richard Nelson** commented, "In spite of working long hours over a period of several days with record breaking temperatures, our employees performed a difficult task exceptionally well!"

As if the heat was not enough, DEP was quick to the scene on Friday night when a contractor working on the 2nd Avenue Subway project accidentally drilled through a

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Spotlight on Safety

Heat Stroke: A Serious Workplace Health Problem

Heat stroke is a serious workplace health problem. Heat stroke occurs when the body's temperature rises to critical levels. It is a life-threatening emergency. During these extremely hot summer days of July and August, protecting workers against heat illnesses is critical. Symptoms of heat stroke include confusion, loss of consciousness, high body temperature, hot, flushed and dry skin, nausea or vomiting, muscle cramps and weakness.

If an employee shows signs of possible heat exhaustion, he/she

should be taken to a clinic or emergency room for medical evaluation and treatment. If medical care is not available, call 911 immediately. Make sure someone stays with the employee until help arrives. Move the employee to a shaded cool area. Taking these simple steps can potentially save a life in an emergency situation. For more information on preventing workplace heat illnesses visit the OSHA or NIOSH websites listed below. Please click here to read the full article [👉](#)

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

Last Wednesday a fire started in the engine room at the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant in upper Manhattan. The fire escalated to four alarms before FDNY was able to bring it under control at a bit after 3 pm. Everyone working at the plant immediately evacuated, and thankfully no one was injured in the fire. But power to the plant had to be cut to put the fire out, and the heat of the blaze badly damaged the engine room and the electrical systems necessary to treat the 120 to 140 million gallons of wastewater that North River treats on an average dry-weather day (and much more than that when it rains). Shortly after 5 pm on Wednesday, the plant's regulators exceeded capacity and began to discharge untreated sewage into the Hudson River. From the time of the incident, DEP has worked hard to provide clear, up-to-date public information about the fire and its consequences, and you can read more about what happened, and the status of our recovery efforts here [👉](#)

This information is important, and we will continue to provide public updates until operations at North return to normal. But it does not completely capture the monumental efforts of our employees, other City agencies, and the many contractors who have been working at the plant 24/7 to get it up and running. On the front lines are **Kathryn Garcia** and BWT's **Vinny Sapienza**, **Steve Askew**, **John Petito**, **Artie Spangel**, **Jim Mueller** and hundreds of BWT employees—electricians, machinists, oilers, STWs, administrative staff and others—who know the plant best. Right beside them are **Kevin Donnelly**, **Kevin Clarke**, **Jim Lauria**, **Alice Ferone**, and many other members of the BEDC team, who have mobilized the best contractors and consultants working on DEP's capital program—including Skanska, Meco, Five Star, Coastal, All State, East Bay, Wade, Trident, Cameron, ABB, Godwin Pumps, FKC, AE-COM, Hazen & Sawyer, Arcadis and Shaw Environmental—to assess and repair the damage, and to get the plant running again. And keeping workers and the public safe and aware of risks are the BPS and EHS teams.



Within 58 hours of the fire—by 9:30 pm on Friday—we had 2 pumps up and running, and untreated discharges had ended. While we've had operational disruptions and challenges since then (including some additional discharges on Saturday due to a Con Ed manhole fire) we have handled all of the flow into the plant since 3:30 pm on Saturday. We still have a lot of work to do to stabilize plant operations, and nearly every DEP bureau and unit is pitching in. I want to thank everyone for their willingness to assist in ways big and small to get this critical facility back online and protecting public health, and New York City's waterways.

I also want to thank the many other City agencies and their dedicated employees who are working around the clock with us to get this done. Without **FDNY's** massive effort to get the fire out quickly, the damage could have been much worse; **NYPD** has provided site support, and helped us patrol the Hudson to ensure that boaters are protected from any health risks; the **DOB** engineers deployed to the site immediately to do a structural assessment that enabled us to re-enter the plant and get to work; **OEM** has provided round-the-clock on-site support; **Parks** and **DOHMH** have helped us to assess public health impacts and take the steps necessary to protect New Yorkers where the untreated discharges released last week could pose a risk; and **DoITT** is working with us at the plant to restore the plant's communications and data systems. **Con Ed** has also provided round-the-clock support to help us restore and protect the power supply to the plant so we can maintain oper-

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Focus on the Field



Born and bred in the Bronx, **Jon Annunziata** has been with DEP more than 26 years. He began as a laborer and worked his way up to Bronx Borough Manager for BWSO. His typical day involves visits to several yards, meeting with his three district supervisors, and coordinating work assignments and priorities. While Jon likes the variety of jobs and situations he has to handle, this past week was especially challenging because of the heat spell and other emergencies he faced.

First of all, he set up two command posts in Manhattan and one in the Bronx to respond to open fire hydrant emergencies. Crews

are mobilized to respond to 311 complaints. When crews are deployed to close illegally opened hydrants, they are supported by DEP Police and the NYPD.

In another emergency, Annunziata deployed crews to ensure that firefighters had sufficient water to put out the fire at the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant. And a third emergency involved the repair of a 48-inch water main on the Upper East Side.

During the summer, Water-On-the-Go stations are also connected to fire hydrants by BWSO in all five boroughs.

Jon seems to thrive in challenging situations and said, "I find that in a moment of crisis my 26 years of experience enables me to handle certain situations with ease and professionalism."

In his spare time you can catch Jon keeping fit and bicycling around town. Additionally, he appreciates good conversation—especially about good food he has tasted and movies he has seen.

North River WWTP



The North River WWTP was the first and only wastewater treatment plant in NYC to have a public park built on top. [Learn more](#)

Plant in operation:	1986
Design Capacity:	170 MGD
Population Served:	Nearly 600,000
Receiving Waterbody:	Hudson River
Drainage Area:	6,030 acres, west side of Manhattan above Bank Street
Plant Staff:	109

Press Box - North River WWTP

- CBS, on Wednesday, broadcast an initial story about an explosion and fire at the plant.
- The Daily News on Thursday reported the Health Department warning to kayakers and swimmers to stay out of the Hudson River because of the untreated wastewater discharge by the plant.
- NY1 interviewed Commissioner Holloway about the amount of sewage being discharged, impact on the beaches, progress of the plant repair and timetable for when it would be back up.
- On Friday, WNYC aired a radio interview from the Brian Lehrer Show of Commissioner Holloway discussing the aftermath of the fire at the plant.
- The New York Times covered the environmental impact, and reported on the end of discharges.
- NY1 reported that there was a minor power interruption on Saturday morning causing a comparatively smaller discharge.
- The Daily News noted today that health officials closed four beaches Monday after finding high levels of bacteria.

(Riding Out the Heat Wave... continued)

48-inch cast-iron water main – a critical water feed for the east side of Manhattan. First to respond was District Supervisor **Russell Giardina**, followed by Emergency Manager **Tommy Votta**, Supervisor **Julio Nunes**, and Manhattan maintenance crews. Crews shut the 48" main by 10:00 pm, allowing DEP's emergency contractor, Halcyon Construction, to begin to break pavement three hours after being notified. Working around the clock, repair work was completed at 9:30 pm on July 24. While weather reports dictated much of the weekend news, losing water during the heat wave could have created a major crisis for the city – potentially cutting off water to local residents and lowering water pressure throughout the area. Fortunately, BWSO team redirected water flows so customers barely noticed and no one lost service.

Yet well before the scorcher hit, DEP programs to beat the heat were already up and running. On July 14, DEP kicked off the fifth annual summer Hydrant Educa-

tion Action Team (HEAT). Partnering with the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (SoBRO), the program informs NYC residents that opening fire hydrants without spray caps is illegal, wasteful and dangerous. Unauthorized open fire hydrants generally release more than 1,000 gallons of water per minute, whereas, hydrants with spray caps only release up to 25 gallons per minute. The public can safely cool off by obtaining a spray cap for free by having an adult, 18 or over, contact their local firehouse.

DEP's Water-On-the-Go program also set up 33 stations between July 20 and July 24 in high traffic areas to allow residents to fill up and hydrate during the warm temperatures. Besides staying inside in a cool environment, drinking lots of water is one of the single best ways to prevent heat related illnesses. Friday marked Water-On-the-Go's busiest day of the summer with 8,047 visitors. DEP welcomes pets to come fill up on water as well.

(Commissioner's Corner... continued)

ations while we continue to repair the rest of the damage.

Today, **Mayor Bloomberg** stopped at the site to see this enormous effort first hand. He surveyed the engine room to see where the fire happened and the work we're doing to restore as much pumping capacity as possible; and he stopped in to Incident Command to thank the team coordinating all of the resources that have been

marshaled simultaneously to restore North River to normal operations. Finally, the Mayor thanked crews taking a quick lunch break for their efforts, and expressed confidence in our ability to get the job done. Last week's fire at North River did tremendous damage; but the recovery operation demonstrates that while we may work for many different agencies, we really are one City.

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