

City of New York  
Department of Environmental Protection  
Commissioner Emily Lloyd

## **Executive Order No. 120**

### Language Access Plan

November 2015



**New York City Department of Environmental Protection**  
**Executive Order No. 120**  
**Language Access Implementation Plan**  
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**Agency Mission and Background**

The **Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)** protects the environmental health, welfare, and natural resources of the City and its residents. The Department manages the City's water supply system, providing over 1.1 billion gallons of safe, clean drinking water daily from large upstate reservoirs to approximately 9 million residents throughout New York State, plus millions of tourists and commuters who visit the City year 'round. The water is transported via a complex network of 19 reservoirs, 3 controlled lakes and 6,200 miles of water pipes, tunnels and aqueducts. DEP is also responsible for managing stormwater throughout the City and treating wastewater at 14 in-City treatment plants, as well as several treatment plants upstate. Additionally, DEP carries out federal Clean Water Act rules and regulations, handles hazardous materials emergencies and toxic site remediation, oversees asbestos monitoring and removal, enforces the City's air and noise codes, bills and collects on approximately 835,000 water and sewer accounts, and manages citywide water conservation programs.

**Key Direct Service Areas**

The Bureaus and Offices responsible for carrying out the agency's mission each perform a level of "direct public service" with NYC residents and businesses through correspondence, community-based meetings, public hearings, issuance of publications and documents, telephone contact, web-based communication, or ongoing face-to-face interaction as in the Bureau of Customer Services' (BCS) "Borough Offices" in the five boroughs, and through its "Customer Service Call Center" at DEP headquarters in Queens. To a lesser degree public interaction is carried out by the other operating Bureaus. These Bureaus include the Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations (BWSO), the Bureau of Environmental Compliance (BEC), the Bureau of Water Supply (BWS) and the Bureau of Wastewater Treatment (BWT) and the Bureau of Public Affairs. We have listed below the "direct public services" provided by the Agency along with their plans to comply with EO 120, starting with those of BCS.

Agency-wide Direct Public Services:

- The issuance of water and sewer bills
- Responding to questions and concerns about customer accounts
- Responding to questions and problems about water meters and water conservation programs
- The issuance of emergency water shut-off notices, three and ten day notices
- Conduct field inspections in response to air and noise code complaints
- Inspect and monitor asbestos removal
- Promote environmental education in schools

## **Agency Language Access Goals**

The goal of the Department of Environmental Protection's Language Access Plan is to provide meaningful language access to customers who interact with the agency for essential services and information, based on at least the top six Limited English Proficient (LEP) languages (Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Korean, Bengali and Haitian Creole).

BCS is the "front line" provider of direct public services for the agency. Therefore, we have focused the majority of our Language Access Plan on how this Bureau developed and implemented customer service policies and standards in compliance with EO 120. Also included are the descriptions of the services provided by the operating Bureaus, and the current interactions and future initiatives they are undertaking to comply with the Language Access Plan.

To take reasonable steps to develop and implement a Language Access Plan for the LEP populations that DEP serves, all operating Bureaus were interviewed to see if they were able to document that a language communication problem existed with the LEP population. While no official record keeping was in place to document their findings, all operational Bureaus indicated they did not have a problem interacting with the LEP population.

To confirm this, DEP initially looked at the number of Service Requests (SRs) created by 311 in its Hansen complaint system from January 1, 2008 through December 11, 2008. During this time period there were 235,874 Service Requests received by DEP with only 50 from the LEP population. While there is no way to document which Bureaus received these LEP requests, they were all in languages that are supported within DEP. The 50 SRs by language for this period were as follows: Cantonese 1; Korean 1; Mandarin 3; Other 2; Polish 2; Russian 6; Spanish 36.

Data concerning telephone calls transferred from 311 to DEP from the LEP population were also reviewed. In calendar year, 2010 there were 574 calls transferred to DEP by 311 of which 533 were forwarded to the Bureau of Customer Services (BCS).

This data continues to confirm that Bureaus other than the Bureau of Customer Services do not have a need to contract with Language Line for interpretation services. The 311 Agency Liaison reviewed the monthly data of 311 calls transferred to DEP from the LEP population for calendar year 2010. The Liaison reviewed the data with all Bureaus. Based on the data, revisions to the current Language Access Plan were not needed.

The Agency currently uses a Volunteer Language Bank (VLB) as well as Language Line for translation services on a limited basis. DEP has taken steps to enhance the language bank by initiating an agency-wide request for language translation and interpretation volunteers via a global email and an insert, which accompanied paychecks. Agency volunteers have been identified and the language bank database has been updated to

reflect the names of additional volunteers and the type of service (written, verbal translations) they will perform. The VLB coordinator will maintain and update the database on a yearly basis, i.e., tracking volunteers by name, Bureau, and telephone and language proficiency. Language service requests, dates received, and type of service (written, verbal translations) will also be tracked in the database, which will be updated according to a regular schedule. Documents/publications from all Bureaus that have been identified as “essential documents” requiring translation for LEP customers have been reviewed with staff from each Bureau by the Plain Language Coordinator and edited to conform to plain language standards and guidelines prior to translation.

The Agency actively participating in the NYCertified program and continues to encourage enrollment.

The Agency continues to use its own signage along with the language identification desktop display/and posters, its own language identification cards and the “I Speak” cards to be carried by LEP customers, the Guidelines for Accessing Interpreter Services, tools developed by the Mayor’s Office of Operations and the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs to help staff identify the primary language of a Limited English Proficient (LEP) customer.

The Department of Environmental Protection has been successfully implementing its Language Access Plan by meeting the following goals:

- Appropriate signage in our Borough Offices and other DEP public service locations has been translated, in addition to utilizing the Language Access signage and tools provided by the City.
- All documents/publications identified as “essential” for the implementation plan have been translated and made available to the LEP populations.
- Interpretation services have been made available to DEP LEP customers using the BCS Call Center and/or a BCS Borough Office.

The following details how the Bureau of Customer Services (BCS) developed and implemented its customer service policies and standards to address the needs of the LEP population. This will be followed by details of how other operating Bureaus within DEP addressed the needs of their LEP customers.

### **Bureau of Customer Services (BCS)**

BCS is responsible for almost all of the direct public services offered by DEP. This includes all functions related to water and wastewater billing for residents of New York City. Additionally, the Bureau contracts for the installation of water meters in unmetered buildings, and tests and validates the accuracy of water meters installed by private plumbers prior to installation. The Bureau has introduced a citywide Automatic Meter Reading system (AMR), a technology that has improved the frequency and accuracy of

the meter reading process and allows customers to get an “early warning” of leaks and alerts of increased consumption before a billing problem occurs. Door-to-door installations of AMR technology began in March 2009. To date, more than 96 percent of all metered properties have been upgraded to the AMR system.

Documents that are deemed essential to this project were translated into the appropriate languages for the demographic areas where AMR was installed. There is a Language Line contract in place to do the translations for AMR on an as needed basis.

The BCS Call Center has completed its upgrade of their Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. The new enhancements include digital recording and monitoring of all calls for training and quality assurance. Call routing is now available for callers requiring an account specialist, or for LEP customers needing language assistance.

### **BCS Direct Public Services/Documents and Publications:**

BCS offers a “Free Water-Saving Test Kit” that contains an informational booklet with instructions in Spanish and English for installing the kit’s several water-saving devices. There is also copy in Russian, Chinese, Korean and Haitian-Creole inviting customers to write to the company for instructions in their respective language.

### **BCS LEP Population Assessment**

#### **How will you execute the Federal Department of Justice “Four-factor Analysis”?**

##### **BCS Borough Customer Service Offices (Five Borough Offices):**

Using the “Four-factor Analysis” the BCS Borough Offices determined that it provides direct service to approximately 58,000 walk-in customers each year. BCS’s customer surveys (tallied) show that about 10% or 5,800 customers make up the eligible LEP service population.

Surveys show that approximately 1,100 customers are served each week at the BCS Borough Office locations and the average weekly frequency of LEP customers interacted with at these five locations is 110 citywide. In the Manhattan office the languages encountered are Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Hindi; Brooklyn office, Spanish, Hebrew/Yiddish, Haitian-Creole; Russian, Chinese; Bronx office, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Italian, Russian; Queens office, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese; Staten Island office, Spanish, Russian, Chinese.

##### **BCS Call Center:**

The Call Center is a vital customer service operation. It provides information to LEP customers by assisting them in understanding billing issues, water conservation programs, payment inquiries, payment plans, lien sales and any other related water and

wastewater issues. In addition, the Call Center provides follow-up calls to the LEP customers to explain billing adjustments, related information and account updates.

According to the 2014 Fiscal Year report, the Call Center responded to approximately 410,000 customers citywide.

Reports and surveys collected by the Call Center Customer Service Representatives indicated that approximately 3% to 5% of all calls taken were in Spanish or Chinese.

The Call Center has developed a cost-effective strategic plan to address the LEP customer language needs. The BCS Call Center currently employs several representatives fluent in two of the most requested LEP languages. BCS continues to recruit new employees with multiple language skills, and utilize its Voluntary Language Bank when the employee is in close proximity to the Call Center. Language Line is easily accessible when the requested language is not available at the time of the call.

### **Will you utilize the top six citywide LEP languages in your plan?**

#### **BCS Borough Office:**

The BCS Borough Offices use the top six citywide LEP languages in its plan. Language Line services are used to encompass these six languages and additional languages, if necessary. All LEP customer language requests, will be addressed first by using bilingual volunteers at the Borough Offices and, if needed reaching out to the BCS Call Center language bank volunteers, or by contacting Language Line.

#### **BCS Call Center:**

The BCS Call Center also uses the top six citywide LEP languages in its plan. In addition, the BCS Call Center uses Language Line services to accommodate languages not currently supported in the Call Center, nor by “in- Bureau” or Agency language bank volunteers.

### **BCS Implementation Plan Logistics**

#### **What is your time line for implementing your Language Access Plan?**

BCS completed a milestone with the implementation of Language Line for telephonic translations in each of the Borough Offices and the Call Center for languages presently not supported by Bureau.

#### **What are the major milestones in your plan?**

#### **Borough Offices**

BCS has met another milestone for capturing the LEP data at all borough offices with the use of a SharePoint software application. While Q-Matic has been installed in all five BCS borough offices, the Q-Matic software does not capture the Limited

English Proficiency (LEP) information. For this reason BCS is using the SharePoint application. BCS utilizes language cards developed by the Mayor's Offices of Operations (MOO) and Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) that customers can use to point to the language they speak.

The Borough Offices uses the City's "I Speak" cards and Guidelines for Interpreting Services template for identifying the language the LEP customer speaks to let the greeter know that an interpreter is needed. This task was completed by the fourth of 2009.

The Borough Offices are located at the following addresses:

- 1932 Arthur Avenue, Bronx, NY
- 250 Livingston Street, Brooklyn, NY
- 1250 Broadway, New York, NY
- 96-05 Horace Harding Expressway, Corona, NY
- 60 Bay Street, Staten Island, NY

The Bureau has met this milestone and is using the language access signage and tools provided by the Customer Services Group (CSG) of the Mayor's Office of Operations (MOO) and Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA).

#### BCS Call Center:

The BCS Call Center has identified a methodology to measure current and future needs of LEP customers. A program has been implemented utilizing Language Line to support languages not presently covered by bilingual staff in the Call Center. A designee in the Call Center captures information, on a daily basis, of all customers served by bilingual staff and Language Line to determine future needs. If all of the LEP-identified languages are currently not spoken in the Call Center, the Bureau will look to future hires, if possible, to fill in the gaps.

#### BCS Training

BCS has modified its current Language Line contract to include interpretative services. Language Line has provided a train-the-trainer session at BCS which facilitated the development of the Bureau's training module in the use of telephonic interpreters, and the language cards to identify the LEP-customer's primary language.

The Bureau has a staff of professional trainers that are responsible for the training needs of all employees. The professional trainers have completed training of all Bureau staff members who utilize the Language Line interpretation services. The

training program is integrated as part of new staff orientation and is available as a refresher class when needed.

The agency is working with the Mayor's Office of Operations to participate in the NYCertified program. The agency currently relies on self-assessments until such time as we can successfully integrate with NYCertified. The current milestone has been met.

### **BCS Record-keeping and evaluation**

A Bureau Liaison at each Borough Office sends the Manager of the Borough Offices quarterly reports on the number of LEP requests encountered at each office. These reports are reviewed to assess the effectiveness of the Language Access Plan in each of the five (5) Borough Offices and to evaluate the LEP customer assistance.

The Call Center maintains a log for all LEP Calls requiring the assistance of a bilingual Customer Service Representative or Language Line participation. The log is used to measure current utilization and to assess future LEP staffing requirements. Information is captured daily, submitted weekly for in-house compiling and internal reporting, and reported monthly in the Bureau's Metrics Data.

The Call Center and the borough Offices' information are sent to the Language Access Coordinator (LAC) on a quarterly basis for evaluation. Modification to the Language Access Plan will be considered if supported by the empirical data.

### **CS Resource Analysis and Planning**

In order to maximize Bureau resources effectively, language access services provided by the Bureau will utilize a hierarchy for service provision. Borough Office and Call Center bi-lingual staff will provide service to LEP customers in the languages each operation supports. If an LEP customer speaks a language that is not supported by this level of staff, assistance will be provided through the Language Line contract. This will allow the Bureau to maximize the dollars allocated through this contract.

### **Other Direct Public Services and Essential Documents**

Outlined below are the current and future language access goal plans for those DEP Bureaus that have less direct public contact than BCS.

The Bureau of Public Affairs (BPA) manages the public information, community outreach and legislative affairs of the Agency. It is responsible for all press and media inquiries, environmental education, special projects and events, production of all public information materials, both print and electronic.

The Community Affairs Unit in BPA is the Agency's primary liaison on all monitoring committees, citizen advisory committees, community outreach projects and service inquiries. DEP has partnered with several community based organizations to develop a

program to deal with the issue of illegally opened fire hydrants. The teams are staffed with youth who are bi-lingual in both English and Spanish. Literature consisting of flyers and posters for the program has also been developed in both languages. The program targeted neighborhoods with a history of high numbers of complaints including Washington Heights and Inwood in Manhattan and Highbridge, Fordham, Morris Heights and Concourse (Community Boards 4 and 5) in the Bronx.

BPA reviews all agency publications. These documents are reviewed to determine the need for translations into the six top LEP languages. This initiative is ongoing. Each of these documents are reviewed and edited to conform to plain language guidelines and standards.

BPA is developing a set of guides in Plain Language English and translations into essential languages for the public and specifically the regulated business community. Guides being developed include:

Dry Cleaners Guide (Korean, Spanish, and other languages upon request)  
Hospitality Guide (Spanish, Chinese, Korean, other languages upon request)  
Back Flow Prevention Guide (Top six LEP: Spanish, Chinese, Bengali, French Creole, Korean, Russian).

Other guides that have been previously translated include the Noise Code pamphlet (Spanish) and Proper Grease Disposal guide (Spanish, Korean, Russian, Chinese).

The Bureau of Environmental Compliance (BEC) has two public service windows, located on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> floors at 59-17 Junction Boulevard, Queens, NY where the public may come to pick up or drop off applications. One is the Asbestos Window and the other is the Records Control Window.

The purpose of the Asbestos Window is to allow members of the asbestos industry and the general public to tender applications, notifications, and written requests relating to asbestos abatement projects. Applications are presented for certification as asbestos handler, asbestos supervisor, and asbestos investigator. Notifications are provided as directed by regulation for proposed asbestos abatement. Written requests are delivered for consideration of variances to the regulations as they apply to specific asbestos abatement projects.

The LAC has met with the bureau and determined that signage in Spanish and Korean, needed to be developed for the 8<sup>th</sup> Floor Asbestos window. This signage has been developed and posted. This milestone has been met.

The Asbestos Unit has bilingual personnel available to handle the majority of the clients they serve. Should the need arise to have interpretations conducted in any of these languages; the Asbestos Unit reaches out to other divisions within DEP for interpreters. At the Records Control Window customers may come to the window to ask questions about air permits, to drop off permit applications and checks, or to speak to someone

about a Notice of Violation (NOV). The LEP customer base is Spanish and Chinese. To date, there have been a few instances where translation to another language has been helpful as the customers were not comfortable with English. To date, staff speaking Spanish or Chinese has been able to assist by interpreting. Signage for the records control window on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor will not be translated since there is no issue with language at that window. On rare occasions Spanish interpretation is required. This is handled by the on- site staff. The LAC will continue to monitor the customer base to determine if there are needs that are not being met.

Presently BEC's Asbestos Unit offers the test for Asbestos Handlers in English, Spanish, Korean, Polish, Russian and Serbian. Owners of companies and investigators take the test in English only. Directions to DEP's Lefrak offices are being translated into the above languages. These directions are included in the letter that is sent to test applicants.

Documents produced by the Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations have been identified as "essential" under EO 120. Each of these documents has been reviewed and edited to conform to plain language guidelines and standards. These documents are:

- Water Shut-Off Notices for Repair/Maintenance as well as Water Main Breaks
- Three Day Notices (presently in English & Spanish)
- Ten Day Notices
- Emergency Shut Off Notices (presently in English & Spanish)

The Bureau of Wastewater Treatment (BWT) produces two brochures, distributed widely to restaurants and citizens: "Grease Disposal Tips," presently available in English, Spanish and Chinese; and "Preventing Grease Discharges in Sewers," presently available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Russian. DEP's LAC reviewed the documents with the bureau and it was determined that the languages specified above serve the bureau's customer base. This milestone has been met. These documents will be reviewed as part of the agency's ongoing publication review process to ensure that they conform to plain language guidelines and standards.

The Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene developed a *Run Your Tap* campaign, a public service campaign to educate city residents about simple precautions that can reduce potential exposure to lead from internal plumbing systems. Brochures were translated into seven languages (Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Korean, Haitian-Creole, Russian and Yiddish) and were available on DEP's website and as literature requests through 311.

### **Public Awareness/Outreach Strategies**

DEP has informed its Bureaus and offices of the Mayor's Executive Order No. 120, ordering each City agency to create and distribute a Language Access Policy and

Implementation Plan that will ensure meaningful access to the services the agency provides.

Information about the DEP Language Access Plan appears on our website.

DEP is producing content for its website that is accessible in multiple languages.

<b>MILESTONES</b>			
<b>Task</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Meeting Projected Target</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Voluntary Language Bank (VLB) updates	yearly	yes	yes
Language Access Coordinator/311 Liaison data review	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 2010	Yes	yes
Language Access Coordinator bureau meetings	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 2010	Yes	yes
BCS Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system upgrade	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of 2010	Yes	yes
BCS Service Termination Notice for Non Payment translation	first quarter of 2010	Yes	yes
BCS implementation of Language Line pilot	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2009	Yes	yes
QMatic implementation in BCS	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of 2010	Yes	yes
“I Speak” cards and Guidelines of Interpreting Services	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2009	yes	yes
BPA review of non-essential documents for plain language and future translation	ongoing no milestone will be set	Yes	ongoing
BCS professional trainers internal training of staff	3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter 2009	Yes	yes
BCS Call Center and Borough Office implementation of database	1 <sup>st</sup> half of 2011	Yes	yes
Signage posted at BEC Asbestos window	No milestone set	Yes	yes
Translation of all BWSO essential documents	work with MOO on “as needed basis”	Yes	ongoing
Review of BWT Grease brochures and additional translation requirements	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2009	Yes	yes
NYCertified	ongoing	Yes	ongoing