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

WEEKLY PIPELINE

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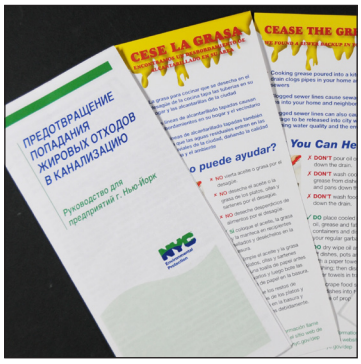
# No Matter What Language, 'Great Service' Is Spoken Here!




New York City is the "Capital of the World" with a variety of languages spoken at every corner. This is why **Mayor Michael Bloomberg** signed Executive Order 120 in 2008, a Language Access Implementation Plan to reach out to all New Yorkers and provide good services in as many languages as possible. In executing this plan and based on the multicultural and multilingual workforce, DEP has expanded its Voluntary Language Bank (VLB), which is a group of approximately 81 employees proficient in foreign languages who are ready to offer their assistance to make sure the agency provides meaningful access to its services in more than 15 languages.

The focus of the VLB is to make DEP's public information as clear and understandable as possible for all New Yorkers, especially in communities where languages other than English is commonly spoken. The areas where the VLB's assistance is critical includes phone calls, correspondence, flyers, public hearings, publications, phone contact, and web-based communications. "We have a long list of employees' names and language skills and we utilize those skills to better serve the community," said Bureau of Human Resources and Administration Deputy Commissioner **Zoeann Campbell,** whose bureau is responsible for the VLB.

The VLB has at least 15 different languages on reserve to assist New Yorkers. Among them are Spanish, Chinese, Italian, Creole, Russian, Hindi, Arabic, Mandarin, Canton-

**(Continued on reverse side)**

# *Spotlight on Safety*

## From the EHS Director's Desk

*This week, a few words on EHS compliance evaluations from Director of EHS Audit,* ***Gerould J. McCoy,*** *Office of Environmental, Health and Safety:*

"To implement the EHS goal contained in Strategy 2011-2014, the agency's strategic plan to "measure EHS performance and demand success," the Office of Environmental, Health and Safety (OEHS) is rolling out its new and expanded audit program and protocol on EHS compliance evaluations.

EHS facility audits had previously focused solely on identifying potential violations and non-compliance items. The new evaluations, called "EHS Assessments," differ in that they look for underlying root causes, and/or contributing factors that lead to EHS non-compliance. Conducting facility evaluations in the new way broadens the scope of audits, raises awareness of EHS goals, and educates employees about compliance requirements and best management practices.

The new EHS Assessment program was initially developed and field tested in BWSO from January through July 2011, and was expanded to additional bureaus in October 2011. Full implementation of the EHS Assessments begins January 2012. For additional information on the new policy and program, click 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*

We have been making a concerted push over the past two years to keep our costs affordable by reforming the regulatory structure that we operate under. Federal and state requirements have been responsible for 69% of our $22 billion capital expenditures since 2002, and the debt service we pay on our bonds has led to substantial water rate hikes. Last week, I travelled to Washington, DC to continue making the case for a smarter regulatory scheme that prioritizes public health outcomes while helping us keep our costs down. First, I attended a meeting hosted by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) and attended by other cities and senior members of the EPA. NACWA's Money Matters campaign seeks "how best to squeeze maximum water quality benefit out of every dollar" and they have drafted federal legislation that would prioritize investments. Read about the campaign, which we helped create, here. Then, I testified in front of the Subcommittee on Water Resources (part of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee), which included Chairman **Bob Gibbs** (R-OH) Ranking Member **Tim Bishop** (D-NY) and several other committee members. One of the points I made was that the federal and state mandates will take up capital that we would spend on necessary but non-mandated investments such as new or replacement water mains, sanitary lines, and storm sewers that have all too often been put on the back burner. Those projects are often more beneficial to the average person than the required ones and still create the jobs and economic stimulus that accompany investments in our infrastructure. For example, we are insuring that NYC has a safe and reliable water supply by investing in City Water Tunnel No. 3 and by repairing the Rondout West Branch Tunnel. EPA has reacted to the NACWA legislation by proposing its own integrated planning framework—a move we support if it is done right. The framework could lead to better collaboration and coordination between federal mandates and locally-identified priorities so that New York City can focus on our greatest challenges to water quality such as controlling CSOs rather than blanket rules that may have more applicability elsewhere. Read my testimony here.

Of the 1.3 billion gallons per day of wastewater that we handle daily, our treatment process generates approximately 1,200 tons per day of solid byproducts that are known as biosolids or treated sludge. The solid byproducts are first broken down by microorganisms in oxygen-free (anaerobic) tanks. This "digestion" process stabilizes the sludge by converting much of the organic material into water, carbon dioxide, and methane gas. We reuse the methane gas at most of our plants to power engines and boilers. The treated sludge is then transported to dewatering facilities where centrifuges remove much of the water. As recently as 1992, this material was then dumped 106 miles out in the ocean. Since then, we have disposed of our biosolids through a number of ways, one being a contact with the New York Organic Fertilizer Company (NYOFCo). Until last year, they used a process called thermal pelletization to turn the biosolids into fertilizer pellets. This contact was terminated due to the cost, a move appreciated by the Hunts Point community since there were also significant odor complaints associated with the private facility. As a result, DEP committed to seeing a cost-effective alternative that also met the sustainability goals of the city. Last week, we announced the selection of WeCare Organics, which will transport a third of all the city's biosolids to a location in rural Pennsylvania where the material will be used to reclaim mines by spreading it over stripped land to help it revert back to its original forested state. Not only is this a beneficial reuse, but the cost is significantly less. From what would have been $150/ton through NYOFCo, the new contract is down to roughly $75/ton.

And a very happy holiday season to all DEP employees and their families!

# Focus on the Field

As Director of the Operations Unit of Human Resources, **Donna Ascione** is familiar with every office and bureau in DEP. Her key responsibilities include conducting provisional hiring, ensuring that DEP employees meet civil service requirements, and coordinating the Volunteer Language Bank. In addition to working with many different bureaus within DEP, Donna also frequently coordinates with other city agencies, such as NYPD when hiring Environmental Police Officers, and the Department of Investigation when processing new personnel.

This year, Donna celebrated 35 years of service at DEP. In 1976, she was hired as an Office Associate at the Jamaica Bay Wastewater Treatment Plant. From there, she was promoted and transferred to the now-defunct Bureau of Sewers, and ultimately to HR's Operations Unit where she has worked since 1981.

"Human Resources is all about customer service," Donna said. "We are the first and last impression that someone, whether a DEP employee or someone from outside the agency, gets of DEP. People come up to me two or three years after they have come to my office, and still recall the friendly and helpful service they received. People remember a lot when you are kind and understanding of their concerns. This is something I believe in."

During her spare time, Donna enjoys listening to music and spending quality time with her nieces and nephews.

# Kudos Corner

Additional "thank yous" for your generous donations to the Thanksgiving Food Drive have come in from some of the recipients, including:

The Tannersville Food Pantry:

*"Thank you again for your help and for the last box of miscellaneous food that was delivered on Wednesday. Not only were they able to give so much more for the holiday baskets, they now have full shelves and cabinets, one is actually popping at the seams! "*

And Middleburgh Central School:

*"Things went extraordinarily well. We managed to feed approximately 56 families. We couldn't have done it w/out you guys."*

# Milestones

Congratulations to the following employees who mark their 30th year with the city in the month of December: **Robin Turner, Vincent Rubbo** and **Francis Vocasek.**

Best wishes to **Odd Larsen,** BWSO, on his retirement with 42 years of service.

**DEP Blood Drive:** Downsville Fire Department: 12/21, 9:00am to 2:00pm; Grahamsville Parking Lot: 12/29, 10am to 3pm. Please click here to see the email from the Commissioner, and here for the list of blood captains.

DEP mourns the passing of the following staff members:

**Nicholas Johnson,** BCS, on December 5, 2011

**Bernard Simpson,** BEDC, on December 7, 2011

# StratChat

*…with Anthony Fisher, BWT, Deputy Plant Superintendent for Operations*

### 100 Strategic Goals Through the Eyes of Our Employees

## Initiative 52—Certify that the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant meets secondary treatment standards by June 2011.

**THE BENEFITS:** "The Newtown Creek plant has a daily average flow from Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan of 230 mgd (million gallons a day) in dry weather conditions. During Hurricane Irene, the plant was able to process more than 700 mgd. Throughout the last 15 years of the upgrade, the plant grew from 32 to 53 acres, with many interim and operational changes. Thanks to the many dedicated personnel, the plant has been able to meet and exceed the Clean Water Act Standards for Secondary Treatment a year ahead of schedule.

I take pride telling visitors to our plant of the work and the commitment DEP has in protecting our environment for all New Yorkers and future generations, they are very interested and appreciative of the work we do. I am looking forward to continuing our commitment to meet and exceed the Clean Water Act Standards for Secondary Treatment."

**(No Matter What Language – 'Great Service' is Spoken Here!… continued)**

ese, Romanian, French, Bengali, Portuguese, Ukrainian and Hebrew. These languages come in handy every time DEP needs a translation of essential documents or a flyer. Once a request comes into the language bank, available staff are assigned to work together with the language bank coordinator **Donna Ascione.**

At DEP, almost every bureau needs to convey important multilingual public information and the VLB is ready to assist them. For instance, the Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations has translated documents into six languages and VLB reviews them and makes sure the intended message is clear and goes out accordingly. Among these documents are the Water Shut-off Notices for Repair, the Three-Day Notice, and the Emergency Shut-Off Notices. In addition, the Bureau for Wastewater Treatment produces two brochures: Grease Disposal Tips, which is available in English, Spanish, and Chinese and Preventing Grease Discharges in Sewers, presently available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Russian. The Asbestos Unit has bilingual personnel to handle the public they serve: this unit offers the test for Asbestos Handlers in English, Spanish, Korean, Polish, Russian and Serbian. For VLB members there is no translation job too big or too small; they are always eager to do it.

DEP has also taken steps to enhance the already robust VLB and has asked bilingual employees to be part of this program and become active members of this vital customer service. A database of names, phone numbers and language proficiency is maintained and upgraded on a regular basis. Service requests vary from internal correspondence to other activities. Requests may include translating letters from out of the country asking about NYC drinking water and requests from other agencies to attend public hearings where foreign language proficiency is a plus. For VLB members using, their skills is all about helping. "It's rewarding when you help people because it feels good assisting our customers the best way possible" said Donna.

**23rd Annual New York Cares Coat Drive**

Now is the time to clean out your closets and help our fellow New Yorkers stay warm during the severe winter months. The drop-off location for the coats is by the vending machines on the third floor of the high-rise building at Lefrak. Donations of gently used winter coats for men, women and children may be made up until December 31.

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