

Improving Workplace Takes Hard Work

The Department of Environmental Protection is at the forefront in participating in New York City's Quality of Work Life (QWL) Program. The program is a forum where labor and management work together to plan and implement initiatives that will improve the workplace environment and address issues affecting DEP employees.



The program operates an Oversight Committee, which functions like a steering committee, and two working subcommittees: Communications and Alternate Work Schedule and Training (CAT), and Equipment. Each of these subcommittees meets monthly between September and June. In addition to other initiatives, CAT spearheads the agency's annual Employee Recognition Day ceremony. 2012 will mark DEP's 29th year of hold-

ing a Quality of Work Life Labor-Management event that recognizes union members who have committed their work lives to serving the city and promoting environmental health and safety.

At last November's Employee Recognition event, 593 honorees received awards for length of service ranging from 15 to 55 years of service, while other awards went to staff with perfect attendance, employees

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Spotlight on Safety

Maintain a Healthy Weight and Stay Safe

Full-time workers in the U.S. who are overweight or obese and have other chronic health conditions miss an estimated 450 million additional days of work each year compared with healthy workers—resulting in an estimated cost of more than \$153 billion in lost productivity annually.

These findings are based on the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index data. Nearly 110,000 full-time employees were surveyed, self-reporting chronic medical conditions. Chronic health conditions in this analysis include being overweight or obese; having ever been diagnosed with a heart attack, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, asthma, or depression; and recurring physical pain in the neck or back or knee or leg in the last 12 months. More

than 30 percent of the population who reported being overweight or obese with one to two chronic conditions missed an average of 1.08 days per month due to poor health. Those who said they were overweight or obese with three or more chronic conditions recorded more than three missed days per month, averaging 42 days per year. Research also shows that overweight or obese employees have twice the injury rate as compared to than employees who maintain a healthy weight.

Lost time is only one downside. Employees who maintain a healthy weight are less likely to develop chronic health conditions, experience fewer workplace accidents and injuries, and are more productive.

To learn more, please 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

Last Friday, I presented the Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) water rate proposal to the New York City Water Board, which contained a 7% rate increase—the lowest such increase in seven years and 25% lower than last year's projection. As the nation's largest water utility, DEP is accountable to 836,000 ratepayers. DEP had a banner year in 2011 as we launched Strategy 2011-2014, Operational Excellence (OpX), and the Leak Notification Program—all while confronting the unprecedented challenges of record rainfall, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, a four-alarm fire at North River and even an earthquake. Like those natural events, economic conditions continue to be tough, and our commitment to minimizing costs for our customers remains unshaken. Among other initiatives, we are piloting a program to cap our rental payment to the city's general fund at \$196 million annually, which is projected to return \$14 million in FY13 and \$98 million over the next three years to the water system.

We must always ensure the maximum return on our investment of ratepayer dollars, and the best way to do so is to rigorously manage our operating and capital costs. Over the past three years, we have "self-funded" costs such as long overdue labor settlements and staffing for new facilities with across-the-board budget cuts of 8% in FY10, 4% in FY11, and 4% in FY12, which has mitigated rate increases. Through the more targeted OpX initiative, we have already saved a projected \$5 million in FY13 by renegotiating chemical contracts, changing our light-duty vehicle maintenance schedules, and other measures, and we are targeting \$100 million in annual, recurring cost reductions.

Despite this progress on operational costs, the largest part of our budget remains debt service, projected to be 42% of our FY13 budget. In fact, our debt service payments have increased 176% since 2002 thanks to years of unfunded federal and state mandates, and are expected to increase by an additional 8% by the end of 2012. That is \$253 a year for the average household due to unfunded mandates. That is why DEP has been a leader in pushing for regulatory reform by directly commenting on the EPA's regulatory review



plan, and through the NACWA "Money Matters" campaign and prioritization legislation. Last month, DEP signed an historic agreement with DEC to eliminate or defer \$3.4 billion in capital commitments to combat combined sewer overflows. We have also successfully deferred until 2023 a federally-mandated cover on the Hillview Reservoir that would cost \$1.6 billion and we hope to eliminate it outright. It is clear that we have begun to reverse the tide of unfunded mandates: the Water Board commended us on capturing the cost of unfunded mandates while continuing to meet unanticipated challenges. In fact, 80% of our upcoming four year capital plan is made up of DEP priorities, compared to 30% in the previous 10 years.

Pushing back against mandates is not a call for disinvestment—it is a rallying cry for the right kind of investment. For example, in 2010 we began installing Automatic Meter Reading technology to provide ratepayers with accurate data on their water use in near real-time, and we have now installed wireless water meter readers in more than 95% of households. Not only does this technology enable us to read meters in a timely and accurate manner, cutting the number of estimated bills in half, but it has helped us save customers money. AMR allowed us to launch the Leak Notification Program to alert customers to unusual spikes in water consumption, which is often indicative of a leak. Since its launch last spring, this program has saved customers more than \$10 million.

Keeping our rates low and the quality of our services high is always our top priority. I commend all of our nearly 6,000 dedicated staff for never losing sight of this, and congratulate the entire agency on a rate proposal with the lowest increase in seven years.

Focus on the Field



Jim Cuggy and **Roz Smalls** are an important part of what makes DEP such a great place to work. Their work as co-chairs of the Quality of Work Life/CAT Committee results in events that are enjoyed by thousands of DEP employees every year, including health fairs, seminars, and recognition days.

Jim began working at DEP in an entry level human resources position 28 years ago. Today, he serves as Deputy Director for Human Resources. Roz Smalls started working 28 years ago at BEDC, where she began as an office aide. Their combined 56 years of experience comes in handy for a job that involves the careful coordination of programs and events with a wide range of stakeholders.

As co-chairs, Jim and Roz ensure that both labor and management voices of are heard. The Quality of Work Life Committee is charged with planning and staging seminars and events that provide value to all DEP staff. At Lefrak, events centered on diabetes awareness and benefits information take place in the cafeteria. But their work is not restricted to Queens. They plan and support events for DEP employees in-city and across the watershed.

Although Jim and Roz are always busy, they were both quick to point out that “it takes the entire committee to plan, coordinate and successfully execute these events.”

When not working towards making DEP the best work environment in the industry, both Jim and Roz enjoy relaxing after a hard day’s work. Roz enjoys crocheting and spending time with her two children, while Jim enjoys dining out.

Milestones

Congratulations to the following employees: **Susan Mathys**, BWS, 41 years of service; **James Pena**, BCS, 31 years of service; **Peter Lenz**, BWSO, 31 years of service; **Anand Chadda**, BWSO, 33 years of service; **Lorenzo Marchesi**, HR, 30 years of service; **Fayek Habib**, BEDC, 30 years of service.

Ask Carter

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Q. Last week’s newsletter had information on the different potential causes of water main breaks: deterioration, extreme weather changes, vibrations from traffic and construction, etc. But I just heard about electrolysis as another possible cause. Is that true? What is it and how does it work?

A. Electrolysis is a type of corrosion that results in a loss of pipe material and is also a possible cause of water main leaks. Stray electric currents can travel through the soil seeking the path of least resistance. Underground metallic structures, such as water mains, serve as a pathway for this current, which can enter the metal pipe and cause a flow of electrons through it and into the ground, resulting in a loss of material. Sources of stray current include large consumers of electric power such as railroads and subway systems. In order to protect water mains from this type of corrosion a cathodic protection system is incorporated. The simplest type of cathodic protection is connecting the water main to another more easily corroded material or “sacrificial anode.” The sacrificial anode is depleted as the stray current discharges from the main to the surrounding soil. Without the sacrificial anode the water main would be subject to corrosion at the point where the current discharges from the main. Today, during installation of new steel water mains, these systems are installed to prevent metal loss. Steel pipes are also coated and lined with material to isolate the pipe from stray electric currents that cause the electrolysis.

Out of the Archives



A SUPPLY OF TALENT: Did you know that in addition to the monumental task of supplying New York City with clean, wholesome water, DEP predecessor agency the Board of Water Supply (BWS) also found time for sports? In 1938, BWS clerical workers joined the Municipal Soft-Ball League, where they tied for 2nd place (Sanitation was first and undefeated). After doing just as well the following season, the BWS team decided to switch to the city hard ball league in 1940.

In addition to the municipal leagues, there was also a BWS League that pitted the Board’s divisions against each other and also against the teams of various contractors and unions. The photo above shows the Neversink Division softball team in uniform. That year the team played in the Liberty Soft Ball League, which was made up of nine teams from within Sullivan County. Starting out the season with six straight losses, the team rallied in the second half to finish with a 6-10 record.

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who did not use any sick time or were late during the calendar year. Over the years, recognition has also been given to staff in the following categories: Environmental Health and Safety Awards, Excellence in Service Awards, and Heroic Service Awards. This program is wide-ranging and an important way to recognize and thank staff who are committed to ensuring that the agency is running at its most efficient levels. Awardees include members of 19 municipal unions including Local 1199 SSEU; Local 3, IBEW; Local 237, IBT; Local 246, Local 300, Local 621 SEIU; Local 371 SSEU; Local 375, Local 376, Local 924, Local 983, Local 1322, Local 1549, Local 2627, Local 2906, DC37, AFSCME; Local 1180, CWA; Organization of Staff Analysts and Retirees’ Association of DC37. View photos of the event here.

The program also provides valuable assistance to DEP employees in other ways. It is actively involved in producing seminars on many useful topics for DEP employees through Health and Education fairs. Beyond the information sharing that occurs at the fairs, there have been instances of positive life-changing impacts where employees learned of conditions that required immedi-

ate medical treatment. On the educational front, fairs are instrumental in helping employees enter or return to college to obtain their degrees. In addition, the program also provides assistance to employees interested in filing for and taking civil service exams leading to permanent appointments. The CAT subcommittee plays a key role in orienting staff to better understand the civil service system and process.

Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources Management **Zoe Ann Campbell** is no stranger to the program, and knows its value and successes. DC Campbell said, “For more than 30 years, the program has been an effective vehicle by which labor and management work together to examine issues that affect DEP employees.”

While meetings are not open to general employee attendance, employees are encouraged to contact their respective union representative of participating locals with any questions or suggestions. Make sure to stay tuned for the next event, which, if like any of the previous ones, will be an opportunity to learn new information, improve the quality of your work experience, and possibly make a positive difference in your life.

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