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**DIAL
311** Government Information
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To: James J. Roberts, P.E.
Deputy Commissioner, BWSO

From: Persis Luke *ML*
Director, Environmental Health and Safety

Fred Chyke-Okpuzor *FCO*
Manager, Health & Safety

Date: September 21, 2007

Subject: Respiratory Protection for Field Operation Managers
Responding to Emergency Incidents or Situations

Background

The nature of the work performed by BWSO field operation crew and managers places them in locations around the five boroughs where they can unintentionally end up in the midst of a hazardous emergency situation (e.g. the Con Edison steam explosion incident in midtown).

As a result of several events that have occurred in the not too distant past, notably, the Con Edison steam explosion of July 18, 2007, the Deutsche Bank fire incident and the September 11th World Trade Center terrorist attacks; there continues to be a pressing need to re-evaluate our position on being able to provide respiratory protection to BWSO field personnel who are expected and called upon by the City to carry out critical functions related to assessing and/or providing critical water service.

Although we are not first responders like the NYPD or FDNY, we are required to assess the impacts or damage to the water supply infrastructure; and also provide essential support roles that could be as simple as turning a water valve, or as complex as a multi location repair within an impacted area. Depending on the location of the incident, BWSO employees can sometimes be placed in hazardous environments (natural or man-made). EH&S has in the past, received concerns from field operation personnel regarding possible airborne exposure to harmful contaminants when providing support to FDNY crew combating fires around the 5 boroughs. Their concern is magnified especially when FDNY personnel are seen in respiratory protection and we are not.

The echoes of the health effects of inadvertent contaminant exposure to several responders, volunteers and the public has been an issue of medical and government concern in recent times.

Recommendation:

In order to afford DEP workers an additional option for safety and protection if caught in an emergency or hazardous atmosphere, we recommend that all BWSO managers (and later, all other employees depending on the labor union orientation to this plan) be placed in the Respiratory Protection Program contingent upon:

1. Their willingness to participate without any mandates;
2. Their being medically cleared to wear respirators;
3. They are fit tested to their assigned respirator, and;
4. They are trained in the proper use and maintenance of the assigned respirator.

If you agree, we will meet with Field operations Management to determine the best way to execute this plan.

Please contact me or Fred with your recommendations.

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