

## Interview and Action

### Description:

Students will explore the different roles people play in constructing and maintaining the city's hidden infrastructure.

### Objectives:

- Understand how our actions impact the efficient transport of wastewater to a treatment plant.
- Explore the various roles people play to ensure the functioning of our wastewater infrastructure.
- Raise awareness about the responsibility and role each person plays to protect the environment.

### Vocabulary:

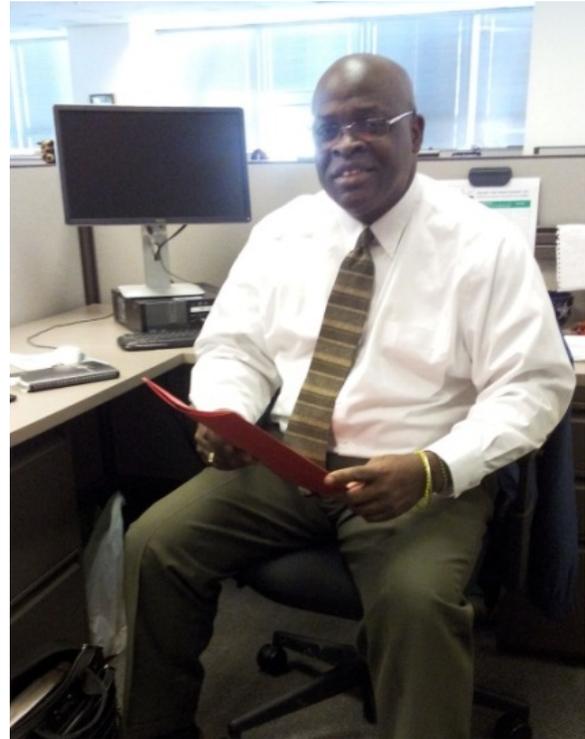
Biodiesel, city codes, coagulate, grease interceptor, infrastructure, sewer backups, sewers, stewardship, wastewater

### Recommended for:

6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade students

### Method:

- Ask your students to read aloud the following interview with Edward Turner, Consultative Supervisor, Bureau of Public Affairs (BPA), NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).
- This can be done with the entire class or in small groups, with some students playing the role of Mr. Turner while others are the interviewer.



Edward Turner received a Bachelor of Arts from the City College of New York. He has 25 years of field experience with DEP working with several different bureaus. He is now an integral part of the BPA.

#### **Interviewer: Describe an average day of work.**

**Mr. Turner:** My day starts with receiving calls from food establishments asking me various questions related to grease interceptors and different laws for city codes pertaining to grease. Grease interceptors are devices that separate grease from wastewater and prevent grease discharge into sewers. If necessary, I will go out to inspect and consult on various concerns related to grease. The purpose of these tasks is to protect the city's sewers.

#### **Interviewer: What is your favorite part of your work?**

**Mr. Turner:** The favorite part of my work is carrying out inspections. I inspect the insides of the sewers for structural damage, and also

inspect other infrastructures for possible problems. I also enjoy educating consumers about the importance of, and how they can keep grease out of the sewers to prevent infrastructural damages and sewer backups.

**Interviewer: What do you find in the sewers of NYC? Do you find alligators?**

**Mr. Turner:** Grease is definitely found in the sewers. Other interesting objects I have seen include a piece of 2x4 wood, dental floss tangled up into a big ball, baby wipes, and even footprints of a human. But there are no alligators.

**Interviewer: How can we protect our sewers?**

**Mr. Turner:** We can protect our sewers by only discharging wastewater into them, not grease. When poured down into the sewers, grease can coagulate and stick to the sides of the sewers. They then can accumulate and clog up the sewers, possibly leading to sewer backups. Don't pour grease down the sink. All food establishments are already required to have grease interceptors. Food establishments should then remove the solid grease from the interceptors, double-bag it, and place the grease in the trash can.

**Interviewer: Share an interesting fact about grease.**

**Mr. Turner:** There are two types of grease. Yellow grease is used cooking oil. It can be collected and recycled into products such as lip balm, cosmetic products, rubber products, and biodiesel. It is distinct from brown grease, which is typically sourced from grease interceptors.

- When you have completed this exercise, ask your interviewers if they have other questions they would have liked to ask Mr. Turner, and if Mr. Turner would like to add anything to the discussion.
- Ask your students what interested them most about the job of a sewer inspector. Were they surprised that such a job existed?

- Students can also role-play the different perspectives and characters within the topic of proper grease disposal, such as those who may need to change behavior, community leaders, city workers, teenage activists, and government officials.
- Discuss the importance of well-functioning pipes in homes and throughout New York City.
- Lead a discussion about how students can share about how to protect the sewers within their communities and at home. They can create posters, poetry, artwork, videos, and online messages to share with neighbors, friends, classmates, and family.
- Discuss with the class other ways to encourage stewardship activities.
- Students can research other careers that help protect the urban environment.

**For more information contact:**

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Also visit DEP's website at:

[www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep)