



COUNTY OF ONONDAGA

Office of the
County Comptroller

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NEWS RELEASE

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Water Environment Protection Department's Call-in, Extended Day and Telephone Time Report

Onondaga County Comptroller Robert E. Antonacci II, CPA, released his report of the Water Environment Protection (WEP) Department's overtime procedures. The WEP department provides Onondaga County with wastewater treatment, storm water management, and the protection of the environment. WEP performs these services 24-hours per day, 7 days per week, and 365 days per year. WEP operates in an environment where emergencies can happen at any time. As a result, certain WEP employees earn overtime (call-in, extended day, and telephone call-in time) on a regular basis.

There are many different reasons WEP employees earn overtime, including but not limited to:

- Alarms going off at the pump stations and regional treatment and storage facilities;
- Sewer backups on residential properties;
- Safely New York Dig (DSNY) events;
- Sludge removal; and
- Rain and snow events.

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The CSEA contract covering all WEP employees earning overtime states "call-in overtime pay shall be the greater of 4 hours at the employee's regular rate of compensation or the rate of 1 ½ times their regular compensation. Employees receive 4 hours for any time worked under 2 ½ hours. If the employee works over 2 ½ hours, they receive the overtime rate (generally time and a half) for each hour. If an employee responds to the call by telephone, then one hour of compensation is paid, regardless of the amount of time spend on the telephone."

While our audit determined the WEP system for collecting, assigning and documenting overtime is well controlled and substantially all (98%) instances of overtime tested were appropriately document and approved, the overtime pay rate provisions of the CSEA union contract as stated above does subject the WEP system to potential manipulation and abuse. The union contract is currently under negotiation and modifying the overtime pay rate provisions could save WEP and Onondaga County significant amounts of taxpayer dollars while still providing the necessary incentives for all WEP employees to work the needed overtime hours to provide all of the services WEP does in a timely fashion.

The report can be found at
<http://www.ongov.net/comptroller/documents/WEPOvertimefullreport.pdf>.

For further information please contact Robert Antonacci II, CPA, at 435-2130.