July 2003

Dear Interested Citizen:

The following document outlines the steps being undertaken by Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc. (“Con Edison”) to inform the public of the Voluntary Cleanup Agreement (“VCA”) entered into between Con Edison and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC).

On August 15, 2002, the NYSDEC and Con Edison executed a voluntary agreement to investigate, test and remediate if necessary the sites of 45 former Manufactured Gas Plants (“MGP”). Con Edison has been working closely with the NYSDEC and New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) to develop an environmental evaluation and response program for sites of former MGPs and manufactured gas storage holders (Holders) that Con Edison and its predecessor companies operated before natural gas became widely available.

MGPs were operated between the early-1800s and mid-1900s, before the development of natural gas systems, to convert coal and oil into gas for heating homes and lighting city streets. Holder stations were sites at which the manufactured gas was stored, using masonry, wooden, or steel tanks. Although the era of manufactured gas ended long ago, federal and state environmental agencies are now asking the utility industry nationally to investigate the sites of these former facilities.

Because the decommissioning and dismantling of most plants and holder stations occurred over 50 years ago, long before current environmental standards were in place, little information is available on the extent to which the by-products and residuals of the gas-making process may remain underground at such sites. Con Edison has collaborated with the NYSDEC and the NYSDOH to develop and implement a reliable evaluation procedure so that information about these sites can be obtained swiftly and accurately.

The VCA between the NYSDEC and Con Edison formalizes the company’s commitment to take action at the sites of its, and its predecessor companies’, former manufactured gas plants and gas holders. If by-products or residual materials from the operations of those facilities are present in amounts or concentrations that the NYSDEC or the NYSDOH believe pose a threat to health or the environment, Con Edison has agreed to implement an appropriate remediation program to address those concerns.
Some by-products and residuals produced by these facilities are potentially hazardous. In assessing the potential for health risks, experts consider both the concentration of hazardous constituents at a site and the extent of exposure. Thus, even if such materials are present in the ground – without exposure to them, there is no health risk. Considering that these by-products are typically not found at the surface, but rather at depth, exposures, and thus health risks, are not anticipated. Nevertheless, we are taking every step possible to determine if any residual materials still exist and, if necessary, that the most appropriate methods for addressing these substances are implemented.

Prior to signing the VCA with the NYSDEC Con Edison provided all property owners on sites involving parks, schools, residences or hospitals, with information regarding these sites; and as of November 8, 2002, all property owners received an official notice that their property was believed to be the site of a former MGP or gas holder.

This notification included general information regarding the history of MGPs and the general nature and character of these historic sites. These letters also provided appropriate contact information for representatives from Con Edison, the NYSDEC and the NYS-DOH. Property owners were also given the opportunity to request an initial soil gas and/or indoor air monitoring of their property, at no cost to the property owner, in order to provide an immediate assessment of any potentially harmful conditions.

Simultaneous with these measures, information is being disseminated to appropriate elected officials, community boards, civic groups and tenant associations. FACTS SHEETS will be distributed to the interested parties. Efforts will be undertaken to provide informational access to the widest range of residents through translators and alternate language versions of Facts Sheets when needed. Con Edison has also implemented a toll-free phone number (877-602-6633) to ensure that all concerns are adequately addressed.

Our priority in this process is to maintain our commitment to the environment and public safety, while producing the least amount of inconvenience to property owners. Please contact Con Edison or representatives from NYSDEC or NYSDOH with any thoughts or concerns regarding this project. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we proceed.

Sincerely,

Randolph S. Price
Vice President, Environment, Health & Safety
Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc.