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Press Release

September 11, 2008

[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

Triborough Bridge's Harlem River Lift Span Under Wraps for Major Paint Job

Motorists taking the Triborough Bridge's Manhattan span across the Harlem River or to the FDR Drive are currently greeted with a strange sight as the west tower comes into view: the 210-foot high steel edifice is shrouded in billowy containment material while a very big paint job is underway.

The Harlem River lift span is getting its first total re-painting since the bridge was built 72 years ago. The \$13 million job involves removal of all older coatings including lead paint (under total environmental containment, thus the shroud-like covering) and application of three fresh coats of blue-gray paint over approximately 1.2 million square feet of steel. To date, approximately 12,000 gallons of paint have been used.

Because much of the original paint contains heavy metals, the work of removing it is done within a covering engineered to maintain negative pressure and air flow to protect the workers and the surrounding environment. "All debris, old paint, and abrasives are collected, stored, and disposed of in strict accordance with New York State regulations," explained Michael Leote, Director of the agency's painting program.

The contract for the painting work, which is part of an overall \$275 million rehabilitation project for the bridge, was awarded in May 2007 to Ahern Painting Contractors of Woodside, New York. The target completion date for the project is spring 2009; approximately 70% of the project has been completed.

In addition to the 310-foot long center lift span and two towers, the machinery rooms, approach span steel, and other miscellaneous components are also being cleaned and painted. The coating consists of an organic zinc-rich epoxy, a high-build epoxy, and a polyurethane gloss finish.

The sprawling three-span Triborough Bridge carries more than 170,000 vehicles daily to Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx. The bridge's Harlem lift span center section was raised more than 80 times in 2007 for passing marine traffic. The MTA's cleaning and painting of the lift span and its Manhattan approach ramps required a halt to marine lifts granted by the U.S. Coast Guard, which regulates use of the waterways. The suspension, which began in May, runs through December and is contingent upon the span's readiness to be raised under emergency conditions.

In the meantime marine traffic headed to or from the Hudson River or Long Island Sound must take the long way around the southern end of Manhattan, rather than the "short cut" provided under the Harlem lift span. Large vessels cannot pass under the Bronx Truss Span of the bridge because the Bronx Kill is too shallow and narrow.

The Harlem River (Manhattan) lift span links the Harlem River Drive, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) Drive and 125th Street to Queens and the Bronx. The normal position of the span is 55 feet above water. The bridge opened to traffic on July 11, 1936.

MTA Bridges and Tunnels' facilities, which connect the five boroughs of New York City, are the Triborough, Throgs Neck, Bronx-Whitestone, Henry Hudson, Verrazano-Narrows, Cross Bay Veterans Memorial and Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Bridges, and the Queens Midtown and Brooklyn-Battery Tunnels. The agency is the largest toll authority in the nation, helping more than 850,000 vehicles and more than a million people reach their destination each day.





PHOTO CAPTION: Sections of Triborough Bridge's Harlem Lift Span shrouded for environmentally contained paint job.