



MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) | ▼

Press Release

June 17, 2008

[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

Triborough Bridge's Harlem River Lift Span Stays in Place for Painting

The sprawling three-span Triborough Bridge, which carries more than 170,000 vehicles daily to Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx, halted vehicles to and from Manhattan more than 80 times in 2007 to raise its Harlem lift span center section for passing marine traffic. But the lifts have been temporarily suspended since the U.S. Coast Guard granted MTA's request for a four-month break from the lift requirement, in order to accommodate MTA's painting of the span, part of a major \$275 million rehabilitation project for the 71-year-old bridge. The Harlem River lift span is getting its first total re-painting since the bridge was built; the \$13 million job involves removal of all older coatings including lead paint (under total environmental containment) and applying three fresh coats of blue-gray paint over approximately 600,000 square feet of steel.

The Coast Guard's approval to cease the lifts is contingent upon the span's readiness to be raised within 48 hours notice under extreme emergency conditions. The lifts will resume in September. 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 Triborough's Harlem Lift Span. Large vessels cannot pass under the Bronx Truss Span of the bridge because the Bronx Kill is far too shallow and narrow, making the trip down to and around the Battery necessary.

When the span is in normal operation, motorists behind barrier gates are treated to the sight of the 310-foot long bridge section rising 135-feet above water to make way for tall river traffic. "We see a wide array of vessels pass under our bridge," remarked Raymond Bush, General Manager of the Triborough Bridge. "Our lift operators and crew are seasoned veterans of the precision-job of raising and lowering the lift span. The safety of all involved is the highest priority, and we work quickly to minimize disruption."

Most vessels that require lifting the span are construction-related (e.g., large barges carrying equipment like cranes and cement-mixers). Right-of-way belongs to the waterway, regulated by the U.S. Coast Guard, and vessels may cross at all hours during the day or night with advance arrangements, but MTA Bridges and Tunnels tries to encourage passage outside of rush hours. The staff has a cooperative working relationship with the shipping companies that regularly require bridge lifts, especially since construction has boomed throughout the city and metropolitan area.

Whenever possible, notice of a lift, which usually lasts about 35 minutes from start to finish, is given to the media. Each lift requires the involvement of 12 to 14 people: two in the control room near the Harlem side of the bridge operate the vertical lift via a control panel linked to a system of counter weights and electronic motors, one in each machinery room monitors the motors and brakes, and eight-to-ten maintenance personnel and Bridge and Tunnel Officers stop traffic on the bridge ramps, walkways and the Manhattan toll plaza, as well as guard against any unsafe moves during the lift. The bridge staff regularly maintains all equipment and schedules at least one monthly maintenance lift in order to ensure the mechanism is in working order.

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 CAPTIONS:

#1 and #2: Triborough Bridge Harlem Lift Span raised for marine traffic.

#3: Harlem Lift Span rising to position for marine traffic.



#1

#2

