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AJNR Am J Neuroradiol 2022, 43 (12) 1687

doi: <https://doi.org/10.3174/ajnr.P0129>

<http://www.ajnr.org/content/43/12/1687.citation>

This information is current as
of July 22, 2025.



Title: East 59th Street Stack. The East 59th Street stack marks 1 of the 6 Con Ed steam power substations in New York City. It is located, not surprisingly, next to the “59th Street Bridge” and billows huge white plumes in the winter. Also not surprisingly, all the substations are located along the major New York City waterways of the East and Hudson Rivers. The New York City steam system is the largest district heating network in the country. It feeds about 120 million tons of steam per year through 105 miles of pipes to around 1800 buildings in New York City, most in lower and mid-Manhattan, which have the highest concentration of taller buildings. The steam powers various processes, including heating, refrigeration, sterilization (eg, hospitals), and humidification (eg, art museums). Without district heating the Manhattan skyline would be very different with 1800 or more spewing chimney stacks and pots peppering the rooftops, not to mention the corresponding constraints on rooftop architectural innovation.

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