

TO: Municipal Offices of Emergency Management and Fire Departments
FROM: Dawn M. Prandi - Somerset County Department of Health

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As you may be aware, the Somerset County Department of Health serves as a liaison to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in the enforcement of environmental regulations within our County. This delegation of inspection and enforcement authority was given in 1992 through the 'County Environmental Health Act' (CEHA).

When an environmental release or complaint is called into the NJDEP Hotline (1-877-WARN-DEP), a referral is often made to the Health Department for investigation and follow-up. Unfortunately, too often, these referrals come days later, and key evidence may be missing that could point to a responsible party.

NJDEP regulations provide for substantial civil penalties in cases involving negligent or deliberate releases to our environment. Our office works closely with the Somerset County Office of Emergency Management HazMat Unit to follow-up on such incidents. In some situations, we may need to rely solely on the report of the officer on scene in ascertaining the extent of contamination and the responsible party. Your general observations will be helpful if further investigation is indicated; for example, odors, soil staining, sheen, proximity to waterbodies or stormwater collection systems.

The specific areas we are authorized to investigate and enforce include:

- Air pollution complaints, such as odors and open burning.
- Water pollution complaints, including discharge to streams, rivers, lakes and stormwater collection systems.
- Solid waste disposal oversight, including complaints of illegal dumping and overloaded and/or poorly maintained roll-off containers that may bring nuisance complaints or cause littering on the roadways.
- Noise complaints from non-residential sources (residential or 'neighbor-to-neighbor' complaints are handled by local ordinance and your local health department).

If you have any questions about this process, or about what matters we are authorized to investigate, please contact Doug Vornlocker at (908) 203-6055. In the event of a significant environmental release, an inspector from this office can be reached 24/7, upon request, by contacting County Communications at (908) 526-2500. Thank you in advance for your assistance.