

UNION COUNTY

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Strategic Environmental Goals for 2009

**County of Union
Department of Public Safety
Office of Health Management
Office of Environmental Health
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INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

Union County's Environmental Health Assessment and Improvement Plan was developed by the Office of Health Management, Office of Environmental Health to define our countywide environmental health priorities. The County's priorities are then used to establish environmental health performance standards for the control of air pollution, hazardous substances, noise, solid waste and water pollution. This plan aims at ensuring that the County's standards and priorities are inline with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's statewide strategic environmental goals.

Background:

The County of Union is the second smallest county in New Jersey. However, its size is no indication of the vital resources that are housed within our boundaries. There are 21 municipalities in Union County and according to the most recent accounting, within the 103 square miles the population is 531,457 representing 5160 persons per square mile and considered the third most densely populated County in the State. Its top industries are manufacturing, retail, pharmaceuticals, petroleum and telecommunications. Union County is home to the headquarters of world known facilities such as Merck and Company, Lucent Technologies, Schering Plough, Wakefern Food Corp. and is also home to the largest petroleum storage facility on the East Coast, known as Conoco Philips/Bayway Refinery.

Located in Union County is the largest and busiest nationwide domestic transportation hub, Newark International Airport (EWR) which, also ranks in the top three for international travel. Not far from EWR is Port Elizabeth - the largest container cargo port on the East Coast. The county is also transected by several major interstates, federal, state and county highways including the NJ Turnpike (I95) the Garden State Parkway, and Routes 1 & 9, 78, 22, 24, 82 and 27. The Arthur Kill is one of the world's busiest waterways, often used as a major

transportation route for barges and small tankers that carry oil and hazardous materials. Numerous rail systems with heavy freight concentration also traverse the county.

Personnel

The Office of Environmental Health (OEH) is comprised of twelve (12) full-time employees. The OEH is responsible for ensuring compliance and enforcement of the state environmental regulations as required by the Department of Environmental Protection, County Environmental Health Act (CEHA) program. The primary responsibilities of the OEH include responding to complaints regarding air pollution, solid waste, spills, hazardous material incidents and noise. Inspecting facilities with potential air pollution sources and regulated solid waste facilities is an ongoing responsibility. Enforcing the County Waste Flow Plan through the Union County Utilities Authority is also overseen by the OEH.

It is the responsibility of the County Health Officer to oversee environmental, hazmat and public health responses performed within Union County. The Office of Public Health staff, consisting of 5 full time employees is responsible for planning and coordinating Public Health Preparedness and Emergency Response within Union County. All Hazards preparedness and planning continues to be a primary focus for all those in the response community. These issues have forced the public health community to interface with the emergency management community on a routine basis. Coordinating training, providing support, and sharing resources has improved communications and enhanced countywide response capabilities.

Bio-terrorism, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), mass decontamination – all continue to demand increased attention above and beyond our everyday challenges. In recent years, additional Bioterrorism funding was helpful in initiating bioterrorism planning but the funds were only temporary. Therefore,

Union County could only address changes in tools, hardware, communications, and similar items but not fundamental personnel issues. Current personnel and resources are taxed to the limit. Therefore, it is essential that additional funding in all public and environmental health and safety programs be made available to hire more employees to handle the critical issues that effect or have the potential to affect the public. This is even more evident due to the fact that the prime target areas in New Jersey that pose the highest potential threat of attack and or incident are in Union County.

Open and Effective Government

The County will fulfill its vision and mission to achieve its goals through the involvement of citizens and stakeholders as partners through a commitment to quality principles and methods as a means to continually improve its operations.

The Union County Office of Health Management (OHM) is a comprehensive environmental and public health oriented agency. Combining the resources and expertise of, CEHA, LINCS, and domestic preparedness planning personnel under one umbrella has allowed for a comprehensive approach to preparedness planning.

OHM staff serves on or attends various meetings and committees such as the “Public Health Weapons of Mass Destruction” Board, the Governmental Public Health Partnership, the New Jersey Health Officers Association, New Jersey Association of County Health Officers, Union County Health Officers Association, the Homeland Security Task Force, the New Jersey Environmental Health Association and the New Jersey Noise Council.

Additionally, the County Health Officer chairs the Public Health Sub-Committee of the Urban Area Security Initiative, a US Department of Homeland Security program tasked with the responsibility of collaborating and coordinating regional programs and grants with the purpose of building capacity to respond to events (natural or man-made) that would affect the health and well being of county and region populations.

Police, fire, health, public works, EMS, and hospital representatives are all considered partners in our daily operations. The OHM’s overall effectiveness to respond and protect the health and safety of the residents of Union County continues to be enhanced by these interactions.

Safe and Healthy Communities

Every New Jersey community will be free from unacceptable human health and ecological risks due to direct exposure from hazardous substances and other potentially harmful agents. Natural resources will be managed to protect the public from floods, fires and storms.

Strategic Environmental Goals for 2009

1. Clean Air: The air in the County of Union will be healthful to breathe, and air pollutants will not damage our forests, land and water bodies.

Air Pollution Control has been and will continue to be one of Union County's highest CEHA priorities, with response to citizen complaints remaining our paramount concern. The Office created a "Clean Air for Union County – Let's Work Together" flyer in an effort to better educate its residents about its response capabilities to odor complaints. The flyer outlines the State Air Pollution Control Code, provides an overview of the complaint process and gives the number to report a complaint 24 hours/7 days a week. Flyers are distributed at various county events and health fairs along with the motor vehicle idling enforcement flyers that we created.

In 2008 the OEH air pollution control program included investigating complaints and inspecting dry cleaning facilities, gas stations, auto body shops and designated "B" facilities. The OEH exceeded the required number of facility inspections in 2008. The staff has investigated 86 air pollution complaints YTD

The OEH will continue its Air Pollution Control Program in 2009. OEH investigators will continue to conduct inspections of dry cleaners, auto body shops and other "B" Sources as directed by NJDEP. Gas Stations will continue to be inspected for Stage I and Stage II Vapor Control criteria. However, in 2009 these inspections will be reported under our CEHA Site Remediation-Regulated UST program.

The objectives outlined above are in keeping with both statewide and countywide initiatives and are achievable by our present staff. Currently, the Office of Environmental Health has five full-time personnel who are trained and qualified for air complaint investigations and facility inspections. They are available for timely, county-wide, 24-hour response.

Activities:

Continue to conduct inspections of Dry Cleaners, Auto Body Shops and other "B" Sources to determine compliance with the NJDEP's air pollution control regulations.

Continue to respond to and investigate complaints referred to this office by citizens and the NJDEP.

The OEH will pursue enforcement actions that result from these inspections and complaints when the responsible party is identified.

Compile and maintain files and records to support NJDEP and County enforcement actions.

Deliverables:

1. Submit all facility compliance monitoring inspection reports to NJDEP's Minor Source Compliance Investigation Program within 60 days of completing the inspection. Submit all inspection reports no later than January 16, 2010.
2. Submit to NJDEP quarterly reports of investigations.

2. Clean and Plentiful Water: New Jersey rivers, lakes and coastal waters will be fishable, swimmable and support healthy ecosystems. Surface and ground water will be clean sources of water. Every person in New Jersey will have safe drinking water. Adequate quantities of surface and ground water will be available for all uses.

Water pollution control efforts have been ongoing in Union County since the UCBEH was designated as the CEHA lead health agency in 1999. In 2007 the UCBEH was redesignated the Office of Health Management – Office of Environmental Health.

Also in the Department of Public Safety, The Division of Emergency Management houses the Union County Hazardous Materials Response Team (HazMat). Response to and mitigation of waterborne incidents have been and will continue to be of paramount concern. The OEH will pursue enforcement actions that result from these complaints when the responsible party is identified.

Activities:

Continue to respond to complaints involving waterborne hazardous materials incidents, ensuring mitigation and remediation and initiate enforcement activities where warranted.

Continue to communicate vital environmental health functions (i.e. Boil Water Orders) in the event of a natural disaster or purposeful acts of intent.

Compile and maintain files and records to support NJDEP and County enforcement actions.

Deliverables:

1. Conduct inspections at the frequency specified in the CEHA contract.
2. Submit to NJDEP quarterly reports of investigations.

3. Noise:

The investigation of citizen complaints relative to noise is an important issue in Union County. Currently, the Office of Environmental Health has five full-time personnel who are trained and qualified for noise complaint investigations that are available for timely, 24-hour response. All five staff members have been certified to use the octave band sound level meter. It is our plan to continue to investigate noise complaints, and when applicable, enforce these regulations to achieve compliance.

The Office has responded to 28 noise complaints thus far in 2008 compared to 8 in 2007.

Activities:

Respond to and investigate all noise complaints received from citizens and the NJDEP which are under the jurisdiction of the State Noise Code and Model Noise Control Ordinances adopted by local Boards of Health.

The OEH will pursue enforcement actions that result from these complaint investigations when the responsible party is identified.

Compile and maintain files and records to support NJDEP and county enforcement actions.

Maintain certification of at least two individuals on staff in the performance of noise control investigations. Maintain two sound level meters and associated sound measurement equipment in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:29-2.1 et. seq.

Deliverables:

1. Submit to the NJDEP quarterly reports of investigations.

4. Pesticides:

The Office of Environmental Health continued its elective program of pesticide compliance in 2008. Pesticide control required DEP inspections include inspections of landscapers, schools, rental apartments and retail establishments. As an agency we exceeded the 2008 requirements and intend to meet or exceed the established 2009 requirements.

Activities:

Conduct routine inspections of schools, landscapers, and rental properties to determine whether the owner or operator has applied any pesticides and, if so, whether such applications were performed by a certified and registered pesticide applicator, operator and/or registered business.

Assess and evaluate citizen complaints, including misuse complaints as per the “Standard Operating Procedures for Performing Pesticide Control Investigations under CEHA.”

The OEH will pursue enforcement actions that result from these inspections and complaints when the responsible party is identified.

Compile and maintain files and records to support NJDEP and County enforcement actions.

Deliverables:

1. Submit to NJDEP quarterly reports of inspections and investigations.

5. Site Remediation:

Under the direction of the Division of Emergency Management, the County of Union maintains a Hazardous Materials Response servicing the County’s 21 municipalities. Seven (7) full-time trained responders are within the Division of Emergency Management, and the County maintains a small core of trained per diems.

The Division of Emergency Management logged in 449 hazardous materials incidents thus far in 2008. This includes responses and notifications. Hazmat Response Teams also respond in coordination with the Union County Bomb squad.

Training is the biggest challenge facing hazardous materials response teams today. CRBN (chemical, radiological, biological and nuclear), decontamination, and PPE training are not only required for our full time hazmat team members, but the agency is also charged with assisting local police, fire, EMS and even hospitals with their training. All County Hazardous Materials Technicians are cycling through the latest 40 hour

version of WMD / CBRNE Technician training. All members already have the 16 hour version of WMD / CBRNE Technician. The county maintains a wireless entry cam which allows team members to visually monitor a location or facility prior to making a physical entry.

Union County HazMat instituted wireless monitoring capabilities with all of its meters in 2005. This allows the sampling of potentially hazardous atmospheres from remote locations with the use of a robot.

The OEH has been participating in NJDEP's Underground Storage Tank (UST) Inspection program since its inception in 1999. The County continued its contract with the NJDEP for UST inspections, agreeing to dedicate at least one full-time staff member to Underground Storage Tank Inspections. We continue to "red tag" UST's at facilities that are not in compliance with specified DEP criteria. The OEH has issued 15 NOVPA's for UST violations in 2008 to date with 6 more pending review and approval to be issued.

Gas Stations will now be inspected for Stage I and Stage II Vapor Control criteria under this Site Remediation-Regulated UST program. Previously they had been inspected under the DEP MSCA Air program.

Activities:

Enhance preparedness to assist public safety officials with the response to and assessment of actual or suspected releases of chemical and or biological agents.

Assist public safety officials with assessment and evaluation of risk to the population regarding chemical facilities and transportation routes which could be the targets of sabotage or terrorism.

Support the Division of Emergency Management to maintain an integrated Hazmat emergency preparedness system throughout Union County. This system will meet the draft standards for Hazmat Emergency Response Teams developed by the New Jersey State Police.

Respond to all hazardous material emergencies referred by NJDEP to assess environmental health threats. Make recommendations to and coordinate these response actions with appropriate federal, State and local agencies. Ensure that personnel assigned to respond to hazmat incidents are properly trained and participating in a medical surveillance program.

Maintain a core of trained and equipped personnel that are capable of responding to hazardous material incidents in accordance with the draft standards document. Ensure personnel are participating in a medical surveillance program.

Maintain an adequate supply of hazmat disposable equipment, such as booms, pads, sweeps, etc. and equipment, such as communication devices, decontamination showers, air monitoring devices, etc., which conforms to the draft standard for inter-operability.

Continue to investigate hazardous materials complaints received from citizens and NJDEP. Refer cases requiring remedial action to NJDEP.

Continue to participate in the NJDEP UST pilot project. This will involve conducting comprehensive inspections of regulated underground storage tanks (UST's) to determine compliance status, to remediate problems and to assure prompt compliance when necessary.

The OEH will pursue enforcement actions that result from these investigations when the responsible party is identified.

Compile and maintain files and records to support NJDEP and County enforcement actions.

Deliverables:

1. Submit to NJDEP (at CEHA audit) proof of meeting PEOSHA health and safety training requirements.
2. Follow NJDEP notification protocol and submit investigation reports as required by NJDEP.
3. Follow NJDEP guidelines and protocols for UST inspections.
4. Submit completed inspection reports as required by NJDEP.
5. Submit to NJDEP quarterly reports of inspections and investigations.

6. SOLID WASTE:

The Office of Environmental Health dedicates a considerable amount of time and resources inspecting solid waste facilities and responding to complaints. Facility inspections will be continued in 2009 based on the needs of the NJDEP Division of Solid Waste.

A total of 50 Recycling Questionnaires were included in the inspection process this year at the request of the NJDEP. This program will be continued in 2009 with the hope that our roles will segway into an enforcement role with the ability to issue NOV's for those agencies and facilities who refuse to comply.

Other initiatives include investigating illegal dumping incidents which continue to be a persistent problem in Union County. This, in conjunction with the inspection of illegal motor vehicle tire storage facilities, will continue to be a priority in response to the prevalence of West Nile Virus.

There were four household hazardous waste programs in year 2008. There will be four more events in 2009 as well as 5 Electronics Recycling events.

Activities:

Continue to investigate all solid waste complaints received from citizens, local health departments, commercial businesses and the NJDEP.

The OEH will pursue enforcement actions that result from these complaints and investigations when the responsible party is identified.

The OEH is currently finalizing a proposed Union County recycling enforcement protocol. Implementation of these procedures is anticipated to commence in 2009.

Conduct routine compliance monitoring inspections of Solid Waste Facilities (Class "A" and "B" Recycling Centers, SW Transfer Stations, Leaf Transfer Stations and Class "C" Compost facilities) as deemed necessary by the NJDEP, continue to update the lists of these sites and provide them to the NJDEP Solid Waste Program.

The Union County Utilities Authority, acting as an OEH subcontractor, will monitor solid waste haulers and conduct waste flow investigations to ensure compliance with the Solid Waste Management Act. They will pursue enforcement actions when the responsible party is identified.

Compile and maintain files and records to support NJDEP and County enforcement actions.

Deliverables:

1. Enforce the State Solid Waste Management Act and initiate enforcement proceeding pursuant to NJDEP guidelines.
2. Conduct frequency and projected annual total of inspections as per program CEHA contract.
3. Submit reports as required by NJDEP.
4. Submit completed inspection reports as required by NJDEP.
5. Submit to NJDEP quarterly reports of investigations.

7. Compliance Assistance for School Laboratory Chemical Management:

The OEH will conduct compliance assistance outreach at High Schools within Union County, and implement the established guidelines to effectively address chemical management practices throughout public and private school laboratories. OEH staff and

HazMat Technicians jointly, will conduct cost-free site visits, and educate the school staff on applicable regulations, best management practices regarding chemical safety, and proper storage and disposal of laboratory chemicals.

Union County has had a laboratory waste program for schools for approximately 10 years. School Lab Waste is included as a separate bid item in the Household Hazardous Waste contract. Flyers advertising this program are prepared each spring and fall with a list of guidelines for participation and dates for scheduled Household Hazardous Waste Events. Schools must provide a list of materials at least two weeks prior to the event and the hazardous waste vendor must provide an item by item approval. ONLY LAB WASTE is accepted at these events. Pesticides and other hazardous wastes are the responsibility of the school district.

Activities:

Conduct routine compliance assistance visits to up to 10 high schools, to educate school laboratory staff on chemical safety, storage and disposal.

Deliverables:

1. Submit to NJDEP quarterly reports of inspections.