

Environmental Regulation
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January 9, 2009

Dear Freeholder:

Subject: Certified Recycling Coordinators

Since its passage in January of this year, the Department has received numerous inquiries concerning the Recycling Enhancement Act (P.L. 2007, c.311) (REA). One provision of particular concern is that which requires counties and municipalities to designate one or more persons as the county or municipal Certified Recycling Coordinator. In order to gain this certification, successful completion of the “Certified Recycling Professionals” training, as detailed below, must be accomplished.

With the passage of the “New Jersey Statewide Mandatory Source Separation and Recycling Act”, in April, 1987, each municipality and county in the state was required to designate one or more persons as the official recycling coordinator. Since that time, to provide these individuals with appropriate professional skills, the Department has contracted with Cook College’s Office of Continuing Professional Education (OCPE) to offer the “Certified Recycling Professionals” training curriculum. Though certification under this program was not a statutory requirement, several hundred public, and private, recycling professionals have received Certification status.

During the deliberative process leading to the passage of the REA, the Legislature determined that a certain level of expertise is necessary for those public employees designated as recycling coordinators. Going forward, the REA mandates that the Department can not accept the annual municipal recycling report and grant application unless it has been signed by a Certified Recycling Coordinator, starting with the 2010 report.

There are options for a county or municipality without a certified recycling coordinator on staff. The Act does not require each county or municipality to employ its own full time certified recycling coordinator, but to merely designate one. Therefore,

“sharing” the services of a Certified Recycling Coordinator for the purposes of filing the required annual report and grant application is acceptable. However, soon to be adopted regulations covering elements of the REA will contain responsibilities which will fall to the designated Certified Recycling Coordinator, which will need to be executed regardless of that person’s full/part time status, or whether one person is filling that role for one or more counties or municipalities. Specifically, if so directed pursuant to the municipal source separation and recycling ordinance, the Certified Recycling Coordinator may be required to enforce the ordinance, and issue exemptions to the ordinance as provided for in the REA. The manner in which these responsibilities are administered are left to individual governing bodies to decide, but the responsibilities themselves are contained in the statute.

In order to handle the anticipated increase in the number of registrants for certification between the passage of the REA and the 2010 deadline for certification, the OCPE has increased the number of classes that it will offer, plus it has modified its courses to accommodate both the recycling novice and the seasoned recycler, As in the past, the Department will continue to cover approximately 75% of the costs of this training.

I trust that the above clarifies this issue, as your county amends its solid waste and recycling plan to be in conformance with the REA. For questions regarding the Certified Recycling Coordinator issue detailed above, please contact Guy Watson, Chief of the Bureau of Recycling and Planning at (609) 984-3438. Finally, please visit our website at www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycling for additional information concerning the Recycling Enhancement Act.

Sincerely,

Original signed January 9, 2009

Nancy Wittenberg, Assistant Commissioner
Environmental Regulation