

Overview

Environmental health professionals at the Westchester County Department of Health work tirelessly to protect the safety and health of Westchester residents.

Through enforcement of the Westchester County Sanitary Code, health department staff aim to assure safe food in restaurants, safe bathing beaches, swimming pools and children's camps, clean air, clean water, and proper wastewater disposal.

The public may call the Department of Health at (914) 813-5000, with questions or complaints regarding septic waste, water supply and drinking water quality, refuse disposal, medical and hazardous waste, air quality, water pollution, realty subdivisions, individual sewage disposal systems, individual water supplies and food safety.

Inspections and Permits

Public health sanitarians and engineers conduct inspections and issue permits and plan approvals to:

- Restaurants
- Children's Summer Camps
- Animal Facilities
- Migrant Labor Camps
- Public Swimming Pools & Bathing Beaches
- Mobile Home Sites & Trailer Parks
- Refuse & Scavenger Vehicles
- Hotels & Motels
- Water and Sewage Treatment Systems
- Realty Subdivisions
- Petroleum Storage Tanks
- Dry Cleaners
- Auto Body Shops
- X-Ray Facilities

Water Supply

Public health engineers strive to assure safe and healthful public drinking water for Westchester families. Environmental engineers:

- Regularly inspect water treatment plants and sample public drinking water supplies
- Issue permits and review plans for public drinking water supplies
- Investigate complaints concerning the

quality and safety of public drinking water

- Provide formal training for water operator certification

Water Quality

A program of inspections, enforcement and education is conducted to prevent and control water pollution of Westchester's rivers, streams, reservoirs and sewage treatment plants. Health professionals:

- Regularly inspect sewage treatment plants.
- Conduct complaint investigations of sewage overflows and other water pollution discharges related to the New York City watershed, Long Island Sound, Hudson River and other bodies of water.
- Provide formal training for septic contractor licensing
- Monitor the repair of septic systems

Swimming Pools

Environmental health staff:

- Issue permits to construct or modify public swimming pools.
- Issue permits for the operation of public swimming pools.

Individual Sewage Disposal Systems & Well Water Supply Systems

Environmental personnel:

- Issue permits and review plans for individual sewage disposal systems and wells.
- Perform inspections.
- Investigate construction complaints regarding wells and individual sewage disposal systems.

Oil, Chemical and Hazardous Materials Spill Response

To safeguard public health, health professionals:

- Provide 24-hour response to hazardous materials incidents and assist local fire and police departments with these incidents.
- Assess public health and safety implications of hazardous materials spills.

- Provide the public with chemical substance information and hazard assessments.
- Respond to complaints regarding hazardous waste sites.

Petroleum Bulk Storage

In order to ensure compliance with State and County regulations, and to strive to prevent harm to public health and the environment, Health Department Inspectors:

- Conduct routine comprehensive inspections at over 3,000 petroleum bulk storage facilities.
- Ensure that required testing, monitoring and routine maintenance is performed by each site.
- Respond to spills and complaints at petroleum bulk storage facilities.
- Ensure that old tanks are removed from service properly and that contaminated soil is removed.
- Order site assessments and maintain oversight of remediation work.

Air Quality

To strengthen and improve the environment, environmental engineers and sanitarians:

- Monitor the permitted releases from industrial and commercial facilities to ensure compliance with New York State regulations.
- Review and approve plans for industrial processes, boilers and incinerators.
- Conduct inspections in response to complaints from residents.
- Perform indoor and outdoor air sampling.

Food Sanitation

Responsibility for the safety of food prepared and served to county residents rests with public health sanitarians who:

- Perform routine inspections of food service establishments including restaurants.
- Investigate complaints received from the public about unsanitary conditions in food service establishments.
- Respond to and investigate all reports of suspected foodborne illness.
- Issue permits and review plans for all food service establishments including restaurants and food vendors.

Realty Subdivisions

In accordance with the State and County realty codes, environmental engineers:

- Review and permit every subdivision plan for commercial and residential use to ensure that there is adequate sewage disposal and drinking water.
- Perform field site visits throughout the construction phase to verify that the plans are being followed.
- Approve all subdivision maps before they are filed with the County Clerk's Office.

Emergency Preparedness/Bioterrorism Response

In collaboration with the Westchester County Department of Emergency Services, staff from the Division of Environmental Health Services assist in the investigation of alleged cases of intentional releases of nuclear, biological or chemical agents. The Health Department:

- Has responded to sites of suspected anthrax contamination, and sites with multiple human illnesses of unknown origin and collected samples of suspect materials for analysis.
- Utilizes personal protective equipment and environmental monitoring equipment that enable them to safely enter "hot" zones of contamination or areas with chemical or radiation hazards.
- Is trained to quickly evaluate a potential hazard site, take immediate measures to ensure public safety, mitigate any further spread of contamination and collect specimens and samples for laboratory analysis to confirm the presence of biochemical agents.

Indian Point Emergency Response Preparedness

Public health professionals work closely with federal, state and county agencies. They:

- Take part in the development of plans to strengthen emergency procedures for Indian Point and its surrounding area. These plans may also be applied to hurricanes, storms, fires, transportation accidents and other emergencies.
- Maintain a leadership role during Indian Point Emergency Response Drills by providing technical staff to measure and determine the off site impacts of a simulated Indian Point emergency.

West Nile Virus Surveillance & Control

Environmental personnel work to control the spread of West Nile virus by monitoring WNV in birds and mosquitoes and minimizing mosquito-breeding sites. Efforts undertaken include:

- Applying larvicide briquettes into state, county and local municipal catch basins to prevent mosquito larvae from developing into adult mosquitoes capable of spreading the virus.
- Investigating reports of possible mosquito breeding sites.
- Maintaining a network of traps throughout the County to monitor mosquito populations and prevalence of arboviral disease such as West Nile.

Housing

Public health staff investigate housing complaints such as:

- Lack of heat
- Lack of hot water
- Insect & rodent problems
- Plumbing, garbage and nuisance complaints
- Smoking in certain public areas

Tobacco Control

Environmental health staff work to keep tobacco products out of the hands of minors by:

- Conducting compliance checks of local merchants to ensure that they uphold the New York State Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Act by selling tobacco products only to persons who can prove that they are at least 18 years of age.
- Offering a course to tobacco vendors to train their sales staff to prevent tobacco sales to minors.

Summer Camp Safety

Public health personnel work to assure a safe and healthy camping experience for Westchester County's children. Sanitarians:

- Review and approve camp operating plans for camper health and safety including water-front activity safety.
- Issue operational permits.
- Inspect all camps at least each summer to assure camper health and safety.

- Train camp directors and staff in topical public health and safety issues at a one-day Camp Operators Workshop attended by over 250 camp directors each spring.

Rabies

Animal vector staff investigate all rabies suspect incidents. This includes:

- Investigating all reports of people bitten or scratched by an animal.
- Collecting and submitting for rabies testing, suspect animals that people or pets have been exposed to.
- Monitoring pets that have been placed in a six month quarantine due to their overdue or unvaccinated status and exposure to a known or suspect rabid animal.
- Providing pet rabies vaccination vouchers to Westchester residents.

Tickborne Diseases

(Lyme, Ehrlichia, Babesiosis)

Animal vector staff provide a tick identification service and are available off-season for seminars (upon request).

Bathing Beaches

Public health and environmental staff monitor water quality and safety at 52 bathing beaches throughout Westchester County. Duties include the following:

- Regular sampling by both boat and at beachfront of 25 Long Island sound beaches
- Regular beachfront sampling of 27 inland beaches
- Monitoring of rainfall levels and pre-emptive closure of bathing beaches when targets are exceeded using models based on historical rainfall data and trends.
- Inspection of safety equipment, lifesaving procedures, lifeguard coverage and compliance with the NYS Sanitary Code.
- Implementation of a new computer program, the Regional Bypass Model, to predict the influence of sewage discharges on county bathing facilities.
- Monitoring of conditions such as swimmer's itch that can affect bathers.
- Protection of county watersheds that feed into Long Island Sound and contribute to the bathing water for other inland beaches.

Administrative Hearing Office

The Administrative Hearing Office conducts hearings in an effort to further compliance with State and County Administrative Laws and Codes where voluntary compliance is lacking.

Appearance tickets are issued for violations of the Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Act, Petroleum Bulk Storage Code, and Rabies Prevention. Public health professionals prepare legal documents for prosecution of permitted facilities in environmental health programs such as food protection, water quality, realty subdivisions, bathing facilities and children's camps when violations that affect public health are not expeditiously corrected.

Locations

Westchester County Department of Health

145 Huguenot Street
New Rochelle, New York 10801
(914) 813-5000

Mount Kisco District Office

118 North Bedford Road
Mount Kisco, New York 10549
Environmental Quality - (914) 864-7333
Public Health Protection - (914) 864-7331

Yonkers District Office

20 South Broadway
Yonkers, New York 10701
(914) 231-2975

For Information or to Make a Complaint

The public may call the Department of Health at (914) 813-5000, with questions or complaints regarding sewage, septic waste, water supply and drinking water quality, refuse disposal, medical and hazardous waste, air quality, water pollution, food poisoning, restaurants, smoking in public places, realty subdivisions, individual sewage disposal systems and individual water supplies.

