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**SPANO ANNOUNCES SEPTIC MANAGEMENT PROGRAM TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY
Health department would license and train septic company workers to ensure proper work is done**

In his continued quest to protect Westchester's water, County Executive Andy Spano today announced that the county would begin training and licensing septic system contractors.

As of April 2002, all septic contractors will be required to take a special training course and obtain a license to perform work in the county. The new requirement was approved July 19 in a unanimous vote by the Westchester County Board of Health to amend the county's Sanitary Code.

"Nearly 67 percent of homes within the Croton watershed use septic systems to dispose of their wastewater," said Spano. "If their septic systems are not functioning properly, wastewater will flow into our streams and groundwater and pollute the water we drink whether it comes from a well or from our reservoirs. Faulty septic systems also put unwanted nutrients into our ponds and lakes, harming the fish and other wildlife that live there. We have a responsibility to the environment and to our homeowners to make sure the work is done right."

Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Westchester County Commissioner of Health, said, "This enhances our ability to protect the health of the public and the environment and to raise the quality of services available to the individual homeowner."

Lipsman said that contractors will have plenty of time to prepare for the changes since licenses will not be required until April 2002.

Spano said that the new licensing requirement was part of a larger Septic Management program that would not only help protect the environment, but protect homeowners from unqualified contractors. As part of the program, the county will also develop a database with information on septic locations and repairs so the county can better monitor septic systems' affect on water quality.

(more)

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The county will also launch a public information campaign, starting with the publication of two brochures -- one aimed at educating the homeowner and another aimed at informing contractors of the new licensing requirement.

After that time, contractors will have to apply to the Health Commissioner for a license. There is a fee of \$200 for the two-year license and another \$100 fee for the cost of the training course and exam. There is a \$25 fee for repeat exams.

Contractors who fail to comply are subject to suspension or revocation of their licenses and or fines of up to \$1,000 per violation after a hearing.

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