



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

Senator Fuschillo Announces New Law to Inform Public of Sewage Spills

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. August 10, 2012

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Sewage Pollution Right To Know Act Will Help Protect Public Health by Increasing Awareness of Water Conditions

Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick) announced that legislation he cosponsored to require greater public disclosure when sewage is discharged into the waterways has been signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo.

The 'Sewage Pollution Right to Know' law will require prompt public notification when untreated or partially treated sewage is discharged into the waterways. This will help protect New Yorkers by increasing awareness when discharges which may affect public health occur, enabling residents to make informed decisions about fishing, swimming and recreating in affected water ways.

“Long Island’s beaches and waterways are widely utilized by swimmers, boaters, and fisherman. They have every right to immediately know when sewage that could potentially affect their health is discharged into the waterways. I’m pleased Governor Cuomo has signed this law to ensure that residents who could be affected will get as much information as quickly as possible,” said Senator Fuschillo.

Currently, notification of a discharge is only provided to certain public officials and not the general public. Sewage treatment plants were required to inform the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the local health department only to instances where the discharge of untreated or partially treated sewage may affect shellfish harvesting, swimming or recreational areas. The new law will expand the notification requirements, ensuring that all New Yorkers know when untreated sewage that poses a threat to public health has been discharged in their communities, as well as giving DEC additional information, enabling the agency to focus compliance education and outreach efforts.

The new law also requires DEC to prepare an annual report of discharges of treated or untreated waste from each publicly owned sewage treatment plant and system. The report will contain the total number of discharges, the volume and duration of such discharges, and the remedial responses, if any, to such discharges.

The new law takes effect on May 1, 2013.