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Hunterdon County Department of Health

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Karen DeMarco, MPH
Health Officer/Director

To: Municipal Clerks / Local Boards of Health

From: Karen DeMarco, Health Officer/ Department Head
Hunterdon County Department of Health

RE: Clean Fill vs Dirty Dirt Alert

Date: January 22, 2020

What is Dirty Dirt?

The Hunterdon County Health Department is alerting municipalities and residents of a disturbing trend, where unacceptable and contaminated soil is sold or provided for free as “clean fill” and being dumped at construction, development and residential sites. Dumping contaminated soil could pose a threat to the public safety and health of residents and damage the environment. Contaminants leaching from illegally dumped dirt can pollute neighboring properties and drinking water supplies. Clean up of contaminated fill is potentially costly to the property-owner, as the responsible party for removing the potentially harmful soil.

“Fill” refers to material placed on land for the purposes of filling low areas, changing the contours of an area, stabilizing existing grades and/or raising the grade of an area. Unacceptable fill includes any materials containing debris (wood, metals, plastics, wire, wall board, roofing materials, insulation, carpets or padding, trash, etc.) mixed in with soils and non-decomposable material. Unacceptable fill may also include hazardous chemicals that exceed residential use standards.

Please be advised that the Hunterdon County Health Department and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is investigating multiple reports of non-compliant solid waste being transported and offered as clean fill in Hunterdon County. In some cases, fill was being offered free to residents online.

What Should I Do?

Report: Report suspicious soil or fill dumping to the Hunterdon County Health Department at 908-788-1351.

Stay Informed: In response to this trend, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has created the “Guard Your Yard” education campaign for municipalities www.guardyouryard.nj.gov. Municipalities are encouraged to visit the site to learn more about model ordinances that can be adopted to regulate the use of soil and fill in your municipality.

Please contact the Hunterdon County Health Department for additional information at 908-788-1351.

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