

UPDATE ON CERTIFICATION OF PROFESSIONALS

By Dr. James Murphy

On January 5, 2011 Governor Christie signed into law New Jersey Act, P.L. 2010, c. 112 (C.58:10A-64). The Act is intended to protect all New Jersey surface and ground waters from impairment by minimizing nitrogen and phosphorus pollution that may be derived from fertilizer. It addresses the **application, sale, and use of fertilizer for turf**. Both specialty fertilizers sold at retail for turf and professional fertilizer applicators making applications to turf are affected by this law. As defined in the law, "Turf means land, including residential property and publicly owned land, that is planted in closely mowed, managed grass, except golf courses or land used in the operation of a commercial farm". Please note that, while golf course turf is exempted from the fertilizer restrictions in this law, those individuals applying fertilizer to golf courses are considered professional fertilizer applicators and are required by law to participate in the certification program. Fertilizer applications to commercial farms are not affected by this law.

A "Professional Fertilizer Applicator" is defined in the law as any individual who applies fertilizer for hire, including any employee of a government entity who applies fertilizer within the scope of employment. The law requires that a certification program for professional fertilizer applicators be established by the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) in consultation with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Please note that this certification program for professional fertilizer applicators is not part of pesticide licensing administered by the DEP. Thus, the fertilizer certification program is separate from the pesticide licensing program and you will need to participate in both programs to legally apply both fertilizer and pesticide as a professional in NJ.



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To become certified, the law specifies that professionals must receive training in the five subject areas outlined below and pass an exam which addresses these subjects:

1. The proper use and calibration of fertilizer application equipment;
2. The hazards involved in, and the environmental impact of, applying fertilizer, including nutrient pollution to the State's waterbodies;
3. All applicable State and federal laws, rules and regulations;
4. The correct interpretation of fertilizer labeling information; and
5. The best management practices developed by the NJAES for nutrient management in turf.

An online program for **Professional Fertilizer Applicator Certification Training** is now available; type **ProFACT.rutgers.edu** in your web browser to register and begin online training. The website records and documents your progress in the online training. Once the training is complete, registered users will be qualified to take the online exam.

The exam is intended to certify that individuals possesses sufficient knowledge of the laws, rules and regulations, standards and requirements applicable to the use and application of fertilizer as required by law. The certification exam was available online at ProFACT.rutgers.edu on January 30, 2012. See the website for more background and instructions for the online training and exam as well as other program details.

The law allows two general classifications for professional fertilizer applicators: **certified** and **trained**. Individuals that make decisions on selection of fertilizer products and application rates and timings; calibrate and setup of application equipment; develop spill response protocol as well as make applications

should become a **Certified Fertilizer Applicator**. For a professional to become a **Trained Fertilizer Applicator**, the individual must also receive training on the laws, rules and regulations, standards and requirements applicable to the use and application of fertilizer by a **Trained Fertilizer Applicator**. Trained Applicators can only apply fertilizer under the direct supervision of a Certified Fertilizer Applicator. Trained fertilizer applicators will need to receive annual training and registration with the ProFACT program. The details for training Trained Fertilizer Applicators will be released shortly and made available through the ProFACT website.

The law also requires NJAES to maintain a list of all **Certified Fertilizer Applicators** and make the list available on its internet website (ProFACT.rutgers.edu). A list of Trained Fertilizer Applicators along with the Certified Fertilizer Applicator(s) that supervise them will also be maintained.

Visit **ProFACT.rutgers.edu** for more information on the certification program.

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