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Recycling officials threaten fines

By MARY T. PRENON

Local businesses have enjoyed a three-year grace period for complying with the 1992 recycling law. Now, Westchester County recycling director James Hogan III is cautioning employers that the long honeymoon is over.

"If there are companies out there not recycling, they're in violation. We're tired of giving out warnings; now we're ready to give out fines."

Hogan joined other county officials and environmental consultants Oct. 24 at a meeting of the Westchester County Business Recycling Committee to stress compliance and enforcement of the law. Business recycling organization chairman George Rolita said his office constantly receives calls from companies inquiring about ways to get out of recycling. "I think their attitude is, if I hide, I won't get caught," he said.

Hogan is working with some 30 Westchester businesses to bring them into compliance. While the county has only one code enforcement officer on staff, Hogan said his department is constantly making unannounced inspections of locations countywide. Fines can reach as high as

\$1,000 per violation. "To date, we haven't leveled any fines," said Hogan, "but that doesn't mean we won't start."

Barbara Fischer, an environmental consultant with Manhattan-based Great Forest, said starting an office recycling program can be time-consuming, but it will save money in the long run. Fisher suggested each company designate a program coordinator, then begin analyzing its trash. "Most companies find about 10 to 15 percent of their trash is white paper, while about 2 to 5 percent is newspaper."

Mandated recyclable items include high grade office paper, newspaper, corrugated cardboard, bulk materials, vehicular batteries and used motor oil. Restaurants or companies providing an employee cafeteria are required to recycle plastic, metal and glass. "Even if you're a small business, if you recycle just one ton of paper, you'll be saving 17 trees," Fischer said.

Lynda Crawford of the Council on the Environment of New York City said while saving trees is important, more companies are interested in savings dollars. Crawford has worked with both private and state institutions to help them reach recycling goals.

Crawford helped NYNEX reduce waste by 45 percent and save \$6,000 a year by switching to durable dishware in their employee cafeteria. "Other cost-effective waste reduction measures include replacing small condiment packages with larger containers, moving napkin dispensers to the tables, and encouraging employees to bring in their own coffee mugs," said Crawford.

Amy Wilmot, an account representative with New England Recycling of Stamford, Conn., said many potential customers she contacts are reluctant to recycle. "It's true, I want their business," admitted Wilmot, "but the bottom line is, it's the law."

Wilmot said in most cases there's no charge for picking up the recyclables. In return, companies could reap anywhere from \$80 to \$100 per ton for high grade of-

office paper, and \$15 to \$35 per ton for newspapers.

In the meantime, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority has provided Westchester County with a \$300,000 grant to conduct a study of recycling mixed broken glass. At present, "cullet" or mixed pieces of colored broken glass, are unacceptable for traditional recycling markets.

The 18-month study, conducted by Malcolm Pirnie Inc. of White Plains, is designed to determine the best use for the 7,000 tons of cullet generated each year in Westchester.

"While the emphasis today is on recycling, it's just as important to use resources and materials to the fullest extent before discarding them," said Marianne Gallagher, county environmental project coordinator.