



**County
Health Officials
of New York**
Leading the way to healthier communities

OPPOSES

AS WRITTEN

**A.3578
(Murray)**

AN ACT TO AMEND THE PUBLIC HEALTH LAW IN RELATION TO REQUIRING LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS TO NOTIFY VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANIES UPON DETECTING RADIATION

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) opposes, as written, the above-referenced legislation. While NYSACHO recognizes the underlying importance of the legislation's intent - to protect firefighters and allow them to respond appropriately in an event - the legislation does not reflect the current operational capabilities of many local health departments. While 36 local health departments (not including the City of New York) provide environmental health services, many do not have the staff expertise or capacity to conduct regular environmental radiation surveillance activities. Additionally, in 21 counties, environmental health services are provided by the New York State Department of Health. These are small, rural counties who are served by volunteer fire departments and the bill does not include provisions to place similar requirements on the New York State Department of Health. The bill is further vague on what constitutes trace levels of radiation and what level would trigger notice.

Because the legislation would mandate reporting based on activities that many local health departments do not provide, we oppose this bill in its current form. Environmental radiation surveillance statewide falls mainly under the purview of the New York State Department of Health's Bureau of Environmental Radiation Protection, who would be most likely to have access to the appropriate data needed to meet the mandate in this legislation. We recommend outreach to the New York State Department of Health for further clarification of both state and local health department roles and responsibilities regarding radiation surveillance to best craft a process that meets the bill's intent within current capabilities.

Volunteer fire departments serve many communities throughout New York State and are a critical part of the emergency response infrastructure, but this legislation as currently written could not be implemented to provide them with the protections it seeks. NYSACHO, therefore, must oppose this bill.

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