

PRESS RELEASE FROM
PRESIDING OFFICER WILLIAM LINDSAY

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Lindsay's Bill Banning Toxic Coal Tar Sealcoat Becomes Law

Sealant Contains Human Carcinogen, Poisons Homes, Wetlands

RIVERHEAD, NY, JULY 11, 2011 – Legislation sponsored by Presiding Officer William J. Lindsay that will ban the use of highly toxic coal tar-based sealcoat in the county has been signed into law. The sealcoat contains a known human carcinogen, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and is a major pollutant of wetlands and surface waters.

“Suffolk County is once again taking the lead in protecting the health and safety of our residents and of our environment,” said Presiding Officer Lindsay. “With effective alternatives readily available, there is no reason to allow the use of coal tar-based sealants, which have been proven to be dangerous to humans and a severe threat to marine life of virtually every variety. I hope this will encourage the Environmental Protection Agency to ban the use of coal tar-based sealcoats nation-wide.”

The ban won unanimous support from Long Island environmental groups including the Nature Conservancy, Group for the East End, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, the Long Island Pine Barrens Society and the Peconic Baykeeper. Groups that address cancer’s causes also strongly supported the legislation, which was co-sponsored by Sixth District County Legislator Sarah Anker.

“I am glad that the County Executive signed this legislation, which will remove a major and dangerous pollutant from our environment,” said Legislator Anker. “We have to do everything we can to stop loading potentially deadly poisons into our environment. Our health and the health of our children depend on it.”

According to the United States Geologic Survey, dust on sealcoated parking lots had more than 500 times the level of the carcinogen PAH than did dust on non-sealcoated parking lots. The dust in homes near sealcoated parking lots or driveways had levels of PAH more than 25 times higher than homes near non-sealcoated parking lots or driveways. That presents a danger particularly to small children who might be playing on the floor in their homes.

“We couldn’t continue to allow the use of this poisonous sealcoat in Suffolk County,” said PO Lindsay. “It is a major pollutant in our waters and in our homes, and is toxic to everything that lives in our waters and wetlands.”

The USGS report also showed coal tar-based sealcoat to be the major source of PAH pollution in 40 lakes studied, pointing out the dreadful effect on local waterways, many of which border roads, parking lots and driveways that are sealcoated. The only lake on Long Island that was tested, in Nassau County, showed the second highest level of PAH of all 40 lakes studied.

The City of Austin, Texas was the first community to ban the toxic sealcoat, back in 2006. Dane County, Wisconsin and Washington, D.C., have also banned its use. Washington State banned its use two months ago. Suffolk County is the second largest municipality in the country to ban the use of coal tar-based sealcoat.