

County submits comments opposing HFC regulations

Submitted by the Public Information Office

Niagara County Legislature Chairman Becky Wydysh and Legislator Rich Andres, Chairman of the Economic Development Committee, today submitted comments to state Office of Climate Change opposing amendments to Part 494 Hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) Standards and Reporting.

These new rules would go well beyond federal guidelines and have a negative impact on any business that relies on refrigeration, particularly in the grocery industry.

"I can't believe how oblivious the state is to consider an action that will undoubtedly raise the cost of groceries on every family in New York State," Andres said. "Every person who walks out of a grocery store is shocked and angered about the price of butter, milk and other basics, and the state seems determined to make it worse. Do they not understand when they impose higher costs in the grocery supply chain, those cost are ultimately paid for by consumers? And worse than that, these rules will force many small grocery and convenience stores

to go out of business, creating more food deserts across the state."

As currently written, the new regulations would impose unrealistic and costly prohibitions on the use of HFC refrigerants and would adversely impact the residents and businesses by imposing aggressive and near-term restrictions on equipment prior to its end of life. The proposed amendments would force grocers, schools, hotels, restaurants and retail establishments to replace or retrofit existing equipment, regardless of its age, performance, or remaining service

life, with alternative refrigerants that are not readily available, not proven to be safer or higher performing, and not compatible with current infrastructure.

"What is particularly maddening is that the federal government already has a timetable for phasing out certain HFCs that applies equally to everyone across the country and provides ample time for businesses to make the necessary changes," Wydysh said. "New York usurping federal guidelines will have no appreciable impact on climate change,

but this is really about those who want to virtue-signal on how green they are, regardless of its impact on regular citizens."

Both legislators said these rules will also impact residential HVAC and air conditioners in cars, as well.

"First it was going after your gas furnace, now its air conditioning in your home and car," Andres said. "The state seems determined to keep us all cold in the winter and hot in the summer. Is it any wonder the great exodus of residents out of New York continues?"

Local highway officials join Ortt to call for restored CHIPS funding

Submitted by the Public Information Office

Niagara County Commissioner of Public Works Garret Meal and Orleans County Commissioner of Public Works John Pappone joined New York State Sen. Rob Ortt and several town highway superintendents from both counties at a press conference to push back against Gov. Kathy Hochul's proposed budget cuts to the CHIPS program. The CHIPS program is an important source of funding for road maintenance and improvement projects.

"Local roads and bridges are essential to our communities, and

need regular maintenance and continued investments to guarantee a strong economy and better future for our residents," Ortt said. "This job is made more difficult by skyrocketing costs for materials and labor, in addition to proposed funding cuts by the governor. I am proud to stand alongside our local highway and public works officials calling for an increase in state funding to CHIPS and in support of critical investments in our infrastructure."

Meal said, "Gov. Hochul's executive recommends cutting CHIPS funding by \$60 million and state

touring route aid by \$40 million – a \$100 million drop in local road funding. At the same time, we have been hit with record-high inflation of nearly 60% on highway construction materials, which obviously sends the cost for projects through the roof. So, a combination of less funding and much higher costs means fewer projects getting done, which translates into further deterioration of our infrastructure."

Pappone said, "To put what we are talking about into perspective, local roads account for 87% of all roads in the state and carry

48% of all the vehicle miles traveled, yet less than 12% of taxes and fees paid to the state by these drivers go back to maintaining local road. It costs five times more to rebuild a bridge and 16 times more to replace pavements that have become deficient than maintenance treatments and repairs to (keep) our infrastructure in a state of good repair. This is not a time to be cutting, but a time to be increasing our investment in local roads and bridges."

According to NYSDOT's latest bridge inspection report over the past three years (2020-22), an ad-

ditional 1.25 million square-feet of local bridge decks have become deficient. Local bridge decks are declining at more than twice the rate of state bridge decks. This is the equivalent to nearly 20 lane miles of local bridge decks becoming deficient in just the past three years. Furthermore, a 2023 update of a study conducted for the NYS Association of Town Superintendents of Highways, shows an additional \$2.1 billion in annual spending is needed to address declining local road and bridge conditions, excluding New York City.

Governor announces extension of home heating assistance programs

Gov. Kathy Hochul announced the availability of additional home heating assistance to help low- and middle-income New Yorkers who are struggling to pay their energy bills, are in danger of running out of heating fuel or having their utility service shut off. The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) has extended the deadline for Regular and Emergency HEAP applications to April 12 and is now accepting applications for a second emergency benefit from eligible New Yorkers who have used up their regular and first emergency benefits.

"Energy prices remain high, putting a burden on struggling New Yorkers trying to pay their bills," Hochul said. "New Yorkers are applying for HEAP benefits, and by extending the program through April 12 and offering a second emergency benefit, we are continuing to provide critical relief to low- and middle-income households."

Hochul's team said, "HEAP, which is overseen by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, is federally funded and can help eligible New Yorkers heat and cool their homes. Normally, eligible households can receive one regular HEAP benefit each winter and could also be eligible for a single emergency HEAP benefit if they face an energy crisis. Those that have already received a regular and emergency benefit this winter will be able to

apply for an additional emergency benefit, if they are facing a utility shut off or are running out of heating fuel and cannot afford to replenish it.

"Eligible homeowners and renters may receive up to \$976 in heating assistance, depending on their income, household size, how they heat their home, and if the household contains a vulnerable member. A family of four may have a maximum gross monthly income of \$5,838, or an annual gross income of \$70,059, and still qualify for benefits."

More than 1.4 million Regular HEAP benefits totaling \$198 million have been issued this heating season since the program opened Nov. 1, with an additional 49,000 emergency HEAP benefits totaling \$30 million provided since Jan. 2.

Applications for assistance are accepted at local departments of social services and can be submitted online, through the mail or in

person. Additionally, older adults needing assistance with HEAP applications can contact their local office for the aging or contact the NY Connects helpline at 1-800-342-9871. The deadline for the regular, emergency, and second emergency benefit is April 12. Assistance is provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

Hochul's team stated, "Additionally, assistance through the 2023-24 heating equipment repair and replacement program remains available to help eligible homeowners repair or replace their furnace, boiler, and other direct heating equipment necessary to keep their home's primary heating source working. Benefit amounts through the HEAP heating equipment repair and replacement program are based on the actual cost incurred to repair or replace the essential heating equipment – up to \$4,000 for a repair and \$8,000 for a replacement. "Eligible homeowners can also

continue to apply for a HEAP 'Heating Equipment Clean and Tune' benefit to keep their home's primary heating source work-

ing at peak efficiency. Applicants for these benefits should contact their local department of social services for more information."

Top Notch Removal

We remove all unwanted junk and debris from houses, garages, sheds, yards, commercial buildings, storage units, warehouses.

We also tear-down and remove unwanted decks, sheds, garages, pools, hot-tubs, sidewalks, small trees/bushes.

No job is too big or too small

Call, Text, or Email for a FREE ESTIMATE
716-216-4602 - office • 716-374-5457 Lisa

Rated Number ONE
In Junk Removal



"Lori & Friends"



Guests: Steve Broderick and Rich Meranto "Hewitt Awards"

hosted by Lori Caso

LCTV Channel 1301
March 25th - April 7th

Mon 3am, 10am, 3pm - Wed 4am, 4pm, 10pm
Thur 3am, 10pm - Fri 10:30am
Sat 3:30am, 5:30pm - Sun 11:30am, 10pm



The Granite Shop
716-402-1046

A Milestone Video Production. Made possible by funds from...

NIAGARA FRONTIER PUBLICATIONS
TRIBUNE/SENTINEL
DISPATCH • PENNSYLVANIA
wnypapers.com

TOPS
Friendly Markets
906 CENTER ST., LEWISTON

Shine Studio
Ask for Toni
716-297-0181

HELP WANTED

Busy editorial department covering Erie and Niagara counties has an opening for an outside freelance writer. Position entails government reporting at town, village and/or school board meetings; other reporting assignments in our coverage areas and the preparation of news copy for our respective news products and website. Candidate must be dependable; have strong writing skills; and the ability to work and meet deadlines in a fast-paced environment.

Submit a cover letter, resume, and writing samples to
Josh@wnypapers.com

Niagara Frontier Publications
Grand Island, NY 14072

CMP COMMUNITY MEDICAL PHARMACY
716-282-1292

Local, Independently Owned & Operated Pharmacy Offering Fast & Friendly Service and FREE Local Delivery

Accepts All Major Insurances
• Workers Compensation
• No Fault
• Express Scripts
Walk-In Flu Shots/Shingles Vaccinations with prescription
Compounding Available
Patient Customized Pain Creams

918 Michigan Ave.
Niagara Falls
Mon. - Fri. 9-6 • Sat. 9-3

www.communitymedicalpharmacy.com

ATTENTION

Village of Lewiston Residents
Scan the QR code below or visit
wnypapers.com for your

2024 Newsletter

