

New Wisconsin Phosphorus law in effect today

Use of compound in fertilizer for home lawns to be restricted

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MANITOWOC - A new state law takes effect today, but Dale Lindner isn't going to play fertilizer cop.

His Ace Hardware store, 2950 Menasha Ave., will continue to sell turf fertilizer containing phosphorus.

The phosphorus ban, signed into law last year by Gov. Jim Doyle, prohibits the use and sale of fertilizers containing phosphorus, but includes several exceptions on both the selling and application of fertilizers.

"There are alternatives," said Lindner, with pallets in his store piled high with bags of "Ace Green Turf Phosphorus FREE Weed & Feed."

"We'll buy whatever complies with the new law," said Ace customer Tom Bare, who owns a home fronting Lake Michigan. "My wife, Virginia, and I are concerned with water quality."

That environmental concern was one of the considerations prompting legislative action.

"The application of commercial fertilizer containing phosphorus on parks, residential properties and other nonagricultural areas causes excess phosphorus runoff into local and state lakes, rivers and streams," said Jerry Halverson, director of the county's Soil & Water Conservation Department.

"A single pound of phosphorus in runoff can cause up to 500 pounds of algae growth,"

Halverson said. "The accelerated growth of weeds and algae causes smelly algae blooms, depriving fish of oxygen, and has a negative impact on many recreational uses."

Ace salesman Bill Tesarik explained that fertilizer bags have three numbers on them, in order,

Where else?

Minnesota passed a statewide law restricting phosphorus in lawn fertilizer in 2005. Florida's law in 2009 requires all local governments to adopt a model fertilizer use ordinance as a minimum standard.

Numerous local governments have phosphorus restrictions in place, including several counties and the city of Ann Arbor in Michigan.

New Jersey is requiring more than 100 municipalities to adopt local ordinances prohibiting use of fertilizers containing phosphorus.

Annapolis, MD is the first municipality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to adopt an ordinance banning the use of fertilizer that contains phosphorus.

All the phosphorous use ordinances contain exceptions for newly established lawns, since phosphorous is important for root growth.

For more info on phosphorus fertilizer restrictions, visit:

www.epa.gov/newsnotes/pdf/88issue.pdf p. 10, *Ordinance Improves Huron River Quality-Restrictions Spread Nationwide*.

More info on lawn care at

<http://safelawns.org/>

Phosphate Detergents

Most detergents have not contained phosphorous since 1989, but dishwasher detergents were exempted from the requirement. PA has amended its law to close that gap and dishwasher detergents will not contain phosphorous starting this summer.

representing percentages of nitrogen, phosphorus and potash. If the middle number is 0, the fertilizer is phosphorus-free.

Nitrogen is for green growth, potash is similar to a vitamin for plants and phosphorus stimulates root development and winter hardiness.

One of the exemptions, Lindner said, is for products designed to help establish new grass, which can contain phosphorus.

According to the legislation, phosphorus also can be applied to an area deficient in the chemical based on a soil test performed no more than 36 months before the application. Lindner isn't going to ask customers to show their soil analysis reports.

Fertilizers with phosphorus also may be applied to farm pastures, land used to grow grass for sod and any other land used for agricultural production, including home gardens.

The ban imposes fines ranging from \$50 for a first offense to as much as \$500 for subsequent offenses, including applying fertilizer to frozen ground and unintentionally spreading fertilizer on sidewalks and driveways.

"If you get fertilizer granules on the driveway or sidewalk, sweep or hose them into the grass or sweep them up and put the granules back into the bag or in the trash," said Charlene Khaze, fertilizer program manager for the state Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection.

Lindner noted a phosphorus ban has been in effect in Minnesota and Dane County. He expressed concerns with changing ban deadlines and a short timeframe between final legislative adoption and the ban going into effect.

He said fertilizer manufacturers were uncertain as to which formulations would be allowed, affecting possible inventory available to consumers.