



## Board of Chosen Freeholders

County of Hunterdon  
71 Main Street, Building #1  
PO Box 2900  
Flemington, NJ 08822-2900

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: January 4, 2019

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## Freeholders Establish County Public Health Services At The Department Level

At the December 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Hunterdon County Freeholder Board re-elevated the Division of Health Services to the Department level. This action is in recognition of the expanding requirements and demands for public health services throughout the County. The Freeholder Board appointed long-time Health Officer, Karen DeMarco as the Department Director.

Freeholder Board Director Matt Holt stated, “The demands on health services in the County continue to evolve. In 2018 alone, the unit has dealt with major health matters, with the discovery of the East Asian tick and an outbreak of E. Coli linked to romaine lettuce, as just two examples. In both instances, work from the Hunterdon County Health Division received national recognition and made a significant public health impact, while protecting resident health locally.”

Organizationally, the Division of Health services was within the Department of Public Safety and Health Services. However, the greater emphasis on health, food safety, and environmental regulations now warrants Health Services to be elevated to a standalone Department.

“The elevation of the Health Division to a Department represents the strategic commitment to ensure Public Health and Safety needs are addressed on a daily basis, as well as the various emergent responses that regularly occur. Health staff work to prevent and respond to routine and large-scale events that pose a threat to Public Health,” County Chief of Staff George Wagner stated to the Freeholders during his recommendation that the unit be divided off from the Public Safety Department, for which he serves as Director.

Under the revised table of organization, six divisions are overseen by the Health Department Director: Public Health Preparedness, Environmental Health, Public Health Nursing, Solid Waste, Vector, and Weights and Measures.



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Health Department Director, Karen DeMarco has seventeen years of experience in the public health field, is an Epidemiologist and licensed Health Officer, and holds a Master's Degree in Public Health from Rutgers University. Ms. DeMarco has been Hunterdon County's state mandated Health Officer, as a contract employee, for six years.

The resolution creating the Health Department, approved by the Freeholders states, 'There is a strong correlation between maintaining a high quality of life and a having a sound public health policy.'