

Recommendation for Handling IDA & NREC Assessments

These changes in the Fertilizer Act were supported by the agricultural industry to address the critical need to support fertilizer regulatory programs and invest in nutrient research and education programs. As a fertilizer distributor you may get questions about the advent of these new assessments. Here is a simple explanation:

Regulatory pressures on the Illinois nutrient industry are serious. USEPA considers Illinois agriculture a major contributor of nutrients resulting in Gulf Hypoxia as well as unacceptable levels of N and P in some Illinois streams, rivers and lakes. Critical research and educational needs exist for agriculture to avoid onerous regulation on nutrient application by proving that growers and the fertilizer industry are capable of managing nutrients to reduce nutrient losses to the environment. The added benefit is that we keep these nutrients for the crop, thus enhancing yields and profitability for growers.

Illinois is in a severe budget crisis and there is little support for taxpayer funded research related to agricultural nutrient use. If we are to protect our ability to manage our nutrients through personal responsibility and best available science, we must invest ourselves in research and on-farm implementation of sound nutrient practices. To do nothing assures that regulations are coming including restrictions on our ability to freely choose the nutrient source, rate, time and method of application that is best for each individual farm.

The NREC is a public-private partnership with IDA. As such, the assessments from the 75¢ per ton remitted to the NREC are not subject to fund sweeps, as they are held outside of state government. The NREC has a council made up of 9 voting members, all from the ag industry, which will oversee the funding of critical nutrient research and is responsible for disseminating this information to growers and the general public for the benefit of agriculture and the environment.

The statute does not require the 25¢ IDA fee or the 75¢ NREC fee to be delineated on the fertilizer invoice. The statute requires only that fertilizer distributors remit these amounts to IDA and the NREC as a condition of their license to distribute fertilizer in Illinois. You may include this amount in the price of the product. Otherwise, if you choose to add a description of these assessments to the invoice, we recommend the following explanation on the invoice to clarify to the purchaser the purposes of these assessments:

25¢: Illinois Department of Agriculture fertilizer quality, safety and inspection fee

75¢: Nutrient Research & Education Council assessment.

If you choose to list the amounts on the invoice, you should be prepared to explain their purpose and this handout should help. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the fertilizer distributor to collect and remit 25¢ to IDA and 75¢ to NREC.