

COVID-19 Crisis: New Jersey Relaxes Open Public Records Act Rules

In light of A3849, which extends the time a public body has to respond to a request for records, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is advising persons seeking documents that it is not able to process requests at this time. The Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requires government entities, at all levels, to respond to requests for public information within seven days. However, the coronavirus pandemic makes that timeline impossible. With most employees working remotely, local officials are also not responding to OPRA requests as they likely do not have access to the records necessary to comply with the statute. The inability to process requests and access information will likely continue until Governor Murphy lifts his order that all non-essential workers stay home and then there will be a massive backlog.