

Lecture Hall

Session Abstracts

National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)
72nd Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition

General Environmental Health

Wednesday, June 25

8:00 – 8:50am

Bridging the Gap—Agency, Industry, and the Public

Jeff Lang, MS, Environmental Health Supervisor, Lane County Oregon Environmental Health, OR

This message is about our responsibility as public agency representatives to serve the industry that serves the public. Yes, we have the public's interest in at heart and yes regulations are in place to protect the public yet, at the same time, who pays the bill and what is our relationship to the industry. More importantly, what, ultimately is the most effective way to provide service to both the public and the industry that is sustainable and offers benefits to all. Private Industry vs. Government Agency? Private industry is self sufficient, self reliant and must survive by making money. Government agencies exist at the expense of businesses and/or tax payers. Who pays the bill? Business pays the bill for itself and for Environmental Health. Who ultimately benefits? Through safe practices enforced by agencies and put in place by businesses the public ultimately benefits. How do we serve the industry? Through our expertise on regulations and rational we work with the industry to find solutions to their concerns. We need to be the "go to" person for advice and consultation. We need to share in the responsibility to enhance business and make our clients prosperous. How about some personal stories? Christmas catering at the hospital, the Faerieworlds Festival, or maybe the media game. Education is the key to meeting the media's needs. Inform the media of the uncertainty of food illness sources in places of service. Protecting the industry we serve - It is important to protect business reputations from scandal, innuendo and half truths. It is important for businesses to know the consequences of their actions or lack of action. Establishing longevity - All businesses have a culture. Large business have a complex culture while smaller businesses have a personal culture. By leading the EH team on field trips to restaurant equipment suppliers, city building inspector staff meeting, food wholesalers, etc we can reach the goal of creating consistency in our work and enhance the use of common sense in the service we provide.

9:30 – 10:20am

Enlightening State Policy Makers as to Environmental Health

Doug Farquhar, JD, Program Director for Environmental Health, National Conference of State Legislatures, CO

Public health, and especially environmental public health (EPH), has no direct contact with state policy makers, unless (or until) a crisis occurs, requiring state resources and reaction, or when a program is created, requiring legislative authorization. EPH programs are designed to avoid crises, and give the public a level of protection from environmental harms. By its structure and mission, EPH is designed to avoid any contact or relationships with state policy makers.

This poses an inherent problem for EPH, creating a disjoint and the potential for miscommunication between the state agencies responsible for operating EPH programs and the policy makers elected to authorize and fund such programs.

11:00 – 11:50am

Use of “Local Government Environmental Quality Advisory Boards”

James D. Harless, MS, Environmental Program Manager, Tennessee Dept. of Environment and Conservation, TN

In my career I have worked for a City Public Health Dept. in which I was assigned to be the City representative to the City established local government "Environmental Quality Advisory Board". I did that work for about a decade. Later, with work at The University of Tennessee, I did start to publish a few articles about use of local government Env. Advisory Boards. I have now published several papers on the topic, and would give a verbal summary of the approach, some examples, and why it is value added to local public health operations or state department of environment programs., as well as to citizens within the community impacted or involved. I have some TN examples and some pride about the work and accomplishment in some other USA regions.

1:30 – 2:20pm

News Media: A Partner in Environmental Health

Stephen R. Tackitt, RS, MPH, DAAS, Health Officer, Barry-Eaton District Health Dept., MI

Do you feel uncomfortable being interviewed by the news media? Can you understand a news event from the perspective of a reporter? What pressures are reporters under to get the scoop? How can you persuade the media to report your story? This presentation will give the attendee tips on utilizing the news media as a partner in getting your message out to the public. It will explore the mindset of the industry so one can have a more positive outcome in interacting with the media. The presentation will also note the different types of media (print, audio, and video).

Preparing an interview is a must. The attendee will be able to create an interview package that will get their message across and relieve some of the tension associated with having a microphone, lights, and a television camera in one's face.

Finally, the presentation will address press releases—when and how to use them to the benefit of both your agency and the public.

3:00 – 3:50pm

Leading a Community Towards Healthy Housing

Magaly Angeloni, MBA, Manager, Rhode Island Dept. of Health, RI

Science has corroborated that the quality of housing has an impact on health outcomes of its occupants. We, as environmental health professionals, aim to remediate or eliminate certain health hazards that exist in housing, such as lead, asbestos, radon, pests, etc., to improve the health of populations. Our ultimate goal is to promote housing that is healthy, which means housing that is dry, clean, pest-free, ventilated, safe, without contaminants, and that is maintained.

In Rhode Island, the healthy housing movement started from discussions of a small group, conducting an assessment of the state resources, reuniting health and housing policy through an innovative partnership and finding the right approach to convince key stakeholders to make healthy housing a priority.

The process to achieve this structure was confusing at times and it was influenced by internal and external factors, all of which contributed in one way or another to the end result. Three years later, the state has a structure, which includes a Steering Committee, a statewide vision, dozens of committed partners and an action plan that is being implemented.

4:00 – 4:50pm

Stepping Stones to a Healthy Home—Developing an Effective Resource Manual

Hector S. Dela Cruz, MS, REHS, Chief Environmental Health Specialist, Los Angeles County Environmental Health, CA

Los Angeles County (LAC) Environmental Health (EH) manages a risk-based housing inspection program of multiple family dwellings (MFD's). Based upon inspection/compliance history, each MFD is assigned a Risk Assessment (RA) category ranging from RA 1 (high risk) to RA III (low risk).

Analyses of several RA 1 and RA II MFD's revealed that such buildings were more likely located in low-income neighborhoods where English may not be the primary language. Moreover, educational levels and literacy rates among residents in these areas were found to be below countywide averages. As a result, the presence of factors negatively affecting living conditions combined with the challenges presented by language, literacy, and learning barriers compounded efforts to effectively communicate the dangers of unhealthy living conditions and methods for their remediation.

LAC Environmental Health (EH) developed the Stepping Stones to a Healthy Home booklet to compliment the enforcements efforts of its Health Homes Inspection Program pilot initiative. The booklet was designed to be an additional tool for inspectors to use during inspections as well as an effective "stand alone" document for tenants to reference in the absence of an inspector. Developing the booklet consisted of three distinct phases:

1. Analysis of the target population's demographic profile. Residents of high and moderate risk rental housing (characterized by repeated health and safety code violations) were identified as the target population.
2. Creation a booklet tailored to meet the target population's demographic profile and that addressed EH related issues commonly affecting the home environment in LAC.
3. Focus group testing of the booklet in English and Spanish.

This approach to developing an effective and measured reference booklet incorporated readability assessment tools for both English and Spanish languages that helped to tailor its readability in matching the target population's educational level. Focus group testing validated the booklet's strengths and identified areas where revisions were required. Moreover, focus group testing also aided in determining the efficacy of the booklet as an inspection tool and a stand-alone reference document.