

Managing Editor's Desk

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The Economy, NEHA, and a Money-Making Opportunity for You!

I'm writing this column in early December. The government's November Employment Report was released two days ago. The November loss of 533,000 jobs constitutes the largest monthly drop in jobs since 1974. The unemployment rate is now 6.7%, and some economists are predicting double-digit unemployment by sometime next year. The underemployment rate was computed at 12.5%, which is the highest it has been since 1994, when the government began tracking this number.

From all indications by the time you read this column these numbers are likely to be worse.

In the meantime, I'm reading that the cumulative gap between state revenues and expenses for FY 2009–2010 totals more than \$140 billion! As if this weren't bad enough, states experience the greatest impact on their budgets after a recession ends because Medicaid growth takes place late in a recession and employment growth (that produces tax revenue) lags behind economic recovery (source: National Governor's Association).

Within environmental health, we are seeing cutbacks, job and compensation freezes, furloughs, and in some instances, the elimination of programs and even whole health departments.

Both my December column and this month's column deal with financial issues. With this kind of news swirling around us, is any other issue at the moment worth talking about? It is even more discouraging that this news seems uniformly bad. Moreover, the news is punctuated with unrelenting reminders that things will only get worse before they get better.

I don't have to tell you that this is all scary stuff. Are you thinking, "What is an EH pro-

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fessional to do?" I'm glad you asked! NEHA can actually help many of you. The story of how we can help is what drove me to write this particular column.

Before I begin, however, permit me to offer some kudos for our association.

As you no doubt already know, NEHA's dues are among the very lowest of national professional societies. We simply don't want NEHA to be economically inaccessible to any member of our profession. *While other organizations and businesses are raising their fees to generate much-needed revenue, NEHA is keeping its membership dues constant.*

In addition, because NEHA is first and foremost an educational resource for the entire profession, we made the policy decision some months back to provide our entire collection of e-Learning at no cost. *I know of no other national association that does that.* Every NEHA member has automatically been enrolled in this program. Through e-Learning, you are able to keep up on the field without having to spend a dime for travel-related costs. Even your continuing education credits are automatically recorded for you (at no cost) if you have a credential from us.

The cost of this program to NEHA for this year alone was \$48,000. We are trying to cover this cost in other ways (primarily through the sale of e-Learning sponsorships).

Now to the main topic of this column and my reason for writing it.

We understand that we have a number of EH professionals out there who are holding onto their jobs by a string or who are even in danger of losing their jobs altogether. NEHA can help — especially if you happen to have food safety expertise.

For our program in food safety training, we continue to welcome new trainers. We provide all the resource material that a new trainer would need to get started. Therefore, even if you have never been a trainer before, no worries! We can help you get started. More importantly, this opportunity enables you to develop a nice income, even as you are practicing environmental health and contributing to the food safety of your communities.

As many NEHA members know, NEHA made the decision about six years ago to get into the food safety training business. Our current cadre of trainers is training food safety workers from around the country to become certified food safety managers. Our training is accomplished through either hard copy book material or online learning courses.

We are also on the verge of working out an arrangement with an ANSI/CFP-accredited exam provider to add the NEHA brand to their exam. In other words, this full set of materials (book training, online course, and accredited exam) is fast becoming a full service package. It couldn't be any easier or more comprehensive. (I should add that our training material would properly prepare the

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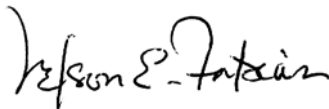
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candidate for any of the three nationally accredited food safety manager exams.)

Even if you have never done any training in the past, I still encourage you to consider this opportunity. Our program is designed to help existing trainers as well as brand-new trainers. We furnish you with a book on how to be a trainer as well as information on how to start your own food safety training business. Again, this program is a great way to bolster your income, protect you against the troublesome economic realities of our day, and still contribute to the realization of important environmental health goals.

Information on the program can be obtained through our Web site at www.neha.org or by contacting our staff in this program, Christine Hollenbeck at chollenbeck@neha.org or Sandra Perryman at sperryman@neha.org.

We have some other ideas that may also pan out that could open up even more ways for NEHA members to earn additional income. If we can make these additional opportunities available to you, we certainly will. Given our low membership dues, our comprehensive and free program of e-Learning, and now this, we are doing everything we can to be of support and service to you during these difficult times. We truly want your NEHA membership to be of great value for you. 🐼



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NEHA members get
free continuing
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