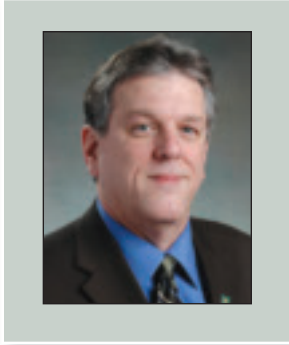


► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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Columbus Beckons!

As I begin my eighth president's message, I thought it prudent to give a shout-out for the host city of our 75th Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition. Having the AEC in Columbus is an especially proud moment for me, as this city is my adoptive hometown. It is the 75th AEC of our esteemed professional organization—the diamond jubilee of NEHA—and it promises to exceed expectations. As you may recall, I moved my family from Michigan to the Columbus area about eight years ago to accept the environmental health director's position at Columbus Public Health and I do not regret the career move. Although I miss Michigan and its great north woods and trout streams, my family and I have made a new life in the vibrant metropolis of Greater Columbus.

It's a city where almost anything can be found, from the arts to sports venues to just about any activity you could imagine. Columbus offers unbelievable shopping, with two world class malls: the Easton Town Center and the Polaris Fashion Place. Also, Limited Brands is headquartered here. The city has a diverse economy based on education (The Ohio State University, with the nation's largest campus, is here), government (Columbus is Ohio's capital city), insurance, and banking (Nationwide insurance and Huntington National Bank are both headquartered here). We have fashion, defense, aviation, and food. Several restaurant chains have their headquarters here and are major employers: Wendy's, White Castle, Max & Erma's, and Bob Evans Restaurants, to name a few. Columbus also is a

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worth the trip.*

leader in medical research, health care, hospitality, retail, and technology.

Modern Columbus has emerged as a technologically sophisticated city. It is home to the world's largest private research and development foundation, the Battelle Memorial Institute; Chemical Abstracts Service, the world's largest clearinghouse of chemical information; and NetJets, the world's largest fractional ownership jet aircraft fleet. In 2009, *Business Week* named the city as the best place in the country to raise a family. *Forbes Magazine* in 2008 ranked the city as the number one up-and-coming tech city in the nation. Next February, Columbus will celebrate its bicentennial. Columbus is also known for its wide spectrum of diversity. And summer, when NEHA will be in town, brings spectacular events featuring food, music, and fun. During the AEC, the Worthington Art Festival will also be taking place in that close-by suburb. And then there are the Buckeyes! Ohio State University athletics are a huge part of the cultural fabric in this town. So yeah, I like living here. It's fun. Best of all, even though Columbus is the nation's 15th largest city and biggest in Ohio (most folks don't know that) it has

that down-home Midwestern flavor and the people are friendly. You'll see.

Our 75th AEC promises to be well worth the trip and investment. As with recent AECs, we will be dividing the training and educational offerings into two distinct learning environments: the Learning Labs and the traditional Lectures. These will appeal to all of our many generational levels. Based upon feedback from the last two years, NEHA has enhanced the Learning Labs to make them even more interactive and the ratio of Learning Labs to Lectures has increased by about 10%.

NEHA continues to "green" our premier event, as we should. Attendees will again be able to purchase carbon credits to offset their travel. NEHA staff will work closely with the Columbus Hyatt Regency staff to provide "green" alternatives in both the food service and lodging commodities, as in previous years. For the first time ever, online registration has been made available for speakers and vendors to further decrease the amount of paper being used. Our membership is encouraged to register online if at all possible for the same reason.

We will again offer the Virtual AEC, both concurrent with the live event and after. Not only is the Virtual AEC a benefit to those who cannot attend in person, it is especially useful in enhancing the experience of the live attendees. Attendees and virtual attendees will be able to establish social networks with one another and will be able to electronically schedule their AEC activities and sessions. The thing I really like about the Virtual AEC is that it allows live attendees the ability to



Downtown Columbus

“time shift” their learning experience by viewing a particular educational session at a later time, which allows them to attend their “first choice” live. It’s like being in two places at the same time!

NEHA’s commitment to return on investment (ROI) principles continues and evolves as the Denver office analyzes feedback data from last year’s AEC. ROI allows employers, who in many cases are footing the bill to send their employees to the AEC, to understand that the benefits of sending their staff will be more than the expense.

The training and educational content will more than meet the expectations of attendees. We will be addressing several hot contemporary issues such as bed bugs, sustainability, nanotechnology, environmental health leadership, climate change, and the latest in the aftermath of the passage of the food safety legislation. Traditional topics including all-hazards preparedness, drinking water, recreational water, onsite wastewater, and emerging pathogens will, as usual, be offered in numerous sessions. As I indicated in last month’s column, NEHA’s AEC planning staff, your board of directors, and technical section chairs will endeavor to bring in speakers who can address the “New Normal” we’re living in now in the wake of the Great Recession and how best to go forward in government, academia, and the private sectors of our profession. It’s important in our era of recession recovery that we take charge of our own destiny and bring inspiring presentations on this very issue. NEHA is also planning a pre-conference workshop on priority-based budgeting, which will be of great interest to those of us who plan and implement environ-

mental health budgets. The UL social event, moved to the AEC’s first evening on Friday, is still being planned at the time of this writing and several options are being discussed with our friends at UL.

In addition, the AEC will have several unique offerings, including a play that depicts what the future environmental health professional will look like. The production will test our imaginations and get us thinking about the future of our profession. It’s not common for environmental health practitioners to talk about the impact of budgets, disruptive technology, and even changing priorities. Future depictions of environmental health are often nothing more than extrapolations from the present. Rest assured that NEHA will change that at this AEC! I told our executive director, Nelson Fabian, that I thought the lead character in the play should be named RoboSan!

Speaking of the future of environmental health, you may recall that in an earlier column I wrote about the importance of embracing and supporting our future, i.e., our environmental health undergraduates. In particular, I asked that we really make a special effort to get as many undergraduate students as possible to the Columbus AEC. To that end, a special fund has been set up so at the time of online registration conference attendees can donate a monetary gift in an amount of their choosing to help defray the costs of the AEC for our future environmental health practitioners. Members can also mail in their contribution separately to the Denver office if that’s more convenient. An application process has been developed so students seeking financial support can apply for AEC scholarships to help them travel to

Columbus and attend the AEC. I have personally donated to this fund and ask you to follow suit and give what you can. I promise it will make you feel good and perhaps change the course in the career of a future environmental health practitioner who may not have otherwise been able to attend. I’m also very happy to report that our colleagues in the American Academy of Sanitarians have committed to a mentoring initiative at the AEC and will provide some one-on-one face time with student attendees, helping to break them in as AEC regulars. They will be available to help our students navigate the event and introduce them to colleagues so they can be better exposed to the networking opportunities our AEC provides.

Ah, the networking! It has been the one thing at our AEC that I value most—even more than the sessions and exhibit hall. It is an opportunity to gather in a new city with my professional peers, see old friends, and make new ones. The sharing of experiences, or tales from the front, adds in immeasurable ways to the total makeup of a consummate professional. We draw upon those shared experiences and seek out those contacts for advice as we encounter situations throughout the year. I hope you can join me in C-bus in June for the truly national event that showcases our profession, provides fantastic training and educational opportunities, and as I have found, reinvigorates my passion for my profession every year. 🐼

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