

▶ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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Amicus Humani Generis and a Year Too Fast

Even though it is April when I write this, I find it difficult to believe that this is my last president's column and that relatively soon my tenure as NEHA president will be over. The time seems to have gone by much too quickly. There are a few areas that I want to address in this final column, so please forgive me for being somewhat disjointed and not having a common theme.

During the past year, I have had the opportunity to serve you and our profession in a way that has been fulfilling, exciting, and humbling. As a long-time member of NEHA and as its president, I have many aspirations for our professional association, but primarily I want to see us continue to grow as a viable and strong organization, represent the environmental health profession admirably, and continue to benefit our members. This past year—despite the economic difficulties faced throughout the country, by many of our members, and even our organization—I think we achieved what we aspired to do, strengthened our foundation, and remain well rooted to continue to grow and continue to serve NEHA members in a way that will benefit the profession and the public health of our nation.

The U.S. military sometimes uses the term "OPTEMPO," which stands for operational tempo, to describe how busy they are and to reflect the number and frequency of operations and activities that they address over a period of time. During my experience as NEHA president, I became very aware of NEHA's OPTEMPO and I characterize it as being quite high. I want to report to you that

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NEHA continues to work vigorously on your behalf as a member of the organization and for the profession in general. I have seen this firsthand, have participated in it, and have led the effort. In a recent past column (*JEH* 72[7]), I described some of the activities that NEHA participates in on a national basis. NEHA also is very busy with its mission "to advance the environmental health profession for the purpose of providing a healthy environment for all," and a variety of associated actions dealing with education, credentials, communication, and a host of other related activities. Even though I was separated geographically from NEHA's office in Colorado, e-mail and the telephone kept me in constant contact with our executive director and NEHA staff and the various situations requiring my decisions and direction. I also am very

happy to report that most of the actions that I encountered over the past year were positive and helpful for our organization and ultimately the members. NEHA continues to be recognized on a national level as an organization that has an important voice in the environmental and public health issues of this nation. This recognition continues to build as we keep on demonstrating our competence and dedication to improving the health of those we serve.

There are many that I need to thank for helping make NEHA the success that it is and for supporting me throughout the year. I would like to again thank all of the NEHA staff in the Denver office for keeping on top of the daily activities that go along with running an organization and bringing important matters to my attention in a timely matter. I also thank our talented, thoughtful, and caring board of directors for setting directions and policies that help keep us running smoothly. Thanks to the many others who volunteer their services to help NEHA's educational and other professional goals and keep us plugged into the latest technologies and policies that affect our profession. This includes the technical editorial advisory board and all the peer reviewers who help maintain the quality of the technical information printed in this journal, and the technical section chairs and vice chairs who are very important to the content of the educational sessions of our annual conference. There are many others that I thank who volunteer to represent NEHA on a variety of special technical and policy committees in areas such as drinking water, food safety, swimming

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pools, and others. There also are those who work behind the scenes with no special title or documented commitment, but they are always there helping NEHA identify and find resources to help its mission. Our members are the ultimate key to our success because without them to serve there may not be a NEHA. The success of our organization truly is a team effort, which I think is one of the environmental health profession's foundational characteristics, and I have been blessed this past year to lead our team.

Visit With the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

I wrote this column while in London, England, on an annual liaison visit with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) (see www.cieh.org), an organization similar to ours with which we share interests and sometimes even projects. In fact, as a dedication to the CIEH and the inspiring visit that I had with them, I used their motto *Amicus Humani Generis* ("Friend of the Human Race") in the title of this column, which addresses the role of environmental health professionals, "who are concerned about people's health, safety, and well-being—the things that are crucial to life itself."

There are many similarities between NEHA and CIEH in terms of providing professional development opportunities and other services for members and helping to enhance the profession. One notable difference is that CIEH establishes, certifies, and monitors the educational requirements of environmental health academic programs in colleges and universities in the United Kingdom. In the United States that is done by the National Environmental Health Science & Protection Accreditation Council (EHAC), which is an organization that is separate from NEHA, but we do communicate with them and many on its governing board are NEHA members. I mention this specifically because of my interest and desire to keep NEHA closely associated with the academic community.

I had the opportunity to meet with several CIEH officials and learn about the organization's mission and functions. I greatly appreciate the hospitality and arrangements provided and coordinated by Graham Jukes, CIEH's chief executive, who gave me an over-

view of the organization's mission and functions and a tour of the CIEH offices. He also arranged for me to meet with several CIEH officials over dinner where we were able to discuss various aspects of environmental health in both of our countries. I would like to thank Alan Higgins, chairman of the CIEH Council; Geoff Ward, chairman of CIEH's business company Chadwick House Group Limited; and Tim Deveaux, chairman of the CIEH Resources Committee. They all were very cordial, quite knowledgeable about environmental health, and just fun to be with. Graham also arranged for me to meet some CIEH members at their places of employment where I was able to learn about some specific examples of applied environmental health in England. I had some unique experiences, including interaction with London Port Health Authority Environmental Health Officers Christine Connolly, Peter Skelton, and Scott McElwaine, who took me up and down the Thames River on their launch (boat) while explaining the work that they did with the vessels and associated facilities along the river. Their work is similar to that of our Public Health Service Environmental Health Officers with the CDC Vessel Sanitation Program and the U.S. Coast Guard. I also visited the Tilbury Container Services Border Inspection Post Examination Facility where I met another London Port Health Authority Environmental Health Officer John Ambrose, who showed me how various foods are received at the port and evaluated for quality and sanitation by their staff before release for public consumption. Finally, I met Steve Miller, a CIEH trustee and the head of public protection for the London Borough of Newham Council. Steve is an environmental health officer who has a position with responsibilities that go beyond what traditionally is considered to be environmental health. He is involved intimately in the public safety (including, but not limited to, environmental health) planning for the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. He arranged for me to tour the site where the Olympic Stadium and other associated facilities are being built. Steve explained the environmental, safety, and health considerations associated with the planning, site preparation, building, and post-Olympic use of the area. This is an experience that few environmental health professionals will encounter,

so I invited Steve to share his experiences in a future article in our journal.

Overall, my experiences with our colleagues in England and the CIEH remind me that environmental health in the United States is not unique and isolated. It is a discipline that is practiced worldwide with similar principles, and we all seek to protect public health.

A Historical Note

This paragraph has nothing to do with environmental health or the state of NEHA, but I thought I would add it a matter of historical perspective. I wrote this column in April 2010 during the time when a volcano in Iceland was erupting. Volcanic ash from the eruption prevented airplanes from London and other parts of Europe from flying. This disruption apparently has not happened before; it affected air travel throughout the world because of the affected European airspace. My wife and I, therefore, were stranded in London during this time until the airways were determined to be safe for travel. This note documents that NEHA has a historical stake in this incidence because it affected the business travel of its president during the liaison visit with the CIEH.

Our Direction Is To...

Again, I thank you all for allowing me to serve and represent you. I challenge all to volunteer your time and get more involved with NEHA by working with one of its technical committees, the journal, any of its activities, or even running for one of the regional or national leadership positions. I guarantee that you will find it both challenging and rewarding. Even though my presidency comes to an end, I will continue to serve NEHA for another year on the board of directors as the immediate past president, but even beyond that I plan to continue to serve NEHA and our profession. I hope that NEHA and all my colleagues will keep challenging what the future has to bring for environmental health and environmental health professionals. Our success as a profession and our impact on public health is best achieved when we all pursue a common direction, and our direction is to **LEAN FORWARD!** 🚗

