

President's Message

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R.E.H.S.



What's in it for Me?

Why should I pay \$95 to join NEHA? What's in it for me? There are a lot of answers to that question.

First, if you're making \$15/hour, which is \$31,200 a year, the dues are only 5¢ of your \$15, or 0.3% of your pay, or 40¢ per workday. It's impossible even to buy a cup of coffee for that! There is virtually *no* other professional association with dues as low as ours!

OK, what do I get for my 40¢ a day?

The simple answer is to tell you to look at page 53 in this *Journal of Environmental Health*. Note that your \$95 dues save you at least \$100 on the Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition registration.

But I don't really believe that any of these are the answer to "What's in it for me?" I think there are other, more important, answers to that question.

I think that the most important answer is that "It's the professional thing to do." What do I mean by that? As a true professional, you should support your professional organization, and NEHA is the *only* national organization that represents the profession of environmental health. Not only does that make you appear to be more professional to others, but it strengthens the position of NEHA in representing the profession. One of Past President Rob Blake's main concerns is that environmental health is "the Invisible Profession." NEHA is working to make the profession of environmental health more visible, but having a greater number of members makes it easier to get that point across.

Your dues make up only 11.4% of NEHA's 2008–2009 budget. In other words, NEHA generates \$8.76 in additional income for every dollar you provide in dues! This is a phenom-

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enal achievement in the professional association world, where dues typically provide about 50% of the revenue. The additional income that NEHA generates from grants and contracts, revenue from the AEC & Exhibition, and so on, goes to promoting and enhancing the profession of environmental health. So, the more dues we collect, the more money we are able to generate to support the profession.

Another answer to the titular question, which is equally important, is the networking that membership in NEHA provides. Networking provides contacts that you can call upon for help with problems in your jurisdiction, because, e.g., you know they've solved similar problems in their jurisdiction. I remember one of the earliest AECs I went to. Our agency had decided to change the food establishment inspection form, and we realized that the good old clipboard that we had been using for ages wasn't going to work. In a passing conversation with a friend in the hallway, I learned of the type of holder that would work for our new forms. Not a big deal, but it saved my department a lot of time and effort doing the research on this. Often

the most important things you bring home are business cards of people you network with. Or it may be information you get from a conversation in a technical session, or in the hallway, or at a meal function, or by the pool!

Another important thing that networking provides is the chance to meet and talk with other professionals to find out what is similar in what you do, and what is different. Being from California, I can tell you that most of what we do seems to be different! But different is only that—different. It's not necessarily good or bad. You start to understand that politics, tradition, the economy, and many other things affect the way we provide environmental health services.

Finally, networking results in many friends. I see a lot of them only once a year, at the AEC & Exhibition. I have the pleasure of seeing other friends, who serve on the board with me, several times a year, and we communicate via e-mail all year long.

Speaking of the board of directors, another answer to the question is the opportunity to get involved in NEHA. There are technical section chairs, committee members, and board members. Look at the fine print in this *Journal* to see all the opportunities to get involved. You might ask, "Doesn't getting involved take time and effort?" The answer is definitely, "YES." But, I submit, you get a lot more out of your involvement than you put in. And, I submit, you get to help shape the future of environmental health. You get a chance to meet and work with a group of dedicated professionals.

You would have to look long and hard to find more dedicated professionals than the sixteen members of the board of directors.

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Environmental Health-'Net

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Shelter Assessment Tool www.emergency.cdc.gov/shelterassessment/

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed an Environmental Health Shelter Assessment Tool to assist environmental health practitioners in conducting a rapid assessment of shelter conditions during emergencies and disasters. The tool is an assessment form that covers 14 general areas of environmental health, ranging from basic food safety and water quality to pet (companion animal) wellness, and allows for the documentation of immediate needs in shelters. It can be easily modified to meet local needs.

The Environmental Health Shelter Assessment Tool is intended to

- serve as a standardized instrument for rapidly assessing environmental health conditions in shelter facilities,
- assist in identifying and prioritizing health and safety issues in shelters,
- provide shelter management officials with data and an assessment of environmental health conditions and recommendations for improvement, and
- capture data and create documentation for use in future planning and improvement of shelters.

The tool provides supplemental guidance and information that should be used in conjunction with existing plans, procedures, guidelines, resources, assets, authorities, and incident management systems. It is not a substitute for shelter preparedness and planning activities.

To develop the tool, CDC convened a working group of experts from local, state, federal, academic, and non-governmental

institutions including the American Red Cross. For more information on CDC's Environmental Health Shelter Assessment Tool, please contact CAPT Mark Miller (770-488-7652 or zdq8@cdc.gov) or Miguel Cruz (770-488-3637 or mgc8@cdc.gov). Users of this tool are encouraged to submit feedback via e-mail at CDShelterform@cdc.gov.

Online National Resource Center for Emergency Preparedness www.diversitypreparedness.org/

The Center for Health Equality at Drexel University's School of Public Health and the Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have launched an online resource for advancing emergency preparedness in culturally diverse communities. The center is an "online clearinghouse and information exchange portal" featuring hundreds of annotated references in over forty languages.

Pandemic Influenza Guidance <http://aspe.hhs.gov/panflu/antiviral-n-masks.shtml>

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services seeks public comment on three draft guidance documents: Interim Guidance on the Use and Purchase of Facemasks and Respirators by Individuals and Families for Pandemic Influenza Preparedness; Proposed Guidance on Antiviral Drug Use During an Influenza Pandemic; and Proposed Considerations for Antiviral Drug Stockpiling by Employers in Preparation for an Influenza Pandemic. 🐼

President's Message

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They have guided NEHA to new levels of financial solvency. The budget has increased about 10-fold in the 17 years that I've had the pleasure of serving on the board. The largest portion of that has come from sources other than dues. The number and quality of the staff have risen, too. There are currently 29 staff members working to promote and enhance the profession. This work of the board is significant work, but probably largely unnoticed by our members.

Along with these increases in funding and staffing, NEHA has earned itself a place at the table in virtually all forums where environmental health is being discussed.

The board does some things that are more visible, but I'd be willing to bet that at least one of those things has gone undetected by most of the membership. How many of you have noticed the new NEHA logo? It may not seem like a big deal, but it's been updated and modernized to represent the updated, modernized NEHA and the profession of environmental health.

You can help to promote the profession by becoming an officer. If you get to be the president, then you get to write columns like this. It's kind of like having your own little soap box in the corner of NEHA Park! How much is *that* worth?

I guess to me, the *real* answer to the question is the great satisfaction I get from working with a dedicated bunch of professionals, both members and staff, to promote a very important profession.

Let me give you a final example. The board of directors has their BIG meeting in the spring in Colorado. We arrive on Thursday afternoon and visit with the staff in the office. We then take off for the hotel where we hold our meeting. On Friday morning, we start at about 8:00 or 8:30 a.m. and go until 6:00 p.m. We go out to dinner together, come back to the hotel and crash. The next day we do it all over again! Finally, on Sunday, we get up early and head back to the airport to go home. Invariably, on the flight home, I'm thinking, "I can't wait until next spring's meeting!" How can you put a price tag on something like that!? 🐼

Dick Pantano