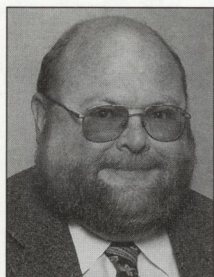


President's Message

James D. Dingman, M.S., R.E.H.S.



Industry and NEHA: The Past and the Present

One of the unique features of a professional association is that it affords all who practice within the profession the opportunity to interact in an atmosphere of mutual respect and friendliness. In the everyday workplace, environmental health professionals must act within the constraints of their role as regulators. That role can sometimes take on an adversarial air, especially as it relates to the relationship with the regulated community.

In our professional association, the regulator role is seldom applicable. To the contrary, the opportunity to learn from each other, to grow, and to groom personal relationships—especially between the regulator and the regulated community—is one of the intangible benefits that make NEHA attractive.

NEHA recognized many years ago that the richness of its programs and offerings is in large measure a function of the diversity of our membership base. One longstanding membership group is industry, and industry has long played an important role in NEHA. Its financial support and active involvement have contributed appreciably to the overall success of the association since NEHA's founding in 1937.

Industry and commercial organizations that have a stake in environmental health programs have long recognized the benefits to industry inherent in the membership composition of NEHA, as well as in our focus on education and the advancement of the environmental health profession. The Annual Educational Conference (AEC), the *Journal of Environmental Health*, and numerous affiliate meetings afford industry a unique forum in which to meet key regulators from government and the military, as well as academic environmental health professionals. Again, the atmosphere is one of mutual respect. Participating industries have recognized the

benefits and importance of working with regulators in incident prevention rather than being policed by them.

As one might have expected, NEHA's initial industry focus was on programs most common early in our history—mainly food, milk, and “general” sanitation. Industry was heavily weighted toward manufacturers and suppliers of food service equipment, sanitation chemicals, insecticides, and basic onsite disposal-system components.

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As the duties and responsibilities of environmental health professionals became more wide-ranging, the opportunity arose for a more diverse and technology-oriented range of products. In addition to food service equipment and onsite components, products for air, water, and waste monitoring, lab analysis, and toxic-material handling and disposal became more commonplace in environmental health applications. Thus, a wider variety of industries were brought into contact with NEHA.

In NEHA's early years, the principal attraction for industry was as exhibitors and advertisers whose aim was to generate sales indirectly by familiarizing environmental health professionals with products or services. More recently, industry has added a

new dimension to its involvement in NEHA. For lack of a better term, I will refer to this new dimension as professional development.

NEHA, working in cooperation with industry, is providing opportunities for environmental health professionals to expand their horizons through awards, conferences, and sabbatical-exchange programs with our colleagues in the United Kingdom and Canada.

While the relationship between NEHA and industry was growing, so were the numbers of environmental health professionals employed by industry. In the 1970s, an Industry Advisory Committee was formed to study the feasibility of an industry affiliate. It was believed that such an affiliate would encourage more involvement and leadership from industry ranks, provide a better forum for communication and cooperation among industry, academia, and the regulatory community, and help broaden NEHA's technical base. In 1985 the Industry Affiliate received its charter, and it has been active ever since. The initial beliefs held true. Industry has been, is, and will continue to be represented in NEHA leadership. Communication and cooperation between NEHA and industry continue to improve and expand. The technical expertise brought to NEHA by industry is invaluable. Although the Industry Affiliate is still small in numbers, it brings a needed and valuable perspective to the association's committees, programs, and publications.

So, to all of the industries affiliated with NEHA, whether as exhibitors, advertisers, or sustaining members—and to all of the environmental health professionals working in industry—thank you for your active involvement and support of our association. I hope to see you all at the AEC in Reno! 🐉

Jim Dingman