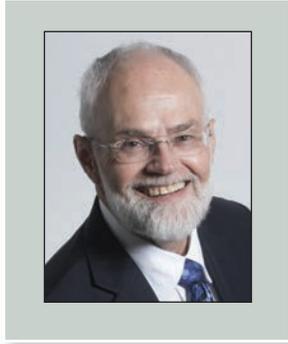


► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Vince Radke, MPH, RS,
CP-FS, DLAAS, CPH

Why? Is It Safe?

*Let us continue
to go far on this
journey together.*

I knew this column was my last even before Kristen Ruby-Cisneros, managing editor of our *Journal of Environmental Health*, e-mailed to let me know that my last column was due. Kristen, thank you for your patience and help in getting my columns out.

Questions

Two questions all environmental health professionals will be asked are, “Why and is it safe?”

As for the why question, you must be able to answer this question. Every day in your work people will ask it. Why are you taking this temperature? Why are you collecting a water sample? Why are you measuring this distance? Why do I have to clean this spill? Why are you doing that? The question of why will always be asked. The answer to the why question cannot be, “Because I’m the environmental health professional,” “My boss told me,” or “The law says so.” Although the law might require you to take certain actions, the answer to the why question must have a scientific basis. An example would be, “I’m collecting a water sample to determine if there are pathogens in the water that might cause illness.” If you cannot answer the why question based on science, you need to find the science and get the answer. Always be prepared to address the why question, especially in a public meeting or court room.

Most assuredly, the next question you will be asked, “Is it safe?” Is it safe to eat this food? Is it safe to drink the water? Is it safe to breathe the air? It is a simple question that is not always easy to answer. It requires a lot of knowledge and understanding on your part and possibly others to address this question.

The answer could be, “Yes, it is safe.” Many times, however, your answer will be, “Yes, it is safe if you do this” or “Yes, it is safe if you don’t do this.” Sometimes the answer is, “It is not safe.” You must then explain to people how they can keep themselves and their families safe to prevent illness or injury. As an environmental health professional, what are you doing to ensure their safety?

To add complexity to the safety questions are the economic factors that can come into play. The economic factors must be secondary to the safety factors.

Finally, your answer to the safety question might be that you don’t know. You must then make every effort to determine if it is safe or not for people, which might require additional knowledge and resources from others. In some cases, even the additional resources might not be enough to determine if it is safe or not. If so, it is best to err on the side of caution, safety, and people’s health. I leave you with a quote from George Bernard Shaw, the great literary giant, “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

Change

I wish to draw your attention to the cover article of this month’s *Journal*. Understanding the Needs, Challenges, Opportunities,

Vision, and Emerging Roles in Environmental Health (UNCOVER EH) was a collaboration between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), and Baylor University. I wish to thank the three people most involved with this great effort and study: Dr. Bryan Brooks, Baylor University; Justin Gerding, CDC; and Elizabeth Landeen, NEHA.

I do not want to take away from your pleasure of reading the article and the complete study; however, I wish to highlight the changes, challenges, and opportunities that this article brings to our profession. The role of the environmental health professional is changing to meet the increasing demand of our critical services. The demographics of our profession are changing and will continue to evolve. The constant response to emergency situations requires flexibility and updated training to meet this challenge. The increased importance of the environmental health professional within the public health framework will require that we are properly equipped and trained to meet the future needs of people in our communities. The UNCOVER EH article offers an opportunity to assess if we are poised to meet the essential services of the communities we serve.

Another change will be the transition of the mantle of leadership to a new NEHA president at the end of our Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition in Nashville, Tennessee. Dr. Priscilla Oliver will take over the reins of our association. I have known and worked with Dr. Oliver for decades. She is a dedicated and hardworking environmental health professional who has held multiple leadership

positions. Over this past year we have worked together to bring about an association we can be proud of. I look forward to the next year with confidence under the leadership of Dr. Oliver. Please help me support and wish Dr. Oliver all the best in the next year.

Final Thoughts

I wish to thank you, our members, for allowing me to serve this past year as your president. I have tried to be a good steward of NEHA. It has been a humbling experience and a labor of love. I had the opportunity to visit many of our affiliates, exchange ideas, and learn from you.

I would be amiss if I did not praise our NEHA staff and Executive Director Dr. David Dyjack for the outstanding jobs they did this past year. They all went above and beyond

the call of duty. To the NEHA staff, a big THANK YOU!

My hat off to NEHA's board of directors—they exceeded my expectations. They visited many of our affiliates and worked behind the scenes on numerous committees and special projects. They made my job as president a lot easier.

I end with a quote that I have carried from office to office during my 49-year career. When the going got rough I would read this quote and get back to my work. The quote is from Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the United States:

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and

sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcomings; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

Let us continue to go far on this journey together. 🐾

All the best,

Vince _____
President@neha.org

Did You Know?

Time is running out to participate in NEHA's Be a Beacon for Membership campaign. The campaign will end on June 15. The top five member recruiters will be announced at the end of June and will be honored at the UL Event at the 2019 AEC. Learn more at www.neha.org/nehabeacon.

SUPPORT THE NEHA ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION

The NEHA Endowment Foundation was established to enable NEHA to do more for the environmental health profession than its annual budget might allow. Special projects and programs supported by the foundation will be carried out for the sole purpose of advancing the profession and its practitioners.

Individuals who have contributed to the foundation are listed below by club category. These listings are based on what people have actually donated to the foundation—not what they have pledged. Names will be published under the appropriate category for 1 year; additional contributions will move individuals to a different category in the following year(s). For each of the categories, there are a number of ways NEHA recognizes and thanks contributors to the foundation. If you are interested in contributing to the Endowment Foundation, please call NEHA at (303) 756-9090. You can also donate online at www.neha.org/about-neha/donate.

Thank you.

DELEGATE CLUB

(\$1–\$99)

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HONORARY MEMBERS CLUB

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Letter from the NEHA president and name in the Journal for 1 year.

Imran Khan
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21st CENTURY CLUB

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Name submitted in drawing for a free 1-year NEHA membership and name in the Journal for 1 year.

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Name submitted in drawing for a free 2-year NEHA membership and name in the Journal for 1 year.

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Name submitted in drawing for a free AEC registration and name in the Journal for 1 year.

EXECUTIVE CLUB AND ABOVE

(\$5,000–\$100,000)

Special invitation to the AEC President's Reception and name in the Journal for 1 year.

Vince Radke