

# **NEHA Food Handler Certificate Program Handbook**

Guide to Policies and Procedures for  
NEHA's Certificate Programs



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**NEHA's Mission is** *"to advance the environmental health and protection professional for the purpose of providing a healthful environment for all."*

In pursuit of its mission, NEHA sponsors a variety of Certificate programs. Today, the association offers a number of Certificate programs

Congratulations on taking a step towards holding a NEHA Certificate Program Certificate. Holding a NEHA Certificate Program Certificate benefits not only an individual in proving competency and capability in the field of food safety and protection, but also benefits the community and employers. It is through the device of a Certificate that a community gains assurance that the workforce handling this responsibility is *competent, properly trained, and equipped to carry out their responsibilities*. The Certificate serves to verify that a professional has achieved what is perceived as a baseline level of competence in this complicated subject area of food protection. By having staff that holds Certificates, employers are assured of having a workforce of employees that are reasonably capable of handling whatever challenges their job responsibilities and their employer present.

**The NEHA Food Handler Certificate Program objectives are:**

- 1. accomplished learning outcomes,**
- 2. stakeholder satisfaction, and**
- 3. increased knowledge of safe food procedures.**

The NEHA Certificate Program Certificate is administrated through NEHA's Entrepreneurial Zone, or EZ. The EZ Program Administrator oversees the program and implements all policies and procedures.

## 1. OVERVIEW

### Purpose

The NEHA Certificate Program is designed for individuals in the food safety field to be able to describe scientific-based procedures needed for food safety and protection. The Program will teach the learner about food safety hazards, explain how to control those hazards, and summarize personal hygiene, handling food safely, the flow of food through a facility, and the basics of pest control. NEHA's courses enhance knowledge and understanding, thus promoting the practice of food safety and protection. The advantages of NEHA's Certificate Programs are the nationwide recognition and reputation of NEHA, the consultation of food safety experts within NEHA's membership, and the continual update of food safety information based on the ongoing assessment of the dynamic food safety field.

### 1.1

#### **NEHA Food Handler Certificate Program**

The NEHA Food Handler Certificate is designed to provide individuals the ability to explain foodborne illness and contamination, receiving, storing, preparing and serving food, personal hygiene, cleaning and sanitation, and pest prevention. A food handler is defined as any person employed in a food premise, who at any time may be involved in the manufacturing, preparation, packing or service of food for sale.

Scope The NEHA Food Handler program is designed to be a 2-hour introductory program including instruction on foodborne illness and contamination, receiving, storing, preparing and serving food, personal hygiene, cleaning and sanitizing, and pest prevention.

Learning outcomes After completing the food handler course and successfully passing the course assessment, participants will better be able to:

- Describe the importance of food safety
- Explain the causes and consequences of foodborne illness
- Describe how to handle food safely, from receiving through service
- Identify proper methods of personal hygiene when working with food
- Describe how food can be contaminated and how to prevent contamination
- Explain cleaning and sanitizing
- Describe pest control

**Course information** – The original NEHA Training food handler course was developed by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) in 2003. NEHA used the CIEH textbook *Food Safety First Principles* for five (5) years before looking into obtaining NEHA copy written material. In 2008, NEHA received a food handler course from MindLeaders/ThirdForce (ML), who allowed NEHA to restructure the ML online course with NEHA members and food safety subject matter experts. Christine Hollenbeck, CP-FS created a NEHA copy written textbook, *NEHA Professional Food Handler*, from the ML materials in early 2009.

Learning outcomes for the NEHA Food Handler Certificate course have been based off of the textbook review and added to the material as, “After reading this chapter, you should be able to 1, 2, and 3.”

In early 2011 NEHA decided to review the food handler materials and prepare for ANSI accreditation of the Food Handler Certificate Program. An Oversight Committee for the Certificate Programs was formed with NEHA staff, restaurant personnel, industry trainers, and environmental health professionals, including the NEHA Board President. The Oversight Committee assists in the development, monitoring and approval of the Certificate Program Plan. This group also serves as the Job Analysis Committee (JAC).

**Job Task Analysis** – NEHA created a survey for a job task analysis (JTA) for the food handler to either confirm or contradict the validity of these learning outcomes. The design of the JTA was researched and completed by Christine Hollenbeck, CP-FS with assistance from Terry Osner. The food handler survey questions were developed by subject matter experts who have been in food safety as food handlers, managers, and trainers. The survey questions were reviewed by Terry Osner and approved by the Certificate Program Oversight Committee. The survey was sent out on August 31, 2011 to food handlers and food managers in the NEHA database, food handlers in Maricopa County, AZ, and food handlers associated with and contacted through members of the Oversight Committee.

**Course outline and assessment** – Based on the job task analysis, an outline for the course/curriculum was developed to ensure necessary knowledge is imparted with additional respect to the weighted needs for skills or knowledge. The course outline was compared to the current course material which was adjusted, as necessary, to comply with the results of the JTA. As the learning outcomes were derived from the JTA results, the course assessment was matched against those outcomes, and again, adjusted as

necessary to comply with the results of the JTA. As discrepancies were found, the assessment was developed in tandem with the course material.

**Course materials** – NEHA publishes all of its in-house developed materials to ensure a high quality book and to keep book costs down to the participant.

The adjusted Food Handler Certificate Program was submitted for numerous internal reviews within the Product Development department in Education and Training. The materials were then presented to the Oversight Committee for final approval. Until the point of printing, the material was subject to edits and rewrites for new information or updated regulations that would deem it prudent.

### **Assessment Design and Development**

As the learning outcomes were derived from the JTA results, the course assessment was matched against those outcomes, and again, adjusted as necessary to comply with the results of the JTA. As discrepancies were found, the assessment was developed in tandem with the course material.

### **Passing Scores**

The passing score for the NEHA Certificate Programs was determined by the criterion referenced method.

The passing score for the food handler assessment was computed from an estimate of the probability of a borderline candidate answering each item correctly. After a discussion and consensus of the characteristics of a borderline candidate, NEHA's subject matter experts (SME) made an independent assessment of the probability that a borderline candidate would answer the item correctly for each item. The SME's assessments of an item were averaged to determine the probability of a correct response for that item. Then, each probability assigned to an item on the exam form was averaged to obtain the pass point. The NEHA Food Handler Certificate Program assessment was found to have an acceptable passing score of 70%.

## 2. INFORMATION

### **2.1 Definition of Holding a NEHA Certificate**

NEHA has adopted the following definition for a Certificate Holder:

*A Certificate Holder is an individual who has completed a prescribed course of study designed specifically to meet predefined industry requirements.*

Individuals holding a NEHA Certificate are viewed as leaders and role models. Studying for and receiving a NEHA Certificate demonstrates a commitment to safe food.

### **2.2 Sponsorship/Administration**

NEHA's Certificate Programs are owned and sponsored by NEHA and run by NEHA's Entrepreneurial Zone, EZ. The Food Handler courses are generally run by the Food Handler's employer, manager, or local health department.

### **2.3 Membership Requirements**

Membership in any association or organization, including NEHA, is **not** required to participate in any of NEHA's Certificate programs.

## 2.4 Course Fees

NEHA Food Handler Certificate Program costs will not exceed any price limitations as declared in state codes and/or laws. There is a cost of \$12.00 for the Food Handler Certificate Program material which includes the textbook or online course, course assessment, and certificate.

**Additional fees may be charged by a course trainer for their time, location costs, food, etc.**

## 2.5 Refunds

1. NEHA will charge Certificate course instructors a fair and reasonable cost for course materials based on production of materials and administrative time. It will be up to the course instructors to abide by state and local regulations on the limitation of course fees.
2. NEHA will audit instructor's fees at regular intervals based on instructor marketing materials and past violations.
3. If the instructor cancels the course, a full refund will be given to all paid participants by the instructor.
4. If a participant is unable to attend the course after making payment, the instructor must be notified in writing, by mail or email, at least 7 business days prior to the course date for a full refund. Within 7 business days of the course, a refund to the participant is not required, although an individual instructor may return all or some of the course fee at his/her discretion. This policy prevents an instructor from ordering and paying for training books and materials that will not be used.
5. In the case of an emergency or if a participant has to leave the class after beginning the course, a refund will not be given; however, the participant will have the opportunity to attend another session of the same course by the same instructor at another time.

## 2.6 Name/Address Change

It is the Certificate holder's responsibility to notify NEHA, in writing or via fax or email of any change in name and/or address. Without this information NEHA is unable to send important information on courses.

## 2.7 Contacting NEHA

The NEHA Office may be contacted by writing, faxing, calling, or emailing:

NEHA

720 S. Colorado Blvd., Ste. 1000-N

Denver, CO 80246

(303) 756-9090 (ext. 337 or ext. 339 for Certificate)

Fax: (303) 651-9490

Email: [support@neha.org](mailto:support@neha.org)

Web: [www.neha.org](http://www.neha.org)

### 3. APPLYING FOR A CERTIFICATE

#### 3.1 Course Standards

NEHA is committed to offering fair, valid and reliable Certificate courses. A **fair** course is not biased for or against any groups because of ethnic background, geographic locale or any other demographic criterion. A **valid** course accurately reflects the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for competent practice. **Reliability** means the course is consistent in its presentation of the knowledge, skills and abilities of competent practice.

All training materials have been verified for accuracy and reliability and referenced to a published source.

#### 3.2 Application Procedures

No application is required to attend the NEHA Food Handler.

#### 3.3 Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of NEHA that no individual shall be excluded from the opportunity to participate in NEHA's Certificate programs on the basis of ethnic origin, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability.

#### 3.4 Foreign Applicants

All NEHA Certificates are available to all those who are able to participate in the NEHA Certificate Programs. Training materials are currently available in English and Spanish.

### 4. COURSE PROCEDUREES

#### 4.1 Course Administration

Participants must be registered with a NEHA trainer to participate in a classroom course. Organization of participants, distribution of test materials, and testing instructions will begin promptly at the posted start time.

#### 4.2 Seat Time Requirements

The Food Handler Certificate course requires a minimum of 2 hours of seat time.

#### 4.3 Course Security

The NEHA Certificate courses are the exclusive property of NEHA. Participants who take a NEHA Certificate course acknowledge that they understand the following:

- Federal copyright law protects the course and information contained therein. No part of the course may be copied or reproduced in part or whole by any means whatsoever.
- The theft or attempted theft of NEHA copy written material is punishable as a felony.
- Individual participation in any reproduction of the course may be sufficient cause to terminate the individual's participation, invalidate the Certificate, or take other appropriate action deemed necessary.
- Participants must agree to sign an end user licensing agreement prior to accessing the online training and the assessment.

#### 4.4 Participant Identity

At the test site, participants must present a government-issued photo ID (such as a valid driver's license) along with their registration confirmation.

As part of the Online Program, only authorized participants are able to access the Program and assessments with their unique username and password.

#### 4.5 Special Accommodations for Participants with Disabilities or Impairments

NEHA is committed to ensuring that no individual is deprived of the opportunity to take a Certificate course solely by reason of a disability or impairment. All classrooms must be fully accessible and compliant with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

#### 4.6 Assessment Requirements

Intended learning outcomes are measured by the course assessment given at the end of the course. Participants must receive a 70% or higher score on the course assessment in order to be eligible for a NEHA Food Handler Program Certificate.

#### 4.7 Certificates

A NEHA Certificate will be issued upon successful completion of the NEHA Certificate Program courses that applies to that specific Certificate. Successful completion of a NEHA Certificate course includes course seat time, as specified by the individual Certificate being awarded, as well as a score of 70% or higher on a Food Handler Certificate course assessment.

#### 4.8 Scoring and Results

If the course trainer has the scoring sheet available and the time to accurately score the assessment without participant interruptions or other distractions, the trainer may choose to score the assessments in the classroom as participants complete their assessments. Scoring is done by matching a participant's Scantron answer sheet with NEHA's master answer key for that Certificate course.

Assessment results may be communicated to the participant directly following the course, and must be communicated to the participant and NEHA within 2 weeks of the Certificate course, by the course trainer.

The course trainer may choose to mail, fax, phone, or email the participant's assessments results to him/her and NEHA.

#### 4.9 Complaints and Appeals

A review and appeals process is available to individuals seeking an amendment of a decision denying certificate from a NEHA Certificate Program. The EZ Program Administrator and the Program Oversight Committee conduct review and appeals processes. The decision of the Oversight Committee is final. Failure of any NEHA Certificate assessment is not subject for an appeal.



A **complaint** is defined as a cause or reason for dissatisfaction; a grievance.

An **appeal** is defined as a resort to a higher authority or greater power, as for sanction, corroboration, or a decision.

## **5. CERTIFICATE PERIOD AND CONTINUING EDUCATION**

### 5.1 Certificate Cycle

All of NEHA's Certificates run on a three-year cycle. The cycle is based upon the updating of the FDA Food Code. The Food Code is fully updated every four (4) years, with supplements available every 2 years. NEHA will assess the Food Code supplements and update the course within 1 year of the updates, making the NEHA course material new every 3 years. The first day of the Certificate period is the date the Certificate course assessment is successfully completed.

### 5.2 Certificate Renewal

At the end of the three-year Certificate cycle, individuals must retake the Certificate course in order for the Certificate to remain valid.

### 5.3 Continuing Education Contact Hours

Continuing education is not necessary or valid for maintaining or renewing a NEHA Certificate.

### 5.4 Uses for the NEHA Food Safety Certificate

The NEHA Certificates show that the participant has completed a prescribed course of study designed specifically to meet predefined industry requirements. The Certificate is not an attestation of qualification, competence, or authority on a subject. There are no acronyms or other marks associated with the Certificate.