



OREGON ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

October 2006

Log onto the OEHA's website

www.oregoneha.org

WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

IS OUR PROFESSION AT RISK?

Our profession is regulated by Oregon Revised Statute Chapter 700 which states as its purpose the following: "Recognizing that to regulate our environment for the protection of the public's health is not a natural right of any person but is a privilege granted by legislative authority, it is necessary in the interests of the health, safety and welfare of the people of this state to provide for the granting of that privilege and the regulation of its use, to the end that the public is protected from unauthorized or unqualified persons and from unprofessional conduct by persons registered to practice under this chapter."

Under definitions in ORS 700, a Sanitarian (now called Environmental Health Specialist) is a "person who by education, training and experience in the sanitary, biological and physical sciences is qualified to perform duties in environmental sanitation, including but not limited to scientific investigation, and education and counseling in environmental sanitation."

As registered professionals in the business of "protecting the public's health," I think we need to ask ourselves if we are doing enough to ensure that "unauthorized or unqualified persons" are not being hired by governmental agencies or an unsuspecting public to perform duties which are direct violations of state law. For example, I think we are all in agreement that persons inspecting restaurants, RV parks, motels and certain day care centers licensed by DHS (through local county health departments) must be Registered Environmental Health Specialists (or trainees under their supervision). However, DHS does not require that registered persons inspect food service in assisted care and nursing care facilities (some of our most vulnerable citizens). Although in November of 2001 the Sanitarian Registration Board vowed to support efforts by the DHS to expand uniform enforcement of food service inspections into these areas, to date the Board has failed to address this issue on its own.

Another example of an agency refusing to recognize that many of its employees were doing work that should have required registration under ORS 700 is DEQ. A few years ago, DEQ was confronted with this situation and, rather than require its employees comply with the requirement of becoming registered, they went before

the Oregon legislature to request and exemption from ORS 700 (not to include employees working in the septic on-site program, which they agreed needed to be registered) claiming extreme financial hardship for the agency if it had to pay for the hundreds of people working (and making decisions affecting public health) in their solid waste, water quality and air quality programs. Although this reason is totally invalid because it is the individual's responsibility to become registered and not the employer's, who simply failed to require registration as a condition for employment. When it came down to testifying in front of the legislative committee it was DEQ that brought out the big guns to vigorously defend its position while our profession was only represented by two or three sanitarians. We were steamrolled by the process because not enough registered sanitarians felt it necessary to get involved. Where was the Sanitarian Registration Board when we needed them?

Once again, DEQ has recently ignored the registration issue when it established a new Administrative Rule (340-071-0131(1)(a) which basically allows unregistered persons to conduct inspections of existing septic systems whenever a private property is sold. This rule allows a person with a NSF certification or other certification approved by DEQ, regardless of any educational background and experience, to conduct the work traditionally requiring registration. In April of this year I sent a letter of complaint to the Oregon Health Licensing Board and to current Oregon Attorney General Hardy Meyers addressing this flagrant violation of ORS 700. This matter still remains unresolved and, if allowed to stand as written, will further weaken our profession by allowing "unauthorized or unqualified" persons to practice under this chapter (700).

Simply put, if we registered professionals fail to (1) bring to the attention of the Oregon Health Licensing Agency (formerly the Sanitarian Registration Board) any unregistered person doing the work of a sanitarian, or advertising as such, and (2) do not follow through to insure that the Agency is responding in a timely manner to complaints and (3) don't feel it important enough to go to Salem to present testimony to the Agency or the state legislature when necessary, then we have no one to blame but ourselves for losing our profession one piece at a time.



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Fall AEC in Klamath Falls October 5-6, 2006



Overall, the fall conference went on without a hitch. I received very positive feedback about the speakers and subject matter presented. Twenty-nine attendees registered for the two days. Friday afternoon activities were held at Oregon Institute of Technology's (OIT) Mt. Thielson Room, and included a tour of the campus Geoheat Facilities.

There was quite a variety of agencies represented: Local presenters included Toni Boyd from the OIT Geoheat Center, Phil Swisher of Klamath County Code Enforcement, Scott Rice of Klamath County Fire District #1, Delbert Bell of Klamath County Environmental Health on ambient air quality, and Arjen DeHoop of Klamath Falls City Sewer Treatment. Other County presenters included Terry Westfall of Douglas County (and current OEHA President) who discussed blue-green algae, Randy Howarth of Multnomah County on new mobile

unit rules, Gary Stevens of Jackson County and Belle Shepherd of Josephine County spoke on environmental health responsibilities during a major disaster. State presenters included James Mack from DHS who discussed the safety of our food supply, Frank Messina from DEQ on asbestos, and Gail Flory from ODA on home kitchens. And, finally, there was Brad LeaMaster from the USDA who updated us on avian flu, WNV and other zoonoses, and Tom Wiley from DOGAMI on earth quake concerns.

Just a reminder, the Registration Board approved 13 contact hours (1.3 CEUs) to put toward your license requirements, for the two days. OEHA Board members sent certificates out. Thanks to all for making this conference a wonderful success and experience!!

Angela D. Scott, REHS
OEHA Eastern/Central Region Director

National Emergency Preparedness Month

It's been a year since Hurricane Katrina and five years since the tragic events of September 11, 2001. What if there was a flood, earthquake, or large chemical release in your county or region? Does the Environmental Health Specialist have a responsibility to respond and ensure the safety of county residents and their communities?

The state is vulnerable to various large-scale disasters whether they are natural or manmade. We should be aware of our vulnerabilities within our own county and state such as floods, wildfires, earthquakes and tsunamis, even pandemic influenza just to mention a few.

If we are going to serve during an emergency, we must be able to do our jobs. We may need to work from alternative sites, utilize alternative communications, work with other disciplines and have available resources at our fingertips.

What Can I do?

Get trained. The basics are the ICS courses, the disease control/epidemiology courses (CD101 through 810); risk

communication, basic training in radiation and chemical hazard recognition and management, PPE training and basic training on how to use communication equipment and the HAN web site.

Get involved with your County BT/Preparedness Coordinator; know your role and practice with the planned exercises.

Info you should know:

State-wide Pandemic Influenza Exercise
November 1 & 2, 2006

ICS training on the Internet; class, test, & certificate
<http://dhslearn.hr.or.us>

DHS preparedness web site:
<http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/preparedness/index.shtml>
by Gary Stevens, REHS



Customer Service

Providing excellent customer service should be important in everyone's lives. I could list examples of what NOT to do versus what TO DO, but service is proactive which should benefit the client. You know that old cliché "service with a smile." We don't need to tell them what they want to hear, but rather communicate with the perception of why and how doing the right thing benefits everyone, soft sell.

Solving one problem at a time with exceptional service could eventually improve the whole community. Well, I did say "could eventually." Customer service is a choice of making a personal connection with the client, anticipating their needs in accomplishing their goals, a form, a process, information, or whatever. That sometimes means you need to tell them what their goals are, i.e., good health, clean water, safe food.

West Nile Virus

The Oregon State Public Health Laboratory has confirmed 65 human cases of West Nile virus infection in Oregon to date for 2006. Malheur County reported the first three cases and lead the state with the majority with a over 48 human cases. Oregon recorded eight human cases in 2005 and only five cases in 2004.

West Nile virus usually have no illness or only mild symptoms. "About 20 percent of cases result in a flu-like illness. In one out of 150 cases, the virus can cause inflammation of the brain and result in serious illness or even death. This most commonly occurs in persons 50 years or older," he said.

Although the mosquito season is more or less over it's a definite reminder for people to continue taking personal precautions against mosquito bites when outside, especially those individuals who work outdoors."

West Nile virus normally lives in birds. It is spread when a mosquito feeds on an infected bird and then bites a human. Birds cannot transmit the disease to humans, nor can it be transmitted through person-to-person contact.

So far this year, Oregon State University's Veterinary Diagnostic laboratory has confirmed 26 positive WNV birds and 34 horses most collected from the eastern counties.

DHS has set up a toll-free West Nile virus hotline for people statewide to call for recorded information in English and Spanish at 866-703-4636. Information can also be found on the [DHS West Nile Web site](#).

Dr. Emilio DeBess, DVM said that people infected with

2006 OEHA Annual Education Conference

The '06 AEC was arguably the best one yet. Not only were the accommodations at Kah-Nee-Ta (Warm Springs) top notch, the three days of educational sessions were excellent. The social events and networking opportunities were fun and rewarding. If you were unable to attend this year you missed a

great professional and educational event.

The 2007 AEC in Hood River April 23-25, 2007 looks to be even better with DHS's participation. This will be well worth your attendance.

David Bussen

Up & Coming Training Opportunities for 2006 & 2007

REGIONAL DRINKING WATER TRAINING

Bend – **Tuesday, Oct. 31**, county/state office building - new building at corner of Lafayette and Hill Streets, room at SW corner of first floor.

Wilsonville – **Wednesday, Nov. 8**, Clackamas CC - Wilsonville Training Center, 29353 SW Town Center Loop East, Room 111 (I-5, exit 283 toward Wilsonville, go east on SW Wilsonville Rd, turn north on SW Town Center Loop E, Training Center is located about .4 mi north and on west side of road (just south of SW Valhos Dr).

Roseburg – **Wednesday, Nov. 29**, Douglas County Health & Social Services building, 621 West Madrone St., Room 1B.

Pandemic Influenza Full Scale Exercise

State wide November 1 & 2, 2006. Check with your local Public Health/CD Coordinator for your participation

'66th' OEHA Annual Education Conference:

Hood River Inn, Hood River, Oregon

April 22, 23, & 24, 2007

2006 OEHA Board of Officers

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NEHA Region 1 Vice President

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Environmental Health Specialist & Waste Management Specialists position openings in Oregon

Where?	Contact Who?	Type of Work?	Deadline
Crook County Health Dept.	Russell Hanson,(541)447-8155	DHS License Facilities & Drinking Water	Nov. 25
Coos County Health Dept	Rick Hallmark,(541) 756-2020-513	DHS License Facilities & Drinking Water	
Douglas County Health Dept	David Bussen, (541) 440-3570	DHS License Facilities & Drinking Water	
Douglas County Planning Dept	David Bussen, (541) 440-3570	Onsite	
Hood River County	Darryl Barton, (541) 387-7130	DHS License Facilities & Drinking Water	
Tillamook County	Annette Pampush, (503) 842-3902	DHS License Facilities & Drinking Water	
Columbia County	Mark Edington, (503) 397-4651	DHS License Facilities & Drinking Water	

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