Support Environmental Public Health Services

Environmental public health practitioners are responsible for protecting and preventing public exposure to harmful agents. Protection of the public’s health comes through the many services they provide, including monitoring air quality, safe drinking water and food safety, integrated pest management (e.g., West Nile virus), toxic chemical control, disaster planning and control (terrorism) and public education. State and local environmental public health programs are typically under-funded and stretched beyond capacity. Environmental public health practitioners are often not sufficiently trained or supported to handle the emerging and complex environmental public health issues they face every day. Programs lack infrastructure to manage these issues, and research is needed. There is a need to continue and secure the federal funding that is so critical to these programs. Without this support, the environmental public health systems may not be able to fulfill their responsibilities, resulting in an increased risk to the public’s health. CDC, NCEH, Environmental Health Services Branch is spearheading an effort to revitalize environmental public health services. For more information on this program, visit www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs, or call APHA’s Director of Government Relations and Affiliate Affairs at (202) 777-2541.

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American Public Health Association
800 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 777-7323
d (202) 777-2534
e-mail: ephs@apha.org

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800 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 777-2542
Fax: (202) 777-2534
e-mail: ephs@apha.org

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Environmental public health addresses the interrelationship between human health and the environment. It has been described as the art and science of promoting health and preventing illness through the identification, evaluation, and control of disease-producing factors that may adversely affect human health. Public health practice comes through the many national, state, and local environmental public health services.

**FACT:**

Environmental public health services have been the backbone of public health in the U.S. since 1798. The first recorded case of a disease outbreak that was controlled by public health authorities is likely that of yellow fever in Philadelphia in 1793. Since then, the role of public health in preventing and controlling disease has expanded exponentially, and public health has been recognized as a vital component of a strong public health system.

**CRITICAL ISSUES**

- **Why are people still dying from contaminated food?**
  - **FACT:**
    - **The annual economic costs of medical care, productivity loss and premature deaths due to food-borne illness associated with just five pathogens are estimated between $7 million and $37 million.**

- **Who are environmental public health practitioners?**
  - **FACT:**
    - **Employees of federal, state, territorial and local agencies (health departments) such as sanitarians, epidemiologists, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, occupational health practitioners, sanitarians, 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Environmental public health addresses the interrelationship between human health and the environment. It has been described as the art and science of preventing and controlling environmental factors that may adversely affect human health. Primary health protection comes through the many national, state, and local environmental public health services.

**FACT:**

**Who are environmental public health practitioners?**

- Employees of federal, state, and local agencies (health departments) such as sanitarians, epidemiologists, public health nurses, and legal counsel, among others.
- Practitioners in the private sector.
- Graduates of environmental health science programs.
- Public health practitioners who work on environmental health issues, e.g., industrial hygienists, toxicologists, environmental scientists, public health administrators and lawyers.

**Why are they needed?**

**PROJECT GOUT:** 40% of human disease has been eliminated because of proper sanitation. Environmental public health services continue to be a major factor in the prevention of disease.

**PROJECT AIDS:** An important part of the public response to terrorism and other public health emergencies is to provide services essential for protecting and ensuring the well-being of people in affected areas with an emphasis on prevention and control of diseases.

**SAVE HEALTH CARE COSTS** through preventing illness—many environment-related diseases.

**CRITICAL ISSUES**

- **Environmental public health**
- **Why Are People Still Dying from Contaminated Food?**

**FACT:**

- **A CDC Initiative**
- **A National Strategy to Revitalize Environmental Public Health Services**

**WORK FORCE**

- **Aging and retiring workforce**—the average age of a public health worker is 46 years and retirement rates will be as high as 45% over the next five years. There is a shortage of young professionals.
- **Poor compensation and retention**—current vacancy and turnover rates of environmental public health practitioners are high in many states because of low pay, minimal advancement opportunities and competition with the private sector.
- **Lack of leadership**—no consistent plan or program exists to train the next generation of environmental public health leaders.

**SERVICES**

- There are 17 essential public health services for which funding is limited and training is needed. For more information, go to www.nhso.org.
- The increasing number and complexity of environmental public health issues as well as the emergence of new issues requires the well-being of affected persons with an emphasis on prevention and control of diseases.
- To reduce the stress caused by increased responsibilities, training is needed. For more information, go to www.sso.org/ecos/.
- Environmental Public Health Services

**Overarching Goal**

- Enhance and revitalize the system of environmental public health services in order to address the broad range of issues facing states and communities.
What is environmental public health?

Environmental public health addresses the interrelationship between human health and the environment. It has been described as the art and science of preventing disease and injury where there may be adverse human health effects or environmental factors that may adversely affect human health. Tuscan health protection comes through the many national, state, and local environmental public health services.

Who are environmental public health practitioners?

- Employees of federal, state, territorial, and local agencies (health departments)
- Such as sanitarians, crime prevention health managers, disease prevention
- Work on environmental public health issues, e.g., industrial hygienists,
- Epidemiologists, chemists, geologists, physicians, economists, public
- Administrators and lawyers
- 6.9% of the total U.S. public health workforce*
- For every 14,000 persons, there is only one environmental public health
  practitioner

Why are they needed?

- Protect against and work on environmental public health issues, e.g., industrial hygienists,
- Epidemiologists, chemists, geologists, physicians, economists, public
- Administrators and lawyers
- 6.9% of the total U.S. public health workforce*
- For every 14,000 persons, there is only one environmental public health
  practitioner

How are environmental public health practitioners involved?

- With setting and enforcing environmental public health policies and regulations
- Environmental public health practitioners are involved not
  only in inspections, but perhaps more importantly in
  surveillance, warnings, permitting, planning, developing, science
- Of public health, plan and design review and approval
  contamination or disease, monitoring, as well as health
- and disease
  prevention, and planning.

CRITICAL ISSUES

“If the emergence of many new issues and threats… Cryptosporidium in drinking water, hantavirus, E. coli, West Nile virus, and most recently homeland terrorism… points to the need for a well prepared environmental health system.” CDC 2003

WORK FORCE

- Aging and retiring workforce—The average age of a public health
- leader is 57 years old, and 64% of the workforce is over 50 years old.

SERVICES

- Environmental public health services are often unnoticed and
  and a workforce with strong communication skills.
- Even with the stepped up importance of public health issues as well as the emergence of new issues requires the
- Emergence of many new issues and threats... points to the need for a well prepared environmental public health system.

FACT:

- 80% of human disease has been eliminated because of proper
  prevention of illness—many environment-related
  illnesses have been reduced.

FACT:

- A CDC Initiative

A National Strategy to Revitalize Environmental Public Health Services

A CDC Initiative

- National Strategy to Revitalize Environmental Public Health Services

- Overarching Goal

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“Environmental public health… touches everyone’s life every day.”