

STATE and LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

High standards for environmental programs are essential for healthy and safe communities. A professional Environmental Health Specialist can serve a community by providing a comprehensive environmental health program.

Many State agencies supplement community environmental protection and control efforts.

It is essential that State and local environmental health agencies work together in a proactive and preventive approach for delivering environmental health programs—sharing resources will help provide high quality services to our Minnesota communities.

WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST?

An Environmental Health Specialist, or “sanitarian”, is a **public health professional** who protects human health from detrimental conditions in the environment through education, consultation, and regulation.

Environmental Health Specialists are college graduates with training in public health, sanitary science, or one of the physical sciences. An Environmental Health Specialist works with other professionals in their community to provide a safe and healthy environment.

After a year of environmental health experience, an Environmental Health Specialist is eligible to take a written examination for professional registration as a Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Sanitarian (REHS or RS) by the State of Minnesota.

WHAT IS MEHA?

The Minnesota Environmental Health Association is a group of public health professionals in government and industry who are working to improve living and working conditions in homes and businesses, and to protect the environment.

Established in the 1950s, MEHA now has more than 300 members throughout the State.

Minnesota Environmental Health Association

P.O. Box 441
Anoka, MN 55303



**An organization of
professionals dedicated to
protecting public health
by improving both indoor
and outdoor
environments**

www.MEHAonline.org



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IN MINNESOTA

Control of environmental conditions is becoming increasingly important to protect and maintain our health and sense of well-being.

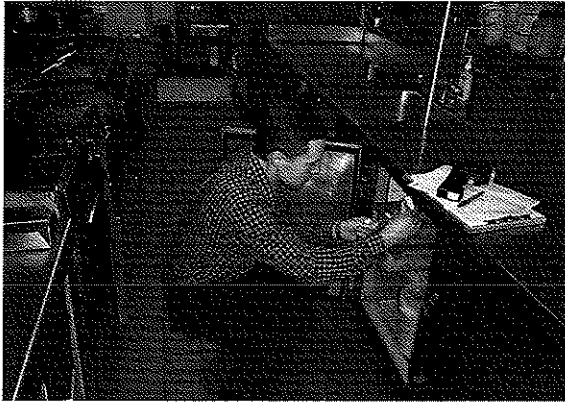
Environmental Health is a field of public health concerned with the management of environmental conditions.

This publication, provided by the Minnesota Environmental Health Association, explains these programs and the importance of the Environmental Health Specialist to local communities.

Environmental Health Specialists provide expertise in the following programs:

FOOD SERVICE SANITATION AND FOOD SAFETY

Environmental Health Specialists inspect restaurants, bars, grocery stores, and other food establishments to ensure **safe food preparation and service**. They also review construction plans to prevent safety and sanitation problems.



Other services for the **prevention of foodborne illness** include certification of food managers, education and consultation in safe food-handling techniques, and investigation of complaints and disease outbreaks.

PUBLIC HEALTH NUISANCE CONTROL AND HOUSING

Environmental Health Specialists help their communities maintain their housing stock by responding to complaints of unsanitary conditions and providing education to ensure safe and healthy housing environments. Specialists investigate sources of **lead poisoning** and regulate removal of these sources. They also inspect **manufactured home parks** to ensure these communities are properly operated and maintained.



RECREATIONAL AND LODGING FACILITIES

- Public swimming pools
- Recreational camping areas
- Youth camps
- Fairs, festivals, and special events
- Hotels, motels, and resorts

Environmental Health Specialists foster **safe and sanitary conditions** through a preventive approach that includes inspections, monitoring, and education.

SEWAGE TREATMENT AND DISPOSAL

In many communities, Environmental Health Specialists are involved in the regulation of household **septic systems** to be sure they are properly located and installed. This protects the quality of groundwater and surface water, as well as public health.

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

Environmental Health Specialists limit the public's exposure to hazardous materials such as **lead, asbestos, and radon** by providing information, testing, consultation, and investigation services.

SOLID AND HAZARDOUS WASTE

Hazardous waste generators & facilities, and solid waste haulers & disposal facilities receive licensing, inspection, and consultation services from Specialists to protect water resources and prevent the public's exposure to **hazardous materials** and **solid waste**.

SCHOOLS, DAY CARE CENTERS, AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

To protect children and vulnerable adults, Environmental Health Specialists consult with and inspect public and private schools, day care centers, correctional facilities, and other institutions to ensure that **healthy and safe conditions** are maintained.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY

The Minnesota Clean Indoor Air Act is enforced by Environmental Health Specialists. Specialists also investigate and provide consultation for other indoor air quality concerns, such as **radon, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, and mold**.

WATER SUPPLIES AND WATER QUALITY

Citizens served by **municipal water supplies** or a **private water well** are assisted by Environmental Health Specialists who monitor drinking water quality through laboratory, inspection, and consultation services. Specialists are also involved in groundwater protection programs.

CONSULTATION AND EDUCATION

Environmental Health Specialists (along with social workers, public health nurses, and others) work on teams that promote safe living conditions for children, older adults, migrant workers, and other vulnerable populations.

They provide information and referral services to communities through presentations to educational institutions at all levels, by participating in cooperative programs, and through one-on-one consultative services.

Many Environmental Health Specialists teach national **certification courses** for food service managers, swimming pool operators, and other occupations that impact public health and safety.