

RS/REHS Study Session Resource Materials: Introduction

In 2010 the Registration Committee of the Minnesota Environmental Health Association began working on a project to improve the test results for those taking the RS/REHS exam. Candidates who take the exam in Minnesota were academically qualified, and had been well vetted to sit for the exam. However, on reviewing MDH summary data for those who had taken the exam for several years previous we found that the failure rate was very high, in one year nearly 50%. Many who failed missed by only a very few points. Those who thoroughly reviewed material and took the test again usually passed. That is an arduous process. The committee decided to conduct study sessions for exam candidates and started usually monthly study sessions in 2011.

In reviewing data and talking with those who had taken the exam we realized that candidates who prepared for the exam reviewed those topics that they liked, and those in which they already had experience. People who had experience in food, pools, and lodging did well in those areas, but not so well in air quality, hazardous wastes, radiation, or OSHA topics. So, our study sessions focused on those areas in which candidates had the least interest and/or experience. The passing rate much improved for those who participated in our study sessions. While study sessions were conducted in the Twin Cities metro area, study materials were also provided to out state candidates via email, and we hope that the material was also a benefit for them as well.

Our study session strategy has been based on the idea that those who have worked in a program area know that topic well. Test questions in a given area are usually pretty elementary, and people pass in the areas they know. In preparing for the 15 or more program areas covered by the exam, many candidates who read areas in which they have little familiarity not may not retain much of what they read. This is reflected on the exam. While we can't give experience in all of the program areas, our study sessions allow candidates to discuss and debate the materials which allows for better retention. We use exam type questions during our sessions to open discussions. We talk not only about why the right answers are correct, but also why the wrong answers are incorrect. Sessions are in an informal group setting.

We have reviewed many study materials over the last six years and the items on this DVD are the "core" items on which we have focused. Our primary resource has been *Environmental Engineering and Sanitation*, by Joseph E. Salvato. Both 4th and 5th editions will do, but 5th edition is the best. Some of the material is a bit dated but the basic material is good. The 5th edition can be viewed at <https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=http://books-library.online/files/download-pdf-ebooks.org-1494689915Wo6Z9.pdf&hl=ar> . Note that it is slow to download. There may be other sites where it can be found.

For general guidance we have also used the NEHA's "*A Guide for Environmental Health Responsibilities and Competencies*" RS/REHS study guide. This is a good place to begin sorting what areas are to be covered in the exam, and to get an idea of what should be reviewed. Beyond this we have collected and used materials specific to the program areas, much of it from the regulatory agencies that set the requirement for those areas. That is much of the materials on this disc. We learn that a couple of areas couple of areas, body art and confined animal feeding operations (CAFO), may also have questions on the exam and we have included study materials.

The study question used in our study sessions are from a few sources. Our basic set is from the CDC Self Study Course 3010-G. There is a set of questions for most program areas. While they are dated they cover the most basic areas, they provide good foundation material. We also use questions written by study session leaders and participants, based on the reading materials. These materials are included on this DVD. In study sessions we usually cover one topic in a 3-hour period. Some topics, like housing, are covered in two sessions. Study materials and questions are provided before the session, and candidates are given at least two weeks to prepare. While group study sessions are a good way to prepare, we hope that the material on this DVD will also be valuable for those unable to attend sessions.

We use many of the Tulane University SCPHP on-line courses, found at <http://lms.southcentralpartnership.org> to prepare for our study sessions. These are free but you will have to register to open and review the courses. See the “Environmental health” category under that page for the course listings.

On this DVD is include material for which there are no apparent copyright issues, such as government documents. For other materials a link is provided where the material can be viewed.
