Editor's note: NEHA strives to provide up-to-date and relevant information on environmental health and to build partnerships in the profession. In pursuit of these goals, we will feature a column from the Environmental Health Services Branch (EHSB) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in every issue of the Journal.

EHSB's objective is to strengthen the role of state, local, and national environmental health programs and professionals to anticipate, identify, and respond to adverse environmental exposures and the consequences of these exposures for human health. The services being developed through EHSB include access to topical, relevant, and scientific information; consultation; and assistance to environmental health specialists, sanitarians, and environmental health professionals and practitioners.

EHSB appreciates NEHA's invitation to provide monthly columns for the Journal. In the coming months, EHSB staff will be highlighting a variety of concerns, opportunities, challenges, and successes that we all share in environmental public health.
At CDC, the Environmental Health Services Branch (EHSB) has been involved in a number of partnerships. One of these is the Environmental Health Specialists Network (EHS-Net) (www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/EHSNet/default.htm), a partnership of nine states, FDA, USDA, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, and centers at CDC. EHSB has also formed partnerships with the National Association of County and City Health Officials and the Association of Food and Drug Officials to help reduce foodborne disease. NEHA has formed a partnership with CDC to provide epidemiologic training (Epi-Ready) to teams of sanitarians, nurses, epidemiologists, and laboratory personnel to improve investigation of foodborne-disease outbreaks.

Although much of the focus has been on partnerships at a national level, it is also important to form partnerships at the state and local levels. No single organization has the resources to achieve the objective of reducing foodborne disease. While working in food safety at a local health department, I saw firsthand the value of partnerships. The local health department partnered with local food service establishments, health educators, and health departments in adjacent jurisdictions to convince local legislators to adopt the FDA 1999 Food Code.

For the local health department to respond properly to foodborne-disease outbreaks, the environmental health section needed to partner with the laboratory and epidemiology sections.

Since September 11, the number and type of partnerships in food safety has increased. We who work in food safety need to form partnerships with law enforcement, hospitals, pharmacies, and others to support the activities required to respond to and prevent intentional contamination of our food supply.

The closing passage from the 2005 Food Code refers to the food industry and government agencies, but it applies as well to all groups that partner to promote public health: “Working together, we will rise to the challenge of making sure all consumers continue to enjoy a safe food supply.”

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