DIRECT FROM CDC ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BRANCH

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EHSB's Free Resources for Environmental Health Practitioners

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 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*.

In these columns, EHSB and guest authors share insights and information about environmental health programs, trends, issues, and resources. The conclusions in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of CDC.

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In today's fast-paced, budget-driven world, environmental health practitioners need all the help they can get keeping up-to-date with the latest research and best practices for their diverse field. The environmental health workforce needs to be strong, sustained, and prepared to meet today's challenges and improve the health and safety of all.

To help the environmental health workforce meet these challenges, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Environmental Health Services Branch (EHSB) provides free tools and guidance, training, and research to prevent foodborne illnesses and outbreaks, protect recreational and drinking water sources, and improve the performance of environmental health programs and practitioners. Our resources are specifically intended for practitioners and programs serving states, tribes, localities, and territories. This column highlights a sampling of the free resources available on the EHSB Web site (www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs).

Food Safety Resources

Around 68% of foodborne illness outbreaks occur at restaurants (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). And each year, 48 million Americans contract a foodborne illness, causing 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths (Scallan, Griffin, Angulo, Tauxe, & Hoekstra, 2011; Scallan et al., 2011). Furthermore, acute foodborne illnesses cost the U.S. an estimated $78 billion each year in health care, workplace, and other economic losses for these preventable diseases (Scharff, 2012). These food safety resources can help you prevent foodborne illness outbreaks and improve your investigation process when they do occur.

- **e-Learning on Environmental Assessment of Foodborne Illness Outbreaks:** Practice skills in an interactive virtual environment and learn to conduct environmental assessments during outbreak investigations (Figure 1).
- **Environmental Health Specialists Network (EHS-Net):** Explore our practice-based research on environmental causes of foodborne illness outbreaks.
- **National Environmental Assessment Reporting System (NEARS):** Participate in our system to capture environmental assessment data from foodborne illness outbreaks. (This system was formerly known as National Voluntary Environmental Assessment Information System [NVEAIS].)

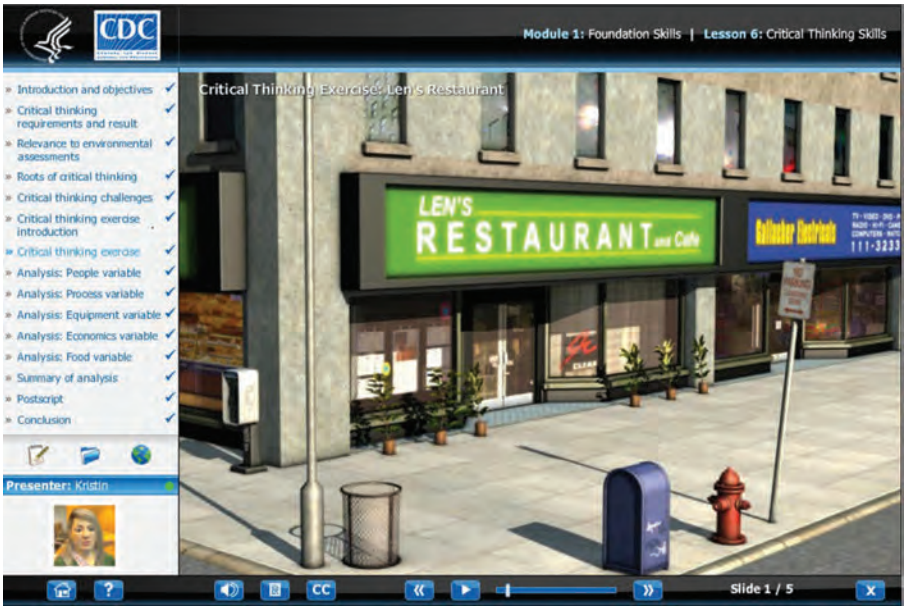
Water Protection Resources

Healthy water is key to a healthy population, and illnesses caused by contaminated well and spring water have continually grown over the past 35 years due to inadequate water treatment (Craun et al., 2010). Environmental health practitioners are crucial to protecting drinking water supplies; inspecting public swimming pools; and working to protect water during emergencies caused by drought, water outages, or outbreaks. These resources can help you prevent and respond to water-related threats to health before they start.

- **Drinking Water Advisory Communication Toolbox:** Access resources to help communities with all phases of water advisories including guidance, recommendations, instructions, templates, and other tools.

FIGURE **1**

Screenshot From CDC's e-Learning on Environmental Assessment of Foodborne Illness Outbreaks Showing a Simulated Environmental Assessment of a Restaurant



- **Emergency Water Supply Planning Guide for Hospitals and Health Care Facilities:** Develop an Emergency Water Supply Plan to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a total or partial interruption of health facilities' normal water supply.
- **Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC):** Reduce risk for waterborne illness outbreaks, drowning, and chemical poisoning at public pools and other aquatic venues with these free science-based guidelines.
- **Improving Drinking Water Programs:** Strengthen the performance of your drinking water program to ensure access to safe drinking water.
- **When Every Drop Counts: Protecting Public Health during Drought Conditions—a Guide for Public Health Professionals:** Understand and prepare for drought in your community.

Performance Improvement Resources

Environmental health programs can contribute to and benefit from collaborations to improve public health efforts throughout their department. These tools help you identify programmatic gaps in service and offer suggestions on how to improve them.

- **Environmental Public Health Performance Standards (EnvPHPS):** Use these standards to improve delivery of the 10 Essential Environmental Public Health Services in your community.
- **EnvPHPS Assessment Toolkit:** Prepare for, conduct, and act upon your EnvPHPS assessment with tools such as a facilitator guide, response analysis tool, report templates, and more.
- **Improving Environmental Public Health Services Performance to Meet Community Needs:** Explore resources to improve and align your program with broader public health department initiatives.
- **Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE EH):** Partner with your community to identify and address local environmental health issues using this guidebook.

Cross-Cutting Training Resources

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) notes that "the changing practice of public health requires local health department staff… to use skills in areas that were probably not part of their formal education, [making] on-the-job training critical (NACCHO, 2007)." The following online trainings can help you improve your knowledge.

- **Environmental Health Training in Emergency Response (EHTER):** Improve your knowledge, skills, and resources to address environmental health impacts of emergencies and disasters.
- **Environmental Public Health Online Courses (EPHOC):** Access comprehensive environmental health workforce development resources with this package of 15 e-learning courses.
- **Biology and Control of Vectors and Public Health Pests: The Importance of Integrated Pest Management:** Learn to control bed bugs and rodents through pest management approaches. Available for continuing education credits through NEHA.

Our nation's public health depends on proactive approaches to issues before they become widespread problems. With these resources, you can help improve your community's ability to prevent and investigate environmental health issues. These and other resources are freely available on CDC's Environmental Health Services Web site at www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs.

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Explore Our Web Site for Free Resources

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