A Glance at Environmental Health in West Virginia

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August 3, 2020
2020 Sanitarian Training Class
Environmental Health Programs in WV

Long Standing Programs in a new light

- Food
- Water
- Sewage
- Rabies
- Vector Control
- Recreational Water Facilities

Additional programs and functions

- General Sanitation
- Environmental Health Preparedness
- Source Water Protection
- Drinking Water Infrastructure Funding
- Fish Consumption
- Infectious Medical Waste
- Asbestos and Lead Abatement
- Clandestine Drug Lab Remediation
- Tattoos and Body Piercing
- Food Manufacturing/Bottled Water
- Tanning Facilities
- Harmful Algae Blooms
- Environmental/Water Lead Levels
- Radon
Food Safety

CDC estimates that contaminated food causes as many as 48 million illnesses annually.

The events of 9-11 and fears of terrorism have brought food security issues to the forefront with food processors and imports.
Shifting Focus

The FDA Food Code acknowledges most food borne illnesses are related to employee illnesses, personal hygiene, and time/temperature abuse of time and temperature control (TCS) foods.
West Virginia currently has over 170 bottled water distributors under permit utilizing 1200 labels. Permitted distributors from 9 different countries and 31 states. Currently WV has 6 bottled water plants.
Safe Drinking Water

Private Supplies

Surface water sources are not considered safe supplies without treatment.

Local Health Departments permit water well drilling and the state office certifies drillers.
Public Supplies

Over 70% of the state population is served by a public water system. Public Water Systems are monitored by the BPH – Environmental Engineering Division.

Any construction activity must be reviewed, approved and be permitted.
Safe Drinking Water

Source Water Protection
Safe Drinking Water

Drinking Water Treatment Revolving Fund

Since Inception in late 1990’s:
• Total Loans: more than 78 loans totaling over $151.7 million
• Average Loan: Approximately $1.95 million
• Smallest Loan: $100,000
• Largest Loan: $9,986,213
While outhouses still may have a place, septic systems today have gone high tech.

Environmental Health works at both the state and local level to permit on-site treatment systems.
New technologies precipitate the need for advanced training. A new hands-on training site for sewage technologies has been created by WVBPH – Office of Environmental Health Services and ETC – Environmental Training Center.
Required rabies vaccination of dogs and cats has greatly reduced the risk of exposure to rabies.

Public Health, in cooperation with other federal and state agencies participates in the oral raccoon rabies vaccination project.

Bait drops are based on active surveillance specimens submitted by environmental health staff in local health departments.
After WWII, there was a public education campaign to control the spread of disease by flies. Today, WV has endemic vector-borne illness - West Nile Virus and La Crosse Encephalitis. WV also has had a dramatic increase in the number of Lyme disease cases in the last few years and WV is now categorized as an endemic Lyme disease state.
Vector Control

Public Education

Public Education for Increasing Numbers of People spending time outdoors.

Different Insects/Diseases

Same old problem
Other Infectious Agents

Infectious Medical Waste

Facilities that generate more than 50 lbs. per month are regulated. Includes hospitals, nursing homes, and laboratories.
Other Infectious Agents

Tattoos and Body Piercing
Regulations for both body piercing and tattooing are in place in WV and enforced by local health departments to control infectious agents.
Many of the pools in WV were built during the 1950’s and 60’s. Local health departments struggle to get them into compliance with today’s higher tech rules.

While the permitting and regulations reside at the state level-local health is the primary enforcement agent.
Hotels, Motels and Recreational Facilities (Campgrounds, Parks, Mass Gatherings (Fairs & Festivals))
The General Sanitation Rule allows for regulation of many of the places that tourists visit.

Tourism is the #2 employer in WV.
Environmental Contaminants

Fish Consumption Advice

WV utilizes a risk-based approach to estimate the probability of adverse health effects. The principles consider information on:

- Contaminant concentration;
- types of adverse health effects;
- the ratio between the contaminant concentration, human body weight and time;
- and the expected exposure of the contaminants to the human population through fish consumption.
Environmental Contaminants

Asbestos and Lead Abatement
Environmental Contaminants

Clandestine Drug Labs

Conduct lab assessments

Investigate complaints

Process remediation plans

Licensing inspections

Inspect remediation projects

Technical assistance

Provide public education and outreach.
West Virginia has its share of natural disasters and emergencies.
During Disasters

Mobile water treatment plant for use when conventional plants washed out by flooding.

Training of operators for these systems is a current project.
Disaster Sanitation

- Food
- Water
- Housing
- Showers
- Sewage
- Waste Disposal

Disaster Sanitation is an all-consuming problem when floods occur.

Multiple problems
No easy answers
Threat Preparedness

post 9-11

- Expanding on state/local experience with disaster response
- Increased Training/Planning
- Coordination with other State and Local agencies
- Implementation of Incident Command Structures
The Radiological Health Program has developed partnerships with Beaver Valley Power Station and regularly exercises with other State and Local agencies to respond potential nuclear emergencies.
COVID-19 Response

- Providing guidance
- Enforcement of guidance and Executive Orders
- Consideration of Local Ordinances
- Responding to complaints
- Assisting with case investigation and contract tracing
Increased Public Water System Security

Oakland Public Service District
WELLHEAD PROTECTION AREA
help us protect our drinking water
REPORT SPILLS: 911
For Information Dial
(304) 797-8353

WV WARN
West Virginia's Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network
Threat Preparedness Today

Environmental Health planning includes addressing drinking water, wastewater, industrial chemicals, contaminants, housing, shelters, etc.
Research, treatment, public education, and enforcement of public policies/regulations lead to reduced public health impact of diseases.
No matter how our Health protection programs change, the human element remains a constant.
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