



National Environmental Health Association

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The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) represents more than 6,600 governmental, private, academic, and uniformed service sector environmental health professionals in the U.S. and its territories and internationally. NEHA is the profession's strongest advocate for excellence in the practice of environmental health as it delivers on its mission to build, sustain, and empower an effective environmental health workforce.

NEHA Presidential Declaration on Food Safety and National Food Safety Education Month, September 2021

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) recognizes that proper adherence to food safety principals and guidelines has a dramatic impact on the health and safety of individuals and communities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018) estimates that 1 in 6 Americans, over 48 million cases annually, become sick with a foodborne illness each year. Of those 48 million cases, 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die from eating contaminated food. Those most affected by foodborne illnesses include higher-risk groups: people over the age of 65, under the age of 5, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems. As a part of our mission to "advance the environmental health professional for the purpose of providing a healthful environment for all," NEHA is dedicated to reducing the burden of disease caused by foodborne illness and supporting food safety education through training, credentialing, and partnership.

Foodborne illness outbreaks can originate from any stage in the food production line. Our food system is broad and complex and encompasses the restaurants we frequent, as well as our grocery stores, suppliers, farmers, manufacturers, and many others. NEHA recognizes the need for safe food handling practices at every step of food production, from the farm to production, to transportation, and to the retail level. Foodborne illness continues to be a preventable public health concern. NEHA supports preventive measures to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness.

In addition, as we continue the fight against COVID-19, additional stress has been placed on those who work to ensure the safety of our food supply. The environmental health workforce has risen to the challenge of ensuring that the food we eat is safe and that workers involved in its production have safe working conditions that protect them and the consuming public.

The environmental health profession has worked resolutely, gone above and beyond their normal duties, and put in countless extra hours to do their part. Food safety programs have adapted by conducting and participating in virtual inspections, providing virtual support to food establishments, and working together to maintain clean and safe facilities throughout this pandemic.

We recognize the tireless work and dedication to the field of food safety. NEHA applauds the environmental health workforce for exceeding all expectations in this unprecedented time. NEHA is

committed to supporting our members as they face the challenges of COVID-19 and as they continue the work of ensuring that the food we eat is safe.

To support our members in their work, NEHA provides ongoing training and education to environmental health professionals, aspiring environmental health professionals, and graduating students entering the workforce from around the globe. NEHA also partners with federal, state, and local agencies; nongovernmental organizations; and industry stakeholders to create and promote a sustainable, healthful, and integrated food safety system.

It is in this spirit that NEHA celebrates National Food Safety Education Month in September 2021. Throughout September we will highlight important topics in the science of foodborne illness, as well as recognize the food safety heroes whose unwavering dedication to food safety has had an immense impact. It is vital that we work together to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness to improve the safety and well-being of our global community.

We are honored to celebrate National Food Safety Education Month and the environmental health professionals who support and uplift the mission of providing a healthful environment for all.

Signature:  Date: September 1, 2021

Roy Kroeger, REHS, RS
President, National Environmental Health Association

Reference

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). *Burden of foodborne illness: Findings*.
<https://www.cdc.gov/foodborneburden/2011-foodborne-estimates.html>