

## NEHA NEWS

### NEHA Cancels 2020 AEC Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) has closely monitored developments of the COVID-19 pandemic since its inception earlier this year. After careful deliberation, the NEHA board of directors has made the difficult but necessary decision to cancel the 84th Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition scheduled for July 13–16 in New York City. We prioritize the health of our members, attendees, partners, presenters, contractors, students, and staff over all other concerns.

“For the first time in our 83-year history we will be unable to gather face-to-face to celebrate our environmental health unsung heroes,” said Dr. David Dyjack, NEHA executive director. “We are desperately needed in communities everywhere to assist in a return to normalcy. Let our science drive the recovery and resiliency of our communities and let us share our lessons learned the next time we meet at the 2021 AEC in Spokane, Washington.” View Dr. Dyjack’s important message regarding cancellation of the 2020 AEC at [www.neha.org/node/61349](http://www.neha.org/node/61349).

NEHA is working on a plan for maintaining professional credentials and continuing education. Details will be announced upon finalization. Furthermore, in response to this need, NEHA is offering free access to online trainings to all environmental health professionals regardless of membership status until June 30, 2020. The online trainings include webinars, partner courses, and NEHA’s E-Learning videos of sessions from the 2017–2019 AECs. By completing these videos, webinars, and courses, environmental health professionals can earn continuing education contact hours toward their NEHA credentials. Information about the online training offerings and how to access them can be found at [www.neha.org/elearning](http://www.neha.org/elearning).

Visit the AEC website ([www.neha.org/aec](http://www.neha.org/aec)) for complete details regarding the 2020 AEC cancellation and refund information. Please remember to cancel any personal arrangements you have made including travel and lodging reservations.

#### Registration Refund Details

All NEHA 2020 AEC conference registrations, preconference workshop registrations, and special event registrations will automatically be refunded based on the receipt of payment. An e-mail confirmation will be sent after the registration cancellation has been processed. 2020 AEC registrants do not need to contact NEHA to initiate the refund process.

Refunds will be processed in the following manner:

- For payments received before December 31, 2019, a refund will be processed by April 30, 2020. For payments received between January 1, 2020 and February 29, 2020, a refund will be processed by May 31, 2020. For payments received on or after March 1, 2020, a refund will be processed by June 30, 2020.
- If the registration payment was made via credit card, the refund will be returned to that same credit card.

- If the registration payment was made via check, the refund will be returned with a check mailed to the main address listed in the MyNEHA account for that registration.
- If the registration payment was not submitted and there is an open invoice, the invoice will be canceled and removed from the account.
- If the registration payment was made by an employer, the refund will be made directly to the employer.
- If you would like to transfer your NEHA 2020 AEC registration fee to NEHA 2021 AEC in Spokane, Washington, or donate your registration fee to the NEHA general fund to assist us in offsetting the significant cost of canceling the conference, please e-mail [staff@neha.org](mailto:staff@neha.org).
- If a membership was purchased with the registration, individuals will be contacted by NEHA’s membership department about processing the refund. We would like these individuals to consider retaining their membership to support the operations of our organization.
- If a donation was made to NEHA with the registration, thank you. A letter has already been provided as a tax receipt and these donations will not be refunded.
- 2020 AEC exhibitors and sponsors have the choice of receiving a full refund, transferring funds to the 2021 AEC, or utilizing the funds for other NEHA marketing opportunities. Exhibitors and sponsors will be contacted via e-mail outlining these options and the refund policy. Please contact Soni Fink at [sfink@neha.org](mailto:sfink@neha.org) if you have additional questions.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during these challenging times. We deeply appreciate and are indebted to everyone who contributed their resources, time, and hard work in support of the 2020 AEC planning phases. We look forward to seeing you next year in Spokane!

### NEHA Conducts Rapid Needs Assessment in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Environmental health professionals are the second largest part of the local public health workforce behind nursing. To support this essential workforce during these uncertain times, NEHA conducted a rapid needs assessment of environmental health activities and needs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic on March 25, 2020. The convenience sample generated 1,175 responses from federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, and other environmental health program personnel. “The environmental health workforce is being called upon to provide critical public health assessment and assurance functions during this pandemic,” said Dr. David Dyjack, NEHA executive director. “Our report details the urgency to provide the workforce tools and resources they can use to effectively protect and promote the health of their communities.”

## Summary of Results

A total of 1,175 responses were received with more than half of the respondents (57%) indicating they were from local environmental health programs (Table 1). The next two largest workforces responding to the survey were other (19%, includes the private food industry, academia, healthcare facilities, and consulting and third-party auditing companies) and federal environmental health programs (13%). Respondents were asked to characterize the employee size of their environmental health programs. Of state, federal, and U.S. territory respondents, 39%, 59%, and 64% indicated a workforce of  $\geq 50$  employees, respectively. Conversely, local and tribal programs reported smaller workforces with 52% and 67% indicating a workforce of 1–10 employees, respectively.

All environmental health sectors responding to the survey indicated being actively involved in the COVID-19 response (Figure 1, page 44). Of the local environmental health program respondents,

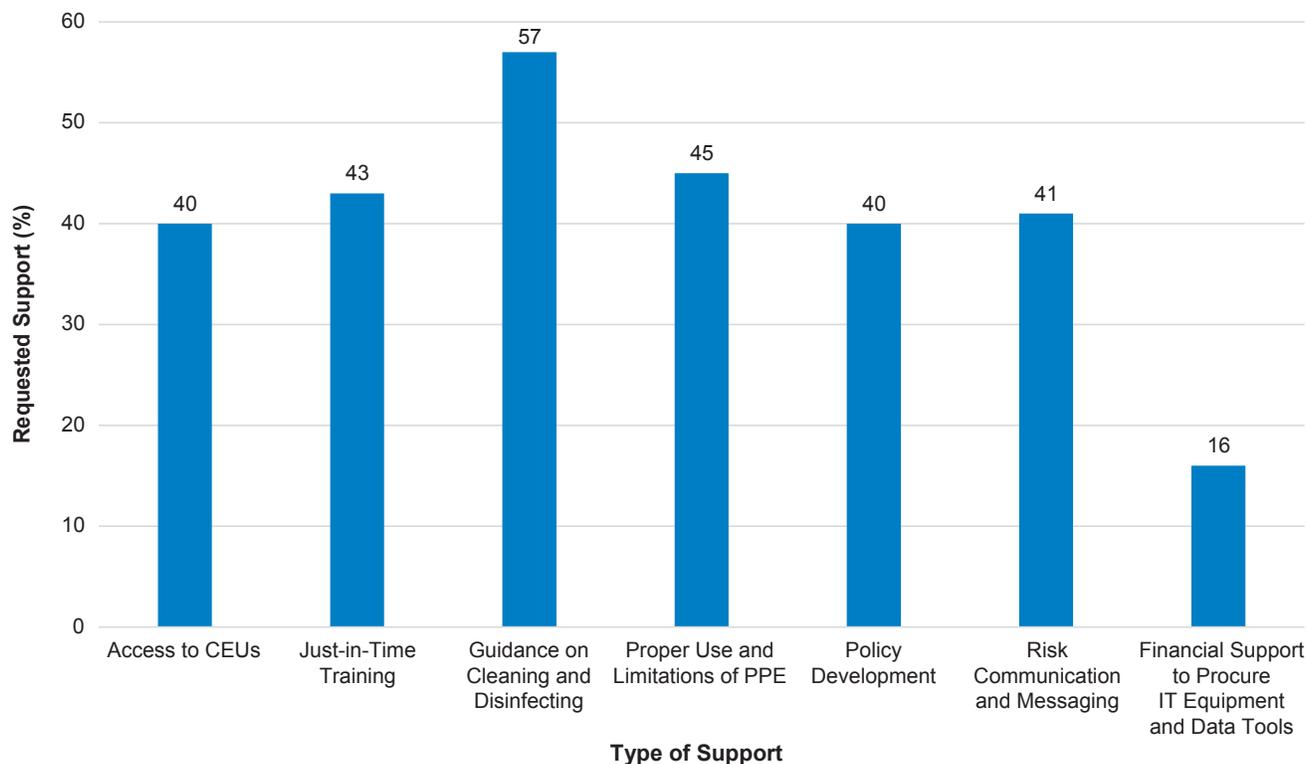
TABLE 1

**Environmental Health Workforce Breakdown of Rapid Needs Assessment Respondents (N = 1,175)**

Workforce Category	%
Local environmental health program	57
State environmental health program	13
Federal environmental health program	7
Tribal environmental health program	2
U.S. territory environmental health program	1
Other local, state, and federal department	1
Other	19

FIGURE 1

**Needs Identified by the Environmental Health Workforce That Can Be Supported by the National Environmental Health Association**



CEUs = continuing education units; IT = information technology; PPE = personal protective equipment.

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60% stated they were actively involved, followed by 47% of federal environmental health program respondents and 44% of tribal environmental health program respondents. The lowest reported involvement was from the other category (34%).

Respondents were asked to specify their access to COVID-19 situation reports and updates, as well as to technical COVID-19 response information and guidance. Tribal environmental health programs had the highest percentage of respondents (33%) reporting inadequate access to COVID-19 situation reports and updates. All other workforce categories, with the exception of other local, state, and federal departments (8%), had an 18–21% range of respondents reporting inadequate access to situation reports and updates. In terms of access to technical COVID-19 response information and guidance, tribal programs indicated the largest disparity with 39% not having adequate access, followed by local and state programs (31%), other (30%), and federal and U.S. territorial programs (27%). Over 77% of all program respondents reported that they use the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website as their primary source of information.

Looking specifically at the COVID-19 response for retail food safety, respondents had the opportunity to indicate the support their programs might need. In total, 50% of respondents reported a need for assistance in developing and providing guidance materials for the food industry on preparing safe food during the pandemic. Other needs indicated were communicating food safety requirements (41%), guidance for cottage food operations (21%), and fielding inquiries from the food industry (20%).

Finally, the survey explored how NEHA can support environmental health programs during this pandemic (Figure 1). The highest reported need was guidance on cleaning and disinfecting (57%). Other types of support included proper use and limitations of personal protective equipment (45%), just-in-time training (43%), risk communication and messaging (41%), and access to continuing education units and policy development (40%).

Thank you to all that responded to the rapid needs assessment. We appreciate the time spent completing the survey and providing us with your input. Your insight will guide us in determining how best to meet your needs. This report also provides evidence and support that the environmental health profession is crucial to the health of our communities and countries at all times. A full report of the assessment can be found at [www.neha.org/covid-19](http://www.neha.org/covid-19).

### NEHA 2020 General Election Results

By Angelica Ledezma ([aledezma@neha.org](mailto:aledezma@neha.org))

Elections are a critical part of the democratic process and are one way to provide members a voice in the running of their organization. NEHA voting members have an opportunity to vote for candidates of contested board of director and regional vice-president positions, as well as cast votes regarding proposed Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws changes. National officers of NEHA's board of directors serve a 1-year term in each officer position (sec-

ond vice-president, first vice-president, president-elect, president, and immediate past-president) for a total of 5 years. Regional vice-presidents (RVPs) serve 3-year terms.

Eligible voters were encouraged to vote during the month of March and the deadline to vote was March 31, 2020. The following are results from the 2020 general election.

#### Second Vice-President

There were two qualified candidates for the second vice-president position: Thomas J. Butts, MSc, REHS, and Timothy Murphy, PhD, REHS, DAAS. All eligible NEHA members were asked to vote for the position of second vice-president and Butts received the majority of votes. Both candidate profiles were published in the March 2020 *Journal of Environmental Health* and on NEHA's website. Butts will assume the second vice-president position in July 2020.

#### Regional Vice-Presidents

NEHA's membership is broken down into nine regions that represent U.S. geographic areas, as well as members in the U.S. military and abroad. The terms of three RVP positions expire in 2020—Region 1: Matthew Reighter; Region 5: Tom Vyles; and Region 7: Tim Hatch.

Regions 5 and 7 had only one eligible candidate and did not appear on the election ballot. Each of these candidates will automatically assume their RVP roles in July 2020. Region 1 had no candidate applications received by the initial deadline of December 1, 2019. Per NEHA bylaws, the board of directors made an appointment to fill the vacancy after putting out an additional call for nominations in Region 1. Following the call for nominations, two qualified candidates—Frank Brown, MBA, REHS/RS, and David E. Riggs, MS, REHS/RS—were considered by the board of directors.

The unopposed and elected individuals will assume their positions in July 2020 and their terms will expire in 2023. All candidate profiles were published in the March *JEH*. The new and returning RVPs are as follows:

- Region 1: Frank Brown, MBA, REHS/RS (Region 1 includes Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington);
- Region 5: Traci (Slowinski) Michelson, MS, REHS, CP-FS (Region 5 includes Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas); and
- Region 7: Tim Hatch, MPA, REHS (Region 7 includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee).

A listing of current NEHA national officers and RVPs, along with state breakdowns for each region, can be found on page 36. More information about NEHA's governance, including its Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, the election process, and associated deadlines, can be found at [www.neha.org/about-neha/governance](http://www.neha.org/about-neha/governance).

Thank you to all members who participated in this year's election!

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## NEHA Staff Profile

As part of tradition, NEHA features new staff members in the *Journal* around the time of their 1-year anniversary. These profiles give you an opportunity to get to know the NEHA staff better and to learn more about the great programs and activities going on in your association. This month we are pleased to introduce you to one NEHA staff member. Contact information for all NEHA staff can be found on page 36.



### Brian Hess

I joined NEHA in May 2019 as the program and operations manager in the Program and Partnership Development Department in the Denver office. Before joining NEHA, I was the director of member programs at the Association of Academic Health Centers in Washington, DC, where I managed the domestic programs for an association representing over 140 academic health centers in the U.S. and abroad. In this position I worked with academic health center leaders and staff to create conference programs, webinar

content, and a new social media program, as well as managed grant funded projects, internal teams, and executive leadership groups.

I have over 12 years of nonprofit management experience in scientific and health-related associations, having worked in a variety of roles including education, program management, committee management, member services, and communication. In addition to my work experience, I earned my master's degree in anthropology from the University of Colorado Denver with concentrations in medical anthropology and political ecology. My academic interests lie in the intersection of human society, health, and the environment, and the significant impact that social determinants of health—the air we breathe, the water we drink, the communities we live in, etc.—have on people's lives.

At NEHA, I help to manage and improve internal processes including budgets and grant reporting, as well as liaising and communicating with other departments across the association. I also work on water safety, informatics, and vector programs, and interacting with our members, funders, and external partners on a variety of programmatic issues. My goal at NEHA is to draw on my education and experience to advance the environmental health profession and help the hardworking environmental health professionals who constantly strive to make our world safer and healthier. 🐾

## Did You Know?

NEHA has created a new blog series: Environmental Health Heroes in the Time of COVID-19. Through these blogs, the work of NEHA members responding to the COVID-19 pandemic from the frontlines will be highlighted. Read what NEHA members are doing on local, industry, and international levels to ensure the health and safety of the public and the environment during these challenging times at [www.neha.org/membership-communities/get-involved/day-in-life](http://www.neha.org/membership-communities/get-involved/day-in-life).

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