



National Environmental Health Association

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Public and Environmental Health Professionals remain at the Forefront of the COVID-19 Crises

The dynamic nature of environmental health means it is essential. Environmental health professionals ensure the sanitary conditions within restaurants, inspect the food, validate that facilities are safe. Their skills are essential to reopening the country.

Tim Hatch,
Deputy Director Emergency Preparedness and Response
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The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) encourages state, local and federal leaders to follow the guidance and direction of their public and environmental health professionals in the effort to reopen the country after Coronavirus (COVID)-19 quarantine measures. The virus likely can be contained, and its potential consequences minimized if the insights of medical, scientific, public, and environmental health professionals are at the forefront of decision making.

On January 30, 2020, the [World Health Organization declared the 2019-nCoV \(COVID-19\) outbreak a public health emergency of international concern](#). A day later on January 31, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar [declared a national public health emergency](#) in response to the COVID-19 virus. By April, every state and territorial governor had followed suit declaring their own emergencies and issuing stay-at-home orders, leading to an unprecedented nation-wide lockdown to the pandemic. These decisions were made based on the insight and guidance of the team of health care, public, and environmental health professionals of the nation.

In [declaring these emergencies](#), state, local and federal officials have looked to the public and environmental health community to provide guidance and direction. It has been these professionals that have warned of the virus, offered responses to limit the severity of the virus, provided data to reinforce the rationales for such responses, and have 'flattened the curve' in order for hospital and emergency response professionals to have the capacity to respond.



NEHA commends these officials in listening to and following the guidance of the public and environmental health professionals. These are the professionals that understand the virus, know their community and understand the delicate nature of the stress this lock-down has had on their regulated community.

As the nation moves [toward a reopening](#), the state, local, and federal officials making these determinations must remember the knowledge, wisdom, and insights that the medical, scientific, public, and environmental health community has provided during this pandemic. NEHA acknowledges the importance the federal government offers in providing medical, public and environmental health services. NEHA also notes that public and environmental health services are primarily powers granted to the states by the U.S. Constitution, which often delegate such powers to their local governments.

Policy adopted by the NEHA Board on May 8, 2020.

Resources:

NGA and ASTHO [Roadmap for Recovery: A Public Health Guide for Governors](#)

ECOS COVID-19 [Resources for Members State Environmental Agency Resources](#)

American Enterprise Institute [COVID Response and Recovery Plan](#)