



Newsletter

Change is Here!

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2008 IEHA AEC

March 3-5 2008 IEHA Education Conference: Sharpen the Saw

Dynamic speaker and FDA regional specialist John Marcello, key-noted the 2008 conference with “The Discipline of Food Safety Leaders.” Using his vast experience and knowledge of food safety issues, Mr. Marcello pointed out that the regulatory side of public health often is ineffective because it does not communicate using the method(s) that work with the food industry, especially the

food workers.

Most of the regulators and food industry management are comfortable with print communication and abstract ideas.. The front line foodservice personnel are usually oriented to oral and visual instruction. To improve communication regulators should use fewer hand-outs and brochures and spend time with stories that show cause and effect, relationships, use repetition, simple posters, and fact sheets.

Citing the Journal of Environmental Health cover story of 15 environmental health leaders, he recalled NEHA’s executive director, Nelson Fabians

observation of the disconnect between the importance of the work we do, the nature of the work we do and the passion we show for it. What erodes the passion? Do we have a job or a career; do we do tasks or make contributions; choose a position or service; climb the professional ladder or impact the discipline? While the size of the food industry has doubled, environmental health programs have diversified and we end up “doing more with less.”

Human resource practices have not been met for the number of employees, having a com-

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Change Is Here!

As the nation will have a new President so does IEHA The IEHA Executive Board appointed Steve Pew to be interim President until the 2009 meeting where an election will

be held.

Here is Interim President Pew’s Message:

Appointed President’s Message:

After successfully giv-

ing Dee Johnson poor evaluations, I was finally able to get her to find another job. Ok I’m kidding on the eval thing but Dee did choose to move on and

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change her career path this year. I really want to wish her the best of luck with her new career and thank her for putting together two excellent conferences as President-elect. Unfortunately with her new job she is unable to continue as President of IEHA. That's apparently where I come in. After serving four years as Secretary/Treasurer the IEHA Executive Council appointed me as *acting* President for the next year. During the next Annual Education Conference (AEC) members will get the opportunity to vote to keep me for another year or get another president for 2009-2010.

Hopefully this isn't the only change that members will see during the next year. We are currently looking at a way to make registration easier for members and less of a headache for the secretary/treasurer, as well as, some other changes to the AEC. Since nothing is final I won't say more but keep your eyes open for new 'stuff' in the future. I'm really excited about it!

As I sit here thinking about what else to write, I find myself reflecting back on my time as Secretary/Treasurer. It was a wonderful experience I wouldn't trade for anything and I want to thank everyone who helped me during the conference. However, there's one thing that keeps bothering me. Each time a new member joined the organization their first question was: "what do I get with my membership?". I also had EHS's and other individuals who had been members tell me they wouldn't join be-

cause they didn't get anything for their membership.

My patented answer was that membership fees help to keep the organization in the 'black' and you got a reduction on fees to attend the AEC and you would get a copy of the Digest and Newsletter each year. However, I have finally figured out that you do get much more than that. The time I've spent attending the conference does wonders for my continuing education for my REHS license obviously, but most important is the camaraderie that a person gets talking with others around the state. I have found out and learned things that I never would have had I not attended a conference. But what I've really realized is that IEHA is **YOUR** organization. You get for your membership exactly what you want. If all you want is to attend the AEC and be able to vote, then you can have that. If, however, you would like to see things done differently PLEASE get involved in either a committee or run for an office. It is a lot of work but the time you spend is rewarding and well worth the effort.

I'm sure you'll hear more from me on this.

With that, have a great Holiday season!!

Steve Pew

Editor's Corner: "Change is Coming."

It is amazing how rapidly time seems to go the more we have experienced it. Sort of like a road trip that with repetition goes faster. So it is with getting out an IEHA newsletter, only this time getting it published was a matter of reading my notes about the annual education conference. My handwriting is more "doctor"-like than I recall. Perhaps it is my rush to capture every spoken word or maybe it is just my eyesight or lack of imagination in deciphering that chicken-scratching.

Enough excuses. Here is the IEHA newsletter, limited to the sessions I attended.

I look forward to the Digest as it is mainly a reproduction of already written material, articles, and the 2009 AEC agenda (tentative). So what is changed? Well, President-elect Dee Johnson moved on to another job and resigned. See "Appointed President's Message."

And I should also be moving on, so am retiring as the Editor/Publisher ("Are you still doing that?" my spouse asks me when I tell her it is time to publish another IEHA Digest.) I am still at CDHD, but it is time to hand the Digest/Newsletter responsibility to someone else who enjoys editing written communication, fabricating stories, and drumming up messages from our IEHA officers.

Thanks,
Bob

Personnel/Personal

Have you met the **new members** of your staff? Have you introduced them to the other districts? Now is the time to do so. Please send a short resume of new faces and job duties, changes in the district, to me, Bob Jue, so I can share with everyone.

To get the ball rolling, again, I will tell you what has been happening since March 2008 at CDHD aka PHD4. We have had two retirements: Malcohm McGregor and Bob Mayer. As a result **Jerry Davis** is inspecting food establishments in Ada Co. For those not familiar, we divide up inspection areas in the county by zip code.

Tammie McCarter has passed the REHS exam on her first try. Josh Kriz, elected Area B rep, organized a nice area meeting that will be reported in the upcoming Digest.

Ann Potcher has added to her duties: she teaches the ServSafe class.

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Reminder from the Awards Committee Chair

Start now in putting together the nominations for Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) Award. The deadline is February 2009. Please do not wait until the last moment. Anyone can nominate a deserving person. The published criteria does not have to be met in its entirety, but points are assigned to the nominee and then the winner's selected on basis of points. For the purposes of the EHS Award be aware that statewide impact work gets the most points. We are truly interested in rewarding someone who has made a difference or contribution statewide or something that possibly affects interagency work.

It is a great testimony for the nominee if collaborating recommendations can come from these other agencies or even from the community.

There are a lot of excellent employees that are doing their job in an extraordinary manner. Remember, if you want to use the Awards time at IEHA to acknowledge a "job well done", let me know. I will provide time for you to recognize the person. This might be a great time to give a thank-you to an employee for special projects work, especially if it has only local impact vs. state impact. It is important to give all employees an opportunity to grow and be recognized.

If there are questions, please call or e-mail.
Thanks and have a great day.

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petitive wage, incentives in pay or recognition, health insurance, or retirement benefits.

In an organization the culture should be everyone does their part, the company is well managed, treats employees fairly so they know “the company cares about me and my family responsibilities.”

Behaviorial changes take 3-6 months. Barriers to making such changes in food safety include lack of time for and interactive inspection, the power dynamic between regulators and the foodservice worker, lack of knowledge or skills to communicate across cultural barriers, and high turnover in the foodservice industry.

We should be shifting from being a foodsafety inspector to being a foodsafety system analyst. That analysis shows the most dangerous organism in the food safety is “Homo sapien.” Marcello urged us to take the new paradigm of viewing a violation of food code as a “system” weakness or breakdown.

With this idea, we must continue our passion for the task. Marcello cautioned, without passion, without being activists, no one will notice us. We must discipline ourselves to not allow our passion to be eroded. “You can’t motivate people. You can only thwart their motivation because people motivate themselves.” (Peter Drucker, management guru)

“Produce quality, get credibility and that draws people to you, you get growth and strength and with that you acquire the abilitly to weld influence.” (N. Fabian)

In closing, Marcello listed three

critical things a leader must do: Remove—barriers which prevent people from being self-motivated; Lead—in action required to achieve desired results; Inspire—the passion within people to perform better. Jim McLaren “A hero is someone intent on making the world better place to live.”

Patrick Guzzle, Idaho Food Program manager, opened the food safety session with a review of state food program audits: reducing the number of inspection forms with NO (not observed) and NA (not applicable) on inspection form. The most obvious way to reduce NOs is to select the time of day for the inspection to include meal or cooking times.

Brady Carter, Decagon Devices, gave an informative presentation about water activity, a_w , and how it affects microbial growth. Carter started with a description of water activity, that it is a measure of the energy status of the water in a system and predicts which microorganisms will grow in a food.

Water activity is derived from the

fundamental principles of thermodynamics and physical chemistry. A_w is the ability of water to escape into the atmosphere. Expressed as a formula it would be water vapor pressure above the sample at °C divided by the water vapor pressure of pure water at the same temperature. Pure distilled water has $a_w = 1$.

Free and bound water are not a measure of a_w . Factors are colliptic effects or solute interaction; matrix effects of surface interactions; capillary effects. Moisture content is the percentage of water. Water activity is better for determining a food’s safety.

A saturated slurry of NaCl has a 0.75 a_w in a closed system. Cheese and cracker in the same package will have the same a_w . If they were different there would be texture changes. Water activity helps provide microbial control, stability, shelf life, texture, and compatibility.

Measuring water activity runs the gamut of hair and humidty, freezing point depression, electric hygrometers, chilled mirror dew-point, and electrical sensors. The latter requires calipoint, and elec-

GROWTH LIMITING A_w		
A_w	Microbe	Example
.91	Gram negative	E. coli, Salmoness spp., Listeria
.86	Gram positives	Staphylococcus
.88	Yeast (practical limit)	
.80	Production of mycotoxin	
.70	Molds (practical limit)	
.62	Osmophilic yeast	
.61	Xenophilic molds	
.60	Absolute limit for all growth	(Continued on page 5)

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trical sensors. The latter requires calibration whereas the chilled mirror method does not. It is accurate except in the presence of volatiles.

Scott (1953 & 1957) showed microbes have a limiting a_w . Lowering a_w reduces their ability to survive; it prevents growth but does not kill the microbe. *C. botulinum* type A has a growth a_w range of .93-.95 and produces toxin at a minimum .97 with pH constant. [Ed. Note: Decreases in a_w had more inhibitory effect than decreases in pH. (Dodds, KL 1989, Appl Environ Microbiol)]. *Listeria* does not grow at $<.92 a_w$. Hurdle technology is used to control bacterial growth in foods: a_w , pH, temperature, natural and added inhibitors, and oxygen (redox potential).

Decagon Devices has been making water activity measurement equipment for nearly 20 years. The portable unit is the Pawkit Portable a_w meter. (www.wateractivity.com)

Problem Solving and Decision Making was Ralph Jones' presentation. Jones is the instructor of Farm Business Management at Idaho State University and chairman of Business and Services at American Falls, ID. Using photos showing the results of bad decision making (what came to mind were Darwin Award runner-ups), Jones pointed out pathways for making a decision. Decision-making.

People are often poor decision-makers. View our current economic situation – record debt, mortgage foreclosures, bankruptcy filings. Even running a red light can have negative consequences. “In most situations, skill levels are determined by the number of times you perform or repeat a task.” This applies to physical and mental skills. So, why is it that we have difficulty making decisions? It is not the outcome that impedes us it is getting the decision over with.

Jones reminded that probability is the chance that something will happen next. It will eventually happen, i.e. all events will occur! The points are 1) Small decisions become big decisions through frequency; 2) Decisions involve consequences. Spend more time making the right decision and less time correcting wrong decisions. 3) Can a decision be revoked? [Only with instant replay.] No, make the right decision the first time. 4) Think Preventive, not Re-

actionary. Reactionary decisions often involve lots of time, sums of money, heartache.

A systematic or Six step process to Decision-making [Could be analogous to HACCP].

1. Identify the problem. Separate the symptoms from the problem.
2. Determine alternative courses of action. Use practical, feasible, cost effective research.
3. Analyze all pertinent alternatives. Establish comparative standards, designate priorities (what absolutely needs to be satisfied).
4. Select the best alternatives. Know your values and assess your goals, resources, strengths, and weaknesses. Normally your weaknesses lead to a bad decision. Anticipate problems that might arise from a bad decision.
5. Implement the decision. Do it quickly and efficiently.

Follow up the decision. Measure success and use the results as feedback.

Systematic approaches to decision-making fail because humans tend to not follow the system.

Suggested references: Any book on the Titanic, John D. Arnold books, Into Thin Air – Jon Krakaur.

Idaho Solid Waste Association's Ted Hutchison moderated a session of Solid Waste Disposal Safety. Mr Hutchinson has been an Ada Co, ID landfill employee for 12 years.

He mentioned that monitoring the construction and demolition pit at the landfill was a good economic indicator and that (in March 2008) it was showing a slowdown in construction. He began the session discussing personal protective equipment (PPE). Solid waste disposal has many physical and health hazards and the level of PPE will depend on the hazards encountered. Gloves, footwear, hats, hearing protection (ear plugs), goggle are typically issued. They must be clean, fit well and of good design and construction. So others (supervisor) can easily see it, PPE should be highly visible.

Employees are trained in knowing what PPE is needed and how to use or put it on. The OSHA PPE guide is 3151-12R 2003 at www.osha.gov

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Safety Plans. Ada county requires contractors have a safety plan but the county does not review it. The contractor is responsible and liable if employees do not follow the plan. Risk management and legal departments should be consulted.

Vaccinations (tetanus, Hep A&B), hard hats, and leather palmed gloves are required for on-the-ground staff.

Clandestine Drug Labs.

Labs can be small and unsophisticated or professional. Professional labs may get an 80% yield, others a 20% yield. They may be called Red P, tweaker, or Mex-nat labs. The main ingredients are phosphorus (from the striker plate for matches), pseudoephedrine, and iodine. The resultant product is very acidic and is neutralized with Drano. The meth oil rises to the top and is decanted. An acidic gas is percolated through the oil to precipitate the meth which is then filtered. (This obviously, is not the full recipe.) Large collection of batteries, matchbooks, and household chemicals may indicate the presence of a meth lab.

Urine odors in a neighborhood may signal a nearby lab. The process of making meth is a fire and chemical inhalation hazard.

Landfill operators are often faced with **Household Hazardous Waste** (HHW) as defined by EPA. It is estimated that 30 pounds are generated per capita annually.

Inert ingredients can be hazardous if mixed with other chemicals. The best option to reduce HHW is to use it up then triple rinse the container before disposal.

Operators should check the loads coming to the landfill and HHW should be separated out of municipal solid waste. A safer operation should have landfill employees well trained, all loads, if possible, should be inspected, loads kept track of, rules enforced, and the municipality should provide education and outreach to the community. Recycling of various waste should be encouraged or required, loads segregated, containment procedures in place for spills, leaks, and broken containers.

Electronic equipment waste is a big problem. In 2007, the Ada County Landfill handled 18,600 units cathode ray tubes (televisions and older computer monitors).

Student Presentations. BSU students presented research papers and Editor would appreciate summaries of each for including in the Digest 2009.

IEHA

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Idaho Environmental Health Association

THANK YOU, IEHA

I would like to express my gratitude in being selected to receive the 2008 IEHA Scholarship. Your generous award will bring me closer to achieving my goal of graduating next year. I am very excited about the opportunities that await me when I enter the field of Environmental Health and I look forward to tackling the many challenges involved in that field. Thank you again for your generosity.

Sincerely,
Nancy Spinazzolo