Notes from Your Section Officers

We are excited about the upcoming TPHA 2019 AEC and hope we will see you there! There is a great line-up of Environmental and Consumer Health presentations, break-out sessions representing all TPHA Sections, and plenary sessions such as the State of the State’s Health.

Pre-conference events include a workshop on leveraging your data. The workshop is sponsored by the Epidemiology Section and is a topic that Environmental and Consumer Health Section members expressed interest in last year.

The conference will be held at the

If You Haven’t Registered Yet – It’s Time!

<table>
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<th>TPHA Annual Education Conference (AEC)</th>
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<tr>
<td>San Antonio, Texas</td>
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<td>March 18-20, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<th>Environmental and Consumer Health Section Business Meeting</th>
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<tr>
<td>Come join and provide input on Tuesday, March 19, 2019</td>
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<td>from 8:00 am-9:00 am</td>
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*Continuing education credit for multiple disciplines will be provided for TPHA (including registered sanitarian)

Henry B. González Convention Center located Downtown along the banks of the River Walk. In addition to extensive education and networking opportunities, the schedule allows time to explore beautiful San Antonio on your own. The full program and registration information can be accessed here.

When you plan your conference experience, be sure to include the Environmental and Consumer Health Section Business meeting. Your voice is needed as we plan for 2019-2020.

This is our first quarterly newsletter. Many thanks to our Secretary Julia Butler for contacting folks around the state for the updates and training information in the following pages. We plan to provide newsletters quarterly and hope we will hear your suggestions for content!

We Hope to See You in San Antonio!
Environmental Sampling

BioWatch

BioWatch is a system designed to detect the presence of biological agents that have been intentionally released into the air. The BioWatch program operates in selected high-threat metropolitan areas across the country. BioWatch involves a large network of stakeholders from public health, emergency management, law enforcement, laboratory, scientific, and environmental health organizations around the country who collaborate to detect and prepare a coordinated response to a bioterrorism attack. More information can be found at the BioWatch website.

Sampling for Legionella: Waco-McLennan County Public Health District

Legionnaires’ disease is a serious type of pneumonia (lung infection) caused by Legionella bacteria. People can get sick when they breathe in small droplets of water in the air (mist) that contain the bacteria or accidentally swallow water into the lungs containing Legionella. More information on Legionella can be found https://www.cdc.gov/legionella/about/index.html

Waco-McLennan County Public Health District (WMCPHD) received reports of seven laboratory-confirmed cases of Legionnaire’s Diseases who stayed at a Waco area hotel from August 2016 to August 2018. Upon receipt of the reports, the hotel was contacted and an environmental assessment was conducted.

Approximately one hundred water samples were tested from multiple locations including water heaters, hot tub, swimming pool, hot tub filtration system, guest rooms where the cases stayed, and several other guest rooms and ice machines. Two samples tested positive: one from a guest room in April 2018 and one from the hot tub filtration system in July 2018. Due to the complexity of the investigation, the WMCPHD requested assistance from CDC and DSHS.

Multiple actions and remediation steps were taken from August 2016 to September 2018 to include: two additional environmental assessments were conducted, control orders to notify guests and employees of investigation, water heater temperatures were raised, CDC visited and collected samples, the hot tub was permanently closed following positive test results, the aerators at the points of use (i.e. faucets) were replaced in all the guest rooms, a new water heater was put in place, and the Water Management Plan is being modified to guarantee a more aggressive action plan in the event of a positive test result or new cases. The last step was a control order issued to maintain a Water Management Plan until October 2021. The WMPCHD staff will conduct active surveillance and ensure that the facility is in compliance with the control order.
**Legionella: Williamson County and Cities Health District**

After epidemiologists determined there was an outbreak at this hotel (2+ confirmed cases at the same facility within a year), Environmental Health Services (EHS) went to the facility’s pool area and collected 9 initial samples. WCCHD required the hotel to contract with a third party environmental health vendor for all water sampling and remediation procedures. The vendor, along with WCCHD Environmental staff, collected pre-remediation bulk water and biofilm samples per CDC guidance from 86 locations throughout the hotel and sent to ELITE testing laboratory for testing by PCR and culture.

Remediation of the entire water system from point of entry was conducted using hyper-chlorination of ALL potable water systems, followed by super heating. All water heaters were drained and cleaned, and several replaced. The pool and spa, and associated filtration systems, were drained and scrubbed with XY-12 sanitizing solution for several hours. Sand filters were emptied and replaced. Post-remediation water tests were conducted from the same 86 locations, and were tested by PCR and culture.

Pre-remediation water sampling confirmed the presence of Legionella spp. through PCR, though culture results were all negative. All post-remediation water and biofilm samples were negative for Legionella bacteria. After water system remediation and negative post-remediation culture results, the hotel was authorized to reopen to guests, with the exception of the pool/spa room. After confirmation of a second round of post-remediation tests, authorization to open the pool/spa room was granted.

**Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM) Waco-McLennan County Public Health District**

Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM) *Naegleria fowleri* is a free-living microscopic ameba. It can cause a rare and devastating infection of the brain called primary amebic meningoencephalitis (PAM). The ameba is commonly found in warm freshwater (e.g. lakes, rivers, and hot springs) and soil. *Naegleria fowleri* usually infects people when contaminated water enters the body forcefully through the nose. More information on PAM can be found at the CDC's website.

In September of 2018, the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District was notified of a case of a New Jersey resident diagnosed with Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM) who had recent exposure to a Water Park near Waco, Texas.

An environmental assessment conducted by personnel from Waco-McLennan County Public Health District, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DShS), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revealed conditions that could lead to waterborne illness throughout the venue’s water systems. Lab testing later confirmed the presence of *Naegleria fowleri*, in two of the venue’s water features.

The WMCPHD worked with the Water Park owner to close the facility to the public and make recommendations for the development and implementation of a comprehensive water management plan. This included the hiring of a consultant to design and install a water disinfection system to work with this unique venue.
Community Exposure to Chemical Spill

On October 3, 2018 Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) issued a do not use order for a community in East Texas due to a backflow incident causing fungicide to enter the water supply. Approximately 500 connections serving around 1,500 customers were affected. The do not use order included bathing, washing clothes, preparing food, drinking, gardening and drinking water for pets.

The suspected fungicide, NeXgen®, contained two active compounds of concern: methylene bis-thiocyanate, and Chlorothalonil. Exposure to these compounds via ingestion, skin exposure or eye exposure may cause gastrointestinal irritation, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, skin and eye irritation and corrosion of the mouth, throat, esophagus, and stomach tissue.

TCEQ worked with the water supplier to ensure public awareness of the situation and implemented multiple measures, including water sampling to determine the extent of the potential impact in the water system, flushing the system and supplying bottled water to the affected households.

Texas Department of State Health Services was also available to take calls regarding health concerns.

Preparedness and Consumer Health Protection

In 2018, The Emergency Preparedness and Recovery: A Toolkit for Rural Communities was shared and well received by the Emergency Management Coordinators (EMCs) in DSHS Public Health Region 7 located in Central Texas. A link to the toolkit can be found here.

The Burnet County EMC, Department of State Health Services Public Health Region 7 (DSHS PHR 7) Preparedness and Epidemiology staff, and Consumer Protection staff collaborated to create and present a training in January 2019 for Food and Water Safety for Volunteers in Shelters and Basecamps.

Other Upcoming Conferences and Trainings

Preparedness Summit
St. Louis, Missouri
March 26-29, 2019

American Planning Association (APA) 2019 National Planning Conference
San Francisco, California
April 13-16, 2019

Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) Conference
San Antonio, Texas
April 15-18, 2019

11th Annual Healthcare Preparedness Symposium
Galveston, Texas
October 9-11, 2019

Texas Environmental Health Association (TEHA) Conference
Austin, Texas
October 14-18, 2019

American Planning Association (APA) Texas
Waco, TX
November 6-8, 2019