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# NEWSLETTER

*International Federation of Environmental Health*

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*April 2009 Edition*

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## **Welcome to the April Newsletter**

The tragic events caused by fires and floods in Australia during the early part of February 2009 will remain with the people of that country for many years to come. While fires raged in Victoria, Queensland was suffering the effects of serious flooding. The live pictures beamed around the world from the news gathering media tended, understandably, to concentrate on showing the fire and its effect on people and property. Fortunately our colleagues in the EHA are trained to deal with emergencies, although it is doubtful whether anyone could possibly have been ready for the scale of these disasters happening at the same time. The thoughts of the environmental health community worldwide go out to all those affected.

## **Council meeting and AGM**

Full details of the Council meeting and Annual General Meeting to be held on Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 July 2009 in Singapore will appear in the July edition of the Newsletter. However, the Federation Council and the Asia Pacific Regional Group wish to encourage as many members as possible to attend. The arrangements for the meetings are being made by the Society of Environmental Health, Singapore.

## **New Zealand Institute of Environmental Health (NZIEH)**

There have been some changes recently within NZIEH. As previously reported Carole Simpson has taken over as President and Ivan Nicholson is now the new Executive Director. Both Carole and Ivan replace Mike Orchard who held both posts for the previous three years. Mike has taken a position teaching environmental health at Hebei University in China.

Elections at the end of 2008 saw a new Government elected in New Zealand. Prior to the election a new Public Health Bill was awaiting its second reading and a draft Food Bill was ready for introduction. The election of a new Government has resulted in a review of priorities and policy decisions so it is uncertain what changes may be made to the direction of the Public Health Act and Food Bill.

The Ministry of Health is looking at implementing generic base competency standards for the public health workforce in New Zealand, which would also apply to environmental health professionals. The NZIEH is involved in ongoing discussions on this matter.

## **Asia and Pacific Regional Group**

Regional Group Chair, Peter Davey, together with Secretary John Gerizim, have been busy promoting the IFEH and the Group around the region. A new Association has been formed in Indonesia. The Indonesia Environmental Health Specialists Association was formed in December 2008 and is to apply to join the IFEH. Dr Bambang, Dean of Public Health, University of Indonesia was elected as the Association's first President. An application will also be made by the University of Indonesia to join the IFEH as an Academic Associate Member.

## **Association of Public Health Inspectors – Cyprus**

The Association held its Annual General Meeting at Governor's Beach, midway between Larnaka and Limassol, on the 11 March 2009. A number of changes to their organising committee have taken place. The new Secretary General is Christos Christou ([cchristou@mphps.moh.gov.cy](mailto:cchristou@mphps.moh.gov.cy)) and the new Treasurer is Stavros Pikrides ([spikrides@mphps.moh.gov.cy](mailto:spikrides@mphps.moh.gov.cy)). George Georgallas continues as the Association President.



## Environmental Health Officers Association

The EHOA and the CIEH Northern Ireland centre are holding a conference on the 21 and 22 May 2009 in the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone, Co Westmeath. Further details concerning this conference can be obtained from Deirdre Fitzsimons at [courseadministrator@ehoa.ie](mailto:courseadministrator@ehoa.ie)

## Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors

CIPHI are holding their 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Educational Conference the Delta Lodge at Kananaskis, Kananaskis, Alberta from the 3 – 6 May 2009. The theme of the conference is '75 years and New Frontiers' and further information can be obtained at [ciphi.conference09@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:ciphi.conference09@albertahealthservices.ca)

## Food Law Enforcement Practitioners group (FLEP)

FLEP will be hosting a seminar on Risk Based Controls in Food Safety regulation in Malta, in partnership with the Maltese Environmental Health Officers Association, on the 14 and 15 May 2009. The seminar will run over one and a half days, with a full day on the 14 and a half day on the 15 May. Although the final programme has not yet been confirmed proceedings are expected to cover:

- An academic perspective on the application of risk based controls.
- The application of risk based controls in practice. Lessons learned from the Public Enquiry into the E.coli 0157 outbreak in South Wales.
- A view from the European Commission.
- A view from the Food and Veterinary Office.
- A view from industry.
- The afternoon will provide an overview of the application of risk based controls from a number of different European Member States. Day 2 will focus on workshops to address key issues identified on the first day.

## Environmental Health Australia

The well know poem My Country penned by Dorothea MacKellar in 1904 has been taught to many Australian children over many decades. It is only in the last few weeks that I, and many of my colleagues, have truly appreciated the lines:

***Core of my heart, my country! Land of the rainbow gold,  
For flood and fire and famine she pays us back  
threefold.***

Indeed Australia has experienced floods in Queensland, drought in most areas of Australia south of the tropics, extreme temperatures which have been responsible for a number of deaths in Southern Australia, and devastating fires in Victorian. There is a high incidence of Dengue Fever in Queensland and it was reported recently that there has been at least one associated death.

The fires in Victoria have been acknowledged as Australia's worst natural disaster killing 210 people, leaving 7,000 people homeless, destroying over 1800 homes and 413,000 hectares of pasture, forest and urban landscape. Up until just before the time of writing there were at least six major fires burning but cooler weather and some rain has arrived and the fires are now within their containment lines and the emergency has been declared over.

The photo below which was taken in one of the affected areas provides a poignant reminder about prevention:





It has been tremendous to see our affected communities being supported through this ordeal by many Australians and our friends and colleagues from overseas, however, there is a long road to be trod on the way to recovery.

Local and state government EHOs were called upon across the state to assist in the recovery phase of the disaster and are continuing their efforts at the time of writing as although the immediate fire threat has been removed there is the rebuilding of communities to be undertaken. All of our EHO resources have been stretched to the limit and we give thanks that our EHA predecessors developed a comprehensive training course in emergency management for public and environmental health professionals in 1983.

This course continues to be delivered each year and it was only late last year we decided to review the course with the idea of delivering it nationally so all our members could have the opportunity of being trained in emergency management. I would think that the course this year will be filled quickly!

A Royal Commission has been announced by the government in Victoria and it will no doubt raise and investigate a range of issues and make recommendations so as to prevent a similar tragedy in the future. These recommendations will be important given that more frequent severe weather events will be a part of climate change.

**Jim Smith**

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## **UPDATE ON THE IFEH SUSTAINABILITY INDICATOR INITIATIVE.**

By Henning Hansen, coordinator of the IFEH working group on the IFEH Sustainability Indicator Initiative (IFEH SII)

### **About the initiative**

The primary aim of the initiative is to collect, disseminate and promote the use of indicators to monitor and assess progress towards a sustainable development.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) has housed the Compendium of Sustainable Development Indicator Initiatives since 1995 and the International Federation of Environmental Health has been running a project on sustainability indicator initiatives since 2000. As a result of our co-operation with the IISD it has been decided to use the Compendium as the common database on indicator initiatives.

Free of charge you can add information on your indicator initiative(s) with a broad focus on sustainability and environmental health and protection, or just browse initiatives already included in the Compendium by entering the web database from this link: [www.ifeh.org/indicators/compendium](http://www.ifeh.org/indicators/compendium)

In short it can be noted: If you don't know where you are located and where you are coming from, you won't be able to define where you are heading and you won't be able to decide whether you are moving in the right or wrong direction! Only by the use of a comprehensive indicator system you will be able to navigate.

By starting out with the experiences collected from all over the World assembled in the Compendium you will have a very good starting point – and also you have the possibility to disseminate your experience to the World for others to benefit from your experience.



## Results so far from the initiative

Below is an outline of the results and important milestones so far:

1. Formation of the IFEH working group on IFEH Sustainability Indicator Initiative (SII-working group)
2. IFEH Policy Statement No.8 - "Declaration on the Use of Sustainability Indicators".  
Link: [www.ifeh.org/docs/ifeh\\_policies/policy8.pdf](http://www.ifeh.org/docs/ifeh_policies/policy8.pdf)
3. Formal collaboration with the IISD  
Link: MoU between the IFEH and the IISD - COLLABORATION TO ADVANCE THE USE OF SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS
4. Through the co-operation with the IISD access to use the web database – the Compendium – to house initiatives.  
Link: [www.ifeh.org/indicators/compendium](http://www.ifeh.org/indicators/compendium)
5. With by now 840 entries, the Compendium is one of the most extensive sources of information on sustainable development indicator initiatives around the world, as recognized by the OECD at the OECD World Forum 2007, Istanbul.
6. The IFEH signing the Istanbul Declaration (the OECD, the European Commission, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, the United Nations, the UN Development Programme and the World Bank ).  
Link: [www.oecd.org/oecdworldforum](http://www.oecd.org/oecdworldforum)
7. Promotion of the initiative:

The initiative has been and still is being promoted through the IFEH website – through the IFEH Magazine "Environment & Health International" – through newsletters and through many IFEH member organisations.

The list of great conferences around the World where the initiative has been presented is very extensive:

IFEH World Congresses in Brisbane, San Diego, Durban, Dublin, and starting up in Oslo, All Africa Conference on EH Nairobi, Irish EH Conference Belfast, Lisbon Technical University Portugal, European Expert Summit on Indicators - Vilnius, Lithuania, EU Expert Summit (European Common Indicators) - Brussels, UN World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg SA and finally OECD World forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy - Measuring the Progress of Societies, Istanbul - Turkey. Coming up: Presentation in the context of the international conference "Joint Action on Climate Change", Denmark.

Taking all these presentations at conferences and promotion through the IFEH network together, thousands of representatives from more than a hundred different countries have been exposed to the vision behind the initiative. The ideas of "measuring progress" keeps on rolling and more and more local as well national governments see that this way of operating is a necessity in order to set out targetable and relevant objectives based on solid and reliable statistics. So besides being an initiative on sustainability indicator, the initiative is also a project on how to achieve democratic and transparent decision making processes in societies. This indeed is strongly needed in many countries around the World today - and even in the developed democratic countries - much still needs to be done in order to make progress towards a sustainable development.

## The next steps

It is important that there are steadily added new entries / examples of indicator initiatives into the web database - the Compendium. In order to ensure progress Henning Hansen, the coordinator of the IFEH working group, invites all IFEH member organisations as well associated member organisations and academic associated members to take part in this process. The task is to find and address relevant initiatives available on the internet – be it local, national or international initiatives – which would be an added value to be included in the database. This special effort will be in place by May 2009 – and is expected to run for a 6 month period.



What is needed is a group of about 10 – 15 educated specialists in the area of environmental health, environmental protection or sustainable development etc. who would like to volunteer to take part in this special effort to search and address relevant initiatives to be included. Besides the IFEH working group, we until now welcomed the help from cand.scient Aruwa Gulamhusein, Aarhus, Denmark (member of Envina Denmark) but we are looking forward to welcome many more volunteers.

In order to take part in this special effort, please contact Henning Hansen, coordinator of the IFEH initiative, by email: [henning.hansen@ifeh.org](mailto:henning.hansen@ifeh.org) before 1st of May 2009.

### **What can be done by each IFEH member organisation and associates:**

As always each member organisation and associates are called upon to make the indicator initiative and especially the initiative website [www.ifeh.org/indicators/](http://www.ifeh.org/indicators/) compendium known to all its individual members and the institutions that the individual members represent. This can be done by having a visual link from your website and by informing about the initiative through your magazine or newsletter, and by doing so encouraging local, regional and national bodies to use the Compendium – for searching information – but also to use this platform to disseminate information to the World Society whenever a new indicator initiative is launched.

The Compendium which can be reached through [www.ifeh.org/indicators/compendium](http://www.ifeh.org/indicators/compendium) and, through [www.iisd.org/measure/compendium](http://www.iisd.org/measure/compendium) is one of the most extensive sources of information on sustainable development indicator initiatives around the world. Entries in the Compendium are created by practitioners, for practitioners. With the help of all IFEH member organisations this World leading toolbox can reach as many as 60.000+ professionals and the institutions that those represent. So why not make use of this given and proven opportunity?

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### **Further action to reduce smoking in Scotland**

The Minister for Public Health in the Scottish Government, Shona Robinson, has announced measures aimed at protecting future generations from the devastating health effects of smoking. In legislation published recently cigarette vending machines and tobacco displays in shops are set to be consigned to history in Scotland as part of radical measures designed to reduce child smoking. Among the measures included in the Tobacco and Primary Medical Services (Scotland) Bill are the

- banning of cigarette vending machines
- banning of tobacco displays in shops
- introduction of a registration scheme for retailers
- introduction of powers to issue fixed penalty notices for retailers who sell cigarettes to under 18s
- introduction of banning orders to prevent retailers selling cigarettes who continually break the law.

Smoking in public places in Scotland was banned on 26 March 2006 and on October 1 2007 the minimum age for buying cigarettes was raised to 18.



## Improving hand hygiene in the NHS Scotland

Health workers in Scotland have been warned that there is no excuse for failing to comply with hand hygiene procedures. This was the message from Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon as the Scottish Government launched a zero tolerance policy to reduce non-compliance across NHS Scotland. The policy is contained in new guidance issued to NHS Boards. The launch coincides with the latest phase of Scotland's hand hygiene media campaign which aims to raise public awareness of the importance of regular hand washing. A completely new awareness campaign, in hospitals throughout Scotland, aimed specifically at health workers, patients and visitors will be launched in the spring. The Scottish Government is investing £54 million over the next three years in a range of initiatives designed to tackle Hospital Acquired Infections (HAIs). These include a national MRSA screening programme, prudent prescribing of antibiotics, 100 per cent single room provision in all new hospitals and a Care Environment Inspectorate to carry out unannounced inspections of hospitals.

All published information on infection rates and hand hygiene compliance, including information from HAI reporting template, will be available from a new web portal at [www.scotland.gov.uk/haitaskforce](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/haitaskforce).

**Finally** the next edition of the Newsletter will be published in July 2009. If I could have any news from your organisation by the first week in June that would be appreciated. My thanks go to Tom Bell, Jim Smith, Carole Simpson, Andrew Forteach and Henning Hansen who have assisted in the production of this issue.

