



## **Introduction to Environmental Health and Disasters**

**Christchurch, New Zealand – 1 - 4 September 2014**

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International Federation of Environmental Health's Asia-Pacific Regional Group (IFEH) proudly delivered an Introduction to Environmental Health and Disasters course on September 1-4, 2014 in Christchurch, New Zealand on the campus of the University of Canterbury. This was a continuation IFEH's disaster risk reduction initiative across the Asia-Pacific.

The course was delivered through a partnership between IFEH, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) USA, New Zealand Institute of Environmental Health (NZIEH) and the University of Canterbury. There were 33 environmental health and disaster management professionals who participated from across New Zealand.



EHD Class Photo September 2014 – University of Canterbury

The course had a particular focus on strategies for addressing environmental health issues before, during and after a local disaster. The 2011 Christchurch earthquakes provided a good example. This included sessions relating to drinking water, shelters, overcrowding, food safety, wastewater, disease-causing vectors, solid waste, hazardous materials and disaster management systems. Internationally, the role of environmental health in the responses to Hurricane Katrina, the Gulf Oil Spill and Cyclone's Larry and Yasi were also covered.

The course concluded with an exercise, which focused on the preparation and response activities related to an earthquake scenario which was relevant to those in attendance. This allowed participants to identify what was to be undertaken when preparing for and responding to a local and wide spread earthquake damage. It also allowed participants to understand disaster response frameworks, challenges faced and tools for systematically addressing environmental health risks.

The course evaluation found the content met all expectations. All participants indicated they would recommend the training to other professionals. On average the awareness level of environmental health risks associated with a disaster increased by 27%. Also, all participants indicated they would use the concepts covered in their disaster management activities.

The course could not have been successful the interaction of the participants. A special thank you goes to Ian Shaw with the University of Canterbury and Ivan Nicholson with NZIEH for helping organise the course.

The course was delivered by Tim Hatch (IFEH; ADPH), Stephen Bell (NZ MPI), Chris Hewins (NZ MPI), James Williams (Aspen Medical), and Sue Reynolds (Hamilton City Council).

As part of continuing to implement its disaster risk reduction initiative, IFEH plans to work with CDC, NEHA, Griffith University and its partner organisations to deliver courses in Australia, Europe, Africa, Indonesia and New Zealand during 2015. For further information please visit [www.ifeh.org](http://www.ifeh.org).

**In partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), USA**

