



Introduction to Environmental Health and Disasters

Redland City, Australia – 6 and 7 February 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 6 and 7 February 2014 in Redland City, Australia. 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 (USA), Environmental Health Australia (EHA) and Redland City Council. There were 24 environmental health and disaster management professionals who participated from New South Wales and Queensland.

The course had a particular focus on strategies for addressing environmental health issues before, during and after a bushfire. The recent North Stradbroke Island bushfires 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. 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 to a bushfire threatening a nearby community. This allowed participants to identify what was to be undertaken when preparing for and responding to a local bushfire. 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 34%. 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 Allan Tan and Daniel Osborne, Redland City Council, and Margaret Hind, EHA, for helping organise the course.

The course was delivered by Tim Hatch (IFEH; ADPH), Ben Ryan (IFEH), Dr Peter Davey (IFEH; Griffith University) and Michael Tait (Redland 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, Indonesia and New Zealand during 2014/15. For further information please visit www.ifeh.org.



Redland City Council Mayor Karen Williams and Ben Ryan (IFEH)



Evacuation Centre Exercise



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