

NEWSLETTER

International Federation of Environmental Health

April 2010 Edition

Welcome to the April edition of the IFEH Newsletter.

Since the last Newsletter was published we have been witness to a number of major earthquakes around the world particularly in Haiti, in January, and in Chile in February. Both disasters resulted in loss of life and destruction. Many public health problems follow on from these disasters. For example: problems associated with the lack of adequate sanitation to a standard that protects the resident population and the environment, and the availability of plentiful supplies of clean drinking water, are usually two issues requiring urgent attention in disaster situations. However, problems concerning water and sanitation are everyday problems for many countries around the world and not necessarily just following on from a natural disaster. The recent Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health held in Parma, Italy, in March, under the auspices of the World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe, had as one of its main goals 'Safe water and adequate sanitation'. In the European Region alone it is estimated that 120 million people do not have access to safe drinking water and many more lack access to sanitation. Although environmental health work in some parts of the world has become very sophisticated and high-tech we should not forget that the basic principles of good public health control, ie control of infection, ensuring safe and sufficient drinking water and the provision of good sanitation remain key challenges for environmental health professionals and the aspirations of the communities they serve.



World Water Day 2010 focuses on the theme of water quality, reflecting its importance alongside water quantity management.

Water quality is critical to ensuring a healthy environment and human health. For the purposes of drinking and sanitation, the daily individual requirement is between 20 and 40 litres of water that is free from harmful contaminants or pathogens. This increases to 50 litres per person when bathing and kitchen needs are considered.

Each year, an estimated 4 billion cases of diarrhoea are associated with water that is unsafe for human consumption, with 2.2 million people dying as a result of diarrhoea, mostly children under the age of five. Human health is severely impacted by water-related diseases (waterborne, water-washed, water-based, and water-related vector-borne infections) as well as by chemical pollution discharged into water. This year World Water Day took place on the 22 March.

Dutch Association of Inspectors looks to future

On the 4th of March this year the Dutch Association of food and consumer-products inspectors took a big step into the future.

As the national inspectorates involved in food, feed, animal welfare, phytosanitary, alcohol and tobacco control in the Netherlands are finalising the process of merging and changing their roles, the board of the association asked the members during their annual meeting to accept several changes in the associations' statutes, making it possible to accept inspectors from all kind of background to their association.

With the new structure comes a new common name for the association, which will be more acceptable for new members, being "het College".

Celebrating its 80th anniversary last year and being present with 20 members at the EWFC Vienna congress last October with a growing number of members and some good plans for the coming years, the association is confident that the future looks bright.

We will keep you informed how these plans will develop.



Environmental Health Officers Association (EHOA)

The EHOA and the CIEH Northern Ireland centre are holding a conference on the 13 and 14 May 2010 in the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Further details concerning this conference can be obtained from Deirdre Fitzsimons at courseadministrator@ehoa.ie

Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS)

REHIS will be holding its 27th Annual Conference on the 19 and 20 May 2010 in the Glynhill Hotel, Renfrew. Further details concerning this event can be obtained from Helen Black by email at contact@rehis.com. Monday 1 March 2010 marked a special day in the history of REHIS when they moved into new offices at 19 Torphichen Street, Edinburgh EH3 8HX. The new offices, purchased by the Institute at the end of 2009, will provide more room for staff accommodation and greater storage facilities in addition to meeting facilities.

Malta Association of Environmental Health Officers (MAEHO)

MAEHO recently held its bi-annual general meeting and the same committee was re-elected. The President for the next year is Rachel Mercieca and the Secretary is Hadrian Bonello.

During the year the committee organise a number of technical seminars and meetings and in addition a full social programme. The first of these was a carnival pasta party which was held on the 13th February and the event was well attended by members, family and friends.

Three EHOs took part in a one day visit on HACCP implementation at Mt. Carmel Hospital in Dublin. This visit was arranged by Ray Ellard from FSAI.

In the forthcoming months a two day work experience in Hamburg is being organised in conjunction with BVLK. It is hoped that EHOs from Malta will gather knowledge on how counterparts in Germany operate their food inspection programme.

A group of 25 environmental health officers from the Department for Environmental Health recently donated blood, as part of an initiative by the Malta Association of Environmental Health Officers, which was fully supported by the Department for Environmental Health.

Parliamentary Secretary Joe Cassar was present at this event and praised the group of donors for this humanitarian contribution. Dr Cassar also encouraged other governmental departments and entities to follow the example of EHOs, and take the initiative of organising similar group activities.



Updates on events can be seen on the MAEHO link in Facebook and from their website on www.maeo.net

The Swedish Association of Environmental Health Professionals

The Swedish Association of Environmental Health Professionals was founded in 1920 and will celebrate its 90th birthday this year. The jubilee will be celebrated during our bi-annual conference in Gothenburg on the 17 and 18 of June. We hope for a good attendance and two interesting days in the city where our association was first set up. As usual the programme can only cover parts of the vast environmental health area. This year the subjects to be covered includes wind power, sustainable communication skills, medicines and the environment, housing and health care premises, and food control revision. The conference will be held in co-operation with Gothenburg University and the City of Gothenburg.

Web: www.ymh.se



New Zealand Institute of Environmental Health (NZIEH).

The Institute has just held its annual conference in Taupo. This was a three day conference with a great mixture of speakers and topics being presented. Delegates were updated on the progress of the new Food Bill which is expected to be introduced into parliament later this year. The Bill will see New Zealand move to a fully risk based regime. There will be a number of regulatory tools in place including template food safety programmes targeted at a range of different food sectors. The engagement between central government (the New Zealand Food Safety Authority – NZFSA) and local government has been excellent. Local authorities are currently trialling the new system in their areas with their local businesses, this has allowed local authorities to understand the impact the new legislation will have and has allowed input into the policy process based on real experience and meaningful feedback with NZFSA.

A similar review of the liquor licensing legislation is also underway. New Zealand is looking at how best the legislation can deliver results in reducing harm in the community, allowing real community input into licensing decisions with a view to limit proliferation of licences, and also work towards a long term change to the drinking culture in New Zealand.

New Zealand local authorities are also preparing for a nationwide review of local government. The first stage in this process is already underway with the eight Auckland local authorities merging to form a supercity. The new Auckland Council will be the largest local government body in Australasia.

Gender Equity Programme for the Africa Academy for Environmental Health

The Africa Academy for Environmental Health has received a grant through the Association for African Universities to undertake a gender equity programme in higher education institutions offering environmental health courses. The programme has a number of facets including:

- Assessing coverage and implementation gaps of gender policy in higher education institutes offering courses in environmental health pertaining to student intake, student attrition rates, academic and technical staffing and research.
- Developing programmes to address gaps identified in student intake, student attrition rates and academic and technical staffing, including the role of women in research and management positions.
- Developing a database of environmental health academia and research. This will compliment the Roster of African Professionals (ROAP) database held by the Association of African Universities (AAU).
- Developing electronic networking forums for women and men at higher education institutions offering courses in environmental health.

- Organising regional training programmes in partnership with relevant organisations (for example, HERS-SA, ACU) for gender sensitization, and development of research skills for women at all levels in the university system.
- To identify, develop and distribute training modules and material including CDs for self learning and training in collaboration with partners (e.g. HERS-SA, ACU, University of Strathclyde).
- Increase gender balanced collaborative research both nationally and internationally to contribute towards policy pertaining to women, their environment (domestic, occupational, institutional) and health.

Institutions wishing to assist and participate in this programme can contact the project coordinator Dr Tracy Morse on tracythomson@africa-online.net

2nd IFEH Africa Group All Africa Environmental Health Congress 2010

Preparations are well underway for the 2nd IFEH Africa Group All Africa Environmental Health Congress 2010 to be held in Lilongwe, Malawi from 24th – 27th May. The Congress programme is taking shape with participants from throughout the continent. The Congress will see the presentation of research papers as well as workshops on drinking water safety plans, community led total sanitation, disaster reduction management, diarrhoea control, e learning and the launch of the curriculum and quality assurance manual for the environmental health degree course developed by the Africa Academy for Environmental Health. The organisers look forward to welcoming colleagues from Africa and beyond to Malawi in May. For more information refer to www.poly.ac.mw/2aahcongress or contact tracythomson@africa-online.net

CO-Awareness launches new campaign

CO-Awareness, a registered UK charity established in 2005 by Lynn Griffiths to provide information on the dangers of CO poisoning and to support victims and their families, recently launched its Four Steps Awareness. campaign. The campaign aims to reduce CO-related illness and death by including the issues in the school curriculum, by improving information and equipment for the medical profession, by creating an information and advice resource for solicitors and victims, and by ensuring that all installation and servicing is carried out by competent operatives. CO-Awareness is calling for medical practitioners and others across a range of disciplines to raise awareness and provide ongoing help and support to victims. Groups to be targeted include housing associations, landlords, councils, builders, architects, registered engineers, PCTs, hospitals, paramedics, GPs, nurses, health visitors, emergency services, and schools services to educate young people about the dangers of carbon monoxide. Full information is available from Lynn Griffiths, CO-Awareness President, c/o Aintree Community Fire Station, Longmoor Lane, Aintree, Liverpool, L9 0EN.

Finally the next edition of the Newsletter will be published in July 2010. If I could have any news from your organisation by the first week in June that would be appreciated. My thanks go to Tracy Morse, Carole Simpson, Hadrian Bonello, Ingrid Horner, Jan Homma, Henning Hansen, Tom Bell and Andrew Forteath who have assisted in the production of this issue.