



Managing Environmental Health in Disaster and Humanitarian Settings

Coimbra, Portugal – 21 through 24 September 2015

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The International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH) proudly delivered a Managing Environmental Health in Disaster and Humanitarian Settings course on 21 through 24 September 2015 in Coimbra, Portugal. This course was held in conjunction with the 1st Global Environmental Health Academic Forum hosted by College of Health and Technology of Coimbra. This was the second IFEH disaster risk reduction initiative in Europe and a continuation of the global effort which began in 2012.

The course was delivered through a partnership between IFEH, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Environmental Health Association (USA), and the Coimbra Health School. There were 16 environmental health and disaster management professionals who participated from across Europe. This was the most diverse course to date with 9 separate countries represented.

The course had a particular focus on strategies for addressing environmental health issues before, during and after floods. This included sessions relating to drinking water, shelters, responder safety, 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 recent Asia-Pacific cyclones were also covered. As a new and emerging environmental health issue, disaster risk reduction was a focus of the learning and a full explanation of SPHERE Standards, ICS, Cluster and UNISDR were covered.

The course concluded with an exercise, which focused on the preparation and response activities to a flood threatening a nearby community. This allowed participants to identify what was to be undertaken when preparing for and responding to a local flood event. 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 23%. 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 Susana Paixao, Joao Alemedia and Marta Vasconcelos as well as the faculty, staff and students of College of Health and Technology of Coimbra for helping organize the course. The course was delivered by Tim Hatch (IFEH; ADPH), Ben Ryan (IFEH, QLD AUS), and Dr. Peter Davey, PhD (IFEH, Griffith University). There was participation and input from several international experts in environmental health including one attendee from the United Nations.

As part of continuing to implement its disaster risk reduction initiative, IFEH plans to work with CDC, NEHA, Griffith University and its partner organizations to deliver courses in Australia, Europe, Africa, Indonesia and New Zealand during 2016. For further information please visit www.ifeh.org.



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