

Environmental Health Specialist/Sanitarian Registration Advisory Council Meeting June 2020

Date: June 11, 2020

Time: 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Location: Phone Conference/teleworking.

Call-In Number: 712-770-5505, **Passcode:** 727126, [Join Skype Meeting](#)

Host: Jim Topie, MDH

Agenda

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Approval of Agenda**
3. **Approval of Minutes of March 11, 2020**
4. **MDH Updates**
 - a. **NEHA Updates of REHS/RS Exam Testing Locations During COVID-19:** Jim Topie (Attachment A: see 05/12/2020 email from NEHA following agenda)
 - b. **Public and Advisory Council provided comments** about [Rule Amendments to Environmental Health/Specialist/Sanitarian Rule](#) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/sanitarian/rulerevision.html>): Linda Prail and Jim Topie
 - c. **Reminder about Per Diem:** Jim Topie (\$50.00 per meeting plus mileage expenses for nongovernmental members)
5. **New Business**
 - a. None at this time.
6. **Review of Science Course List**
 - a. **Sustainability** (Attachment B: see information following agenda)
7. **Review of Candidate(s) Information**
 - a. **Approval of Candidate(s) for Registration/Examination**
 - i. William Alken
 - ii. Caesar V. Pinto
 - iii. Cody J. Tennant
 - iv. Sheng Yang
 - b. **Candidate(s) Applying for Reciprocity**
 - i. None at this time.

8. Old Business

- a. Rule Update and Side-By-Side Rule Language Review: Linda Prail

9. Next meeting date

Thursday, September 10, 2020

9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

MDH Office Complex, Room A164, 625 Robert Street North, Saint Paul, MN

Face-to-Face scheduled, but due to COVID-19 situation may need changed to phone conference/teleworking

10. Other Issues?

- a. None at this time

If you have any questions, please contact the Sanitarian Registration Program by email at health.sanitaricians@state.mn.us.

MDH EH Division – FPLS Section

651-201-4500

Attachment A

From: Carol Newlin <CNewlin@neha.org>

Sent: Tuesday, May 12, 2020 5:28 PM

To: Zerwas, Tracie (MDH) <tracie.zerwas@state.mn.us>; Topie, James (MDH) <james.topie@state.mn.us>; Carlton, Kim (MDH) <kim.carlton@state.mn.us>

Subject: NEHA update on REHS/RS testing opportunities

Hello All,

This is an update from NEHA on the option for the environmental health professionals in your state to be able to take the Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS) credential exam over the next few months. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we face this long-term reduction in testing opportunities across the country, due to the Covid19 pandemic and the local regulations regarding social distancing, business operations and access to college campus testing centers.

The safety of all test takers and the testing center employees is the highest priority. NEHA is committed to following CDC guidelines and the recommendations of local public and environmental health professionals. **Unfortunately, the administration of the REHS/RS exam has been greatly impacted.** Very few people have been able to take the exam since mid-March in the U.S.. As some states begin to open up more business operations, we were hoping more testing centers would have the ability to schedule more exams. Unfortunately, an individual (such as yourself) cannot check on this unless they have a Pearson VUE account and they

cannot set up that account until they have paid and are processed by NEHA's Credentialing Department. We now have a NEHA account with Pearson VUE, so we can access the same information the approved individuals can access. Also, the Pearson VUE Covid-19 information webpage has been helpful.

[Pearson | Vue \(https://home.pearsonvue.com/coronavirus-update\)](https://home.pearsonvue.com/coronavirus-update)

After analyzing test scheduling opportunities in 32 cities across 10 states, we need to let you know that the availability of open testing slots is very, very low for May, June and July, but this is a situation that changes quickly and varies by locality. Yesterday, I looked at test sites in states that use the NEHA

REHS/RS exam as their primary test, such as your state. They are in all geographic areas of the U.S. I checked 2-5 cities in each state to get a broader view, and 2-3 specific test sites in each city.

DISCLAIMER – THIS IS A SNAPSHOT VIEW OF THE SITUATION ON MAY 11TH. Whether a computer testing center can accept new appointments changes quickly. While some test center have no availability until late August, they may start opening up appointments any day. Others that have open appointments, may start cancelling them when conditions and regulations change or are enforced more strictly.

TESTING AT COLLEGE TEST CENTERS. One of the biggest determinants is that approximately 80% of the testing centers are on college campuses. After my research, it is apparent that about 95% of those schools' testing centers are not taking appointments at all at this time, even up through September. This may change over the next few weeks or months. But at this time, roughly 75% of the total test centers are just not open for scheduling at all. If and when colleges reopen, this could change. In some areas, colleges are already reopening and their testing centers are taking appointments.

TESTING AT PEARSON-OWNED TEST CENTERS. Another primary type of testing centers are the Pearson Professional Centers (PPC's) which are owned directly by Pearson VUE and are not on college campuses. They are just now starting to make more appointments available but it varies by state. The majority of the PPC's I checked have virtually no availability in May and June, very limited availability in July and August, but lots of availability in September. There are some exceptions. Some had openings in May and June. Again this is just a snapshot of May 11th.

INDEPENDENT TEST CENTERS. Lastly there are a few non-college, non-PPC sites. These seemed to have a lot more openings in May and June. These are not available in every city, however.

At this time, NEHA is granting people a **13-month testing window** for computer testing instead of the **normal 12-month window**. We are also offering extensions for no charge for people whose authorization for computer testing is running out and they cannot book an appointment.

From what we've been told, Pearson VUE is giving priority scheduling to people who had an exam scheduled in the last few months that was cancelled due to a test center closing. Also Pearson VUE is warning clients that the availability of testing is also determined by staff willing to work in somewhat risky situations, the availability of cleaning and sanitizing supplies, and the

ability to spread test takers out to adhere to social distancing guidelines. Therefore, even if they are open, they may have to greatly decrease the number of test takers that they can accommodate each day.

MASKS AND GLOVES. If someone is able to make an appointment and masks are required in their locality, they will not be admitted without a mask. The PPC facilities started requiring masks for everyone, regardless of local mandates, starting May 11th. The individual will have to remove the mask when their ID is checked. Gloves and hand sanitizer will be allowed.

PEARSON VUE WEBSITE FOR UPDATES. Pearson VUE has an abundance of public information about how they are dealing with the Covid 19 outbreak. Please check this site if you have questions. The FAQ's are helpful, but you won't be able to log in to check availability in your area unless you have an account.

[Pearson | Vue \(https://home.pearsonvue.com/coronavirus-update\)](https://home.pearsonvue.com/coronavirus-update)

Is your state changing its rules for testing? If your state is changing its requirements for environmental health testing to accommodate the EH specialists in your state during this unique time, please let us know. Have you extended deadlines for testing? At NEHA we would like to be aware of how this situation is affecting the environmental health registration programs around the country.

Please contact me (cnewlin@neha.org) or Sarah Hoover (shoover@neha.org) if you have questions or concerns about this situation. Thanks for reading all of this and stay safe!

Carol Newlin, Credential Specialist
National Environmental Health Association
720 S. Colorado Blvd., Suite 1000-N
Denver CO 80246
PH: 303-756-9090 ext. 337

Attachment B

Information regarding major or course work in “sustainability” or “environmental sustainability”:

[Sustainability Degree \(https://www.environmentalscience.org/degree/sustainability\)](https://www.environmentalscience.org/degree/sustainability)

Sustainability is a relatively new discipline within the environmental and business fields. Sustainability at its simplest terms combines economics, business, social (human environment) and environmental science. The goal of sustainability is to find a balanced approach that minimizes risks to these areas in order to maintain or enhance the quality of life in the future. It can also be defined as the study to minimize and mitigate environmental impacts caused by human actions. Environmental Sustainability is just a slightly redundant term for true sustainability, as everything relies on the environment. In order to major in “Environmental Sustainability” it is imperative to select a program offering ecology and environmental classes.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST/SANITARIAN REGISTRATION ADVISORY
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According to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), there are:

- At least 33 schools within the United States that offer a 2 year Associates degree that has a sustainability focus. Of these, 15 have sustainability as a major and 18 offer a minor in sustainability.
- Approximately 421 colleges within the United States offer sustainability focused bachelor's degrees. This includes both Bachelors of Arts (BA) and Bachelors of Science (BS) degree programs. At least 98 of these colleges have a major or specific concentration in sustainability.
- Over 463 United States colleges offer Master's degrees with a focus in sustainability. At least 145 offer a major or concentration in sustainability.
- At least 103 colleges within the United States offer sustainability focused Doctoral degree. At least 8 list sustainability as a major or concentration.
- A total of 136 schools offer a sustainability focused graduate certificate and 61 of these are under the discipline of sustainability. At least 51 United States colleges offer sustainability focused undergraduate certificates with half focusing specifically on sustainability.

Minnesota Department of Health
EH-FPLS
651-201-4500
www.health.state.mn.us

09/2020

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-4500.