



## How To Become a Health Inspector! The Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS)



Presented by:

The California-Nevada  
Public Health Training Center

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## Objectives

- This tutorial will help you:
  - Understand the history and development of the current California REHS program
  - Identify the section of the law that requires certification of environmental health professionals
  - Explain the process of becoming an REHS, including test content and pass rates
  - Become familiar with the continuing education requirements
    - define contact hours

## History of the California REHS

- The first “Health Inspectors” in California were called **Sanitarians**, and they primarily worked in the food & market inspection program as housing inspectors

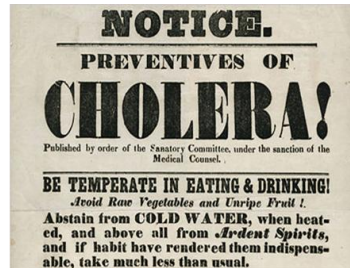


Photo from Orange County Environmental Health

- **Senate Bill 319 (SB 319)**, signed by Governor Earl Warren, created the first registration program for Sanitarians in 1945
  - Sanitarian Registration Act (1945)

## History of the California REHS

- A Registered Sanitarian (RS) was defined as: “a person trained in the field of sanitary science and technology who is qualified to carry out educational and inspectional duties and enforce the law in the field of sanitation”



Photo from Orange County Environmental Health

- Any person who was classified as a Sanitarian prior to January 1, 1946 automatically became an RS
- The California Department of Public Health was directed to develop criteria and an examination to test for minimal knowledge in the profession after this date

## Introduction to the REHS

- The Registered Sanitarian becomes the Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS)
- Registered Sanitarian = Registered Environmental Health Specialist
- The REHS expanded from its traditional regulatory role to private industry
- TEAMWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SAFETY



## Disciplines within the Profession

### Knowledge in various areas of Environmental Health, including:

- Food Protection (including retail, wholesale, mobile and temporary food facilities)
- Public Swimming Pools
- Housing
- Hazardous Materials and Waste
- Recycling Programs
- Solid Waste
- Water Quality
- Ocean Water Protection
- Radiological Health
- Lead Poisoning Prevention
- Medical Waste

(Orange County Environmental Health, 2003)

## REHS Certification : Not Just a Good Idea, It's the Law!



- Specific criteria and requirements found in California Health and Safety Code Sections 116600 thru 116735
  - (California Health & Safety Code, 2011)
- Creation of a Registration Committee to oversee, regulate and recommend changes involving the REHS program
- Covers all aspects of the REHS from educational requirements to administrative actions
- Requires continuing education

## The Environmental Health Specialist Registration Committee

- **Purpose:**
  - Advise and make recommendations to the California Department of Public Health
- **Tasks:**
  - Maintain a current registry of all specialists
  - Review complaints
  - Suspend REHS certification when appropriate
- **Composition:**
  - **11 members** including the Chief of the Environmental Planning and Local Health Services Branch, who serves as Executive Officer
  - Members may serve up to **two 4-year terms** and are required to meet twice a year



(California Health & Safety Code, 2011)

## What do you need to do to apply to become an REHS?

- Obtain a bachelor's degree with a minimum 30 semester (45 quarter) units of approved **basic science** courses
- File an application for **transcript review** with CPS HR Consulting
  - CPS HR Consulting
  - 241 Lathrop Way
  - Sacramento, CA 95815
- File an **application** with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH)
  - California Department of Public Health
  - EHS Registration Program, MS 7404
  - PO Box 997377
  - Sacramento, CA 95899-7877



## Training and Experience

- The transcript evaluation will result in placement in 1 of 5 tiers that will indicate the amount of training and experience needed prior to taking the exam

OPTION	Coursework Units (semester/quarter)	Total Experience	Total Training Hours
I	30/45	18 months	600
II	45/68	12 months	450
III	30/45	9 months	300
IV	45/68	6 months	201
V	N/A	N/A	N/A

For more information:  
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/occupations/Documents/REHS/Preliminary%20Guidelines.pdf>

## Training and Experience

- Environmental Health Specialist Trainee Programs
- Local Environmental Health Agencies
  - [http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlicoccupations/Documents/REHS/elements\\_training\\_plan.pdf](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlicoccupations/Documents/REHS/elements_training_plan.pdf)
- Assistant Environmental Health Specialist
  - 3 years to complete requirements and pass exam



## The REHS Examination

- **Offered 3 times a year at 2 locations**
  - March, July, and November
  - Los Angeles area and Sacramento area
- **6-hour multiple choice exam**
  - Broken up into two 3-hour sessions conducted on the same day
  - Total of 260 questions (130 questions per session)
  - Questions are randomly selected from a large computer-based data set



# REHS Exam Content

- **Highest emphasis:**
  - General math and science
  - Inspections and investigations
  - Food and consumer protections
  - Drinking water
- **Medium emphasis:**
  - Hazardous materials and waste management
  - Solid and medical waste management
  - Wastewater management
  - Recreational waters and public pools
  - Disaster management
  - Vector-borne and zoonotic disease control
- **Lowest emphasis:**
  - Air quality and pollution control
  - Housing and institutions
  - Land use



## Tips for Taking the Exam...

- **Read all directions thoroughly**
  - Ask questions if the directions are unclear
- **Watch your time carefully**
  - Average 1-2 minutes per question
- **If you aren't sure, guess**
  - Don't get bogged down on difficult questions; answer the easier questions first
  - No deductions for wrong answers
- **Write in the exam booklet!**
  - You paid to take the exam and they do not get reused
- If time permits, you may challenge questions you believe to be inaccurate

# Exam Results: Pass or Fail?



- Results are mailed within 4-6 weeks after the REHS examination

Exam Date	Total # Candidates	Original # Questions	Final # Questions	Passing Score	% - # Candidates (Pass)	% - # Candidates (Fail)
March 2010	55	260	259	64%	80% - 44	20% - 11
July 2010	39	260	250	62%	79% - 29	21% - 10
November 2010	40	260	260	64%	63% - 25	37% - 15
March 2011	24	260	259	64%	67% - 16	33% - 8
July 2011	41	260	260	64%	61% - 25	39% - 16

## REHS Career Fields



### Public Sector

- United States Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- California Department of Food and Agriculture
- California Health and Human Services Agency
- Local government agencies

### Private Sector

- Water Districts
- Sanitation Districts
- Hospitals
- Food Safety Inspectors
- Compliance Officers
- Educators/consultants
- Occupational Safety and Health Officers



## Maintaining Your REHS Certification

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- In December 2009, **continuing education** requirements for REHS certification were signed into law
  - Requires the completion of 24 contact hours in order to renew license
  - License renewals occur biennially (every 2 years)
- Courses are provided through Accreditation Agencies (AAs) that are approved by the California Department of Public Health
  - <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/occupations/pages/REHS.aspx>

## Contact Hours

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- 24 contact hours must be completed within 2 years before renewing registration
- Contact hours are usually calculated as follows:
  - 50-60 minutes = 1 contact hour
  - 0.1 continuing education unit (CEU) = 1 contact hour
  - 1 quarter unit = 10 contact hours
  - 1 semester unit = 15 contact hours
- Keep track of your contact hours
- Exemption from continuing education may be granted under special circumstances

## Renewing Your REHS Certification

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- Submit a Continuing Education Verification Form available at the CDPH website
  - <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/occupations/Pages/REHScontinuingeducation.aspx>
- Certificates and documents of course completion should be kept for 5 years since random audits may be conducted
- If you fail to meet continuing education requirements, your payment for renewal will not be accepted and your license will be suspended
  - Penalty fee may be assessed

## References

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- California Department of Public Health (CDPH). REHS Program Overview. Retrieved from <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/occupations/pages/REHS.aspx>
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