

Montana Environmental Health Association

Volume 1, Issue 1

Spring 2010

Required Food Safety Training

Sean Hill, R.S., MBA
Gallatin City-County Health Department

Mandatory food safety certification has come to the Gallatin Valley.

During the re-write of GCCHD Health Code Chapter 2, in the summer of 2009, education became a priority. Previous efforts of GCCHD expressed having all employees voluntarily trained since education has been shown to reduce illness and improve food safety standards (Cates et al., 2009), but more managerial control was needed. This need was in light of high employee turnover rates. Food safety training in Gallatin County was not implemented to correct past issues but to set a level of expectations in what establishments should be providing to the public, and what managers should be providing to their employees.

GCCHD Health Code Chapter 2 (Page 14)

B. Mandatory Education

A licensed establishment must have a minimum of one (1) person on duty at all times of operation who has completed a managers food safety training program. A nationally recognized program with a minimum eight (8) hours of classroom training and approved by GCCHD will qualify.

Establishments that possess a (F) (Food Small) category license are found to be low risk and therefore exempt from this training requirement. GCCHD may require a facility to adhere to subsection (4) of this chapter.

All facilities must comply within one year from this effective date. Failure to comply will result in a Critical Violation as referenced in 2-09(B) and could be subject to closure.

With a proactive, educated Board of Health, EHS set forth to require all managers in food establishments to receive a managers certification in food safety practices.

For full text of GCCHD Chapter 2 please refer to:

http://www.gallatin.mt.gov/Public_Documents/gallatincomt_environmental/Chapter2Effective052309.pdf

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Special points of interest:

- Virginia Reber Public Health Award
- Montana Public Health Association Awards
- Social Media in Food Safety Education
- Well Permitting in Missoula

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Required Food Safety Training *(continued from Front)*

The code will start being enforced on June 01, 2010. On the interim, GCCHD has been promoting and educating the public and establishments to look for certifications to promote food safety and consumer awareness.

Leading up to enforcement, our partners in food safety have stepped up to fill the training gap by providing multiple managers courses in the Gallatin Valley. Food Services of America, Nobel Sysco, and the Montana Restaurant Association have scheduled many classes throughout the community. They have expressed support and the need for statewide requirements.

A decrease of critical violations has been found to be a positive indicator attributed to food safety training (Cates et al., 2009). GCCHD has been tracking critical violations which directly influence food born illness risk since it began electronic data storage in 2007. We will evalu-

ate the first year (and subsequent years) of mandatory education and compare against the number of critical violations throughout Gallatin County with the goal of decreasing critical high risk practices. Having mandatory food safety education and active managerial control will increase food safety standards in licensed establishments and GCCHD hopes this will promote a higher standard of food safety.

Look in future newsletters for updates and results from Gallatin's Food Safety Training program .

Cates SC, Muth MK, Karns SA, Penne MA, Stone CN, Harrison JE. [Certified kitchen managers: do they improve restaurant inspection outcomes?](#) J Food Prot. 2009; 72(2):384-91.

Virginia Reber Public Health Award Initiated

Sean Hill, R.S., MBA
Gallatin City-County Health Department

National Public Health Week was fittingly recognized when the Lake County Board of Health initiated the Virginia Reber Public Health Award. The award was given to the Arlee/Lake County Water and Sewer District for its tenacity in bringing community sewer service to the Arlee area.

The 2010 award is the first of what will be an annual award to honor community partners for their contribution to the work of public health. The local public health umbrella includes the Board of Health, Health Officer John Williams MD, the Lake County Public Health Services Department, the Lake County Environmental Health Department, the Tribal public health agencies, the medical community, school nursing programs, and many community partners.

The Board of Health chose Virginia Reber, RN as the award's namesake to honor her work as the Lake County public health services director. At the award luncheon, Linda Davis, RN, retired program director, shared Virginia's history with the department which extended from 1976 through 1991. During those years, Virginia responded to the needs expressed by the community to expand public health services. She laid a solid foundation for nursing services, a home health visiting pro-

gram, well-child clinics, child immunization efforts, and many other public health services. She reached out to schools, worked with tribal counterparts, and mentored new public health workers. In her retirement, Virginia served two terms on the Lake County Board of Health.

Paddy Trusler, RS, Lake County Commissioner, relayed the story of how the Arlee/Lake County Water and Sewer District worked for nearly thirty years to provide sewer service to the area. Arlee is located over a shallow aquifer and very gravelly soils. Homesites in the area were served by relatively shallow wells and septic systems. This presented a very serious threat to public health in that the local wells were showing signs of both bacterial contamination and elevated nitrates. The award gave special recognition to Gary and Connie Wining in working through myriad obstacles to achieve the goal of sewer service. Gary Wining indicated the sewer service is already proving its worth, as the aquifer nitrate levels are decreasing.



In photo (left to right): Gary Wining, Virginia Reber, Kassie Parson, Anna Baldwin. Smaller Plaque awarded to Arlee District. Large Plaque on display at the Public Health Building in Polson.

The annual award provides a plaque to the community partner plus recognition on a permanent display at the county public health building in Polson. Nominations for next year’s award will be solicited in early 2011 with the award announced during National Public Health Week. For more information, contact Emily Colomeda BS RN, Public Health Services Director, 883-7288, or Susan Brueggeman RS, Environmental Health Director, 883-7236.

Montana Public Health Association Awards

Joan Paulsen
Flathead City-County Health Department

We at the Montana Public Health Association invite you to nominate persons and programs who have made a real difference in the health and well-being of your community.

Nominees may come from traditional public health disciplines, or from the myriad of entities that support public health from outside the conventional boundaries. Remember, the public’s health is impacted by free space, exercise, volunteer efforts, nutrition, community groups, mental health programs, educators, medical providers, economic issues, elected officials and SO MUCH MORE!

Public Health is everywhere and you are invited to celebrate the quiet powers behind all that Public Health promotes.

If you have a person or group who has positively impacted some aspect of the Public’s Health, please consider nominating them for an award. The awards will be given at the MPHA state meeting in the fall.

The New 'Face' of Food Safety Education

Alisha Johnson, R.S.
Missoula City-County Health Department

The 2010 Food Safety Education Conference in Atlanta had a very modern message: the face of food safety education is changing to—well, *Facebook*. Yes, the forum commonly viewed as a social networking site for teens and twenty-somethings has morphed into a tool used for everything from big business and Taylor Lautner fans, to organizations for social change and educators. These tools, according to several social media experts, have democratized the information superhighway. Now people of all ages, nationalities and socio-economic classes can have memberships in the world of information, a world growing in size and resources everyday.

Social media has an enormous reach and possibility for impact. Facebook has over 400 million followers, which would make it the third largest country in the world dropping the United States to fourth, and experts anticipate that over 800 million people will participate in a social network by 2012. While print-media continues to decline, Facebook, along with Twitter and various Blog venues, have created huge communities that are changing the way people get information. Not only are people able to get information right when they need it, but they now have the ability through social media to contribute to the news stream.

This shared structure has many benefits if one understands two important concepts. First, everyone is an expert and second; no one has to be *the* expert. While this may seem counterintuitive, it makes perfect sense when examined under the guise of the institution, such as the Centers for Disease Control. The information compiled by CDC does not come from one source, but rather depends on the contributions of hundreds of experts. Social media turns the internet into an institution, and the millions of contributing users into 'experts'. While not all contributions released will be accurate, the ability for other 'experts' to weigh-in and comment, creates a peer review system that maintains the integrity of the institution, and with the speed of the internet, information can be quickly corrected and updated.

So what's the catch? And how does any of this apply to Food Safety Education? Simple—we, as experts in Public Health, must once again adapt to a new way of communicating as those in this field have done before—from print to radio, from radio to TV, and now from TV to Twitter and Facebook. And with Social Media, comes a new responsibility: we must make the information less about what we have to say and more about what people think and need. We must respect that the expert-filled environment Social Media has created has upped the ante for educators. Audiences and students no longer feel they need to be educated, but rather, engaged. If we can accomplish that however, and get people to interact with us through social media tools, we can substantially change the image of our programs, giving us an opportunity to reach more people and have a greater impact than ever before. If one really stops to think about it, Social Media makes perfect sense with what we do. It gives us the opportunity to make Public Health really about the public, an interactive community, not just locally, but globally.

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The Food Safety team of the Missoula City-County Health Department has been working on revising their education program. They have rewritten their classes to be more interactive and engaging, remodeled their website and are currently working to establish a blog and Facebook page.

Well Permitting in Missoula County

Erik Engelbert, M.S., R.S.
Missoula City-County Health Department

Meeting required setbacks is critical to the installation of a new well or septic system. Not only does it ensure compliance with current rules, but also protects public health by minimizing the chance for drinking water contamination.

As part of the subdivision review process, a landowner must propose locations for new wells and septic systems. These locations must meet current local and state rules for setbacks, and are often planned to maximize the number of lots created within a given division of land. As a result, site plans are often submitted with well and septic locations which offer little room for error during installation.

Our Missoula County septic permitting process already provided a mechanism to ensure the installation of septic systems in the correct locations; however, we did not have an adequate process to address the same concerns with wells. It should be noted that these concerns were not limited to subdivisions, but also extended to landowners with wells that did not meet all setbacks—a shortfall which could create issues for the property owner later on.

After several discussions within the Department, we decided that the best solution would be to implement a well location permitting program similar to the existing permitting program for septic systems. We then discussed the scope of the program, deciding early on that we did not want to duplicate the work of the Montana DNRC, nor put ourselves in a position where we would have to enforce their rules. It was also agreed that the most significant issues to tackle would be the proposed installation of wells in locations violating an existing Certificate of Subdivision Approval (COSA) and proposed wells that did not meet the setbacks shown in ARM 36.21.638.

Meeting required setbacks is critical to the installation of a new well or septic system. Not only does it ensure compliance with current rules, but also protects public health by minimizing the chance for drinking water contamination.

After identifying the major concerns, we put the program together, modeling it after Missoula County's existing septic permitting program, where landowners are required to submit information on their property and a site plan of the proposed installation. After submittal, the Department would review the application and issue a permit. Following installation, a sanitarian would conduct an inspection to ensure that the well was installed in the correct location. The program also provides for evaluations of the proposed well site through pre-inspections upon request prior to drilling. Once the basic framework had been created, we invited local water well contractors to a roundtable meeting to discuss the proposed program. The contractors who offered their input had several good questions and ideas. They even expressed support for the program, citing that it would ensure that all well drillers would have to meet same installation requirements.

After receiving input from the well drillers and the Water Quality Advisory Council, we made a few changes to the structure of the program and then presented it to the Missoula City-County Board of Health. The Board approved the program making it Regulation 5 of the Missoula City-County Health Code on October 15, 2009, with an effective date of January 01, 2010. Aside from the expected challenges of implementing a new permitting program, it is working better than expected, further helping to ensure the protection of public health within the Missoula community.

The Newsletter of the
Montana Environmental Health Association

Montana Environmental Health
Association
PO Box 741
Helena, MT 59624



Visit us on the web!

www.mehaweb.org

Save the Date!

Don't forget to mark your calendars for the Fall Conference in Yellowstone National Park, October 18—21, 2010. Registration deadline is September 15.

Check out the website for updated conference information.

Message from a Fellow Sanitarian

MEHA Members,

Thank you for the unsuspected retirement cake and the kind words on the card. It was a total surprise and a very welcomed surprise. Thanks to Crystal for her words of thanks and encouragement that made me cry inside. I have been blessed and honored to be a member of MEHA and having the privilege of serving on the Board for the past 3 years.

Thanks to all of you who donated to my nephew, Brett Stulc. The backpack was won by Bonnie Lovelace, DEQ. Since there was such a tremendous response, I donated 24 fly fishing flies; that I now have time to tie. The dry flies were won by Cameron Shipp.

I received donations from MEHA, DEQ, other State Departments, and the morning coffee table at Blue Cross Blue Shield. The response was so great that my nephew received a check for \$790.00.

With Gratitude,

Mary Schroeder
Secretary, Board of Directors