

Activity No. 2: – EH Roles and Responsibilities

The most dramatic advances in health status and life expectancy did not come from medications, but from sanitary engineering-techniques to provide clean water, to remove and treat sewage, to manage waste, and to protect food. These centuries-old efforts are just as relevant today as they were in ancient Greece and every American benefits from them. The scope of the field expanded considerably with the onset of the industrial age in the nineteenth century. Today, environmental public health faces new challenges such as emergency preparedness. If a disaster or emergency struck your community, environmental health staff will have an important role.

What roles or responsibilities do you think environmental health staff would have if a disaster or emergency struck your community?

Potential roles are included on the following page.

Activity No. 2 (Continued)

- Develop strategies and ensure appropriate actions are taken to prevent or lessen the impact of adverse environmental exposures on the public's health.
 - Monitor and ensure safe food and water for human consumption.
 - Monitor and coordinate adequate functioning of sanitation facilities and services.
 - Implement actions to prevent or control vectors such as flies, mosquitoes, rodents and other pests.
 - Coordinate with the water, public works, and sanitation departments to ensure the availability of potable water, an effective sewage system, and sanitary garbage disposal.
 - Coordinate with the animal care and control agency to dispose of dead animals.
 - Ensure that adequate sanitary facilities are provided in emergency shelters and for response personnel.
- Maintain a visible presence in the response community by raising awareness of the environmental health roles in disasters and emergencies.
 - Provide consultation to other emergency responders on health risks and/or exposure pathways.
 - Provide the environmental health perspective to emergency managers and other decision makers, to help assess the scale of the emergency and ensure an effective response.
- Provide technical assistance and guidance to affected parties.
 - Retail food establishments
 - Public swimming pools
 - Lodging facilities
 - Lead hazards
 - Solid waste haulers
 - Solid waste transfer stations
 - Hazardous waste generators
 - Hazardous waste facilities
 - Illegal dumping of solid and hazardous waste