



U.S. Public Health Service Environmental Health Officers



Disaster and Emergency Assistance

The U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps is an elite team of more than 6,500 well-trained, highly qualified public health professionals dedicated to delivering the nation's public health promotion and disease prevention programs and advancing public health science.

Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) make up approximately 350 of these professionals and work to advance public health and safety in a variety of domestic and international roles. Examples include epidemiologic surveillance, disease prevention, radiologic health, industrial hygiene, food safety, injury prevention and education, and emergency preparedness. During natural disasters and other emergencies EHOs protect the public from environmental threats and help communities recover.

Where We Work

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Indian Health Service
- Food and Drug Administration
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- National Institutes of Health
- Bureau of Prisons
- National Park Service
- U.S. Coast Guard
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration

What We Do Every Day

USPHS EHOs play an important role in protecting public health in their everyday jobs. These officers perform duties in specific areas such as the following:

General Environmental Health: assess water and wastewater systems, provide vector control, monitor medical and solid waste, assess habitability, conduct environmental-related disease investigations, provide emergency response, provide consultation, and conduct training.

Food Safety: inspect restaurants and feeding stations, provide advice on mass-feeding plans and food salvage, and conduct training and community outreach.

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Hazardous Wastes/Materials: perform risk assessments, conduct public health assessments, and conduct community outreach.

Occupational Health/Industrial Hygiene: conduct worker exposure monitoring, select personal protective equipment, conduct respirator fit testing, and conduct training.

Safety Officers: act as Site Safety Officer, prepare site safety plan, conduct inspections, and conduct training.

Support in Emergency Response

USPHS EHOs possess the skills and knowledge needed to assist in emergency response. USPHS EHOs have been deployed in the past during federal disaster declarations and for public health emergencies to augment state and local environmental health efforts.

The USPHS directly supports the Emergency Support Function (ESF) #8 (ESF #8, Public Health and Medical Services) of the National Response Framework (supplemental assistance to State and local authorities). EHOs can also be deployed as support for other ESFs such as

- ESF #3- Public Works and Engineering
- ESF #6- Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing & Human Services
- ESF #10- Oil and Hazardous Materials Response
- ESF #11- Agriculture and Natural Resources

Once local and state resources are exhausted, these federal resources can be requested by coordinating with your State Health Agency and State Emergency Management Agency.

Attributes and Qualifications

- Minimum training in ICS 100, 200, 700, 800b
- Degrees in environmental health, industrial hygiene, or radiologic health
- Many EHOs are Registered Environmental Health Specialists/Sanitarians
- Additional common credentials include the following:
 - Certified Industrial Hygienist
 - Certified Safety Professional
 - Certified Hazardous Materials Manager
 - Certified Health Physicist
 - Certified Food Safety Professional

For More Information

If you would like additional information about EHOs and the USPHS, please visit these Web sites:

- [Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service, Environmental Health](#)
- [Environmental Health Officer Professional Advisory Committee](#)