



*Environmental Health Officer
Professional Advisory Committee*



The EHO Assessment

February 2021 News and Updates

A place to learn about current events and updates from the EHOPAC

EHOPAC Leadership Updates

Welcome to the first EHO Assessment of 2021. The newsletter is a tool made by officers for officers, so the EHOPAC welcomes your feedback regarding the format.

At the beginning of 2020 when we launched this publication, we were just beginning to face the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time we encouraged resilience, resource sharing, and networking as we were uncertain how long the event would last but we were sure that utilizing EHO's for the important work of preventing disease and injury for both our responders and our citizens would be paramount. Today we share the same message. EHO's are still conducting important work across the nation to keep the most vulnerable safe while we wait patiently to achieve herd immunity with vaccine distribution ongoing.

We hope you find this issue helpful as we strive to keep our officers connected, informed, and energized for this (hopeful) last leg of the pandemic. Please read on for important updates and resources and reach out to us if there are issues the PAC or CPO can help with to keep our category running at optimal performance.

You Asked: EHO Anonymous Feedback Responses

The following comments were submitted to EHOPAC leadership via the new anonymous feedback system. **If you have a question or comment** for EHO leadership and wish to remain anonymous, please utilize our anonymous feedback system by visiting <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NDXMFWX>.

Comment: I feel like the promotion cycle is always hasty. The way of giving access to other to my eOPF is always a headache and it almost never works; so you end up wasting time in the approval of a form that is eventually never used; the process of assigning counselor if you fell under the lower quartile or decile is also last minute, the process on waiting to be pair with a senior officer for career mentoring is also during the last weeks of Promotion cycle, the publishing of new templates occurs last minute (we never have more than 2 months to properly work with all new templates (CV, Coversheet, OS, Continuing education, etc.). This should be a less stressful process for the officer.

- **Response:** EHOPAC Leadership understands your concerns. If you are unable to provide access to your eOPF, you may always download the relevant documents and share them with your mentor or counselor. There are many timelines associated with promotion counseling. It is a requirement that CPOs counsel officers in the lowest quartile and those not recommended for promotion. Our CPO and Career Development Subcommittee work hard to begin counseling as soon as possible and will continue to shorten the timelines where possible. This year CCHQ adjusted the timeline for publishing benchmarks because they recognized officers' concerns when these were posted so late in the year. EHO benchmarks did not change from last year. The CV Coversheet, Continuing Education Summary Sheet, OS example, and ROS example were posted in May – July 2020 and only included minor changes to dates and examples, but no other content. The Career Development Subcommittee will also ensure changes are identified and published early in the year so officers have time to make adjustments to their documents.

Permanent Promotion Results:

Congratulations to all who were promoted to the permanent rank.

A promotion in rank is a significant career milestone. A promotion demonstrates your commitment to the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps, your commitment to your career, and your readiness to assume a higher level of leadership.

The 2020 permanent grade promotion lists are now available on the Commissioned Corps Management Information System (CCMIS) [promotion results webpage](#).

Please contact your USPHS CC Agency Liaison if you have questions regarding results.

Important EHOPAC Updates

Training & Events:

As the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we interact with each other, the EHOPAC Events Workgroup, under the Training and Events Subcommittee, searched for new and innovative ways to bring members of the PAC together for the holidays in a responsible, yet socially distanced manner. On December 16, 2020 – the Events Workgroup hosted the 2020 EHO Winter Social Virtual Trivia and Networking Event. This event was virtually attended by over thirty Environmental Health Officers, located across the country from South Florida to Alaska. The networking event kicked off with a holiday sweater contest, providing an opportunity for officers to showcase their holiday spirit in a tightly knit and decorated package. The officers in attendance unanimously voted the EHOPAC's CPO, RADM Kelly Taylor's sweater as the most holiday festive. This sweater tied in holiday elements with motifs from her time spent out west with the Indian Health Service (IHS).

The officers then jumped into a trivia challenge hosted on the virtual Kahoot! Platform. These officers tested their skills in questions ranging from the holidays (which date does Festivus fall on – December 23); to public health (which state recently issued a public health advisory regarding the consumption of cannibal sandwiches - Wisconsin). Even though the officers were not physically together, they were still able to share their favorite holiday traditions ranging from the Dinner of the Seven Fishes, to an entire family gathering re-enacting the "12 Days of Christmas" song. The trivia contest was won by the trivia master **LCDR Molly Madson**, who also won the trivia challenge during the September 2020 Virtual

Training Series. This virtual event was a festive way for fellow EHOs to engage, to laugh, and to network prior to the holiday break. The Events workgroup is looking forward to putting on more interactive, yet socially distanced events during 2021.

If you have ideas on creative ways to host events that will help spread esprit de corps, please contact the Events Workgroup Lead – LCDR Ronan King at Ronan_King@nps.gov.

Readiness:


Be sure to login to the Officer Secure Area Dashboard to check your projected readiness status to ensure you're not falling behind. Email PHSReadiness@hhs.gov, complete a Readiness Assistance Form, or reach out to the EHOPAC Readiness Subcommittee to address any errors you note in your readiness history or projections. We encourage you to do what you can to clear up all items (immunizations, APFT, BLS, and PHUs) that will be coming due as the COVID-19 waivers expire. Please be sure to keep a copy of all records related to readiness in your personal files in case there is a discrepancy. The career you save may be your own.

Please refer to the EHOPAC listserv e-mail titled *"January Readiness Reminder: COVID-19 Immunizations, PHUs, Readiness Waivers Expiring in March, BLS Refresher Options, and USPHS Exercise Challenge"* (dated: 1/25/2021) for further announcements and information on:

- COVID-19 Immunizations
- Periodic Health Updates Resuming in 2021 – First Batch Due March 31, 2021
- COVID-19 Readiness Waivers Expiring March 31, 2021 for BLS and APFT
- BLS Refresher Options During COVID-19 Restrictions
- USPHS Exercise Challenge

Required Training Reminder: Each officer must complete a series of COVID-19 Pre-Deployment Vaccine Training Modules. Please refer to the e-mail titled "Acting Surgeon General Memo for Officer COVID-19 Vaccinations and Vaccination Training Resources" sent from CCHQ sent on Friday, February 12, 2021 for further information and links.

Mentoring and Orientation:



DYK? January was **National Mentorship Month**. A blog post from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Director, celebrating National Mentorship Month, poignantly says: "Mentoring is a two-way street. There are times in all our careers when we need help and guidance from a colleague or friend. And, we can learn as much from those we mentor as we can from those who advise us." **Thank you to all the EHOPAC mentors!**

Figure 1 – Mentorship is a Two-Way Street

Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ) Updates

CCHQ has provided several updates regarding personnel matters involving the USPHS Commissioned Corps. Effective January 20, RADM Felicia Collins will serve as the Acting Assistant Secretary for Health. Effective January 26, RADM Susan Orsega will serve as Acting Surgeon General, in addition to her role as Director of Commissioned Corps Headquarters.

A special thanks to former Assistant Secretary for Health ADM Brett Giroir, Surgeon General VADM Jerome Adams, and Deputy Surgeon General RADM Erica Schwartz for their service to our nation and our USPHS Commissioned Corps.

The United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps has **received a Presidential Unit Citation (PUC)** for our extraordinary performance of duty during the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic and for unwavering dedication to protecting, promoting, and advancing the health and safety of our Nation. The Presidential Unit Citation, awarded to all Public Health Service officers, recognizes the tireless commitment, many sacrifices made, and exemplary performance when faced with unknown and unseen threats to one's own personal safety. Our work is far from finished!

CCHQ is pleased to announce that, for the third year, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has provided a special opportunity for the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps to participate in their **VITA Program. This program provides access to free electronic filing of both federal and state tax returns.** Starting today, you'll have access to the VITA Program Self Service Tax Support online tax preparation service through a special TaxSlayer URL provided to officers behind the [Officer Secure Area](#). Once you login to the Officer Secure Area, navigate to the 'Commissioned Corps Modernization' tab and click on the 'Presentations and Resources' section to find the VITA Program documents. Only USPHS officers are authorized to use this link and only for your own personal income taxes (either as an individual or jointly with a spouse). If you file jointly the other person named on your taxes can also use this link.

The 2020 Social Security tax deferral ended on December 31, 2020. **Beginning January 2021, the normal 6.2% Social Security tax withholdings will be deducted;** additionally, you will see a deduction for the deferred 2020 Social Security tax collection taken from your pay.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 extended the period for collecting deferred 2020 Social Security taxes. The period for collection is now January 1 through December 31, 2021 (instead of January 1, 2021 to April 30, 2021).

Collection Process:

Per Internal Revenue Service guidance, the amount of Social Security taxes deferred in 2020 will be collected in **12 installments** out of your monthly pay, between January 1 and December 31, 2021.

Beginning in January 2021, your earnings statement will reflect the total amount of the deferred taxes and the deferred taxes will be shown on your monthly statement as "Indebtedness Loan".

Please refer to CCHQ e-mail on the 2020 Social Security Tax Deferral dated 1/21/2021 for additional information on the collection process when separating from service as well as additional background information.

CCHQ **announced several policies signed recently** by the ASH & SG. A formal rollout is to come. The following policies have been signed and are pending posting:

Commissioned Corps Instruction (CCI) 322.06, "Ready Reserve Management"

CCI 221.01, "Medical Accession Standards"

CCI 221.02, "Medical Readiness"

CCI 391.01, "Appointment Boards"

CCI 231.01, "General Appointment Standards"

CCI 231.03, "Category Specific Appointment Standards"

Commissioned Corps Directive (CCD) 151.06, "Assignment Pay"

CCI 633.06, "Assignment Duty Pay"

Personnel Operations Memorandum (POM) 821.79, "Assignment Pay Locations, Rates, and Agreements"

Amendments to CCD 151.05, "Health Professions Special Pays"

Amendments to CCI 633.01, "Special Pays"

POM 821.70, "Health Professions Special Pay (HPSP) Submission, Effective Dates, and Rates"

CCI 661.01, "Computation of Retired Pay"

CCI 322.01, "Short Tours of Active Duty"

CCI 311.03, "Request for Personnel Action"

CCI 384.01, "Creditable Service for Retirement"

CCHQ will communicate additional information regarding these policies soon.

Upcoming Events

SAVE THE DATE: March 9 – 10, 2021

Legionella Conference Special Session

In response to the current COVID-19 pandemic, *Legionella* Conference organizers NSF and the National Environmental Health Association have added a virtual special session, which will take place March 9 – 10, 2021. This two-day session centers on how industries and organizations such as health care, water utilities, manufacturing, cultural institutions and hospitality, as well as health departments and regulators, can better respond to water-related challenges during a pandemic or major health crisis.

Eligible attendees can earn 18 CE credits by attending the event.

[LEARN MORE AND REGISTER HERE](#)

CALL FOR COUNCIL NOMINATIONS: EHAC Council Members

The National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council (EHAC) is pleased to announce its 2021 Council Member Call for Nominations.

*EHAC Council Members can be Environmental Health Academicians or Practitioners and **must be nominated by current EHAC Council Members or an Accredited Degree Program Director.***

Please note that Council members are required to have at least 5 years of EH experience - or a combination of academic and practical experience (described in attachment on page 5).

To learn more about the EHAC Council, please visit www.nehspac.org.

Nominations are due to EHAC Nomination Committee Chair, Chris Sparks (via executive.director@nehspac.org), by February 28, 2021.

More information and links can be found in the EHOPAC listserve email "EHAC Call for Council Nominations" dated 1/18/2021.

CALL FOR AWARDS: National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)

NEHA's annual awards call is open through March 31. There is a **new award this year, The Dr. Bailus Walker, Jr. Diversity and Inclusion Awareness Award**, which recognizes an individual or group that has made significant achievements in the development and enhancement of a more culturally diverse, inclusive, and competent environment.

Please visit the NEHA Bulletin for more information on the new [Diversity and Inclusion Award](#). For more information on NEHA Awards, please visit <https://www.neha.org/about-neha/awards>.

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS: Uniformed Services Environmental Health Association (USEHA) Technical Education Program

The Uniformed Services Environmental Health Association (USEHA) proudly announces its annual **Technical Educational Program** to be held during the NEHA Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition (AEC). Due to COVID-19 restrictions, NEHA is presenting its AEC as a three-part virtual series (see: <https://www.neha.org/neha-2021-annual-educational-conference-aec-exhibition-three-part-virtual-series>).

Due to the time limitations, presentations should be limited to 25 minutes, including 5 minutes for questions (also see "Information for Presenters" at the NEHA AEC website).

The USEHA presentations will occur during a 3-hour period on Tuesday, 1 June 2021.

Questions about the USEHA program content and to submit an abstract:

Dr. Welford C. Roberts at (703) 201-6246 or welford@erols.com

Call for abstracts announcement:

[2021 USEHA Call Abstracts 1st Call.docx](#)

Abstract Submission Form:

[2021 USEHA Abstract Submission Form.docx](#)

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: 12 March 2021

Organization of the Month

The [American Society of Safety Professionals \(ASSP\)](#) has operated for more than 100 years as a global association for occupational safety and health professionals. The organization supports occupational safety and health (OSH) professionals in their efforts to prevent workplace injuries, illnesses, and fatalities. The ASSP works to provide education, advocacy, standards development, and a professional community to its members.

The ASSP provides many online courses including instructor-led and self-paced as well as live virtual classrooms, live webinars, and on-demand webinars. More information on ASSP courses can be found on their [Online Learning webpage](#). Additionally, the ASSP hosts a variety of conferences in the areas of professional development and safety leadership. More information can be found on their [Conferences webpage](#).

Consider exploring more about the ASSP. Workplace safety impacts all of us and is a foundation in Environmental Health!

About EHOPAC News

Do you have a news story to share? Submit your *EHOPAC News* stories or questions for inclusion in a future edition to LCDR Matthew Kozler at matthew_kozler@nps.gov and LCDR Tyler White at tyler.white@bia.gov!

For More EHOPAC Information:

Visit the [EHOPAC Website](#)

Check out our FACEBOOK pages:

[EHO Closed Facebook Group](#)

To join, please log in, and click the green “Join Group” button.

[EHOPAC Open Facebook page](#)

[EHO LinkedIn page](#)

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Thank you for all you do,

EHOPAC Communications Subcommittee – Publications Team

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