Greetings from the Chief Professional Officer
By RADM Kelly Taylor, Chief Professional Officer

Greetings, EHOs!

As I was preparing to write this article, I tried to think of what EHOs would find most interesting to hear from the CPO. With all the new policies showing up almost weekly, it’s hard to figure out where to begin. I finally settled on a topic that I think would be worth talking about in this particular article.

I’m stealing the theme I used for Category Day at the USPHS Symposium in June – “Embrace Change.” Charles Darwin said, “It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.” I find this extremely relevant these days. I took a quick snapshot of the recent issuances that are on the first page of the CCMIS website and saw that there were 13 just this year (and we aren’t done yet). In discussions with Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ), I have become aware of a host of others that are “coming soon”. It seems like every time I look, there is another policy that is going to change my life.

Some officers may have begun to get comfortable with their careers and where they were going when all of a sudden, things didn’t seem so certain anymore. That feeling of uncertainty is not always a bad thing, though. It keeps us from becoming complacent and nudges us forward to keep trying to be better officers. I would like to think the changes that are coming to the Corps will make us better officers and the Corps stronger. For that to happen and to help us manage the uncertainties, we need to pay attention to the changes and be responsive to them.

How are we expected to keep up with all the changes that are occurring? Well, first off, make sure you pay attention to those emails from “Commissioned Corps HQ (HHS/OSG)” and phsopffix@hhs.gov. They are often your only notice that something is about to affect your career. CPOs have been asked by CCHQ to encourage their categories’ officers to review the CCMIS website frequently and I must admit, that is an excellent idea. I’ve made it my browser’s home page so I can keep an eye on new issuances and announcements. If you have questions about a policy, an announcement, or new initiative, the first place you should check is the website. After the website, consult your PAC representative, your agency liaison, the anonymous question and answer link on the EHOPAC website, or me.

So while we’re all wondering how the new policies and directives are going to affect us, and what the Corps will look like in five years, we need to keep doing our jobs, be the best officers we can, and remember that our mission is to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of our Nation.
Greetings EHOs, I hope that you are all having a great summer; congratulations to the following Officers who were recently promoted!

PERMANENT PROMOTIONS

**CAPTAIN (0-6)**
- Robert Bialas
- David B. Cramer
- Brian K. Johnson
- Mathew J. Thomas
- Bobby T. Villines
- John T. Whitesides
- James P. Young

**COMMANDER (0-5)**
- Jason E. Barr
- Michael G. Box
- Mark A. Byrd
- Jennifer A. Freed
- Aimee T. Treffiletti
- Sarah E. Unthank

**LIEUTENANT COMMANDER (0-4)**
- Timothy M Albright
- Nicola J. Areshenko
- David G. Bales
- Jennifer D. Dobson
- Kenneth W. Fent
- Christopher A. Fletcher
- William P Fournier
- Justin A. Gerding
- John C. Hansen
- Jessica E. Hensley
- Robert C. Horsch
- Katherine N. Hubbard
- Harold P. Hurst III
- Joel D. Hustedt
- Jasen M. Kunz
- Eun G. Lee
- Brian M. Lefferts
- Jason A. Lewis
- Molly A. Madson
- Eva D. McLanahan
- Aaron B. Otis
- Jessica E. Pharo
- Sarah-Jean T. Snyder
- Racquel Y. Williams

**LIEUTENANT (0-3)**
- Sandra Carpio
- Douglas L. Erling
- Jason K. Ferry
- Gamola Z. Fortenberry
- Riley K. Grinnell
- Aubree J. Kelly
- Christine E. Lloyd
- Stephen G. McLane

**LIEUTENANT JUNIOR GRADE (0-2)**
- Stephanie A. Bridges
- Rachel M. Forche
- Francis Park JR
- Amberlynne VanDusen
- Capri R. Woolridge

TEMPORARY PROMOTIONS

**CAPTAIN (0-6)**
- Michael D. Boley
- Derek A. Newcomer
- Jill M. Shugart
- Sarah E. Unthank

**COMMANDER (0-5)**
- Travis R. Bowser
- Jennifer D. Dobson
- William P. Fournier
- Anna E. Khan
- Andrew M. Kupper
- Aaron B. Otis

**LIEUTENANT COMMANDER (0-4)**
- Isaac N. Ampadu
- Laura K. Annette
- George F. Carroll
- Racio T. Carter
- Matthew G. Duling
- Adrienne C. Eastlake
- Karl D. Feldmann
- Dwight D. Ferguson
- Gamola Z. Fortenberry
- April K. Hill
- Daniel A. Malashock
- Mistin L. Ray
- Kerton R. Victory

The Resources section of the EHOPAC website has promotion-related resources in the Career Development section, which can be used to prepare for PY 2019. The EHO Promotion Benchmarks and Benchmark Supplemental Guidance are available. The updated CV template, CV Cover Sheet, and ROS and OS templates are also available.

The EHOPAC recently voted to revise the EHO Appointment Standards; we will provide an overview of the changes at the Fall EHOPAC meeting. We will also present an overview of the Recognition for Excellence in Physical Fitness (REP!) Program during our Fall EHOPAC meeting.

I enjoyed meeting many of you in person at the COF this year, and I hope that many of you will be able to attend the COF next year in Minneapolis!
2018 EHOPAC Members

RADM Kelly Taylor, IHS
Chief Professional Officer

CDR Chris Van Twuyver, FDA
EHOPAC Chair

CDR Michael Quinn, DOI
EHOPAC, Chair Elect

CDR Jessica Otto, FDA
EHOPAC Secretary/Treasurer

LCDR Daniel Malashock, EPA Executive Committee Liaison

CAPT Jill Shugart, CDC
EHOPAC Ex-Officio

LT Erin Kincaid, CDC
Communications

CDR Luis Rodriguez, CDC
Communications

CDR Jamie Mutter, CDC
Awards

CDR Elena Vaouli, ATSDR
Marketing & Recruitment

LCDR David Bales, IHS
Marketing & Recruitment

LT Steven Merritt, EPA
Readiness

LT Krista Ferry, FDA
Readiness

LCDR Matthew Deptola,
NIH, History

CDR Jessica Hensley, FDA
Information Technology

CDR Carrie Oyster, USCG
Mentoring & Orientation

CDR Elizabeth Valent, FDA, Training & Events

CDR Monica Leonard,
CDC, Mentoring & Orientation

CDR Eva McLanahan,
ATSDR, Training & Events

CDR Travis Bowser, IHS
Career Development

CDR Katie Hubbard, IHS
Policy & Standards

CAPT Stephen Piontkowski, IHS
Career Development

CDR Andrew Kupper,
FDA, Policy & Standards
EHOPAC Subcommittee Highlights

Readiness

Retention Weight Standards

Attention EHOs! Major readiness changes are still underway. On 3 August 2018, Commissioned Corps Headquarters issued Personnel Operations Manual 821.66 (https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/ccis/documents/POM18_001.pdf), which outlined the policy for implementing the Retention Weight Standards (RWS). The policy requires every officer to submit a verified measurement of his or her height and weight via the “Readiness” category in eDOC-U on the Verified Weight Report – Form PHS-7044-1 (https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/PDF_docs/PHS-7044-1.pdf) by 2359hrs on 30 September 2018. The form must be signed by both the officer and a healthcare provider or any person who is authorized to verify the APFT. If you fail to submit form PHS-7044-1 by the 30 September 2018 deadline, you will be marked “Not Basic Ready” on 1 October 2018. Officers will not be penalized—and there will be no impact to promotion eligibility for PY 2019, regardless of weight—if they meet the 30 September 2018 submission deadline.

The RWS are based upon an acceptable range of body mass index (BMI) of between 19kg/m2 and 27.5 kg/m2, or an allowable percent body fat determined by a prescriptive circumference measurement (a.k.a. taping) protocol found in the policy. Officers out of compliance with the provisions of the Retention Weight Standards on 1 October 2018 will require additional notification, quarterly reporting, and/or weight loss plan submissions to Medical Affairs until they come into compliance. Depending upon current/initial documented BMI, officers may have up to 3.75 years (15 quarters) to achieve the acceptable BMI, assuming a conservative 3.5% weight loss per quarter. Medical Waivers of the Retention Weight Standards are possible for pregnant, postpartum, or breastfeeding officers, or for officers with documented medical conditions or prescribed medications that impact their weight.

Per the RWS, there will be no impact to promotion eligibility for Promotion Year 2019, regardless of weight, if you meet the September 30th submission deadline for Form PHS-7044-1. After 1 October 2018, the RWS requires annual submission of Form PHS-7044-1 in conjunction with your Annual APFT documentation. Complying with RWS is a Condition of Service (CCD 111.03) and an element of the recently promulgated Readiness and Duty Requirements (CCI 241.01). Officers who fail to meet or maintain force readiness standards without an approved waiver are subject to disciplinary action and/or separation from active duty. If you’re concerned about meeting the RWS and are on Facebook, consider joining the “Ground Pounders” group to shed the pounds with other PHS officers encouraging you and offering accountability along the way. Please commit to being or becoming #SGFit and meeting this new readiness requirement.

For more information on the Retention Weight Standards, please see this CCMIS webpage: https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/weightstandards_m.aspx

Recognition for Excellence in Physical Fitness (REP!)

One of the most common reasons for not being “Basic Ready” is a missing or expired APFT. The former PHS APFT Certificate of Excellence (PACE) program has been revitalized and renamed Recognition for Excellence in Physical Fitness (REP!). The REP! program is an incentive for Corps officers to improve and maintain their physical fitness. Besides the inherent health and career benefits of an active lifestyle, now there’s one more reason to get fit and stay fit. Questions about REP should be directed to REPprogram@fda.hhs.gov. The REP! fitness program will recognize officers who achieve the following APFT benchmarks:

1. Fitness Level Increase (minimum from Satisfactory to Good)
2. Outstanding/Maximum Level
3. 3-Year Outstanding/Maximum Level

Officers should submit requests for REP! recognition to REPprogram@fda.hhs.gov as follows:
1. Please indicate “Attn: [Type of REP! benchmark, i.e., Level Increase, Maximum/Outstanding, or 3-yr Maximum/Outstanding]” in the Subject
2. Within the e-mail, please provide your Rank, First Name, Last Name, Category, and Agency/OPDIV
3. Attach a PDF or photo of your completed/signed APFT Form PHS-7044 and a screenshot of your Physical Fitness Summary page from the Readiness Self-Service web application in the Officer Secure Areas of CCMIS.
Readiness Status

The readiness percentages for the EHO Category and the entire PHS Commissioned Corps have declined over the last quarter. Please be aware that the Readiness Subcommittee isn’t consistently getting copies of the projected readiness status for EHOs prior to the final readiness checks, so we haven’t been able to alert officers of potential issues beforehand. This is one more reason it is incumbent upon every EHO to check their readiness status monthly within RedDOG Self-Service! As of August 2018, the Environmental Health category has 31 officers that are “Not Basic Ready” and 12 who are exempt from readiness requirements. The most common reason is missing/expired APFT, followed by or in conjunction with missing/expired BLS, so get those APFT records updated and go take a BLS class! The EHOPAC currently has the 3rd lowest readiness percentage at 90.7%, just barely beating out the Veterinarians and Medical Officers. The HSOs, Engineers, and Scientists are still beating us, so we’ve got to aim higher!
EHOPAC Subcommittee Highlights (continued)

Career Development

EHOPAC Resources: We are pleased to share three updated documents with you on the EHOPAC resources website:
- Continuing Education Summary Template
- Officer’s Statement Example 2019
- Reviewing Official’s Statement Example 2019

There are no significant changes to the template and examples. The document contents were reviewed, dates were updated, and other minor edits were made. The newest version of the Continuing Education Summary Template does have guidance and reminder statements for officers.

The OS and ROS documents serve as examples. They are not required formats, but a suggestion of what/how to write them. Please see the OS and ROS Commissioned Corps websites for more information.

Marketing & Recruitment

Applicant Assistance and Placement (AAP):

CALLING ALL HIRING OFFICIALS! Interested in being the first to know when newly boarded EHOs are available for hire? The Applicant Assistance and Placement (AAP) workgroup is here to help. Our goal is to assist you in searching for a qualified candidate by placing newly boarded EHOs in their first position. You’ll receive monthly updates on newly boarded EHOs available for hire along with information on their specific qualifications and experience. If you are interested in receiving these updates or know a hiring official in your Agency who could benefit from this information, please contact AAP’s Co-Lead LCDR Sarah Meehan (sarah.meehan@fda.hhs.gov).

General Duty Updates – AAP is currently tracking and assisting 30 EHO boarded applicants, 24 of whom were boarded in January, February and March 2018. 18 of these boarded applicants are currently seeking their first assignment. If you are a hiring official and would like more information about these newly boarded applicants, please contact AAP’s Co-Lead LT Bradley Benasutti at Bradley.benasutti@fda.hhs.gov.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>APPLICANT UPDATES AS OF APRIL 2018</th>
<th>30 EHO Applicants Successfully Boarded</th>
<th>12 Have Secured Federal Positions</th>
<th>18 Are in Need of Securing a Billet</th>
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JRCOSTEP Updates

Summer 2019 Application Window – Will open for EHOs and ENGs from OCT 15, 2018 through NOV 30, 2018. Interested candidates must contact the Commissioned Corps Recruitment Call Center at 1-888-225-3302 between these dates in order to complete the preliminary screening. Please share this opportunity with interested students and accredited programs. Interested students must have completed at least two years of study in an accredited baccalaureate program or at least one year of study in an accredited master’s or doctoral program.

The continuous openings to apply for general duty are temporarily suspended for former EHO JRCOSTEPs and EHO Inter-service Transfers. DCCPR suspended these EHO-specific continuous openings, and other category open application periods scheduled for 2018 to allow DCCPR time to process a backlog of applications and perform an assessment on Corps requirements. No future dates for EHO open application periods have been identified, nor when the temporary suspension on EHO-specific continuous openings for former JRCOSTEPs and Inter-service Transfers will be lifted.
EHOPAC Subcommittee Highlights (continued)

Mentoring & Orientation

The Officer Basic Course’s (OBC) Graduation Working Group, led by LCDR Monique Lester and LTJG Rachel Forche participated in three OBCs this past two quarters and welcomed eight EHOs to the PHS: three in the April OBC, four in the May OBC, and one in the July OBC. During each Newsletter publication, M&O will post graduation photographs with our new EHO graduates and OBC Graduation Working Group Volunteers.

Also, as you may be aware, the M&O Subcommittee pairs mentors and protégés in our EHOPAC Official Mentoring Program. What you may not realize is that during 2015, M&O was only able match 10 EHO pairs within the Mentoring Database. In 2016, M&O successfully matched 14 EHO pairs. Then, in 2017 M&O upgraded and kick-started a new pairing program, opening up online enrollment in October. Since this modernization, we have matched more than 60 EHO pairs, which is four times the number of pairs since 2016. Thank you for signing up to be a mentor or to have a mentor!

To register for our EHOPAC mentoring program, please visit: http://mentor.usphs-hso.org/ and select “New User Registration”, complete the database application, select the “Environmental Heath” category and apply.
Policies & Standards

Appointment Standards – Due to a broadening definition of Environmental Health across academia and the challenges of evaluating EHO applications against our appointment standards, updates to our standards were necessary. The Policies and Standards Subcommittee, along with the EHOPAC Executive Committee, developed updated EHO appointment standards which were recently voted on by the EHOPAC Voting Members. An update will be provided to the category during the September EHOPAC meeting.

Training and Events

Training and Webinar Calendar – Recently we created a Google Calendar that lists relevant trainings and webinars available to EHOs. The calendar lists the annual conferences of several professional organizations covering the wide and diverse field of environmental health. Simply click on the meeting listed on the Google Calendar to find out more information about the conference or training and a link to the organization’s website. The Google Calendar can be easily accessed by clicking on the “Calendar” link located on the left side of the EHOPAC’s homepage.

Information on other training and education resources, such as credentials, graduate certificate programs, and on-line trainings, can still be found on the Training and Events Subcommittee page, or by clicking the link: https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/eho/calendar_te.aspx

Do you have or know of a training or webinar that is available to all EHOs? Is there a relevant professional organization whose annual conference is not listed on the Google Calendar? Please email the Training Workgroup Lead, LCDR Scott Daly, at sdaly@cdc.gov with the information to be uploaded to the Google Calendar.

History

The History Subcommittee is looking for articles, photographs, letters and items of historical significance. Please submit any items that you think may be of interest to the current Subcommittee Chair, LCDR Matthew Deptola, at matthew.deptola@nih.gov. Please include the following information with your submissions to help properly catalogue the item, and one of our volunteers will be in contact with you regarding your submission:

- Provide captions that identify agency, individuals, and that describe the task/activity depicted in photographs if possible.
- Provide date including the year, month, and day along with a summary describing articles, letters and documents.

Thank you for your support of the PAC and helping us to document our history!

EHO Category Coin is back in stock!

The EHOPAC is selling the category coins for $10. There will be an additional shipping cost based on the number of coins ordered.

The coin features the EHO logo, which glows in the dark (shown on the right), on one side and the Seal of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service on the other. Anyone interested in purchasing coins should use the fillable PDF form available via the link: https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/eho/ehocoin_pre2016.aspx

If you have questions you can contact CDR Jessica Otto at usphsehopac@gmail.com
Communications

Publications Team- Thank you to our Publications team for their hard work and dedication in the production of this edition of the EHOPAC Newsletter!

Social Media Team-

We are working hard to grow our social media presence!

Our Social Media Team initiated the “Share Your Story” effort to highlight the diverse and exciting work we do as EHOs. Please consider sharing your experience as an EHO. See the emails sent over the ListServ for more information.

Summary for the Open Facebook Page by total monthly reach:

- During the second quarter, the Social Media Team posted seven posts. These posts reached 4,762 unique users, and resulted in 69 new likes.
- The top 3 posts for the quarter (as indicated by likes, shares, and/or comments) were:
  1. The photo and description of who received the EHOPAC awards.
  2. The JRCOSTEP application information post, which included the link to apply.
  3. Information on how to apply to the USPHS, including contact information.

The EHOPAC Open Facebook Page can be found at: https://www.facebook.com/US-Public-Health-Service-Environmental-Health-Officers-180811921960576

Summary for the “Closed” Facebook Group:

- During the second quarter (April-June 2018), the Social Media Team initiated the “Share Your Story” effort to encourage EHOs to post about experiences they’ve had in their positions or deployments.
- There were 35 posts to the Facebook group USPHS Environmental Health Officers during the second quarter, on topics ranging from industrial hygiene to international deployment.
- Currently, there are 264 members in the closed group.
- The top three posts for the quarter (as indicated by likes, shares, and/or comments) were:
  1. “Share my Story” and photo by CDR Luis Rodriguez.
  2. Photo and post about EHOs at the Surgeon General 5K.
  3. “Share my Story” and photo by LT Erin Kincaid.

All these stories and more can be viewed by visiting the EHOPAC “Closed” Facebook Page by clicking the following link: https://www.facebook.com/groups/101483319904462

Ongoing Efforts:

- The Social Media Team continues to solicit stories from EHOs to increase awareness of EHO careers and promote communication across EHOs from different agencies. The effort is titled, “Share Your Story.”
- The Team welcomes posts from other EHOPAC Subcommittees that want to share their efforts/initiatives on the Facebook page.
- The Team continues to monitor and post relevant stories to both the closed and open Facebook pages.
On Tuesday, June 26, 2018, the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) 2018 Annual Education Conference (AEC) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Healthy Homes Conference commenced at the Marriott Convention Center in Anaheim, CA. Environmental health professionals from across the United States converged in Anaheim, including Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Environmental Health Officers (EHOs). The Environmental Health Officer Professional Advisory Committee (EHOPAC) Training and Events Subcommittee hosted a meet-and-greet at JT Schmid’s Restaurant & Brewery. Over 30 EHOs, as well as friends and family, attended this event.

The event started with a welcome speech from our Chief Professional Officer, RADM Kelly Taylor. Following RADM Taylor’s welcome remarks, special guest Dr. David Dyjack, Executive Director of NEHA, spoke about the strong relationship between NEHA and the USPHS EHOs. Officers and friends enjoyed an evening of great food, camaraderie, and an opportunity to network with colleagues from across the country. The evening culminated with a group photo of those who were in attendance, and a photo of the individuals responsible for planning the event. The event was a huge success as a result of the coordination between the Events Workgroup (LCDR Laura Annetta, lead; LCDR Nora Lirette; and CDR Theresa Gallagher) and the ad-hoc planning team, who began planning this event in April 2018.

The planning team was led by LT Kendra Vieira and LT Ronan King, and communications co-leads LT Kate Pink and LTJG Joshua Greenberg. If you missed out on all the fun at this year’s event, plans are already in the works for another EHO social at next year’s NEHA 2019 Annual Education Conference in Nashville, TN from July 9-12, 2019. Thank you to all who were part of the extraordinary evening of EHO awesomeness!

_Pictured right, the Planning Team. Left to right: LT Ronan King, LT Kate Pink, LT Kendra Vieira, LTJG Joshua Greenberg, CDR Elena Vaouli, CDR Betsy Valenti_
Wow! This will be the fifth year that we have produced a professionally bound photobook that highlights the work of USPHS EHOs. As I have said in years past, “it pays to advertise,” and that may be truer this year for our Category than ever before. The goal of the photobook is to raise awareness to Corps leadership on the great work that you all (EHOs) do, both in your day jobs and during response efforts, volunteer work, or participation in fitness events. I have learned that even among our own Category, we don’t always know what EHOs do in other agencies or on deployments, so that means most Senior Commissioned Corp Leadership (that are not EHOs) have even less understanding about the contributions and impact EHOs provide in carrying out the mission to “Protect, Promote, and Advance the Health and Safety of our Nation.”

For the last four years, we have presented a copy of the photobook to the Surgeon General, Deputy Surgeon General, and the Director of DCCPR. The photobooks have been a big hit with leadership, and other categories are starting to follow suit. When RADM Taylor assumed the Chief Professional Officer position for our Category last November, I committed to her that I would keep producing the photobook as long as I was still in the Corps, but I need your help!

Like previous years, we are looking to highlight the work of EHOs over the past year (since October 1, 2017). We want to include your pictures/stories of significant or unique work that have occurred over the past year. If you have participated in any physical fitness events, PHS or agency deployments, volunteer work, recruitment events, or have pictures of you in your day job, please consider submitting the associated pictures. COSTEP pictures would also be great to include. We also need pictures of interesting scenery or events that may not include an officer in the picture, but represents unique work, an environmental health issue, or an accomplishment. We can always grab their attention with a picture and make them want to read the caption. Think creatively!

Please send any pictures you may have of you or groups of officers and a short (a few sentences/bullets) description of the work/accomplishments that we can use as a caption for the picture(s). Pictures need to be high resolution to be used in the photobook. If you have civilians in any of the pictures, please make sure you obtain permission to use the photo.

Please submit your pictures by October 19th to CDR Eva McLanahan (yjp8@cdc.gov).
Highlights from the 2018 USPHS Symposium EHO Category Day
Submitted by: LCDR James Gooch, LCDR Beth Wittry, and LT Sam Frank

The 2018 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium was held on June 4-7, 2018 at the Renaissance Dallas Addison Hotel just north of sprawling Dallas, TX. The festivities kicked off with an early morning mentoring session on Tuesday, where six senior officers provided guidance and advice to 12 junior officers on everything from promotions and awards, to career progression and deployment readiness.

Tuesday evening, several EHOs performed with the USPHS Music Ensemble during their spectacular annual concert. Following the concert, over 25 officers attended the EHO Social at the nearby Lazy Dog Restaurant & Bar. The social provided a great opportunity for officers to mingle in a laid-back environment and get to know one another over some delicious food and drinks.

Pictured above, EHO Category Day attendees with Assistant Secretary for Health, ADM Brett Giroir; Surgeon General, VADM Jerome Adams; Deputy Surgeon General, RADM Sylvia Trent-Adams; Director of DCCPR, RADM Joan Hunter; Director Oklahoma City Area IHS, RADM Kevin Meeks; EHO Chief Professional Officer, RADM Kelly Taylor; and EHOPAC Chair, CDR Chris van Twuyver.

Pictured left, CPO, RADM Kelly Taylor presented the CPO Update.

Pictured right, RADM Kevin Meeks and the Symposium Planning Team: LCDR Beth Wittry, LCDR James Gooch and LT Samuel Frank.
The EHO Category Day was a great success. With over 50 officers representing nine federal agencies, it was the largest turnout to date for an EHO Category Day. The day began with updates from the EHO Chief Professional Officer (CPO) RADM Kelly Taylor and EHOPAC Chair CDR Chris van Twuyver. RADM Kevin Meeks followed with an inspiring “Call to Action” address aimed at the promotion of EHOs across the Corps and our important roles within our respective agencies.

The rest of the morning consisted of an impressive line-up of speakers who provided technical and professional insight into various environmental health and industrial hygiene topics. These topics ranged from the FDA’s Interstate Travel Program to the potentially harmful effects of isocyanates. The morning also involved a networking tabletop exercise and the most junior officers were selected to share their groups’ decisions about how best to respond to Commissioned Corps and EHO-related scenarios. This session generated a lot of discussion around the room.

During lunch, RADM Taylor presented the 2018 EHOPAC Awards to award recipients to recognize officers’ hard work and perseverance. The awardees were: CDR Bryan Christensen for the Edward (Ted) Moran Award, LT Steven Merritt for the John C. Eason Award, CAPT Kenny Hicks for the Thomas E. Crow Mentor Award, CAPT David Cramer for the John G. Todd Award, and LCDR Brian Czarnecki for the EHO Responder of the Year Award. RADM Taylor also recognized LCDR Charles Darr for receiving the Junior Officer Advisory Group’s (JOAG) VADM C. Everett Koop Junior Officer Award.

The afternoon’s events consisted of a series of captivating deployment presentations that highlighted the incredible leadership and hard work EHOs displayed during the 2017 hurricane response missions. Among the topics discussed were: leadership during deployments, medical waste management in the U.S. Virgin Islands, health clinic assessments in Puerto Rico, disaster epidemiology, and the role of ASPR Division of Fusion in hurricane response missions. The Assistant Secretary for Health ADM Brett Giroir, U.S. Surgeon General VADM Jerome Adams, and USPHS leadership stopped by to address the group about the current and future direction of the Commissioned Corps. They discussed the important role EHOs play in accomplishing our overall mission of protecting, promoting, and advancing the health and safety of our nation.

The planning for the next EHO Category Day has already begun. We hope to see you at the 2019 Scientific and Training Symposium, May 6th - 9th in Minneapolis, MN! Mark your calendars!

Pictured left, LT Sandra Carpio (EHO, Puerto Rico) participated in the networking session.

Pictured right, 2018 EHO Awardees: LCDR Charles Darr, LCDR Brian Czarnecki and LT Steven Merritt with USPHS leadership.
The EHOPAC’s Social Media Team, who maintains the EHOPAC Facebook sites, recently established a “Share my Story” initiative. LCDR Jonathan Blonk sat down to interview LT White and learn more about the project.

What was the impetus for the “Share My Story” project?

Our team brainstormed ways to increase involvement in the Facebook Group and Page. We have four team members who take turns “on duty,” posting relevant info from the newsletter, list serve, or other EHOPAC sources. However, social media is meant to be social! LCDRs Catherine Beaucham and Kristen Szenderski came up with the idea to have members share their stories to interact with other EHOs and learn about the diversity of EHO careers. This effort nicely overlaps with the EHO photo book as many posts have great photos for that publication.

How long of an article are you requesting EHOs submit?

The actual posts are very brief. We are asking for only 1-2 paragraphs or less than 8 lines. The story can be a summary of an officer’s duty station, career, or specific response effort. The goal is to share an experience, lesson learned or opportunity to demonstrate the breadth of EHO careers and deployments. Officers in the Facebook Group “USPHS Environmental Health Officers” can post directly to the group. Any officers without Facebook that would still like to participate are welcome to send their write-up to me at tyler.j.white@uscg.mil.

How many stories have you received so far?

This summer, we received stories from five officers in three different agencies (FDA, CDC and USCG). These stories have generated many more comments/reactions than typical EHOPAC Facebook posts, indicating there is an interest in learning about our fellow officers. With over 350 officers in over 15 different agencies, it would be great to have representation from various agencies and duty stations. Now is a great time to demonstrate the great work EHOs do! Check out the EHOPAC Facebook page for some examples: https://www.facebook.com/groups/101483319904462/
Awards Corner

Many of our Environmental Health Officers receive recognition from professional organizations, agencies, and other entities for their outstanding work in the field of environmental health. The following officers received awards in the previous year and represented our category with pride and distinction.

LTJG Rachel Forche, Project Manager with the FDA Center for Tobacco Products, received a FDA Group Award. LTJG Forche was an instrumental part of managing the project to ensure the successful collection of biomarker data for the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health Study.

LCDR William Bird, FOH Industrial Hygienist, received the 2018 HHS Regional Director’s Leadership Award for an agency specific deployment to St. Thomas and St. Croix following Hurricane Maria supporting the TSA by conducting mold assessments and awareness training at two International Airports protecting the health and safety of TSA agents and the public entering these airports.

RADM Kevin Meeks, Deputy Director of Field Operations, IHS, was presented the Surgeon General’s Medallion by VADM Adams, for exceptional achievement to the cause of public health.

LTJG Shelby Foerg received the Bemidji Area Environmental Health Specialist of the Year 2017 for “exceptional efforts to improve the lives of American Indians by eliminating environmentally related disease and injury through model public health practices”.

LCDR Charlie Darr was selected as the recipient of the 2018 VADM C. Everett Koop Junior Officer Award, for demonstrating exceptional leadership and outstanding capability by undertaking highly visible special assignments and emulating the commitment, contributions, and character of the 13th Surgeon General of the United States.

Congratulations to RADM Chris Buchanan, Deputy Director, IHS, who was recognized by the American Indian and Alaska Native Commissioned Officers Advisory Committee with the 2018 RADM George Blue Spruce, Jr. Flag Officer Award.

CDC’s Vessel Sanitation Program received the CDC NCEH/ATSDR Honor Award for Excellence in International Partnering for 2017. The award was for collaboration with the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Travelling Public Program to prevent the introduction and transmission of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) from cruise ships sailing from foreign ports. This partnership was important during 2017 when eight AGE outbreaks and elevations occurred on five cruise ships sailing between Alaska and Canada.
Frequently Asked Questions

Periodically, EHOs will submit questions or feedback to the EHOPAC Executive Committee (EC) leadership via the EHOPAC Anonymous Feedback System (https://goo.gl/Igy9TD). Questions are addressed during quarterly EHOPAC meetings by EC Leadership, and subsequently shared in quarterly meeting minutes and the Newsletter.

**Question 1 and 2: Physical Standards & Readiness**

**QUESTION:** With the current emphasis on physical standards for retention, is there any consideration of giving program support for obtaining these physical standards? This would need to be endorsed by the PAC and the surgeon general.

**ANSWER:** With the implementation of the new conditions of service policies (March, 2018), any sort of program could impact the officers and their individual agencies. As a reminder, all PHS officers are required to meet the expectations outlined in PHS Deployment Readiness and Conditions of Service Policy, including deployment readiness, which is a component of basic readiness. The Readiness subcommittee is available to support officers with additional questions and concerns.

**QUESTION:** When will supervisors be held accountable when officers they supervise do not meet readiness standards?

**ANSWER:** This is an interesting idea, however unlike DOD which has line authority, our current PHS system is not conducive for something like this. Disciplinary action against civilian supervisors is not likely a plausible action.

**Question 3: Deployment Reimbursements**

**QUESTION:** What is the PAC effectively doing to support EHOs when they deploy without orders in hand, have to pay up-front for meals and incidentals, and wait months to be reimbursed for the costs incurred to support PHS deployments?

**ANSWER:** ASPR and DHHS resources were stretched very thin this year. The engineering PAC was able to get feedback on additional information from those officers who experienced delayed payment. This will be presented to the CPOs for further discussion. HQ and leadership is aware of it, and while it is unfortunate, we will share updates if we receive them.

**Question 4: Employee Viewpoint Survey**

**QUESTION:** Some PHS Officers (outside HHS) cannot participate in the Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS). Can this be addressed and can we provide feedback like other employees do?

**ANSWER:** While certain agencies have developed workarounds for this, PAC leadership was not aware of the extent of this issue. Additional information about the agencies where this is occurring would be useful to move forward.

**Question 5: EHOPAC Planning**

**QUESTION:** What is the EHOPAC 5 year plan, specifically goals and milestones?

**ANSWER:** The PAC does not use a 5 year planning period, because it presents operational challenges. PAC has a defined set of subcommittees covering a wide range of topics that help officers. These subcommittees which are chaired by our VMs, work on specific goals and topics throughout the year. Each year, the PAC identifies critical issues and needs to be addressed by each subcommittee. Over the past few years, the EC has made many improvements to the framework of the PAC, including updates to the charter and bylaws. One idea to help improve the PAC is through listening sessions where officers can share ideas and projects with voting members for consideration.

**Question 6: Category General Application Window**

**QUESTION:** When will the next EHO category general application window be open?

**ANSWER:** This is currently unknown at this time, but will be shared as soon as the EC is aware. Hopefully it will be at a different time of the year that is more conducive for newly graduated students.

**Question 6: GI Benefits**

**QUESTION:** Recommend the EHOPAC host the webinar on GI benefits.

**ANSWER:** The PAC is looking into this and will provide a date and time for this event once scheduled.
Administrative Announcements

EHOPAC QUARTERLY MEETINGS!

Join our Quarterly Meetings! Listen for EHOPAC and Commissioned Corps updates. Hear leadership discuss pertinent EHOPAC issues. All are encouraged to submit questions to be addressed by EHOPAC leadership as well as any other information they wish to share with fellow EHOs. Have a question for EHOPAC Leadership? Submit it anonymously by using this link: https://goo.gl/Igy9TD

Upcoming 2018 EHOPAC Meetings:
September 11\textsuperscript{th}, December 11\textsuperscript{th}

Webinar: https://ihs.adobeconnect.com/ehopac/
Conference Line: 1-800-832-0736; Conference Room #: 6084616

ABOUT THIS EDITION
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Thank you to all the EHOs who contributed articles to this Newsletter!

Have an idea for our next EHO Newsletter?
Want to be a featured “EHO in Action” in the next Newsletter?
Submit your ideas to LCDR Jonathan Blonk at jonathan_blonk@nps.gov