



WSEHA Newsletter

WASHINGTON STATE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION



National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)

Position on Offshore Oil Drilling

July 12, 2010

Background and Vision

The destructive explosions and fire at the British Petroleum (BP) Deepwater Horizon offshore well located off the Louisiana coast in the Gulf of Mexico April 20, 2010 led to the tragic death of eleven workers and caused numerous additional injuries. The Deepwater Horizon rig sank less than two days later with 700,000 gallons of diesel fuel aboard, leaving the well gushing at the sea floor some 5,000 feet below the surface. That was the start of what is now the worst man-made environmental disaster in United States history.

As of this writing, and more than eighty (80) days post disaster, several oil capture and recovery attempts have been employed near the well head to stop the leaks. All have proved futile. The United States Department of Energy estimates Deepwater Horizon is gushing almost 1.5 million gallons per day (gpd) ⁽¹⁾ into surrounding marine environments. BP's own worst case scenario assessment admits leak volume could exceed 2.5 million gpd. To bring perspective to volume of the current spill, the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska was the worst spill in US history. The Valdez spilled 258,000 barrels, 10.8 million gallons of oil ⁽²⁾, the effects of which linger in Alaska's Prince William Sound more than two decades after the disaster. Two bird species show little or no recovery from the oil spill while others are still recovering. Human resources linked to the Sound are also in differing states of recovery from the decades old spill. ⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾

While oil (and other leak by-products such as methane) from the disaster has largely coalesced in waters off the coast, product has found its way to shore, oiling over 170 miles of shoreline in four states. Impact on the Gulf is already severe through loss of fisheries, impact on marine wildlife, impact on local economies and reduction in tourism.

Each day in the United States approximately 818 million gallons of oil are used. ⁽⁵⁾ Worldwide use is almost 3.5 billion gallons ⁽⁵⁾. Oil is used to fuel vehicles, heat homes, lubricate machinery ranging from bicycles to printing presses, make asphalt to pave our roads, and make plastics, medicines, ink, fertilizers, pesticides, paints, varnishes, and electricity.

Because of the United States' dependency on oil, offshore drilling has become a major part of the oil supply market in past decades. Offshore wells produced approximately 27% of the crude in 2007 --- almost 500 million barrels of oil, according to the United States Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) ⁽⁶⁾. With the nation's dependency on oil and the reality of obtaining as much of it as possible from domestic supplies, it will be a long time before we cease offshore drilling in this country.

As technological advances increasingly allowed the natural gas and oil industry to explore and extract oil products farther beneath the ocean floor over the past half-century, developments in management of these submerged sources have aimed to balance conflicting interests and needs associated with these activities. It has become apparent, with this tragedy as evidence, that regulation and oversight of deep water wells has not kept pace with oil and gas extraction technology in remote environments.

An ABC News review of federal records shows that in spite of chronic safety violations, MMS imposed inconsequential fines that often took years to collect. In a majority of cases in which workers were killed, there was no record of fines paid. When fines were imposed, the maximum penalty was only \$25,000. ⁽⁷⁾

Although the Secretary of the Interior restructured MMS into three separate bureaus on May 19, 2010, ⁽⁸⁾ its functions are still located in the Department of the Interior. The three new bureaus with better defined missions are the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, and the Office of Natural Resources Revenue. It took the current situation in the Gulf of Mexico to bring about this change and it is NEHA's belief that environmental enforcement is best handled by the federal agency with the proven track record of such responsibilities. Additionally, such a move will restore confidence that regulation of the industry is under new purview.

Recommended Actions

- Support legislation to require an accurate, comprehensive, and reviewed contingency plan for worst case scenario prior to the issuance of any new drilling permit.
- Support legislation that improves and increases a disaster relief fund such as the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund (OSLTF). For this and future disasters, the fund should have government oversight but be funded by the oil companies and managed by a neutral third party. Any and all fines levied on off shore drilling rigs should be put into this fund.
- Advocate for the encouragement of expert technological assistance from other countries.
- Support legislation to reorganize MMS, and move it from the Department of the Interior to the United States Environmental Protection Agency. This will separate the inspection and regulatory staff from revenue collection and development staff and place them in a separate federal agency.
- Advocate for the establishment of research programs (funded by oil companies who are currently or plan to drill offshore) to study health effects of petroleum, it's by products, and chemical dispersants on recovery workers, volunteers and the public who may have come into contact with the products.
- Support the establishment of research programs necessary to determine the effects of The Deepwater Horizon and other potential spills on the marine environment and best management practices for recovery from any spill.

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Next Newsletter Deadline:

**Sunday, October 31,
2010**

The Washington State Environmental Health Association Newsletter is the official publication of WSEHA. Membership in WSEHA includes a subscription to the newsletter. Manuscripts for publication must be type-written and submitted via e-mail to kerri@wseha.org, or on a computer disk mailed to WSEHA at the address above. Membership in WSEHA is not required for acceptance of articles in the newsletter.

Opinions expressed in articles published in the WSEHA newsletter should not be accepted necessarily as statements of policy or opinions of WSEHA.

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Nominations and Awards

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- Advocate for the establishment of guidelines by the FDA on seafood and shellfish harvested from oil spill affected waters to ensure a safe food supply.
- Support the requirement that all cleanup personnel (employees and volunteer) follow OSHA requirements and NIOSH guidelines to protect health and safety both onshore and offshore.
- Support and encourage acceleration of research and advancement of technologies that result in a sustainable environment using renewable resources whenever possible.
- Support legislation that will increase funding for renewable energy research and provide tax incentives to energy companies that switch from carbon based extraction to production of renewable energy.
- Support measures applied to improve the conditions of affected people, ecological systems and businesses, both environmentally and economically, with a goal to restore conditions as close as possible to pre-contamination conditions.
- Advocate legislation and regulations that establish strict environmental responsibility, stewardship and liability. These laws and regulations need to address accountability and negligence for both government and industry as both have shared responsibilities associated with the prevention, response and remediation of oil spills and releases.

Method of Implementation

Upon adoption, NEHA should disseminate this paper as widely as possible by release to the membership, publication in the *Journal of Environmental Health*, provision of copies of this paper to affiliates to share with their members, and provision of copies of this paper to similar professional associations for their review. Affiliates and members should be encouraged to provide comments to legislators based upon the information contained herein, or to provide a copy of this document as augmentation to their own comments.

References

1. Ray Henry (June 15, 2010), Scientists: Oil leaking up to 2.52M gallons daily: Associated Press
2. State of Alaska Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council: from <http://www.evostc.state.ak.us/facts/qanda.cfm>
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4. State of Alaska. Status of Injured Resources & Services, Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
5. U.S Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy
6. Offshore Energy and Minerals Management (OEMM). Minerals Management Service, Department of the Interior. (Now known as the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement)
7. Pierre Thomas, (June 24, 2010) Offshore Drilling: Years of Lax Oversight, Small Fines for Serious Violations: ABC News
8. United States Department of the Interior, Press Release, (May 19, 2010) Salazar Divides MMS's Three Conflicting Missions - Establishes Independent Agency to Police Offshore Energy Operations: <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/Salazar-Divides-MMSs-Three-Conflicting-Missions.cfm>



President's Message

Geoffrey Crofoot
WSEHA President

At the writing of this Presidents message, the gusher in the Gulf of Mexico has been capped and appears to be moving steadily towards a permanent capping and closure. When it's closed for good, with no leaks and no fear of further release then, perhaps, we can all let out that breath we've been holding for these past months as crude oil flowed without check into our lives.

Even with the relief that a capped and closed well brings, there is still the uncomfortable idea of responsibility that lurks in the periphery of my mind and the persistent nagging that I've been all too complacent. I can't help but think that all of the gushing crude, tar ball spoiled gulf-coast beaches and images of oiled sea birds are analogous to a slaughter house visit and the subsequent surprising realization of the brutal origins of meat. I like my various meats as much as the next WSEHA president (president-elect position is currently vacant) and I do a fair amount of travel in my trusty ten year old corolla. Truth be told, though, I like both my meats and gasoline to be clean and easy to acquire. Until recently, my petroleum has been pretty much boneless, skinless, packaged on a white styro-tray chicken breast. Now however, as I stand at the pump, I'm forced to consider that benignly and relatively thoughtlessly fillin'-it-up comes with real risk, cost and consequence. So, what to do?

In this issue of the WSEHA newsletter, we are running a position paper from our partners, the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA). Without being too much of a spoiler, it calls citizens to action on a national policy and legislative level. I support the direction of the letter and I urge you to take up the change to support NEHA's recommended actions.

That said, I think there is more you can do locally, or perhaps not do, to improve the situation. Walk, bicycle or ride the bus or a combo of all three to work. If that sounds familiar, perhaps you are already hearing it from your doctor, health officer or partner. They are correct. It makes good sense to get out of your car for the daily commute on many levels but one reason is simply moving yourself to work daily equals built-in exercise. Considering that obesity related disease is on the forefront of public health minds, doing your part towards less fuel consumption, happily, may have a reductive influence on your waist line as well.

Buy locally! As you already know, WSEHA is your local professional association, so naturally we support the idea of buying and consuming locally. Buying local products makes sense simply because it takes less fuel to get whatever *it* is from the local field or factory to your mouth or onto your back.

"...I'm forced to consider that benignly and relatively thoughtlessly fillin'-it-up comes with real risk, cost and consequence."

This brings me to my final point. We are all consumers. We pay for and use all manner of stuff; energy, clothing, food... For a long while, it seems that our use has been without cost, consequence or thought. I know for me, it's certainly much easier to not think about any or most of my purchases. However, the environmental tragedy in the Gulf and perhaps other costly fuel related efforts in far-away places can and do serve as a stark reminders that consumption has consequence. So, I simply suggest, consume more thoughtfully. I think, as Americans, we cherish choice. I say, embrace the choice you have as a consumer and think a little more about what it is your cash is voting for.

Upcoming Events:

Composting for Regulators and Operators Workshop

Date: Thursday, September 9, 2010

Time: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Location: Moses Lake, WA



Big Bend Community College ATEC Building

Lecture and hands-on activities will cover:

- Compost basics and best management practices
- Compost technology and treatments
- Conducting a facility inspection
- Biofilters and other odor control technologies
- Feedstock and product odor evaluation (hand/nose-on activity)
- Biosolids composting and biosolids general permit
- Regulations covering permitted and exempt facilities (including anaerobic digestion)
- Compost sampling, lab analysis, and application rates.

Please visit <http://www.wseha.org/CompostTraining.pdf> for more information about the workshop.

To register: please visit <http://www.compostwashington.org>.

Cost: \$40. Please bring your own lunch.

Pool Operator's Manual

A Guide for Safe and Healthy Operation of Swimming and Spa Pools

Manuals are available for \$25 or \$20 when purchasing a quantity of 10 or more. WSEHA members rate is \$20 per manual.

Please make check payable to WSEHA and mail to:

WSEHA
103 Sea Pines Lane
Bellingham, WA 98229-9363



Joint Conference on Health Silent Auction

Submitted by Ross Lytle, WSEHA International Health Committee Chair



The WSEHA International Health Committee is still holding out hope that we may be able to conduct a Silent Auction at the 2010 Joint Conference on Health in Yakima.

Our 2010 recipient, depending on whether a Silent Auction can be conducted, will be Water for People, a non-profit international development organization, which has been active in supporting integrated, sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene projects in Guatemala, Bolivia, Honduras, Malawi, and India.

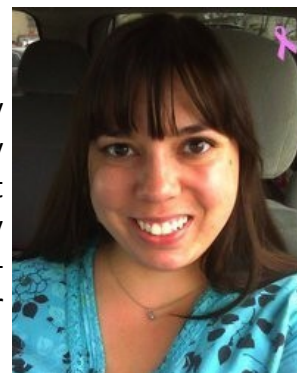
In order to have any chance of making this happen, the WSEHA IHC is in serious need of both volunteers (especially, anyone who is planning to attend the Joint Conference) and donations. Without more volunteers and/or donations, the IHC will have to forgo plans for another Silent Auction until at least Fall of 2011.

If you are interested, please contact Ross Lytle at (360) 337-5677 by early September. September 24th is the registration deadline for a display booth at the Joint Conference.

Meet the Editor, Cinnamon Brown

At Kerri's request, I am popping out of my hermit hole to do a quick wave and introduce myself. Starting with this newsletter, I'll be working with Kerri as the new editor. This means that although your articles (yes, you) will still be sent directly to Kerri, I will be compiling them and attempting to form them into the cohesive unit that we all know as the WSEHA newsletter. Of course, that's only if Kerri receives articles. Which means you have to write them. Otherwise, I'll end up staring at a blank screen wondering how many images of dancing hippos I can find online to wow you with.

When I'm not working with Kerri, I help hold down the fort in Whitman County as the Food Program Coordinator and have done so for the past two years. My education is actually in Biology and Secondary Education so I tend to look at things from that perspective. I am a generalist, so in any given day I typically manage to stick my nose in the food, solid waste, animal bite, septic, water recreation, and WSU's Greek Life programs. Yep, that's Environmental Health for you—always something new and fascinating around every corner.



University of Washington's SEHA

Submitted by Kelsi Thorsness, Recent UW Graduate, Past SEHA Representative

Fish and Environmental Health

I am writing this from Kodiak Island in Alaska. I took a summer job with Icicle Seafood's Larsen Bay plant. We process salmon. And I mean a lot of salmon. The cannery is over 98 years old and is made up of many different components. We have tenders that collect fish from the fishing boats. From there the fish is pumped into the fish house and the sorters put each species into different bins. Pinks always go to the fish house area to be prepared for the cannery. Other species go through the fresh frozen area. Given the current market demand, reds always go from fresh frozen to the fillet line. Chum and silver are either shipped fresh after being chilled or shipped frozen.

My title is Fish House QA (Quality Assurance) Lead. I basically make sure everything is up to both Icicle's and our client's standards. A quality product involves cleaning, cutting, and packaging the fish correctly. Environmental health issues such as food and workplace safety are covered by the QA practices. The most important aspect of food safety is in the cannery. Icicle uses the HACCP system to make sure that *C. botulinum* spores will not survive in the cans after being heated in the retorts.

In my section of the plant we are most concerned with the temperature of the fish, and contamination. We want the stored fish to be between 32 and 36 degrees Fahrenheit. Excessive time or temperature abuse causes belly burn. Enzymes in the fish will break down the lipids and result in a lower grade of fish. A lot of times the fish, especially fresh fish, will come in from the tenders too warm. We always cool the bins down with ice when that occurs. To prevent contamination of the product we make everyone wash off their raingear with an iodine solution each time they enter and exit the production areas. This is to prevent old fish and

other debris from getting on the fresh product. We do not allow people to eat or drink while wearing their raingear. To prevent microorganisms from building up we thoroughly clean the equipment after processing each night. When a fish is dropped on the floor it is always either put back on the line where it will eventually get washed or if it is in the fillet line it is dipped in a mild chlorine solution. Food safety is taken care of by Icicle's quality assurance practices of keeping fish cold and free of contamination. Those practices include SSOPs (Standard Sanitary Operating Procedures) and GMPs (Good Manufacturing Practices).

All in all this is quite an experience for me. I get to see how a food processor deals with environmental health issues and how they deal with inspectors. We've already seen an inspector from the FDA, a rabbi looking to see if everything is kosher, and are expecting many more people from different organizations. I am getting a lot of practice inspecting and enforcing worker habits and cleanliness of equipment. Larsen Bay is a beautiful place to work. I have seen lots of bald eagles and one Kodiak bear. It was huge! It will be amazing to come home to a 40 hour a week job after working this many hours. And no, I am not sick of eating fish yet!



Washington State Environmental Health Association (WSEHA)

Membership Application

WSEHA is a nonprofit professional and educational organization. It was established in 1946 to provide a forum for dialogue and a vehicle for advanced training opportunities. WSEHA enhances individual and collective expertise, promotes professional growth, and revitalizes Environmental Health endeavors. The Association is enriched by the diversity of ideas and orientations of its members, who represent both the public and private sectors.

Categories of Membership (please mark next to the category that applies)

_____ **Regular Membership (\$50.00)**- Persons who are active in the field of environmental health or related educational activities, who have a bachelors degree from an accredited college or university.

_____ **Associated Membership (\$50.00)** - Persons who are active in the field of environmental health or related educational activities, but who do not meet the requirements of regular membership.

_____ **Student Membership (\$5.00)** - Persons who are working towards a bachelor or higher degree in sanitary science, public health, environmental health, or related academic field.

_____ **Subscribing Membership (\$20.00)** - Persons residing outside of the state of Washington whose principal membership benefit is receiving the WSEHA Newsletter and other generally distributed information.

_____ **Affiliate Membership (\$75.00)**- Professional or civic organizations which share the goals and objectives of WSEHA and wish to improve communications and coordination of mutual programs.

_____ **Sustaining Membership (\$75.00)** - Persons or organizations that are interested in supporting WSEHA and its goals and objectives.

_____ **Emeritus Membership** - May be awarded by the WSEHA Board of Directors to persons who have been active in the field of environmental health for at least 25 years, including at least 6 years as a member of WSEHA, and who have retired because of age or disability.

First Name	MI	Last Name	Degree(s)
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Job Title	Agency/Organization
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Work Address	City	State/Zip
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Work Phone	Fax Number	E-mail (for newsletter and other WSEHA information)
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Home Address	City	State/Zip
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_____ Use as my primary mailing address: () Work () Home
Alternative E-mail

I have read and will abide by the WSEHA Code of Ethics found at <http://www.wseha.org/CodeofEthics.pdf>.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please make check payable to WSEHA and mail to: WSEHA, 103 Sea Pines Lane, Bellingham, WA 98229-9363. Memberships expire one year from the date issued and are non-transferable.