

Maryland

» and environmental public health

Maryland is compact, diverse, and populous. Its varied economy includes fishing, farming, industry, education and technology. Maryland's rate of growth and development is expanding rapidly—putting new demands on those charged with protecting environmental public health.

CRITICAL ISSUES

MANAGING GROWTH

In the last three decades, Maryland's population increased by 37 percent and the amount of land developed grew by 124 percent. The population is expected to grow another 20 percent by 2030. This growth impacts air and water quality, infrastructure costs, and increases demand for environmental public health services.

Source: The National Geographic Society. Why We Need Smart Growth; Maryland's Growing Pains. Washington, DC 2002; Profile of Maryland Environmental Public Health Practice, Johns Hopkins Center for Excellence in Community Environmental Health Practice, February 2005

MAINTAINING WATER QUALITY

Groundwater protection, adequate treatment of wastewater, and storm water management are critical tools in preventing contamination of our water supplies and the Chesapeake Bay—an environmental gem and a primary economic driver in the state.

Source: Maryland Department of Environment Initiatives 2006

RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

Natural and manmade disasters leave behind a myriad of environmental public health issues, which divert resources from everyday needs and create unexpected budget and personnel costs.

Source: Governing Magazine 2004; Gursky/Century Foundation Report 2003; Trust for America's Health 2004

GREATEST CHALLENGES

FRAGMENTED SYSTEM

Many agencies are responsible for environmental public health services. This diversity can confuse those seeking information and assistance, and can hamper effective planning and policy development. In response, agencies must work continually to meet the need for effective communication and coordination.

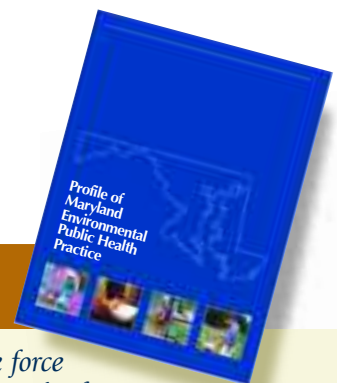
DECLINING WORK FORCE

As many environmental public health workers near retirement, replacements are not in sufficient numbers and new recruits often lack knowledge and experience.

STRETCHED RESOURCES

Fifty-five percent of counties face budgets insufficient to handle increased demands of growth and development and emergency response—despite post 9/11 federal grants.

In Maryland and throughout the United States, resources for environmental public health protection and services are stretched thin because of the loss of experienced staff, added responsibility for emergency preparedness, and increasing workloads related to growth and development.



Environmental Public Health Profile

"Maryland's environmental public health work force is dedicated, hardworking and concerned about the future..."

(They) not only ensure that our food and water are safe, but they also protect us from disease outbreaks and guide us during disasters or terrorist attacks," said Thomas Burke, PhD, Johns Hopkins University, principal investigator of Profile of Maryland Environmental Public Health Practice.

This profile identifies challenges within the infrastructure and offers recommendations to improve work force development, funding, technology and legal responsibility.

Source: Profile of Maryland Environmental Public Health Practice, Johns Hopkins Center for Excellence in Community Environmental Health Practice, February 2005.

DOWNLOAD A COPY: <http://www.jhsph.edu/ecehp/Profile%20Report%20Page.html>

GREATEST CHALLENGES

Fragmented System

As in most states, the Maryland environmental public health services system is a complicated web of federal, state and local agencies. Maryland's system assigns the task of day-to-day environmental public health services to both local and state agencies. Agencies work hard to coordinate services and maintain clear lines of communication.

MARYLAND'S SYSTEM OF ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

4 Federal Agencies + 6 State Agencies + 24 County Health Departments

Resource: Profile of Maryland Environmental Public Health Services February 2005

Declining Work Force

Low salaries, long hours, and limited opportunities for advancement result in poor recruitment and retention of local environmental health practitioners, particularly directors. One half of the state directors are eligible to retire by 2006.

PATTERN OF DECLINING WORKERS

Retired 2004 *25% Eligible to Retire 2006 50%

Resource: Profile of Maryland Environmental Public Health Services February 2005

*at the time of this report, half of these positions were filled

Stretching Limited Resources

Unforeseen emergencies and natural disasters, not just growth and development, stretch already strained resources. Funding for core services—such as food establishment inspections and septic tank checks—is redirected to respond to unexpected events.

CORE SERVICES

- » Licensing and permitting
- » Development plan review
- » Disease investigation
- » Case management
- » Facility inspections
- » Environmental sampling
- » Animal control
- » Nuisance complaints
- » Coordination and planning
- » Legal support

Resource: Profile of Maryland Environmental Public Health Services February 2005

EXAMPLES OF EMERGENCY AND NATURAL DISASTERS IN MARYLAND

Anthrax Scare of 2001

- » Responded to 1800 citizen calls
- » Collected 100 samples
- » Expended 2600+ man hours

Hurricane Isabel 2003 (power outages and flooding)

- » Staffed disaster recovery centers
- » Inspection of affected food establishments
- » Managed drinking well contamination/sewage outfall

Resource: Profile of Maryland Environmental Public Health Services February 2005

CDC INVESTMENT

Federal partnership and support for environmental public health services is essential. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Environmental Health, Environmental Health Services Branch provides critical support to Regional Academic Environmental Public Health Centers including Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health. The JH Northeast Center is working to build environmental health capacity at the state and local level through technical assistance to communities, training for practitioners, and is working to advance research on program effectiveness and outcomes.

INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

CROSS AGENCY COORDINATION

Maryland officials are dedicated to interagency planning and coordination. For example, the Environmental Health Liaison Committee meets bi-monthly to enhance communication and coordination of services and regulations. Participants include Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), and the associations of Local Health Officers and Environmental Health Directors. MDE is also partnering with the Maryland Department of Planning to assist local officials in early coordination of planning.

Take Action!

Support Environmental Public Health Services

Every day, environmental public health practitioners guard our communities against threats to our food supply, drinking water, air quality and sanitation systems. This vital protection requires investment at the local, state and federal level.

The Environmental Health Services Branch of National Center for Environmental Health, Centers for Disease Prevention and Control is spearheading efforts to revitalize environmental public health services (see: www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs).

Please lend support... environmental public health services are vital to everyone, everywhere, every day.



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