

## What are the roles of an Environmental Health Department?

Environmental Health Departments may have different areas of responsibility in different jurisdictions, but all of the following programs are in the field of environmental health.

**Food Protection:** Through the permitting and inspection of retail food businesses, REHS's ensure compliance with State and local regulations pertaining to food safety and sanitation. REHS's may also provide food safety training, conduct plan reviews, and investigate complaints regarding food safety and sanitation.

**Recreational Areas and Bathing Facilities:** Through outreach, inspection, and enforcement, REHS's work to eliminate physical, chemical, and bacteriological hazards at public pools, and spas.

**Housing:** REHS's may conduct housing complaint investigations, detention facility inspections and farm labor camp/employee housing inspections. The Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program is also often a part of the housing program.

**Hazardous Materials and Wastes Management:** REHS's ensure operators comply with State and local regulations that apply to handling hazardous materials. Specific areas of regulation include Underground Storage Tanks, Hazardous Materials Business plans, and Hazardous Wastes and the California Accidental Release Prevention Program. REHS's in this program are also often members of a Hazardous Materials Incident Response Team.

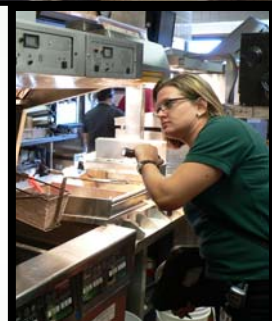
**Solid Waste:** REHS's in the solid waste program ensure that laws are followed with regard to the operation of landfills, transfer stations, recycling facilities and programs, and medical waste management.

**Drinking Water:** REHS's in this program work to ensure that businesses and home-owners comply with all State and local laws that apply to groundwater. Wells are monitored during installation and destruction and routine inspections of small water systems are conducted.

**Liquid Waste Management:** REHS's in this program issue permits, conduct inspections, and investigate complaints related to septic systems, sewage pumper trucks, and wastewater reclamation systems.

**Storm Water:** REHS's in this program conduct storm water compliance inspections to ensure compliance with the requirements of local storm water ordinances that require businesses to prevent the discharge of pollutants into storm drainage systems.

**Other programs some jurisdictions may oversee:** Noise Control, Pest and Vector Control, Land use, Air Quality, Radiation Protection, and more...



# Registered Environmental Health Specialist Career Guide

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TOUCHING EVERYONE'S LIFE, EVERY DAY**

**California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health**

For additional information on Environmental Health Programs in California or employment opportunities in a challenging and fulfilling career in one or more of the programs above please visit [www.ccdeh.com](http://www.ccdeh.com)

## Career: Registered Environmental Health Specialist

Are you interested in a career that:

- Improves the environment and protects public health?
- Is challenging and fulfilling?
- Provides opportunities to work in the field with a wide variety of people?
- Has good pay and benefits?

If you answered yes to any or all of these questions, then becoming a Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS) may be the right career for you.

**Job description:** Conduct inspections and assessments to determine compliance with State and local laws and regulations governing retail food establishments, sewage disposal systems, substandard housing, land use and recreational health, water supply, solid waste management, public nuisances, and vector and rodent control. An REHS is also responsible for recommending changes, providing guidance and conducting enforcement activities to ensure the correction of deficiencies and violations.

### → Get Started!

#### 1. Complete your Bachelor's Degree in a Science based major.

REHS's have a wide variety of degrees:

Biological Sciences, Biotechnology, Chemistry, Conservation, Dietetics, Environmental Health, Genetics, Microbiology, Marine Biology, Nutrition Science, Zoology, ....and more!

A minimum of 30 semester or 45 quarter basic science units is needed.

#### 2. Obtain a trainee Certification Letter from the California Department of Public Health.

- a. Visit the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) website for application information [www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/occupations/Pages/REHS.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/occupations/Pages/REHS.aspx). Submit application and fee (approx. \$95) as instructed.
- b. At the same time, submit transcripts and fee (approx. \$250) to CPS Human Resource Services for transcript evaluation.
- c. A letter will be mailed to you outlining the training and experience hours you will need to complete prior to being eligible for the REHS examination. Submit this letter when applying for a job as an REHS trainee.

### → Apply for the Job!

#### 3. Apply for a "trainee" position in the Counties/Cities where you are interested in working (there are 58 counties and 4 cities in California that have Environmental Health Departments).

Look for job announcements on the CCDEH website: [www.ccdeh.com](http://www.ccdeh.com) or the California Environmental Health Association (CEHA) website: [www.ceha.org](http://www.ceha.org)

- Apply for an entry level Environmental Health Specialist (REHS trainee) position – remember to look for and answer any supplemental questions and include all required paperwork such as the Trainee Certification Letter and/or your transcripts/diploma.
- You will receive a notice of ranking after the application deadline. If your rank is high enough, and a position is available, you will be contacted for an interview.
- If you pass the oral interview, you may be offered a position as a trainee.
- Celebrate! You are starting an exciting and rewarding career!

### → Get Paid to Learn!

#### 4. Your first year as an REHS (trainee)

The first year will be spent learning on the job and preparing to take the REHS examination.

Daily activities could include:

Conducting routine inspections and complaint investigations, attending training courses and studying for the REHS examination.

#### 5. Pass the Examination

Individuals hired as trainees must pass a registration examination within 36 months of hire. The exam covers all subjects within the field of Environmental Health and ensures that individuals have sufficient education, training and experience.

Is this the career for me?

Call your local County Environmental Health office and ask if someone is available to discuss careers in Environmental Health.

Questions?  
Call (916) 449-5663 or  
email  
[REHSprog@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:REHSprog@cdph.ca.gov)

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