

NEHA 2025 AEC

Wrap-Up

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Oasis in the Desert: Shaping Tomorrow's Environmental Health

The 88th Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition of the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) was held on July 14–17, 2025, in Phoenix, Arizona, at the Phoenix Convention Center. We had 1,138 registered attendees, with 1,020 attending in person and 118 attending virtually. The theme for this year was “Oasis in the Desert: Shaping Tomorrow’s Environmental Health.”

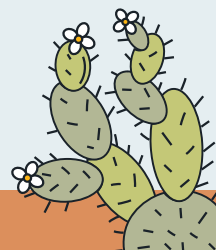
A total of four general sessions were presented, including the Keynote Address, two Grand Educational Session Kickoffs, and the Closing Session. In addition to these general sessions, we offered 194 educational sessions in three different formats: 138 in-person sessions, 48 livestream sessions, and 8 prerecorded virtual sessions. Overall, 341 subject matter experts presented to our attendees throughout the week. Our Exhibit Hall was filled with nearly 60 booths featuring a wide range of products, services, and resources tailored to the environmental public health profession.

Furthermore, various events were held throughout the conference, allowing attendees to connect with us and network with their peers. On Monday, July 14, we offered our First Timer Welcome and the widely popular Exhibition Grand Opening. For Tuesday, July 15, we hosted the Environmental Health Photo Exhibit & Contest, our Career Fair, and the Student Reception. And on Wednesday, July 16, we started the day with the Breakfast & Town Hall Assembly and ended the day with our Awards Celebration and Signature Networking Event.

We thank our attendees, members, speakers, exhibitors, sponsors, partners, board, technical advisors, and staff who participated and contributed to the success of the 2025 AEC. We hope to see you next year in Kansas City, Missouri, at the 2026 AEC. Check out the promotion for the 2026 AEC on page 67.



Photos courtesy of Blake Latolais, B1 Studio LLC



General Sessions



Keynote Address, Monday, July 14

McDonald's Secret Sauce: The Power of Partnership

The 2025 AEC was kicked off with a warm and inspiring welcome to Phoenix from Mayor Kate Gallego. Cesar Piña, senior vice president and chief supply chain officer of North America at McDonald's USA, explored how partnership and collaboration have been the recipe for success, helping McDonald's become an iconic brand with a global footprint. The session dove into the company's franchise model and its three-legged stool approach that unites owners and operators, corporate employees, and suppliers to drive innovation, sustainability, and growth. Piña shared how McDonald's continues to strengthen partnerships within the environmental health community while maintaining its commitment to feeding families and communities worldwide.



Grand Educational Session Kickoff, Tuesday, July 15

Environment, Pollution, and One Health

This session opened with a virtual address from Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska). Senator Murkowski highlighted the crucial role environmental health professionals play in addressing challenges across vast geographical areas and diverse communities. The new and late-breaking session with Dr. Bryan Brooks, distinguished professor of environmental sciences and public health from Baylor University, focused on the topic of our environment, pollution, and One Health. One Health is a collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach—working at local, regional, national, and global levels—to achieve optimal health outcomes, recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.



Grand Educational Session Kickoff, Wednesday, July 16

The Dilemma of Cut Plant Foods: Evaluating the Risks

This session provided an in-depth look at the Conference for Food Protection (CFP) process used to propose and evaluate potential changes to the Food and Drug Administration model *Food Code*. Attendees gained insight into the formation and objectives of the Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) Committee and learned how this diverse group of experts from industry, regulatory agencies, and academia focused on reviewing the science, history, and rationale behind current TCS food definitions and developed recommendations for change. The session also explored the potential regulatory and industry impacts of expanding the definition of TCS foods to include a broader range of cut plant foods. Presenters included Sandra Long from the Environmental Health Division of the Town of Addison, Texas; Rachel Scanlan from Chick-fil-A, Inc.; and Lily Yang from The Acheson Group.



Closing Session, Thursday, July 17

Seeing Over the Horizon and Saving Lives: 30 Years of Emerging Public Health Issues, Illnesses, and Disasters

In the final session of the 2025 AEC, Dr. David Krause, former state toxicologist at the Florida Department of Health, used his 30 years of experience in environmental and occupational health to help attendees step back and observe the current pulse of our profession. What if the complaints, reports, and patterns we are seeing now are the early signs of the next public health crisis? What if our day-to-day work holds clues to what is coming next? Dr. Krause emphasized that we need to be able to predict and react to the next health crisis and circumnavigate the red tape we face with a public health system that is under increasing pressure and scrutiny. He emphasized that this work is not just about solving today's problems—it is about learning to predict and to expect what is next before it creates a media frenzy and public outcries for action. Dr. Krause shared the lessons and hard-won insights from his experiences to help attendees prepare for the next public health crisis with focus and renewed purpose.



Education & Training

The 2025 AEC offered a broad range of educational and training opportunities for the environmental public health professionals who attended the conference. Attendees were able to choose the education and topics they needed or were interested in from 9 preconference workshops and trainings, nearly 200 sessions, and 4 general sessions. Overall, our more than 1,000 attendees—in person and virtual—had numerous environmental health topics to choose from. As one attendee stated, “NEHA does a great job of finding a wide variety of topics with practical applications.”

The goal of the AEC is to foster a collaborative environment where environmental and public health professionals can come together to share innovative ideas, best practices, and emerging trends. By providing a platform for dialogue and networking, the conference inspired participants to enhance their professional development, enrich their instructional strategies, and ultimately, improve environmental health outcomes. Through our general sessions, single lectures, and panel discussions, attendees engaged with diverse perspectives, reflected on their own practices, and left equipped with actionable insights that can be applied within their educational contexts.

The breakout educational sessions started on Tuesday, July 15, and provided attendees with 14 different educational session rooms throughout the day. Along with sessions on climate and health, data and technology, food safety, general environmental health, healthy communities, infectious and vectorborne diseases, water quality, and workforce and leadership, we had learning lab sessions and presentations related to the NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model (RFFM) Grant Program and the uniformed services.

Continuing on Wednesday, July 16, the breakout sessions again ran throughout the day and offered 14 different educational session rooms for attendees to choose from. We offered a broad spectrum of environmental health topics that included climate and health, data and technology, food safety, general environmental health, healthy communities, water quality, and workforce development. Sessions related



to the NEHA-FDA RFFM and uniformed services rounded out the full educational schedule on this day.

The last day of the conference, Thursday, July 17, provided attendees with one last chance to get the education they needed through 15 different educational session rooms that ran in the morning. The educational sessions on this last day covered topics on data and technology, emergency readiness, focused populations, food safety, general environmental health, water quality, and workforce and leadership. We also offered sessions from prerecorded presenters, engaging learning labs, and the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program.

The most popular educational tracks included food safety, general environmental health, infectious and vectorborne diseases, water quality, and workforce and leadership. Overall, 90% of conference attendees who submitted a post-event survey rated the educational sessions as excellent or good. The highest attended

individual sessions explored specific examples of food safety and management, along with some fascinating topics on workforce support, disaster response, water quality, and green funerals:

- Home-Based Foods on the Rise: Navigating Public Environmental Health Challenges in the Cottage Food Industry
- Food Fraud in the Kitchen
- Assessing the Relationship Between Certified Food Protection Managers' Certification Characteristics and Food Inspection Outcomes in Ohio
- Kava: Unapproved Food Additive and Conventional Food?
- Keeping Food Safety Exciting
- A Regulator's Guide to *Actively* Assess, Promote, and Incentivize Active Managerial Control in Food Service Establishments
- Third-Party Assessments and Regulatory Inspections: Are They Different?

- Role of Environmental Health in Disaster Response: Considerations for Food Safety and Emergency Shelters
- Healthy Responsibility: Mitigating Burnout and Championing Performance
- Microplastics and Impacts on Water Quality and Public Health
- The Color of Death in the 21st Century: The Rise of Green Funerals and Its Impacts for Environmental Health Practitioners

The educational sessions were packed full of interesting topics, engaging presenters, and a wide array of subject matter experts. Of the attendees who completed our post-event survey, 90% indicated that the variety of educational sessions was excellent or good. Further, 94% of attendee respondents rated the quality of the educational sessions as excellent or good. As one attendee stated, "I always learn something new and gain insights on novel approaches to address challenges and new issues."

2025 AEC Session Tracks & Subtopics

1. Climate & Health

- » Adaptation & Mitigation
- » Air Quality
- » Drought
- » Extreme Heat
- » Extreme Rainfall
- » Extreme Weather
- » Flooding
- » Hurricanes
- » Wildfires

2. Data & Technology

- » Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- » Data Modernization
- » Environmental Health Tracking & Informatics
- » Technology & Environmental Health

3. Emergency Readiness, Recovery, & Resilience

4. Focused Populations

- » Children's Environmental Health
- » Environmental Justice
- » Industry
- » Uniformed Services

5. Food Safety

- » Cannabis
- » Food Safety & Defense
- » Retail & Home Restaurants

6. General Environmental Health

- » Body Art
- » Emerging Environmental Health Issues
- » Fentanyl
- » Food Waste
- » General Environmental Health
- » Global Environmental Health
- » Hazardous & Toxic Materials
- » Solid Waste
- » Sustainability

7. Healthy Communities

- » Environmental Health Impact Assessments
- » Healthy Homes & Communities
- » Indoor Air Quality
- » Land Use Planning & Design
- » Lead
- » PFAS
- » Risk Communication
- » Schools & Institutions

8. Infectious & Vectorborne Diseases

- » Pathogens & Outbreaks
- » Vector Control & Zoonotic Diseases

9. RFFM/Retail Program Standards

- » Administrative
- » Capacity Building Add-On Grant
- » Mentorship Add On Grant
- » Special Projects Add-On Grant
- » Track 1 Development Base Grant
- » Track 2 Development Base Grant
- » Track 3 Maintenance & Advancement Base Grant
- » Training Add-On Grant

10. Water Quality

- » Onsite Wastewater
- » Premise Plumbing
- » Private Drinking Water
- » Recreational Water
- » Shorelines
- » Water Quality
- » Water Reuse

11. Workforce & Leadership

- » Leadership & Management
- » Student & Young Professional Career Development
- » Workforce Diversity

Preconference Workshops

Attendees were able to add to their 2025 AEC experience by attending one of nine preconference workshops held on Monday, July 14. These workshops provided attendees with focused learning opportunities that were led by subject matter experts in specialized areas of environmental health practice, including water quality, climate health, recreational waters, workforce development, and vector control.

The preconference workshops received positive feedback from the 123 attendees who completed the post-event survey. Over one half (53%) rated the preconference workshops as excellent, with an additional 46% rating them as very good or good. These data indicate consistently high satisfaction with the preconference workshop programming, with 85% of respondents rating their experience as excellent or very good.

The preconference workshop agenda included:

- **Beneath the Surface: Advanced Insights Into Groundwater, Soil, and Wastewater Systems for Private Water Protection:** This in-depth workshop delved into the complex interplay between groundwater systems, soil processes, and wastewater management, with a focus on private water supplies. Through expert presentations, group activities, and discussions, participants gained advanced knowledge and practical skills to develop sustainable water management practices in their communities.
- **Climate for Health Ambassador Training:** This interactive training equipped attendees with the knowledge and tools to lead local climate and health discussions. Through hands-on activities and expert insights, participants learned how to communicate climate impacts, promote health equity, and strengthen community resilience.
- **Communication: Verbal Techniques for Challenging Situations:** This workshop focused on how to have difficult conversations in a nonconfrontational way, including verbal techniques to avoid conflict. It also provided methods to de-escalate conflict and stressful situations.
- **Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code (CMAHC) Aquatic Venue Public Health Inspector Course:** This training is a certification-based course designed specifically for professionals in public health who are tasked with the inspec-



tion of public and semi-public aquatic venues. This course covered the essential topics in pool inspection and aimed to educate and empower public health officials to inspect aquatic venues in their jurisdiction with confidence.

- **From Blueprint to Action: Building and Managing an Effective Vector Control Program:** This workshop equipped participants with the foundational knowledge and practical tools needed to design and implement a successful vector control program. Key topics covered included assessing local vector risks, crafting comprehensive control plans, implementing monitoring strategies, and fostering community engagement.
- **Overcoming Compassion Fatigue in Environmental Health:** This workshop unpacked the root causes of compassion fatigue and explored effective individual, team, and workplace solutions. Through interactive discussions and activities, attendees gained practical tools to create compassion-positive cultures that support well-being while strengthening teams and work.
- **Protecting Children's Health: Addressing Climate Change Impacts:** This workshop introduced environmental public health professionals to the impacts of climate change on children's health. Attendees gained essential knowledge, practical tools, and resources to identify and address these challenges effectively.
- **Ugh. Uncertainty!: How to Lead and Make Decisions in Unpredictable Times:** As information changes quickly and uncertainty inhibits the ability to plan long-term, leaders are called to

make bold decisions—often with incomplete information and limited time. This workshop guided attendees through several modules designed to help them discover ways to address this dilemma, including types and sources of uncertainty, what to focus on in the midst of chaos, what (and what not) to communicate, and more.

- **Well, What Now? Abandoned Wells and Community Engagement in Tribal and Rural Communities:** This workshop addressed the pressing challenges of abandoned wells and private well maintenance, with a focus on tribal and rural frontier communities. Attendees explored the health and environmental risks associated with abandoned wells, sustainable management practices, and strategies for engaging with local communities.

As in past years, we also offer a leadership workshop for our affiliate presidents. More than 30 affiliate presidents and their representatives gathered for a dynamic preconference workshop centered on learning, collaboration, and shared leadership. Attendees explored the value of NEHA affiliation, discussing the many benefits and opportunities it offers while exchanging innovative ideas to strengthen education and training at state and regional levels.

This year's affiliate workshop emphasized collaborative leadership and highlighted ways to build stronger synergies between NEHA and its affiliates, as well as among the affiliates themselves. Attendees examined shared leadership models, explored the creation of practical tool kits, and engaged in peer-to-peer support to advance collective goals. Through these discussions, affiliates contributed meaningful strategies to strengthen partnerships and propel our shared mission forward.



Student Reception



The Student Reception, held on Tuesday, July 15, connected students, recent graduates, mentors, and professionals, and showcased our growing investment in emerging leaders in environmental health.

NEHA President CDR Anna Khan opened the reception by welcoming attendees and highlighting the association's expanding student engagement. NEHA now has more than 900 student members across 48 states and 20 countries. We continue to broaden opportunities for professional development through scholarships, internships, mentoring, and leadership training.

The evening featured recognition of the recipients of the NEHA/American Academy of Sanitarians (AAS) Scholarships, representing a joint investment of \$22,500 across six outstanding students. Winners of our Student Research Competition were also recognized. Please see the Awards & Scholarships section on pages 64 and 65 for a listing of these recipients and winners.

Networking games, door prizes, and conversation tables helped foster meaningful connections among attendees. The event also honored the National Environmental Public Health Internship Program (NEHIP) travel awardees, celebrating students who completed hands-on environmental public health internships across the nation.

The Student Reception underscores our enduring mission to cultivate a diverse, skilled, and inspired environmental health workforce—ensuring that today's students become tomorrow's leaders in protecting public health.

Environmental Health Leadership Academy Graduation Celebration

The 2024–2025 Environmental Health Leadership Academy (EHLA) cohort celebrated the conclusion of their year-long

2025 AEC Sponsors, Partners, and Contributors

We appreciate the following sponsors, organizations, and individuals who helped make the 2025 AEC possible!

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Silver
Bloomberg America Health Initiative

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AEC First-Timer Buddies
American Academy of Sanitarians
Arizona Environmental Health Association
Association of Environmental Health Academic Programs
Association of Professional Piercers
Aventura Catering
Beaded Plume
Blake Latiolais, B1 Studio LLC
Dr. Bryan Brooks, Baylor University
Catherine Eyde Art + Design
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Cesar Piña, McDonald's USA
Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code
David Krause, Healthcare Consulting & Contracting
Dina Kagan, Media for Social Profit
Dr. Bailus Walker, Jr. Diversity and Inclusion Awareness Award Committee
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Food and Drug Administration
Indigenous Fragrances

Joe Beck Educational Contribution Award Committee
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Nick Ogg, NEHA Media Production
Phoenix Convention Center
Pink Sky Photo Booth
Rachel Scanlan, Chick-Fil-A, Inc.
Sandra Long, Environmental Health Division, Town of Addison
Seth Arends and Julia Hautzinger, NEHA Graphic Design
Society of Permanent Cosmetic Professionals
Student Research Competition Judges
The Native Art Market
Uniformed Services Environmental Health Association
U.S. Public Health Service
Valleywide DJ Entertainment
Visit Phoenix
Walter F. Snyder Award Committee
Walter S. Mangold Award Committee

program during a graduation ceremony at the 2025 AEC. During the ceremony, 22 participants presented leadership capstone projects that addressed environmental health challenges at their organizations, in their communities, or within the workforce. Over the last year, EHLA participants engaged in virtual training, mentorship, and skill-building exercises focused on leadership, management, community partnership, and emergency management,

preparing them to be the next generation of environmental health leaders.

The cohort represented a broad range of U.S. regions and agencies, balancing mid-career expertise with newer professionals and reflecting the diversity of the environmental health workforce. This program illustrates our commitment to enhancing the capabilities of the environmental health workforce and preparing leaders to meet the evolving challenges of the field.

Social Events

First Timers Welcome and Buddy Meet-Up

We were delighted to welcome our first-time attendees to the First Timers Welcome & Buddy Meet-Up on Monday, July 14. This event set a positive tone for the week by fostering connection, community, and shared purpose among environmental health professionals from across the country.

NEHA President CDR Anna Khan opened the program with a warm welcome, emphasizing that the conference is about not only earning continuing education credits but also building relationships and strengthening the profession. Attendees were encouraged to engage fully, introduce themselves, and take advantage of the many networking and learning opportunities available throughout the week.

We also recognized participants in the NEHA Mentorship Program, celebrating their dedication to professional growth and peer support. Many attendees expressed interest in joining the next cohort, reflecting a strong desire for ongoing engagement and development within the NEHA community.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our volunteer AEC Buddies for guiding and supporting first-time participants. Their commitment helped ensure that everyone felt welcomed and connected from the very start.

Environmental Health Photo Exhibit & Contest

Members showcased their creativity and dedication to the field through our 3rd Annual Environmental Health Photo Exhibit. This year's theme, "Framing Environmental Public Health Challenges," invited participants to capture images that illustrate the impact of environmental health work across a variety of categories, including climate and health, food safety, general environmental health, and water safety.

Winning photos were featured in the exhibit on Tuesday, July 15, and remained on display throughout the conference, highlighting the artistry and commitment of the environmental health community. Judges of the photo contest included Justin Dwyer of the Illinois Environmental Health Association, Gina Bare of NEHA,



The First Timer Welcome brought new and veteran AEC attendees together to foster connections and enhance the conference experience.

and Cameron Garrison of HS GovTech. Contest prizes were generously provided by HS GovTech.

We thank all who submitted photos for the contest. Congratulations to this year's winners:

Climate and Health

- 1st place: Samantha Russell, Skagit County Public Health
- 2nd place: Dan Sherwood, Fairfax County Health Department
- 3rd place: Lisa Whitlock, FDA (retired)

Food Safety

- 1st place: Joseph "Austin" Addison, Georgia Department of Public Health
- 2nd place: Bonnie Waldemarson, Public Health, Idaho North Central District
- 3rd Place: Marlene Johnson, Burlington Board of Health

General Environmental Health

- 1st Place: Ashley Green, Two Rivers Public Health Department
- 2nd Place, Zachary Barr, Toledo-Lucas County Health Department
- 3rd Place, Todd Walsh, NEHA Member

Water Quality

- 1st Place: Dani Serna, Weld County Environmental Health
- 2nd Place: Lauren Marie Ward, University of Michigan
- 3rd Place: Bob Custard, Monongalia County Health Department

Breakfast & Town Hall Assembly

The Town Hall Assembly is a cornerstone event during the AEC where mem-



For the 3rd year, the Environmental Health Photo Exhibit emphasized the value of telling our story through imagery.

bers engage directly with our leadership, discussing the state and future of the environmental health profession. President CDR Anna Khan and Executive Director Dr. David Dyjack led this year's Town Hall Assembly held on Wednesday, July 16. The event focused on four key areas: 1) workforce development, 2) policy advocacy, 3) education and training, and 4) long-term organizational sustainability.

Dr. Dyjack highlighted NEHA's continued investment in students and early-career professionals through scholarships, mentoring programs, internships, and the new Career Center microsite. He underscored NEHA's advocacy successes, including engagement with the Food and Drug Administration's Human Foods Program, support for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Environmental Health, and collaboration with policymakers to ensure sustained funding for the environmental health workforce.

Members shared their perspectives on pressing issues such as federal budget constraints, state-level workforce reductions, and emerging environmental health challenges. Dr. Dyjack reaffirmed NEHA's strategic response—diversifying revenue streams, strengthening the endowment, and expanding partnerships to ensure financial resilience.

The Town Hall Assembly also included recognition of outstanding service across NEHA's network. Certificates of Merit were awarded to affiliate and individual honorees from 11 states, along with Presidential Citations, acknowledgments for



The winning photos on display during the Environmental Health Photo Exhibit sparked many conversations among the attendees.



New to the AEC, our Career Fair connected attendees with employers from a wide range of environmental public health organizations.

our technical advisors, and appreciation for outgoing and incoming board members whose leadership continues to guide NEHA's success. See pages 64 and 65 for the Certificate of Merit and Presidential Citation awardees.

In closing, CDR Khan emphasized the collective strength of the environmental health community: "NEHA remains your home, your advocate, and your partner in progress." The Town Hall Assembly served as both a reflection and a call to action—reinforcing the shared vision of a healthier, safer, and more resilient future for all.



The Town Hall Assembly, hosted by NEHA's leadership, gave attendees insight into the current state of the association.

Signature Networking Event: A Taste of the Southwest



Attendees were invited to mix and mingle with fellow environmental health professionals at our Signature Networking Event on Wednesday, July 16. The event was held in one of the ballrooms within the Phoenix Convention Center. Attendees were greeted by our photo booth as they

entered the space, then provided with a Southwestern-themed meal, and encouraged to network at our largest social gathering of the 2025 AEC.

Music was provided by a local DJ to create a fun and relaxed atmosphere. A local group showcased a Native American performance and storytelling to engage and educate the audience. New this year, we created a local artisan marketplace within our event, where attendees were able to shop for unique and local handcrafted gifts, all while supporting small businesses from the Phoenix area.

Additionally, seating within the space was designated by session track. While completely optional, attendees were encouraged to sit with the track they worked within to facilitate new connections.

Career Connections

We featured an exciting new initiative at the 2025 AEC—Career Connections—designed to foster professional growth, networking, and career advancement within the environmental health community. The initiative included the debut of our in-person Career Fair, held on Tuesday, July 15. The fair brought together employers and public health agencies eager to connect with environmental health professionals at every career stage. Participating organizations included health departments, consulting firms, and food safety and water quality companies. Representatives had the opportunity to meet directly with conference attendees, share information about employment opportunities, and recruit for open positions in a dynamic, face-to-face setting.

Complementing the fair, the Career Connections Lounge served as a dedicated networking space throughout the conference. Located in a central area near the Exhibit Hall, the lounge provided a relaxed environment for informal conversations, on-site interviews, and professional development. A career bulletin board allowed employers to post opportunities and job seekers to share résumés and contact details. Attendees also benefitted from free one-on-one career coaching sessions offered by the Trebuchet Group, which provided personalized guidance on leadership and career strategy.

Together, the lounge and fair supported our broader goals of advancing workforce development and launching our new online Career Center, creating a seamless bridge between in-person networking and ongoing digital engagement.

These inaugural events successfully highlight our commitment to connecting environmental health professionals with meaningful opportunities and equipping the next generation with the tools to thrive in a growing and essential field.

Exhibition

The Exhibit Hall at the 2025 AEC was alive with energy and innovation as environmental and public health professionals gathered to explore the latest tools, technologies, and partnerships shaping the field. Held on Monday, July 14 and Tuesday, July 15, the Exhibit Hall once again served as a vibrant centerpiece of the AEC.

This year's conference made it easier than ever for attendees to connect. Exhibitors were featured in the conference app, which allowed participants to schedule in-person meetings, browse exhibitor profiles, and follow up with companies of interest both in the Exhibit Hall and throughout the event.

A total of 59 exhibit booths filled the hall, featuring a dynamic mix of returning partners and 11 first-time exhibitors. Company representatives were available throughout both days to answer questions, showcase products and services, and share insights into the future of environmental health.

The Exhibition Grand Opening kicked off the event with great enthusiasm. Attendees mingled over food and beverages, discovering innovative products, reconnecting with colleagues and friends, and making new professional connections. This annual favorite continues to set the tone for the week, energizing professionals and inspiring collaboration across sectors. Further, throughout the Exhibit Hall, poster sessions offered attendees a chance to dive into the latest research and spark meaningful discussions.

The second day of the Exhibit Hall kept the momentum going with live demon-



strations during morning, midday, and afternoon beverage breaks. HS GovTech sponsored and led the morning session; Johns Hopkins, Bloomberg American Health Initiative sponsored and hosted the noon demonstration; and Inspect2GO sponsored and rounded out the day with the afternoon session. Each session buzzed with energy and was packed with attendees eager to learn from and engage with industry experts.

For the 5th consecutive year, HS GovTech proudly served as the NEHA 2025 AEC Premier Sponsor. Additional sponsors included NSF, which provided Wi-Fi access; Hedgerow Software, sponsor of the popular Photo Booth; and Tyler Technologies, which sponsored the afternoon beverage break on Tuesday, July 15, giving attendees another opportunity to explore the latest products and services while staying refreshed. HS GovTech also sponsored the Environmental Health Photo Exhibition & Contest. Cameron Garrison, the executive director of operations

for HS GovTech, served as a judge and presented awards to the winners, with prizes provided by HS GovTech. Rounding out our sponsors, Inspect2GO supported the Food Safety & Defense Track.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all exhibitors and sponsors whose continued support makes this event possible. Your contributions help advance the profession and strengthen the community of environmental and public health professionals dedicated to protecting and improving lives.



Exhibit at the 2026 AEC



Reach Environmental Health Professionals Where Decisions Are Made

Registration for the exhibition at the 2026 AEC is open! The 2026 AEC is being held on August 3-6, 2026, in Kansas City, Missouri, with the Exhibit Hall open on August 3 and 4. Early-bird registration is available until February 28, 2026 (if space is available). Contact NEHA Sales Manager Soni Fink at sfink@neha.org or (303) 802-2139 for questions regarding exhibition or sponsorship opportunities. You can also learn more at www.neha.org/exhibit.



2025 AEC Exhibitors

Accela, Inc.	MTX Group
AGAT Laboratories	National Environmental Assessment Reporting System (NEARS)
American Mosquito Control Association	National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)
American Public Health Association (APHA)	National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council (EHAC)
Association of Professional Piercers (APP)	National Environmental Public Health Internship Program (NEPHIP)
CDP, Inc.	National Evermore Services
City of Phoenix Environmental & Safety Division	National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA)
Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code (CMAHC)	National Restaurant Association/ ServSafe
EMSL Analytical, Inc.	NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model (RFFM) Grant Program
Environmental Health Leadership Academy	Nemko USA
Environmental Information Association (EIA)	NSF
Hedgerow Software	Pool & Hot Tub Alliance
Henka LLC	Prinsco
HS GovTech	Private Water Network
IAPMO EGS	Responsible Training
IFPTI	SciAps, Inc.
ImmunoLytics	StateFoodSafety
Inspect2GO	Sweeps Software, Inc.
Johns Hopkins University–Bloomberg American Health Initiative	The Private Well Class
LaMotte Company	ThermoWorks
Lucy Houghton Professional Development	Tyler Technologies
Mars Air Systems	University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health
Micro Essential Facility	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Wastewater Management

Feedback From Our Attendees

All 2025 AEC attendees were asked to complete a post-event survey. Of the respondents, 94% rated the overall quality of the conference as either excellent or good. Furthermore, 96% of respondents indicated that they would attend a future AEC. The main reasons for attending the AEC included professional development, continuing education, networking opportunities, exposure to emerging issues, and leadership priorities. As one attendee stated, "This conference provided a great chance to network with people all across the country who operate in different facets of environmental health that I would have never gotten the chance to meet."





Awards & Scholarships

We were proud to bestow several national awards and scholarships that represent outstanding individuals, programs, and groups throughout the country in 2025. From leaders working on diversity efforts to some of the most recognized names in our professional community, the recipients this year illustrate the dedication and selflessness of the professionals in our field.

The recipients of these awards and scholarships were honored at the AEC during the Student Reception on Tuesday, July 14, or at the Breakfast & Town Hall Assembly or Awards Celebration on Wednesday, July 15.

The Award Celebration opened with welcoming remarks and continued with a series of distinguished award presentations. The evening concluded with a uniformed services recognition, led by NEHA President CDR Anna Khan, who presented commemorative challenge coins to honor the service and resilience of uniformed environmental health professionals. In a deeply meaningful moment, a formal presentation of the U.S. flag was conducted, and the flag was presented to NEHA Executive Director Dr. David Dyjack in honor of his 10 years of dedicated leadership to the association and the profession.

The Awards Celebration at the 2025 AEC stood as an inspiring tribute to the individuals and organizations whose achievements embody our mission to advance the environmental health profession and safeguard public health nationwide. For more information about NEHA's awards, please visit www.neha.org/awards.

Davis Calvin Wagner Sanitarian Award

CAPT Jill M. Shugart, MSPH, REHS, DAAS, CPH

This award represents the highest honor the American Academy of Sanitarians (AAS) bestows on one of its diplomates.

Dr. Bailus Walker, Jr. Diversity and Inclusion Awareness Award

Maurica D. Bynum, DrPH, REHS, CP-FS
NEHA annually gives this award to recognize an individual or group who has made significant achievements in developing or enhancing a more culturally diverse, inclusive, and competent environment in their organizations and communities.



Dr. Maurica Bynum (left) received the Walker Diversity Award from NEHA President CDR Anna Khan (right).

Joe Beck Educational Contribution Award

Joseph Sarcone

NEHA annually gives this award to recognize an individual or team for an educational contribution designed for the advancement and professional development of environmental health professionals.

NEHA/AAS Scholarships

Both NEHA and AAS believe that structured education at the undergraduate and graduate levels is important to an individual's successful professional development in the environmental health field and that continuing education is a vital component in the continued career growth of environmental health professionals. We were able to give out \$22,500 in scholarships thanks to the generous donations from our members, which is a \$5,700 increase from what was awarded in 2024. Overall, six scholarships are awarded in 2025.

Dr. Sheila Davidson Pressley Undergraduate Scholarship

Savanna Crooks
Eastern Kentucky University

Dr. Carolyn Hester Harvey Undergraduate Scholarship

Caydence Frietas
University of Washington

Environmental Health Undergraduate Scholarship

Katrina Cruz
Western Carolina University



Laurel Garcia (left) and Kira Kalpeshkumar Gor (right) were honored at the Student Reception as the winners of the NEHA Student Research Competition.

Graduate Scholarships

Elizabeth Quagrine
East Tennessee State University

Damilola Sherifat Shaba
University of Illinois

Julia Weakley
Texas A&M University

NEHA Affiliate Certificates of Merit

Certificates of Merit are awarded to NEHA affiliate members and teams who made exemplary contributions to the profession. Each affiliate in good standing is invited to select winners based on its own criteria for recognition. This opportunity to be honored before a national audience is one of the many benefits of affiliate membership. The nominating affiliate for the following winners is indicated in parentheses.

Individuals

Heather Anderson (IL)

Jessica Cliff (MA)

Scott Cook (CT)

Claire Knocke (MN)

David Morales (AZ)

Mark Redecker (MO)

Hannah Shimanek (WI)

Melissa Vaccaro (Business & Industry)

Judy Vallandingham (WV)

Tom Vyles (TX)

Clara Weidman (OR)

Abigail Weymouth (UT)

Teams

24 Trauma Services, Inc. (MA)

Aquatic Facility Rule Advisory Committee and Regulator's Workgroup (OR)

Founding members of the Pennsylvania Environmental Health Association (PA)

NEHA Past Presidents Award

Darryl Booth, MBA

Each year, the NEHA Past Presidents Affiliate identifies and honors a hero or group of heroes from the environmental health profession.

NEHA Presidential Citations

Presidential citations are given to those individuals who made exemplary impacts on the association during the term of office of the NEHA president. President CDR Anna Khan recognized several individuals who made meaningful contributions to the organization during her presidential term.

Vic Andrich	Lisa Hughes
Katherine Bailey	Angelica Ledezma
Rance Baker	Niki Lemin
Gina Bare	Natalie Lowdon
Gary Brown	Kelsey Lyon
Kim Carlton	Tanya Morrison
Renee Clark	Vi Nguyen
Brian Collins	Vince Radke
Melissa Burn	Larry Ramdin
Tom Butts	Kristen
Bob Custard	Ruby-Cisneros
Kristie Denbrock	Michéle
Rosie DeVito	Samarya-Timm
Doug Farquhar	Ashish Sharma
Soni Fink	Phil Swain
Heather Folker	Christopher Walker
Scott Holmes	

NEPHIP AEC Travel Awards

The National Environmental Public Health Internship Program (NEPHIP) provided travel awards for 11 current and former interns to attend the 2025 AEC.

Umikka Chopra, University of Washington (graduate)

Savanna Crooks, Eastern Kentucky University

Penelope Diamond, State University of New York

Emily Do, University of Washington

Vinod Kamalam Surrendran, East Carolina University (graduate)

Nora Labbo, Colorado State University

Zane Lawrence, University of Georgia, Athens (graduate)

Pheobe Nadeau, University of Washington

Adolph Quayson, University of Findlay

Mi'Angel Williams, University of Georgia, Athens

Mahek Zaveri, University of Pittsburgh

Samuel J. Crumbine Consumer Protection Award

Consumer Health and Food Safety Division, Pima County Health Department, Arizona

This prominent award is given annually to local environmental health jurisdictions that demonstrate unsurpassed achievement in providing food protection services to their communities. It is named for one of the country's most renowned health officers and educators, Dr. Samuel J. Crumbine. The Crumbine Award encourages innovative programs and methods that reduce or eliminate food-borne illnesses, recognizes the importance of food protection at the local level, and stimulates public awareness in food service sanitation.

The Pima County Health Department's Consumer Health and Food Safety (CHFS) Division has been selected as the 2025 Crumbine Award winner. The division was selected for this year's award for numerous reasons, including their use of data and data visualizations to show program progress and success. The division was also commended for its efficient use of resources compared to other jurisdictions, specifically citing the use of GoPros during virtual inspections. With the operator's consent, an inspector can wear a GoPro during the visit; the footage is then shared back to the establishment so new or newly promoted staff can learn facility-specific compliance requirements from a first-person perspective. Further, the division was recognized for its use of the Food and Drug Administration's Retail Program Standards to make tangible improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in the field, specifically the overhauled complaint tracking system.

The Crumbine Award is supported by the Conference for Food Protection, in cooperation with the American Academy of Sanitarians, American Public Health Association, Association of Food and Drug Officials, Food Marketing Institute, Food-service Packaging Institute, International Association for Food Protection, National

Association of County and City Health Officials, National Environmental Health Association, National Restaurant Association, NSF, and UL.

Student Research Competition Winners

We are pleased to carry on the Student Research Competition after more than 20 years of coordination by the Association of Environmental Health Academic Programs. The competition is a chance for undergraduate and graduate students from an accredited environmental health program to showcase their research projects.

Undergraduate: 1st Place Winner

Lauren Garcia

East Carolina University

Project: Antibiotic treatment efficacy

Graduate: 1st Place Winner

Kira Kalpeshkumar Gor

University of Illinois Springfield

Project: Sustainable plastic waste management

Uniformed Services Awards

Awards from the Environmental Health Officers Professional Advisory Committee were recognized at the 2025 AEC. These awards honor environmental health professionals within the uniformed services for their outstanding accomplishments in the environmental health field.

John G. Todd Award

CAPT Carolyn Oyster

Edward (Ted) Moran Award

LCDR Erin Kincaid

John C. Eason Award

LT Michael Gonzalez

Thomas E. Crow Mentor Award

CAPT Danielle Mills

Kelly M. Taylor Environmental Health Champion Award

CDR Candis Hunter

Responder of the Year Award

LT Michael Gonzalez

Volunteer of the Year Award

LCDR Alexa Deptola

Walter F. Snyder Environmental Health Award

Girvin Liggans, PhD, REHS/RS, DAAS

The Snyder Award was created in 1971 in honor of Walter F. Snyder, cofounder and first executive director of NSF. Presented by NSF and NEHA, this award is given annually to individuals who continue Snyder's legacy through outstanding contributions to environmental and public health. NSF and NEHA are proud to announce that Dr. Girvin Liggans is the recipient of the 2025 Walter F. Snyder Environmental Health Award. Dr. Liggans received the award for his impactful contributions to human and environmental health throughout his decades-long career.

"I'm incredibly honored to receive this award and grateful to the colleagues, collaborators, and mentors who work tirelessly to advance public health," stated Dr. Liggans. "Their support has made it possible for me to live out the motto that



guides my work: Stay curious, solve big problems, and have fun doing it."

Dr. Liggans serves as the deputy director for Plant-Derived Foods in the Office of Microbiological Food Safety at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), where he provides strategic direction for programs that ensure the safety of fresh produce and plant-derived foods across the nation. He has also served as technical lead for

retail food policy at FDA, where he led policy, planning, and research initiatives to support national retail food safety. His extensive career spans more than two decades of dedicated service in environmental health, from frontline inspections in local government to the highest levels of national policy development and international engagement.

"Dr. Liggans embodies the heart and soul of environmental health. His life's work has made our food safer, our prevention systems smarter, and our profession stronger," said Dr. David Dyjack, NEHA executive director. "Honoring him with the Snyder Award is a celebration of everything we aspire to be."

Source: NSF, <https://www.nsf.org/news/dr-girvin-liggans-receives-prestigious-walter-f-snyder-environmental-health-award-nsf-national-environmental-health-association>.

Walter S. Mangold Award

CAPT Charles S. Otto, III, REHS, DAAS, USPHS (Ret.)

Walter S. Mangold dedicated his life to the practice of environmental health in an extraordinary and exemplary way. In doing so, he became a beacon of excellence and inspiration for all environmental health professionals who followed after him. Created in 1956 and first awarded to Mangold, the Walter S. Mangold Award recognizes individuals for outstanding contributions to the advancement of environmental health professionals. It is the highest distinction that NEHA can grant to one of its members. We are pleased to honor CAPT Charles S. Otto, III, with the 2025 Walter S. Mangold Award.

CAPT Otto began his comprehensive 50-year environmental health career in Alabama, first with the Mobile County Health Department and then with the Alabama Department of Public Health. He was commissioned as a U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) environmental health officer and served two tours at FDA in Washington, DC. His next USPHS assignment was to the National Park Service, where he oversaw the implementation of the FDA Food Code and its computer-based inspection system in the fine



dining wilderness venues, such as at the Grand Canyon, that serves over 100 million visitors each year.

He continued his 30-year USPHS career with three tours at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, first serving in the Vessel Sanitation Program (VSP), where he managed the first major upgrade to the cruise ship comprehensive environmental health rules. He then headed the Innovation Team at the Environmental Health Services Branch and later served as acting chief. His final USPHS tour was back at the VSP as deputy and acting chief. Over his career, CAPT Otto has made significant contributions to advancing the environmental health profession.

CAPT Otto received the 1993 USPHS Outstanding Service Medal from FDA

Commissioner Dr. David Kessler. The National Capital Area Environmental Health Association selected CAPT Otto to be the recipient of the 1997 ADM Jerrold M. Michael Award. He was selected in 2001 for the Environmental Health Officers Professional Advisory Committee's John G. Todd Award. Other accolades have included the Chair's Award from the Conference for Food Protection in 2004, the Power 25 Choice from Aquatics International in 2008, a NEHA Presidential Citation in 2008, and the Walmart Food Safety Champion in 2017. More recently, AAS presented CAPT Otto with the Davis Calvin Wagner Sanitarian Award in 2022.

CAPT Otto is grateful to all of the mentors and colleagues over the past 50 years who have contributed so much to his growth as an environmental health professional through their encouragement, instruction, advice, and correction. In turn, he has done the same for other developing professionals. With his experience in environmental health from local to global levels, he salutes those individuals on the front lines of our profession for their daily efforts in protecting the ones they serve. 🌸