

## Direct from CDC's Environmental Health Services Branch

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# CDC and HUD to Release an Updated Housing Inspection Manual— The *Healthy Housing Reference Manual*

*Editor's note: NEHA strives to provide up-to-date and relevant information on environmental health and to build partnerships in the profession. In pursuit of these goals, we will feature a column from the Environmental Health Services Branch (EHSB) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in every issue of the Journal.*

*EHSB's objective is to strengthen the role of state, local, and national environmental health programs and professionals to anticipate, identify, and respond to adverse environmental exposures and the consequences of these exposures for human health. The services being developed through EHSB include access to topical, relevant, and scientific information; consultation; and assistance to environmental health specialists, sanitarians, and environmental health professionals and practitioners.*

*EHSB appreciates NEHA's invitation to provide monthly columns for the Journal. In the coming months, EHSB staff will be highlighting a variety of concerns, opportunities, challenges, and successes that we all share in environmental public health. This month's column provides an overview of the Healthy Housing Reference Manual.*

**I**n 1976, the Center for Disease Control (now known as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC]) published the manual *Basic Housing Inspection*. Since its publication, this manual has been used by public health and housing professionals as a guide for state and local housing codes and inspection of housing units. An updated, revised, and expanded manual, now titled *Healthy Housing Reference Manual*, will be released in mid-2006. CDC, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), designed the new manual for field use by public health and housing professionals. Thirteen chapters contain annotated references and a list of sources for additional information. They focus on

- housing history and purpose;
- housing regulations;
- disease vectors and pests found in and around housing;
- indoor air pollution and toxic materials;
- housing structure;
- environmental barriers;
- rural water supplies and water quality issues;
- plumbing;
- onsite wastewater treatment;
- electricity;
- heating, air conditioning, and ventilation;
- energy efficiency; and
- residential swimming pools and spas.

The *Healthy Housing Reference Manual* is the only manual that addresses health issues related to housing construction, and new chapters make it more comprehensive. For example,

the chapter on rural water supplies and onsite wastewater treatment is new, as is the chapter on residential swimming pools and spas.

Since publication of the original manual, much has been learned about how specific housing conditions are related to disease and injury. The new manual provides a comprehensive guide on housing systems and construction and on the ways they affect the health of the occupants. The *Healthy Housing Reference Manual* includes current research findings and best-practice information and is unique in its focus on public health issues related to the housing environment. The manual covers the various aspects of environmental public health and directly addresses CDC's mandate to provide and deliver environmental public health services that help ensure the health and safety of all Americans. The 2006 edition of the *Healthy Housing Reference Manual* will give public health and housing professionals the tools necessary to ensure that housing is safe and healthful, especially for children and the elderly, who are particularly vulnerable to the adverse health effects of substandard housing.

The manual provides clear, current information on housing construction and maintenance and on the effects of housing construction and maintenance on people's health and safety. It includes current information on specific health and safety hazards, as well as information on how to identify and remedy those hazards. Field personnel can use the manual to assess, identify, and remedy housing construction and maintenance deficiencies that may lead to adverse health effects.

Highly trained individuals such as contractors, builders, code inspectors, housing inspectors, environmental health practitioners, injury control specialists, public health nurses, and epidemiologists are required to achieve the goal of safe, healthy housing. This reference manual will enable those professionals to recognize and address housing-related health hazards and to promote CDC's Healthy Homes Initiative. The national Healthy Homes Initiative is a coordinated, comprehensive, holistic approach to preventing diseases and injuries that result from housing-related hazards and deficiencies. Its focus is to identify health, safety, and quality-of-life issues in the home environment and to act systematically to eliminate or mitigate problems. Health and housing professionals can use the manual to reduce substandard housing conditions that cause disease and injury and that affect people's quality of life.

The updated and revised *Healthy Housing Reference Manual* is an important reference for anyone with responsibility for and interest in creating and maintaining healthy housing. In mid-2006, the new *Healthy Housing Reference Manual* will be accessible and downloadable from CDC's Web site at [www.cdc.gov/nceh/publications](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/publications). A limited number of print copies will be published later in 2006. 🇺🇸

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