

# Healthy Housing Inspection Manual Now Available

*Editor's note: This month's column features the preface from the newly released CDC/HUD Healthy Housing Inspection Manual. Request your CD-ROM copy of the manual by calling 1-800-CDC-INFO or sending an e-mail to [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov). As always, your comments are welcomed; please send them to [ehsb@cdc.gov](mailto:ehsb@cdc.gov).*

*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 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.*

*In this column, EHSB and guest authors from across CDC will highlight a variety of concerns, opportunities, challenges, and successes that we all share in environmental public health. 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.*

**T**he *Healthy Housing Inspection Manual* completes the foundation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Healthy Homes Initiative. The manual reflects the ongoing commitment of both CDC and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to work together to provide local jurisdictions with tools to address housing-related health hazards. Development of this manual was supported by the HUD and CDC Healthy Homes Initiatives.

The agencies' initiatives related to healthy homes were created to develop a holistic approach to healthy housing based on the following broad objectives.

- Broaden the scope of single-issue public health and safety programs—such as childhood lead poisoning prevention, residential asthma intervention, and injury prevention—to adopt a holistic approach addressing multiple housing deficiencies that affect health and safety.
- Build competency among environmental public health practitioners, public health nurses, housing specialists, housing owners, housing managers, and others who work in the community so they can incorporate healthy housing activities into their professional activities.
- Develop national healthy homes capacity through cross-disciplinary grants, contracts, and other activities at the federal, state, tribal, and community levels that research and demonstrate low-cost, effective home hazard assessment and intervention methods.
- Develop effective education and outreach materials, with a particular focus on high-

risk populations, to increase public awareness of residential hazards and highlight effective actions households can take to reduce the risk for illness and injury.

The *Healthy Housing Inspection Manual* is a model reference tool that local jurisdictions or others may use as is or modify based on local needs. Use of the manual is expected to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the public health, housing management, and workforces that identify, prevent, and control health problems associated with housing. The manual does not introduce any inspection requirements, nor does it modify any existing inspection requirements for housing agencies, residents, HUD, or CDC. The manual is not a substitute for the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Minimum Property Standards. The manual does not propose to establish any regulatory authority for HUD or CDC with regard to residential inspection requirements.

The *Healthy Housing Inspection Manual* takes environmental health professionals and housing managers, specialists, and inspectors through the elements of a holistic home inspection. It is also a useful reference tool for nurses, outreach workers, and others who are interested in preventing illness and injury due to residential health and safety hazards.

The *Healthy Housing Inspection Manual* addresses the broad range of housing deficiencies and hazards that can affect residents' health and safety. The purpose of the manual is to

- improve communication and collaboration among public health professionals, housing professionals, property owners, and property managers;

- increase the understanding of the relations among exposure to hazardous agents, conditions in the home, and adverse health outcomes; and
- improve the ability of programs to address an array of housing deficiencies in an efficient, effective, and timely manner.

HUD and CDC have also jointly developed and funded other important activities related to healthy homes, including

- a healthy housing curriculum that addresses the training needs of environmental public health practitioners, public health nurses, housing specialists, and others interested in building local capacity to address housing-related health hazards (Healthy Homes Training Center and Network, <http://www.healthyhomestraining.org>); and

- the *Healthy Housing Reference Manual*, which gives public health and housing professionals the tools necessary to ensure that housing stock is safe, decent, and healthy for our citizens, particularly children and the elderly, who are often most vulnerable and spend more time in the home (<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/publications/books/housing/housing.htm>).

### Format of This Manual

HUD and CDC recommend that Section 1, the Healthy Housing Model Resident Questionnaire (a voluntary health assessment), be completed first. The questionnaire should be used to collect information that cannot be determined visually. Information from the questionnaire can provide important clues that point to housing deficiencies.

Section 2, the Visual Assessment Data Collection Form, should be used to collect information that can be determined without asking questions of a resident. This form includes detailed assessment of exterior housing, kitchen, bathroom, and living area, as well as a general building information.

This manual also contains three supporting appendices:

- a data dictionary that defines housing deficiencies listed in the Visual Assessment Data Collection Form,
- a cross-reference to code provisions in the 2003 *International Property Maintenance Code* (2003 IPMC), and
- additional resources (links to environmental sampling methods and to more information about substances or issues related to healthy housing). 🐼

### Managing Editor's Desk

*continued from page 94*

To get some sense for how the relationship between rising energy costs and education is playing out, I looked at what higher education is going through this summer in light of the rise in the cost of gas and how much more expensive it has become for college students to drive to school. The results are not surprising.

To summarize:

- most (79%) of the nation's 15 million students live off-campus, meaning that driving and the cost of gas is a very real part of their world;
- schools are seeing a significant increase in the percentages of their students who are now enrolling in online courses;
- though the increase in online enrollments is taking place at both four-year schools and community colleges, this development appears particularly pronounced at community colleges;
- online enrollment increases of 35%, 24.5%, 52%, and 114% have been reported at Bucks County Community College (Pennsylvania), Brevard Community College (Florida), Ozarks Technical Community College (Missouri), and Bristol Community College (Massachusetts), respectively; and
- even four-year institutions are seeing significant increases in online enrollment, as evidenced at Villanova (40%), Tennessee (29%), and South Texas College (35%).

In all cases, the reason cited for these enrollment numbers is connected to the rising price of gas.

On the one hand, many in the meetings business argue that because we humans are social creatures and have a need for face-to-face contact, meetings as we have known them will continue on. On the other hand, and using the experiences of these colleges as a guide, it would seem that the price of travel is now reaching levels that would have many people trading in their airplane ticket for a seat at the keyboard where they can access online learning for much cheaper. Is NEHA ready for such a trend?

We can honestly say that we began preparing for this day several years ago when we started worrying about the decreases that you were experiencing in your continuing education budgets. In response, we began building a brand new NEHA program (which we initially called CERT or Center for Environmental Research and Training but which we now refer to as our e-Learning program). Through our e-Learning activities, we are now able to provide a healthy measure of continuing education online.

As we were experimenting with different business models for the e-Learning program to determine what might work best for both you and NEHA, we rather quickly concluded that the fee-based model was not the best. As a result, we have abandoned this approach and are now giving away for free the many online learning courses that we feature through our Web site.

To cover our costs and make this financially viable for NEHA—especially if this new program is destined to make up for revenue we could lose from our AEC & Exhibition—we are now courting sponsors to support these online courses. This arrangement offers all parties a win-win-win opportunity.

Clearly, the member wins, for you are now able to honor your professional obligation to keep on top of your practice through continuing education, at no cost! NEHA wins, because we have found a way to deliver the education that people come to us for, but through an arrangement that enables us to cover our costs. And the sponsors win, because they are able to connect better with the membership by being visibly present in their educational experiences.

NEHA will continue to enhance and aggressively market its AEC & Exhibition. Please don't read into these comments any subtle message about pulling back on our AEC & Exhibition commitment. When I see decreased continuing education budgets and significant migration from in-class experiences to online training options, however, I worry. Out of that worry comes a sobering realization that if this trend sweeps through the NEHA community, we have to be there with the appropriate options. And we are. That's just the way that NEHA works! 🐼

