

October 2007 Newsletter

NORTH CAROLINA BOARD OF SANITARIAN EXAMINERS

www.rsboard.com

Board Members: Ann (Len) C. Gilstrap – Chair, Eastern
Terry L. Pierce – Vice-Chair, Secretary NCDENR
L. Layton Long – Sec./Treas., Health Directors
Perry Solice – Sanitarian at Large
Patricia Hawkins – Western

Malcolm Blalock – Public Spirited Citizen
Dr. Burton Ogle – Educator
Sheila Nichols – NCDENR DEH
Lynn Lathan – Central

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Currently in North Carolina there are 1108 Registered Sanitarians. Of that number 130 are retired or unaffiliated and 141 are interns. The exam has been administered two times in 2007 to 91 interns of which 59 passed and 32 failed. Another exam is scheduled to be administered on October 25, 2007 in Morehead City. The Board has held five (5) meetings so far for 2007.

During this time, the makeup of the Board changed with the appointment of Patricia Hawkins by Governor Easley to represent the Western Environmental Health Specialist vacancy. Layton Long, Davidson County, was re-appointed by the Governor to the Local Health Directors. Two terms will expire on December 15, 2007. They are: Malcolm Blalock, Public Spirited Citizen and Perry Solice, Environmental Health Specialist at Large. Both positions are eligible for reappointment for another term.

The current officers for the Board are: Chairman, Ann (Len) C. Gilstrap, Carteret County, Eastern Representative; Vice Chairman, Terry Pierce, Director of NCDENR-DEH, Secretary of NCDENR Representative; Secretary/Treasurer, Layton Long, Davidson County, Local Health Director Representative. Malcolm Blalock is the Education Committee Chairman and the Legislative Committee Chairman.

The Board usually meets a week or two before CIT is scheduled to approve interns for registration. Original transcripts, sent directly from the university to the RS Board, are a part of the intern registration application. The intern cannot be approved for registration until the transcript(s) have been received and approved. Visiting www.rsboard.com, you will find a complete description of everything required for registration. Newly hired EHSs should apply for registration as soon as possible.

Getting new hires approved for CIT attendance continues to be a big challenge. DEH does not accept individuals into CIT unless they are eligible for registration. Transcript(s) must be reviewed by Dr. Ogle to determine if the applicant has sufficient hours of biological or physical science to qualify for registration. In some cases, if the applicant has a degree other than biology, chemistry, or physics, it may take several weeks to contact the university to make that determination. For new-hires, the Board requests that supervisors send transcripts to Janice Jones as soon as possible for review prior to CIT starting. While the Board wants to make the science determination very quickly, sometimes it is not possible.

No significant changes in the passing rate have been noted with the new NEHA exam. This year the number of Interns taking the exam at each session has increased significantly. It is crucial that Interns planning on taking the exam register as early as possible to guarantee they have a spot. Testing requirements do not allow the Board to take unlimited numbers. Some Interns are waiting until the last year to take the exam for the first time. With the exam given only three times a year some Interns have run out of time before they passed the exam.

The Board has been involved with multiple complaints that have necessitated investigation teams being appointed pursuant to the Rules. Two Board members are assigned to investigate complaints and to report back to the Board for potential action. Below is a synopsis of disciplinary actions since last year:

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The Board re-investigated a complaint regarding Cherokee County. The investigators received evidence of criminal prosecution and the Board determined that action was required. A hearing was scheduled for August 9 and 10 but a Motion to Continue was filed on July 26, 2007 since the primary witness was unavailable at that date. A new hearing date has not been set at this time.

Appeals action by the Board involving Gerald Strickland and the reduction of "time served" decision by the Superior Court judge is still pending.

A complaint involving the falsification of records in Wake County was investigated. The investigators recommended a hearing be held to determine what action, if any, should be taken by the Board. A hearing was conducted in Wake County and action was taken by the Board to revoke the registration of Rhonda Barnes.

A complaint to the Board involving alleged inappropriate action was investigated and no evidence was found to support allegations. No action was taken.

Two other investigations are underway which involve criminal activities in which action has or may be taken by legal authorities. Actions by the Board are pending.

It is the intent of the Board to have the law revisions introduced as a bill in the next legislative session. Concurrent with the proposed changes to the laws, the Board has worked on a number of proposed changes in our administrative rules. Most of these changes have been brought to the attention of the RSs and RSIs in the last few years. The proposed changes may be found on the Board's website. We need your support when we move forward with this important legislation.

The Office of State Controller requires that all Boards and Commissions do an annual Self-Assessment of Internal Controls. In doing so the Board has uncovered multiple concerns that must be addressed to operating properly (fiscally and policy-wise). Members of the Board are developing policies to meet the requirements of the Internal Controls. Given the small size of staff (only one half-time person) and the fact that the Board is so decentralized makes progress slow. However, the Board has seen the need to put the required policies and procedures in place to operate better.

On a financial note, the Board continues to have more expenses due to several major factors:

- Increased expenses for Board Members travel;
- An increasing number of investigations concerning disciplinary matters;
- The need for additional administrative support;
- Meeting the requirements of the State Controller's Office; and
- Inflation.

The Board has been spending more than it has taken in for the past several years. The new requirements by the Controllers Office are likely to increase costs. We will be seeking legislative changes, including a change in fees to allow the Board to be self-sufficient and to carry out its responsibilities properly.

Permanent registration cards should be distributed to all Registered Sanitarians at this time. The cards are plastic and have a bar code that may be used, where applicable, to sign in at continuing education courses. Temporary cards will continue to be issued to Interns.

The Board has partnered with DEH to develop the "RS Training and Authorization System" (RSTAS), a computer system that will combine the databases from the CIT system, the Authorization system, and the Board's system. The system will be web-based and allow viewing access for the public, and RS's, RSI's, the Board, and DEH to update records. Confirmation of registration renewal will also be available therefore eliminating the need for new registration cards each year.

The Board has provided a guidance document for non registered environmental health assistants. The intent of the Board is to provide a dividing line between responsibilities of registered individuals and non-registered individuals. The document also clearly defines consequences when non registered individuals are used in the capacity of a registered environmental health specialist. This guidance document is available on the RS Board website.