

A Typical Day of Environmental Health

How many of you have used an Environmental Health service within the last month? The last week? The past day? You are using Environmental Health services all the time without knowing it. The following is an example of those services:

- ❑ **Shower in the morning** – If your family lives outside the city or other public sewer system boundaries, wastewater is treated and disposed of by way of a septic tank and drainfield system designed and inspected by the local health department. The septic system meets stringent state standards and is designed, operated and maintained to function properly to protect drinking water supplies and surface water.
- ❑ **Family has breakfast** – Frozen juice concentrate is mixed with tap water. If the water is from a community water system, the water quality is checked regularly by the health department. If the family has a private individual well, the local health department has a certified lab that is capable of testing the well water for harmful bacteria and nitrates. The food for breakfast is purchased at the local grocery store, which is permitted and inspected by the local health department.
- ❑ **Garbage pickup day** – Before leaving for work, the garbage can is taken to the street for collection. The garbage is taken to the transfer station, which is inspected by the local health department. Regulations address all aspects of monitoring the closed landfill and the transfer station including groundwater monitoring and nuisance abatement. The local health department also works with property owners and takes necessary action to get illegal dumping cleaned up.
- ❑ **Drop children off at school** – Schools must operate in compliance with state board of health regulations, which govern sanitation, playground safety, food safety, air quality and school construction. The local health department conducts routine food inspections and responds to complaints.
- ❑ **Lunch with friends at a local restaurant** – food service establishments are inspected and permitted by the local health department for compliance with sanitation and food handling standards. The local health department contracts with WSU Cooperative Extension to provide food handler training classes for food workers.
- ❑ **Co-worker tells you about a meth lab that was busted in their neighborhood** – after the bust, the local health department posts warning signs on the home and works with the property owner to assure the house is cleaned up before it is reoccupied or sold.
- ❑ **Your son calls you at work** – While walking home from school he was bitten by a dog. Law enforcement or the hospital emergency room notifies the local health department. The local health department coordinates with local law enforcement

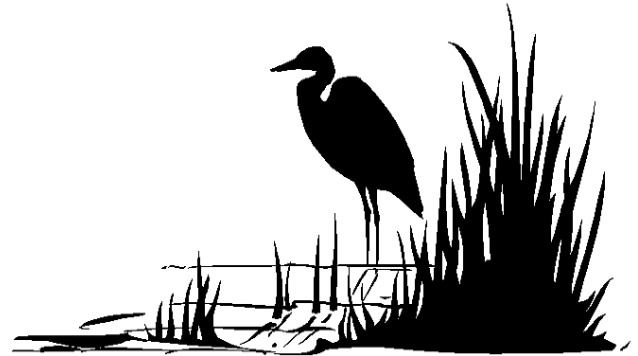
authorities and assures that the dog is quarantined and observed for ten days as required by regulations.

- ❑ **Your daughter calls you at work** – She reminds you to pick her up at the high school at 6:00 PM after her swim team practice. The swimming pool is permitted and inspected by the local health department.
- ❑ **Home by 6:30** – just in time to take the kids to the Mason County Fair. Your family eats at several of the food booths. Each booth is required to obtain a temporary food service permit issued by the local health department. Booths are also inspected by local health department sanitarians.
- ❑ **While watching the late news** – You learn of a food borne illness outbreak involving one of the local restaurants. The local health department is working overtime investigating the cause and source of the outbreak and to prevent additional illness. Residents are urged to phone the local health department for reliable information or if they have eaten at the restaurant recently and have become ill.

Another news story tells how the local health department is involved with emergency and flu pandemic planning.

A third story explains that West Nile Virus (WNV) has arrived in the State and that mosquito control measures are still needed until the first frost arrives. Personal protection is still the best defense against contracting the virus.

- ❑ **Finally to bed** – You'll sleep better knowing that Public Health is always working for a safer and healthier Mason County.



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