



## **Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Continuing Education Requirements for Registered Environmental Health Specialists**

### **Continuing Education Requirements**

*NOTE: This publication is meant to be an aid to understanding the Continuing Education Requirements set forth in CCR, Title 22, Chapter 23, Sections 65800 to 65808. The published codes are the only official representation of the law.*

### **Why should continuing education be required of Registered Environmental Health Specialists (REHS)?**

A number of agencies, organizations, and other interested parties have strongly supported continuing education as a means of professional development for REHSs. These entities include the Environmental Health Specialist Registration Committee, California Environmental Health Association, National Environmental Health Association, California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health, California Conference of Local Health Officers, and California Department of Public Health (CDPH) as well as individual REHSs and the public. Continuing education will provide opportunities for REHSs to maintain scientific and technological skills needed for today's challenges in environmental health.

### **Where are the statutory and regulatory requirements found that describe the components of the REHS Program?**

The REHS Program statute is in the California Health and Safety Code, Sections 106600 to 106735. The REHS continuing education regulations are in the California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Sections 65800 to 65808.

### **How many continuing education contact hours are required?**

Continuing education required for the biennial renewal of the applicant's registration will be 24 contact hours offered by accreditation agencies (AA) that have been approved by the CDPH REHS Program. A current list of the approved AAs is provided on the [CDPH REHS Program website](http://cdph.ca.gov/REHS) at [cdph.ca.gov/REHS](http://cdph.ca.gov/REHS).

### **When did the continuing education requirements become effective?**

The regulations requiring continuing education for REHSs in California were approved in December 2009. The 24 contact hour requirement became effective beginning January 1, 2010. REHSs whose registrations expire on December 31, 2018, will be required to submit approved coursework that has been obtained between January 1, 2017, and December 31, 2018.

**What is the timeline for the completion of continuing education requirements?**

REHSs whose registrations expire on December 31, 2011 need to have completed 24 REHS approved contact hours between January 1, 2010, and December 31, 2011. REHSs whose registrations will expire December 31, 2012, must complete 24 approved contact hours between January 1, 2011, and December 31, 2012.

**Continuing Education Hours and Courses**

**Who will approve the continuing education courses?**

The CDPH REHS Program will approve the AAs. The AAs are responsible for approving and monitoring recognized providers (RP) and course materials.

**What subject areas or topics are approved for continuing education?**

Food protection, solid waste management, liquid waste management, medical waste management, water supply, housing and institutions, bathing places, vector control, hazardous materials management, underground tanks, air sanitation, safety and accident prevention, land development and use, disaster sanitation, electromagnetic radiation, milk and dairy products, noise control, occupational health, rabies and animal disease control, recreational health, bioterrorism, emergency preparedness, lead poisoning, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, epidemiology and communicable diseases, public health, and environmental health administration and management are all acceptable topics.

**If a training opportunity does not advertise that it is eligible for California REHS continuing education credit, how do I get credit?**

In order to receive REHS credit for continuing education contact hours, the courses, workshops, and other training opportunities must be offered by an AA approved by the CDPH REHS Program.

**Where can I take courses?**

It is possible for local colleges, universities, State or federally funded training, county based training, professional organizations, industry seminars, educational workshops, and online courses to be approved for REHS contact hours, but they must be offered through AAs which have been approved by the CDPH REHS Program.

**What is the difference between contact hours and continuing education units (CEU)?**

- 50-60 minutes = 1 contact hour
- 0.1 CEU = 1 contact hour
- 1 quarter unit = 10 contact hours
- 1 semester unit = 15 contact hours

**How do I find training opportunities that are available to me?**

All approved AAs are listed on the [REHS continuing education page](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DRSEM/Pages/EMB/REHS/REHS-Continuing-Education-Requirements.aspx) at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DRSEM/Pages/EMB/REHS/REHS-Continuing-Education-Requirements.aspx>. AA contact information and directs links to the AAs also are included.

**Will there be courses available to accommodate REHSs who live in rural areas or out of the state?**

It is expected that online training and other distance learning venues will be approved for continuing education credits. These alternatives will accommodate REHSs who cannot easily attend live presentations.

**Who is responsible for paying the fees for continuing education coursework?**

The employer may choose to pay course or workshop registration fees perhaps based on a bargaining unit agreement with an employee union. However, there is no statutory or regulatory requirement for an employer to pay registration fees for continuing education.

**If my employer submits one check to cover the cost of registration renewal for all the REHSs in the workplace, what happens if not all of them have completed their required 24 contact hours?**

Each employer is responsible for ensuring that all REHSs have completed their approved hours before submitting payment for renewal. Employers should confirm that all contact hours submitted from all employees covered by the one check are from REHS Program approved AAs. The list of approved AAs is on the [CDPH REHS Program page](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DRSEM/Pages/EMB/REHS/REHS-Continuing-Education-Requirements.aspx) at [cdph.ca.gov/REHS](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/REHS).

**What will continuing education courses cost me?**

You will need to contact the individual AAs or check each AA website. All AAs and their contact information are listed on the [REHS continuing education page](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DRSEM/Pages/EMB/REHS/REHS-Continuing-Education-Requirements.aspx) at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DRSEM/Pages/EMB/REHS/REHS-Continuing-Education-Requirements.aspx>.

**Does my employer have to give me release time to attend classes?**

There is no statutory or regulatory requirement for an employer to grant release time to attend classes.

**Is there a grace period for completing the 24 continuing education hours?**

No, a list of courses and contact hours must be submitted by the last day of the year that your registration expires.

**Does the REHS Program keep track of REHS continuing education contact hours as they are accumulated?**

No, the REHS Program does not keep track of the continuing education contact hours for REHSs. Each REHS is responsible for keeping track of his/her own hours to make sure they have 24 hours each renewal cycle.

**Can additional contact hours earned during a 24-month period be carried over to the next 24 months?**

No, additional hours accumulated cannot be reserved to meet the 24 contact hours requirement for the next REHS biennial renewal period.

**How do I notify CDPH of course completion?**

At the time of your biennial renewal, you will be required to submit a Continuing Education Verification Form listing all of your completed courses. You must include your name and for each course the name of the REHS approved AA, course title, instructor, RP, and, number of contact hours earned. The form is located on the [REHS continuing education page](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DRSEM/Pages/EMB/REHS/REHS-Continuing-Education-Requirements.aspx) at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DRSEM/Pages/EMB/REHS/REHS-Continuing-Education-Requirements.aspx>.

**How long do I keep proof of course completion?**

You must keep copies of certificates and documentation of completed courses for five years. Random audits will be conducted to determine compliance. Knowingly making a false statement on an application for renewal is grounds for revocation of registration (Health and Safety Code Section 106715).

**What do I need to submit if I am audited?**

All Certificates of Completeness and/or Certificates of Attendance will be required to be submitted to the REHS Registration Program if you have been notified that you will be audited by the REHS Program. Each course listed on the Continuing Education Verification Form submitted for the REHS biennial registration renewal must be verified with a Certificate of Completeness or Attendance.

**Are retired REHS required to meet the continuing education requirements?**

If a retired REHS returns to active status, that REHS must meet the continuing education requirements and maintain current biennial registration.

**Can I be exempted from meeting the continuing education requirement?**

REHSs may seek exemption from the continuing education requirements for registration renewal on the grounds of serious illness or military service by applying to CDPH in writing. CDPH will review each request on a case by case basis to determine if it qualifies for exemption and will notify the applicant in writing.

**What are the consequences of not meeting the continuing education requirements within the 24-month period?**

If you do not submit documentation of 24 REHS approved contact hours at the time of the biennial renewal, payment will not be accepted, your registration will be suspended, and you may no longer perform the duties of an REHS. Subsequent penalties will be applied.

### **After suspension, how do I renew my registration?**

If the renewal fees, associated penalties, and contact hours are not paid or met within three years, the registration will be revoked and will not be revalidated. In order to reactivate, a new application to the REHS Program must be submitted, current education, training, and experience requirements must be satisfied, and the REHS exam must be completely successfully.

## **Accreditation Agencies**

### **What is an AA?**

The AA is authorized through the CDPH REHS program to be the sponsoring organization or agency of the REHS approved coursework. AAs are required to meet established criteria for identifying course providers that are competent, relevant, and accountable. The list of CDPH approved AAs can be found on the [CDPH REHS Program web site](http://cdph.ca.gov/REHS) at [cdph.ca.gov/ REHS](http://cdph.ca.gov/REHS).

### **Do existing continuing education providers and courses have to be approved as RPs?**

Yes, existing continuing education providers need to apply to become AAs, and their affiliates must become RPs before the coursework will be approved to meet the REHS continuing education requirements.

### **Do I need to be a member of the AA to receive continuing education contact hours for courses or conferences that I attend?**

Not necessarily. Many AAs offer online courses and conference attendance for nonmembers at a higher fee than individual members.

### **Can I get a course approved by CDPH that has not been approved by an AA?**

No, in order for CDPH to approve continuing education courses, they must be approved by an AA.

### **Can a county environmental health department be their own AA?**

Yes, but to receive contact hours for their employees, they need to provide opportunities to enhance the REHSs' education and training.

### **Can I attend a training opportunity in another county?**

Yes, but some county environmental health departments prefer no visitors or other REHSs outside of their local jurisdiction.

## Recognized Providers

### What is a RP?

A RP is an individual or organization that has been approved by an AA and is responsible for overseeing the administration and coordination of continuing education courses. The RP is responsible for assuring the educational quality of its approved coursework by meeting specified requirements.

### If I become an instructor or RP for an AA, can the hours I teach count as contact hours?

You can count the contact hours for each approved course that you teach the first time you present it within a 24-month biennial renewal cycle.

### How do instructors of approved REHS continuing education courses provide proof of having given the course for completion of contact hours?

Instructors who receive contact hours for teaching a course can keep certificates of having taught the course as proof of contact hours.

### What should you expect from a RP?

Every RP approved by an AA must ensure that coursework is pertinent to the REHS scope of practice, the instructor is qualified, and a syllabus with a course outline and instructional objectives has been provided. Additionally, the RP must provide an evaluation by the participants, a method to verify attendance, and a certificate of completion to the participants that indicates the number of contact hours that have been earned. The attendance records must be maintained for 5 years following the completion of the coursework.

### What information should the certificate of completion contain?

Certificates must include the names of the AA, RP, instructor, and participant. Additionally, they must include the course title, number of approved REHS contact hours, date of course completion, course expiration date, and course number if applicable.. Some AAs will send the certificate through the mail after the course is completed.

### How can I become a continuing education RP?

First, you will need to apply to an AA for approval. A list of AAs is posted on the [REHS continuing education page](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DRSEM/Pages/EMB/REHS/REHS-Continuing-Education-Requirements.aspx) at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DRSEM/Pages/EMB/REHS/REHS-Continuing-Education-Requirements.aspx>.

### How can I complain about a course RP?

You can file a complaint by completing the REHS program's complaint form with a description of your concerns.