

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Regarding the Continuing Education requirements for Registered Environmental Health Specialists

Continuing Education Requirements

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

The Environmental Health Specialist Registration Committee, California Environmental Health Association, National Environmental Health Association, California Directors of Environmental Health, California Conference of Local Health Officers, Department of Public Health (CDPH), individual REHS, and the public strongly supported continuing education as a means of professional development for REHS. Continuing education will provide opportunities for REHS to maintain scientific and technological skills needed for today's challenges in environmental health.

When did the continuing education requirements become effective?

The regulations requiring continuing education for REHS in California became law in December 2009 and the 24 contact hours became effective beginning January 1 2010.

When can I start accumulating continuing education contact hours?

REHS will be given a full two years to complete continuing education contact hours from the day after their registration expires.

Continuing Education Hours and Courses

Who will approve the continuing education courses?

CDPH will approve Accreditation Agencies (AA) who are responsible for approving course material and monitoring course providers.

What subject areas/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, environmental health administration and management are all acceptable topics.

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

In order to receive credit for CE hours, the courses, workshops and other opportunities must be approved by an AA and the instructor must be a Recognized Provider (RP).

Where can I take courses?

Local colleges, universities, state funded training, county-based training, professional organizations, industry seminars, educational workshops and online courses may all be approved through the Accreditation Agencies (AAs).

What is the difference between contact hours and continuing education units?

50-60 minutes = 1 contact hour
0.1 continuing education unit (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?

The REHS Program has listed all AAs on the REHS website and host links to each AA website. The REHS website is cdph.ca.gov/REHS.

Will there be courses available to accommodate REHS 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.

How many continuing education hours will be required?

Continuing education required for renewal of the applicant's registration will be a minimum of 24 contact hours.

Who is responsible for paying the fee for continuing education coursework?

The employer may choose to pay registration fees based on a bargaining unit agreement with an employee union. However, there is no statutory or regulatory requirement for an employer to pay for 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 their approved hours done before submitting payment for renewal.

What will continuing education courses cost me?

You will need to contact the AA or check their website. All AAs are listed on the CDPH website, cdph.ca.gov/REHS.

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 hours must be completed by the last day of the year that your registration expires.

What is the timeline for the completion of continuing education (CE) requirements?

Certifications that expire on December 31, 2011 must complete 24 hours of CEs between Jan 1 2010 thru Dec 31 2011. Certificates that expire December 31 2012 must complete 24 hours of CEs between Jan 1 2011 thru Dec 31 2012

Does the Environmental Health Specialist Registration Program (EHSRP) keep track of REHS continuing education contact hours as they are accumulated?

The EHSRP does not keep track of REHS continuing education hours. Each REHS is responsible for keeping track of his/her own hours to make sure they have 24 hours each renewal cycle.

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

Additional hours accumulated cannot be reserved to meet the next 24 hours CE requirement.

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, title of each course, topic/subject of each course, name of instructor, name of RP, name of RP's Accreditation Agency, number of contact hours credited for each course. The form is located at the following website:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/occupations/Pages/REHScontinuingeducation.aspx>

How long do I keep proof of course completion?

You must keep copies of certificates and documentation of completed courses for five (5) years. Random audits will be used to determine compliance. Knowingly making a false statement on an application for renewal is grounds for revocation of registration (CHSC section 106715).

What do I need to submit if I am audited?

All Certificate of Completeness (CoC) and Certificates of Attendance (CoA) will be required to be submitted to the REHS Registration program upon notification of audit. Each course listed on the Continuing Education Verification Form submitted during the biennial renewal of your certificate 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 they must meet the continuing education requirements and maintain current biennial registration.

Can I be exempted from meeting the continuing education requirement?

REHS may seek exemption from the continuing education requirements for registration renewal on the grounds of serious illness, hardship or military service by applying to the Department in writing. The Department will review each request to determine if it qualifies for exemption and notify the applicant in writing.

What are the consequences of not meeting the CE requirements within the 24 month period?

If you fail to meet the proper continuing education credits at the time of the biennial renewal, payment will not be accepted, your registration is suspended and you may no longer perform the duties of an REHS. Payment for renewal registration will be assessed a penalty of \$88. Any CE units that are short during that period will have to be made up within a year and payment plus any penalties shall apply.

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, registration will be revoked and will not be revalidated. In order to reactivate, a new application must be submitted and the REHS examination must be taken and successfully passed.

Accreditation Agencies

What is meant by “Accreditation Agency”?

The AA is authorized through the CDPH-REHS program. AAs are required to meet established criteria for identifying course providers that are competent, relevant and accountable.

Do existing continuing education presenters and courses have to be approved as RPs?

Yes, existing continuing education presenters need to apply as an AA and their affiliates must become RPs before their coursework will be accepted as meeting the registration requirements for continuing education.

Do I need to be a member of the Accreditation Agency to get Continuing Education credits for courses or conferences that I attend?

Many AAs offer online courses and conference attendance for non-members 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 continuing education credits 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 REHS outside of their local jurisdiction

Recognized Providers (RPs)

How do instructors of 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 is meant by a “Recognized Provider”?

A Recognized Provider (RP) of continuing education courses is evaluated and approved by an AA. The RP submits their biography and is authorized through the CDPH Accreditation program.

What should you expect from a Recognized Provider?

Every RP approved by an AA should present an accurate and informative presentation, a method to verify attendance/contact hours and a certificate of completion.

What kind of information should the Certificate contain?

Certificates must include the name of the participant and provider, course title, number of contact hours, date of completion, course expiration date, course number (if applicable) and the name of the AA. 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 website, cdph.ca.gov/REHS.

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

Each approved course you teach counts as contact hours the first time it is presented within a 24 month Certificate renewal cycle.

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.