

SANITARIANS' NEWS



WVPHA ANNUAL MEETING 2025:

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

NEHA Study Group- 2

Vaccine Research Cuts- 2

Committee Updates- 2

Mosquito-borne Outbreak- 3

EH Legal News- 4

Conference Highlights- 5

NEHA AEC 2025- 5

Unusual EH Stories- 4, 5

FDA's Food Safety Cuts- 6

WVAS Fall Election Info- 7

WVAS Information- 8

Credits- 8

Oglebay's Wilson Lodge Sept. 17-19, 2025



Registration link: <https://ddzmuifdlvgdbmi.eventify.io/t2/tickets>

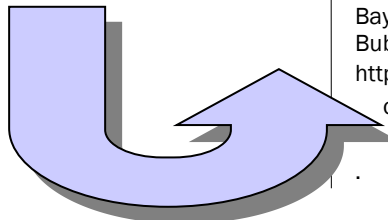
Any photos, stories, or any good news? Share in the next issue by reaching out to Nick King,

Nicholas.B.King@wv.gov

Online Hotel Reservation:

<https://book.onagilysys.com/wbe/group/616/oglebayresort/auth?langCode=EN>

GET INVOLVED WITH WVAS!



Nominate!

Know anyone that deserves recognition for their contributions to environmental health? Nominate them for the Steve Bayer, Recognition, Citizen, or Bubba Award. Info is found at <https://wvaos.org/awards>

or contact Awards Committee Chair,

Run for Office!

Elections of Executive Council occur once a year during WV Public Health Conference in the Fall. Serve your fellow sanitarians for a two year term as Member at Large or run for Vice President and serve a year as VP and a year as President. If you are interested in running reach out to Cara Harding at charding@berkeleywv.org.

Join the AOS (or Renew Membership!)

In the 2025 Mid-year Meeting, the WVAS voted on and passed bylaw changes to include all sanitarian registered with the WV State Board of Sanitarians in the WVAS without paying membership fees. Mid-year conference registration fees will then be used to completely fund WVAS activities and expenses.

News Liaison Committee

No updates. Check back next issue!

WV Board of Sanitarians

Training for CEHs needs to be submitted to Linda Whaley to officially count for your sanitarian registration. Email CEUs to linda.k.whaley@wv.gov.

Do not wait until the end of the year to submit CEHs. You can check your CEHs on the Board of Sanitarians' website at <http://www.wvlicensingboards.com/BoardOfSanitarians/>

Any sanitarians in training need to send their application, registration fee, and college transcripts to the Board as soon as sanitarian training class is completed. Sanitarians that are not registered with the Board are unable to work independently until registration is completed.

Region Representatives

JJ Rose—ROC (Beckley) Region
Steve Hinerman—PACT (Fairmont) Region
Vacant—EPHRT (Kearneysville) Region
Rodney Melton—BUNDLE (St. Albans) Region
Nicole Needs—MID-OHIO VALLEY
Lock Johnson—NORTHERN (Wheeling) Region
Vacant—SPHERE Region

If you have an issue you wish to have addressed by this committee, please send that information to your Region Representatives.

Sanitarian Liaison Committee webpage:

<https://oehs.wvdhhr.org/phs/public-health-sanitation/state-local-environmental-health-liaison-group/>

Neha Exam Study Group Completes First Series

The NEHA Test Study Group has completed its first course. At the time of this writing, two members of the study group have passed the NEHA Test! The material will still be posted on the shared drive for others who are still studying. The course will be run again next year and updated to reflect new material and based on the feedback of members who have taken the test. For more information, you can contact Nick King at Nicholas.B.King@WV.gov.



Federal HHS Announces \$500 M Cuts in mRNA Vaccine Research

In August, HHS Secretary Kennedy announced \$500m in cuts to all mRNA vaccine research funded by the federal government. This impacts 22 projects led by pharmaceutical companies such as Pfizer and Moderna to develop not just new seasonal COVID-19 vaccines but also new ones for other viruses such as bird flu. The cuts were announced with dubious arguments claiming that the rare side effects of vaccines are worse than their overall benefit to public health.

Along with these cuts, committees that issue official recommendations on vaccines have been fired and replaced with anti-vaccine activists aligned with the current administration.

These cuts will harm the development of new vaccines for emerging infectious diseases, making the US especially vulnerable for new pandemics, and may even inhibit its ability to release new seasonal vaccines for COVID-19.

CHIKUNGUNYA VIRUS EPIDEMIC IN CHINA RISKS SPREADING TO OTHER GLOBAL REGIONS

Throughout this summer, China has an unusually wet and humid summer, creating perfect conditions for the mosquitoes *aedes aegypti* and *aedes albopictus* to breed in large numbers. These mosquitoes are also the natural reservoirs of the Chikungunya virus. Even though the virus has been detected in Southern Asia for years, the rarity of the virus in China caused the population to have a weaker immunity to the virus, allowing the large numbers of mosquitoes to quickly spread the virus to thousands in a matter of a couple months. As of this writing, there are now over 8000 cases of Chikungunya Virus in China.

Symptom onset is within 3-7 days of being bitten by an infected mosquito and range from joint pain, fever, nausea, and rashes, resolving within a week or two but can be fatal to highly susceptible populations, who can also develop chronic pain lasting years as a result of infection. The symptoms are also very similar to Dengue Fever. There are currently no widely available vaccines for the virus, only a short supply of two brands of vaccines only used for travelers.

Any area that has *aedes aegypti* and *aedes albopictus* is at risk of being part of this epidemic because infected persons can travel to other countries and spread the virus. Many countries have issues travel advisories due to this epidemic, the epicenter of which is in Guangdong province.

In response to the epidemic, the Chinese government is having officials regularly fog streets in parks in Guangdong, ordering infected persons to isolate, and go door to door looking for stagnant water. At the time of this writing, it appears that cases of the disease are plateauing in Foshan, but measures will have to continue throughout the season to control mosquitoes; other regions of the world have to monitor travelers for potential cases throughout summer and fall.

Mosquito Outbreak Map



FIND US ONLINE

WVAS now has a closed group on Facebook to share news and information with members.

Request to join at www.facebook.com/groups/263384244100903/

WVAS also has a website at <https://wvaos.org/>

Our email is wvaos@outlook.com.

The WV Public Health Association also has a website. <https://wvpublichealthassociation.org/>

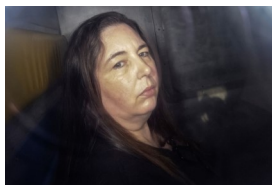


Legislative News

At the time of this writing, there have been no legislative developments regarding environmental health.

Stay tuned for the Spring Issue after the next legislative session in January 14, 2026 for more updates!

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SOLVES TRIPLE MURDER IN AUSTRALIA



On July 29, 2023, Erin Patterson, 50 (pictured above), ate her home cooked beef wellington for lunch with her in-laws Don and Gail as well as Gail's sister Heather and her husband Ian after announcing to them she had developed cancer. Erin had also invited her estranged (but not divorced) husband Simon over but he declined.

On July 30th, all four guests presented to the hospital with severe vomiting and diarrhea, later, organs such as the liver started to fail. All four victims were then placed in a medically induced coma in an attempt to save them. Gail and Heather died on August 4th. Don died on August 5th after failing to respond to a liver transplant. Ian managed to survive and was discharged on Sept. 21st.

The first clue of what happened occurred to toxicologists at the hospital when Ian tested positive for both beta-amanitin and alpha-amanitin. These are amatoxins that are only found in death cap mushrooms. As little as half a cap can kill someone. Furthermore, these mushrooms can only be obtained by deliberately foraging them in the wild. After obtaining a food history from Ian, the incident was then reported to the Victoria Health Department and police in September. A two month environmental investigation followed.

Erin was already the prime suspect to police after interviewing Ian, the problem was how to prove to a jury beyond a reasonable doubt that this was a triple murder and an attempted fourth. Erin had claimed to police that she got slightly sick but had bulimia and vomited the wellington after eating it, preventing herself from being severely poisoned. Erin also stated that her two children had also eaten it afterwards but with the mushrooms and pastry scraped off; she got the mushrooms from an Asian market. In order to prove that Erin is lying, police and the health department needed to prove that Erin had deliberately foraged the mushrooms and had all of the necessary equipment to do so.

The environmental investigation conducted in September over the next two months was able to prove that Erin murdered her in-laws by finding the following key facts: (1) Food samples of the beef wellingtons recovered at the home tested positive for death cap mushroom DNA, but one wellington tested negative. (2) according to Ian and her children, the in-laws ate different colored plates that the color Erin ate to differentiate the unadulterated wellington from the adulterated wellingtons. (3) Blood tests on Erin proved she had not gotten sick from her wellington as all, as was the case with her children. (4) a post on Erin's Facebook account showed that she had a mushroom dehydrator, which is needed to turn foraged mushrooms into dried mushrooms that can be used for cooking. (5) a scan of security footage at local garbage dumps found a clip of Erin disposing a mushroom dehydrator, which was then recovered and tested positive for death cap mushroom DNA and Erin's fingerprints all over it. (6) the location Erin had foraged the death cap mushrooms was discovered after an analysis of one of Erin's phones had activity on a site called iNaturalist which identified local areas, including photos, of where specific plants grow, including death caps. (7) Cell phone signals from Erin's phone traced her location to the location marked on iNaturalist where she foraged the death caps. (8) The Health Department performed a traceback of the mushrooms confirming that they did not come from any market and that Erin had lied about buying them. Furthermore, they found that the mushrooms' physical qualities did not match any mushrooms commercially available.

The investigation concluded in late October. On November 2, 2023, Erin Patterson was arrested and charged for the triple murder and attempted fourth. Erin entered a not guilty plea on May 7, 2024. The trial began on April 29, 2025. Erin was found by the jury guilty of all four charges. Erin's sentencing is scheduled for Sept. 8 this year.

WVPHA Conference Schedule Highlights for WVAS

Wednesday, September 17

10 AM– WV Association of Local Health Departments Meeting

1 PM– Welcome, WVPHA President David Whittaker

1:15 PM– Keynote Speech by Dr. Singh

2:45 PM– Understanding Adult Childhood Experiences

Thursday, September 18

8 AM– Registration desk and ballot box open

8:30 AM– Noon: Foodborne Illness Outbreak Exercise

1 PM– WVAS Business Meeting

1:30 PM– The Food Safety Ninja

2:45 PM– How to get the most out of HS Cloud, Stacy King

3:45 PM– RFFM updates, Bob Custard

4 PM– OEHS Update, Stacy King

Friday, Sept. 19

8 AM– Burnout and Beyond: Mental Health Realities in Public Health Careers

11:30 AM– Door Prize Drawing

LAWSUIT ALLEGES MI WOMAN CONTRACTED FLESH EATING BACTERIA FROM UNSANITIZED POOL

Residence Inn Ann Arbor Downtown is being sued by a resident of Flint, MI after being hospitalized and suffering chronic morbidities stemming from a MRSA infection contracted after swimming in their pool. The antibiotic resistant bacteria has resulted in three surgeries, daily intravenous antibiotics, and a possibility of the plaintiff's leg needing amputation.

The plaintiff, Alexis Williams, stayed at the Residence Inn in June 24-25 with her family. Upon leaving the pool on the 25th, Williams scraped her knee on the pool wall. Within hours, her scrape began to burn and sting, resulting in hospitalization within a day when Williams could no longer walk on that leg.

According to the lawsuit filed and records from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy's Drinking Water and Environmental Health Division, inspections of the swimming pool by sanitarians showed that on June 12, June 27th, and July 9th, the pool had no chlorine and pH above regulation; both of these are prime conditions for bacteria like MRSA to grow in pool water. Records also show that the pool water tested positive for coliform bacteria on June 13 and July 12, and that the pools daily operation records had significant gaps lacking measurements for relevant factors such as pH and chlorine required by regulation. There are no logs for June 25th. There are also no records indicating that the hotel closed and shocked the pool as required when measurements are out of compliance.

The hotel's owner has still not issued a public statement responding to the incident. The lawsuit has just been filed at the time of this writing so no court date has been scheduled yet.

RABIES FOUND NEAR MORGANTOWN DUE TO RACCOON ATTACK

On August 1, a raccoon tested positive for rabies in the unincorporated community of New Hill, in Monongalia County near Morgantown. The raccoon was captured after biting a person, who later received rabies PEP.

The bite occurred off Route 7 near Meadow Ponds. After the exposure, the Monongalia Co. Health Department put a public notice out to residents to ensure their pets are updated on rabies vaccines. Sanitarians also distributed flyers in the area that week informing residents of the situation and best practices.

Since the incidents, no other cases of rabies have been reported around New Hill. However, rabies in Monongalia co. had grown over the past few years, reaching about 20 animal cases a year in 2019. Because of this trend, MCHD has contacted USDA's APHIS agency to move the vertical distribution line of oral rabies vaccine air drops to go further east into more of Monongalia Co. Sanitarians also distributed ORV baits themselves on August 28th and 29th. Since the response by MCHD, rabies incidents have significantly dropped.

Dan McNeil Wins Spring Sanitarian Olympics!



After two long and hard fought rounds of trivia, Dan McNeil took the crown at the last mid-year meeting. Dan was followed by Anna Coleman and Lydia Takemoto.

For those who want another shot at the crown, you will have a chance at the WVAS Mid-Year Meeting in Spring!

FALL CONFERENCE WVAS ELECTIONS

Elections for WVAS occur at the PHA conference this fall. The following appointed positions are available.

Membership

Legislative Committee

Awards

Anyone interested in these positions can contact Cara Harding at charding@berkeleywv.org.

This years WVAS Election ballot will be sent out via email to be filled out and mailed but can also be filled out at the conference. There are only two positions up for election; both have unopposed candidates. They are:

Vice President

Lydia Takemoto (Marshall Co.)

2 Year Board Member

Mark Hawkins (Brooke Co.)



**West Virginia Association
of Sanitarians**

P.O. Box 334
Kingwood, WV 26537
Phone: 304-272-2137
Email: WVAOS@Outlook.com

We're on the Web
<https://wvaos.org/>

WVAS Executive Council

Elected Officers

Acting President: David Whittaker

Vice-President: Bob Custard

Elected Members at Large: Jimmy Casdorff, David Whittaker, Glen Ondick

Appointed Members

Secretary-Treasurer: VJ Davis

Newsletter: Nick King

Legislative Committee: Vacant

Nominating Committee: Cara Harding

Awards: Vacant

By Laws: Mike Bolen

IEHS: Bill Nestor

Media: AJ Root

Membership: Vacant

Event Planning: Mark Hawkins

News Liaison Committee: Stacy King

Credits

Lead Writer

Nick King

News Liaison

Stacy King

WV Board of Sanitarians Updates:

Brad Cochran, Linda Whaley

Additional

Assistance/Editing

V.J. Davis, David Whittaker