

**RI Committee Occupational Safety & Health  
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**A year-end summary of RICOSH activities for 2020**

**Advocacy**

- With the onslaught of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic RICOSH has been an active part of Protecting Workers Alliance an international network of occupational clinicians, academics, unionists and other health professionals to understand and explore the many facets of the pandemic, from modes of transmission to methods of control, to vaccines and surveillance and tracing. RICOSH has joined on the RIDOH COVID Providers advisory weekly (and now biweekly) briefings.

At the request of Senator Sheldon Whitehouse's staff we drafted a policy memo on *Rebuilding a Robust Pandemic Planning and Response System*. In the early stages of the pandemic we proposed to the RI healthcare community and the Governor and RIDOH to prepare for a possible surge that might well overwhelm our health care infrastructure by converting Pawtucket's vacant Memorial facility to serve as a dedicated COVID isolation facility

- Meanwhile RICOSH has continued working with a National Heat Protection Campaign a coalition of unions and occupational health professionals and advocates to address occupational heat stress issues especially as one key impact of our changing climate will be more frequent days of extreme heat.
- RICOSH continues work with RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) on a joint USEPA, Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association, and Toxics Use Reduction project to encourage the janitorial and housekeeping community in Rhode Island and Southeastern New England to switch from hazardous to safer cleaning chemicals.
- RICOSH participate with the RI Executive Council on Climate Change (EC4) to address climate change impacts, especially as they impact the health and safety of workers.
- RICOSH continues to support the expansion of public transit as a green solution to climate change and social equity issues as part of the RITransit Riders Alliance and RI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4), and the Environment Council of RI Climate Crisis campaign.

{{Organizations that we have worked with occupational and environmental health issues:  
RI Mobility Innovation Working Group  
Brown School of Public health  
RI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4)  
Local Emergency Planning Committee #2  
RITransit Riders Alliance

RI Department of Environmental Management  
National Council for Occupational Safety and Health  
Working RI  
RI AFL-CIO  
Protecting Workers Alliance  
RI EC4-Science and Technical Advisory Board  
Brown Climate Development Lab  
Safety Association of RI  
Environment Council of RI Policy committee  
Brown University Superfund Research Project

## □ **Training and Education**

*‘Throughout decades of workplace and environmental health and safety advocacy, RICOSH has educated and trained workers - as well as community members and agencies and professionals - about classical job hazards like asbestos, lead and carbon monoxide and emerging hazards like nanoparticles and emerging infectious diseases.’ (New England Consortium Quarterly, UMASS/Lowell)*

[TNEC-CSEA)

*Since 1987, The New England Consortium (TNEC-CSEA), a partnership of the University of Massachusetts Lowell in the Department of Community Health, with RICOSH, NHCOSH, CTCOSH and MASSCOSH and the Civil Service Employees Association, Local 1000, AFSCME funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Worker Education Training Program. TNEC-CSEA has conducted top quality learner-centered participatory hands-on Hazardous Waste Worker and Emergency Responder Health and Safety Training throughout the region. **This year we were awarded a new five year grant from the NIEHS.***

**With the COVID-19 Pandemic TNEC training project was suspended by mid March. Prior to that date RICOSH helped training in several TNEC/CSEA programs on hazardous materials, emergency response, work zone safety, OSHA10 Construction, confined space safety, disaster preparedness. For the following entities:--**

**OSHA 10 MWRA Chelsea MA**  
**8HR Refresher Woodward & Curran, PE, ME**  
**8HR Refresher Woodward & Curran Pe, ME**  
**8HR Refresher Woodward & Curran Prov RI**  
**8HR Refresher Woodward & Curran Dedham MA**  
**PAL Refresher Smithfield RI**  
**8HR Refresher Woodward & Curran Middletown CT**  
**40Hr Hazwoper training and refreshers for the Massachusetts Police Academy**

With the loss live in-person training TNEC-CSEA pivoted to virtual and on line training with a special 2hr program on TNEC COVID-19 2hr *Returning to Work* seminar for free that was run twice a week every week from April to August and then ran twice a week since August. Total of over fifty seminars have been delivered on line.

We conducted a series of workshops in collaboration with RIAFL-CIO

**-Worker Safety in the Age of Covid-19**  
**-Worker Safety & Health in the Age of Covid-19: an Update**  
**-Cleaners, Disinfectants and Chemical Safety**  
**-Heat Illness and Healthy Heat Safety**

We conducted seminars for TNEC/UMASSLOWELL on **Climate Change and Worker Health&Safety**-and for the Department of Pathology and Molecular Medicine-Brown University on **Silica and Silicosis**.

RICOSH translated several of our safety and health modules into Spanish and provided them to the National Council of Occupational Safety and Health and the TNEC-CSEA.

RICOSH's staff attended in-service training and seminars to improve our skill set and tool box: a *sample* of some of these programs-

Emory/NIEHS Workshop: *Protecting Infectious Disease Responders During the COVID-19 Outbreak*

NIEHS WTP- *Train-the-Trainer for Virtual COVID19 Safety Advisors*

*RCRA Compliance at Cleanup Sites: Waste Treatment & Land Disposal Restrictions*  
NEWMOA

*COVID Testing - NCOSH/ICWUC Training Center*

*Indoor Air Quality in K-12 Schools: Addressing the Concept of Layered Risk Amidst COVID-19* EPA.

*Army Installation Resilience - Challenges and Opportunities to Improve Mission Readiness* Security and Sustainability Forum

*Impact of COVID-19 on the Construction Industry and New Research Initiatives*  
CPWR/NIOSH

*Proper Ventilation for COVID-19*.NYCOSH

*Federal Government Human Health Pfas Research*-Nat'l Academies of Sciences

Superfund Research Program Progress in Research Webinar Part 2: *Legacy and*

*Emerging Contaminants (PAHs, PCBs, PFAS)*-NIEHS –

*Work-Related Asthma*-Harvard Occupational& Environmental Medicine

*NIEHS Workplace Outbreak Investigation, Contact Tracing and Testing: Intersection between Occupational & Public Health*

*Safer Cleaning and Disinfection for Schools* TURI

*Airborne Transmission of SARS-CoV-2*: Nat Academy of Sciences

CDC COVID-19 Partner Update: *How to Protect K-12 School Staff*

*Disinfecting during the COVID-19 Pandemic*: MSU/edu

*Preventing Heat Illness in Practice* CME

*NIEHS Pilot Opioid Train the Train*

*The Role of Healthy Buildings in the Age of COVID-19* Harvard TH Chan

*COVID-19: Keeping Construction Workers Safe* ACOEM

*Best Safety and Hygiene Practices for Public Workspaces in the COVID-19*

*Environment* Federal Facilities Council.

*COVID-19: Protecting Health Care Workers--Epidemiology, Virology, and Occupational Health Practice* ACOEM

*Protecting Health Care Workers – Decontamination & Reuse of Respirators* ACOEM webinar.

NIEHS WTP *Protecting Healthcare Workers from Exposure to SARS CoV-2*,  
University of Maryland Medical Center

## □ **Information & Technical Assistance**



***"You produce a great newsletter! You have done a great job at solid technical, diverse and useful articles."***

Janet Clark, Senior Associate Director, Toxic Use Reduction Institute UMASS/Lowell  
Center for Sustainable Production

RICOSH produces a newsletter and we have added an online news and notes memo. Additionally, we developed a detailed technical bulletin on PFASs, a class of environmentally ubiquitous chemicals that have become major concern and factsheets and alerts on Heat Stress, Respirators, and Cold Hazards. RICOSH developed the COVID Reoccupancy plan for the TNEC Training center at UMASS/Lowell.

One of RICOSH's primary functions is to supply accurate information about environmental and occupational hazards, regulations, and methods of control. Agencies, institutions, officials, and organizations that requested information and technical assistance include some of the following-:

- *RI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4)/ Teamsters L251// UFCW 328// The Transportation and Climate Initiative Program//Office of the General Treasurer//Protecting Workers Alliance //Institute for Labor Studies and Research //RI Clean Transportation and TCI Advocates//RI Department of Environmental Management// 1199-SEIU// Hackensack Meridian Health// UAW7770//SEIU 580// Beacon Mutual// RINEA// RIAFT&HP// RI Mobility Innovation Working Group//RI Department of Education//Brown Climate Development Lab// New England Laborers' Health & Safety Fund // Local Emergency Planning C#2//TNEC Quarterly//National Council on Occupational Safety and Health// RI Public Transit Authority//OSHA// NIEHS Worker Training Program // Brown Superfund Research Program// RI Black Story Tellers*



*Sources of funding: National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences National Worker Education Training Program, Susan B Harwood OSHA grant, unions' dues and individual supporters as well as fees for service*

***1/7/21***