Advisory Board Update

Welcome!

We have developed this electronic newsletter as a quick and efficient way to give you an update of TNEC activities. Let us know what you think!

As you remember, our Fall meeting time was used for initial prep work on a proposal for our next five-year contract. That brainstorming session was very productive. We will be soliciting more of your help as proposal development continues. Please note: TNEC will convene an Advisory Board meeting this May 26, 2004. Watch for more information in the coming weeks.

Best wishes,
Craig Slatin
Principal Investigator, TNEC
Associate Professor, Health and Clinical Sciences

Save the Date

The next advisory board meeting for The New England Consortium (TNEC) will be held on Wednesday, May 26, at the Alumni Lounge at the University of Massachusetts in Lowell.

We will be sending out a notice with the agenda details, directions, and additional information. Key business items for the meeting will include a discussion of the All Hazards Health and Safety Training Project that we've been conducting this year.

TNEC Grant Renewed by NIEHS

The New England Consortium (TNEC), based at the UMass Lowell campus, received a grant of $979,600 from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences' (NIEHS), Worker Education and Training Bureau. The grant is a fourth-year renewal in a five-year funding cycle.

Under this grant, TNEC continues to provide region-wide health and safety training to hazardous waste workers and hazardous materials incident emergency responders. Hazardous waste workers conduct hazardous waste clean up, transportation, management, or storage. Under this grant last year, TNEC delivered sixty-one courses for 8562 workers involving 15,200 hours of instruction in its courses for hazardous waste operators and emergency responders.

So far this year, TNEC has worked with a number of organizations and firms in designing customized training courses. These companies and agencies include Public Service of New Hampshire's Merrimack Station in Bow, NH, Neo-Resins in Wilmington, Covanta Energy in Haverhill, and the U.S. Geological Survey based in Pembroke, NH, the Boston Inspectational Services Division, and the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority. TNEC has also collaborated with the U.S. EPA and the New England Native American Tribes on a hazardous waste refresher courses.

TNEC facilitated an Emergency Response Team Exercise at the Merrimack Station, Public Service of NH training exercise.
NEC has also received a supplemental grant of $191,000 from NIEHS to provide awareness level and advanced training for workers at community health centers and community boards of health and for environmental health nurses. This training focuses on emergency response actions related to future disasters or potential terrorist attacks that involve weapons of mass destruction. While the training is intended to help prepare these public health professionals for potential mass casualty incidents, it is grounded in a practical approach for evaluating and preparing for various hazards scenarios that can come up in one’s day-to-day work.

The Consortium is working with the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, the Connecticut Primary Care Association, the University of Connecticut Occupational and Environmental Health Center, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Western Regional Health Office, the Vermont Department of Health Division of Community Public Health, and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services. Additionally, Stephanie Chalupka, Director of UMASS Lowell’s Undergraduate Nursing Program and a member of the International Nursing Coalition for Mass Casualty Education has served on the curriculum development committee and has been a key liaison with the Vermont Environmental Health Nurses.

Each of the Coalitions for Occupational Safety and Health that are partners with the UMASS Lowell staff in TNEC is involved in the process of curriculum development and in training. New Hampshire COSH, in conjunction with the NH Department of Health and Human Services, facilitated 8-hour Emergency Response Awareness sessions related to Mass Casualty Incidents for community health officers on November 12, 2003, February 12 and April 15, 2004. Western Mass-COSH coordinated three-day 24 Hour Basic Health and Safety Courses with a Focus on Chemical, Biological, Radiation/Nuclear and Explosive Hazards for Emergency Responders / Public Health Officers from January 20–22, February 17–19, and March 24, 31, and April 17, 2004.

Further meetings are scheduled with the health center organization representatives in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and environmental health nurses in Vermont to review curriculum and needs assessments and to schedule training sessions later in the spring. TNEC’s Advisory Board members contributed greatly to this project during the proposal development stage in April 2003.

Community-Based Worker Training Begins

TNEC has also received funding to work with JFY Networks, Inc. in Boston to support and coordinate a Brownfields Minority Worker Training program and to conduct the program’s health and safety training component. TNEC has just completed one course with JFY and is conducting this training for similar programs in Lowell, Massachusetts (Coalition for a Better Acre), and Groundwork Providence in Rhode Island. Each of these organizations has received grants funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In addition to providing training for inner city and minority workers through non-profit organizations across New England, TNEC is working with the University of Connecticut-Farmington Occupational and Environmental Health Center to develop curricula and deliver training for public health workers.
A new computer-based training module has been developed by TNEC and was highlighted at the April 2003 National Trainers Exchange of the NIEHS grantees.

The module, developed under the direction of Assistant Project Director Wayne Sanborn, was cited for the ease with which it can be integrated into small group training programs.

The simulation, which was presented in its earlier form to members of the TNEC Advisory Board at their Fall 2002 session, is designed for use in TNEC's 40-hour Hazardous Waste Site Worker Training Course and simulates an emergency removal action. Parts of it are also being covered in 8-hour Site Worker Refresher courses.

The simulation incorporates the effectiveness of computer-based training within the framework of TNEC's traditional small group activity method. This approach enhances worker-oriented problem solving through interactive, participatory training.

An overall evaluation process to measure the effectiveness of the simulation is being launched now through the remainder of this grant year (August 31, 2004). The evaluation will focus on how the simulation program is meeting its training development and delivery goals and will also consider the ways in which the program integrates empowerment principles.

Qualitative feedback will be gathered through interviews, observations, questionnaires, focus groups, document collection, and analysis with the cooperation of Consortium instructors, students who have used the simulation in course and from organizational representatives.

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**Did Chuck Levenstein Really Retire?**

Officially, Dr. Charles Levenstein retired from the UMass Lowell faculty in December, but it would be hard to figure that out by the schedule he keeps. In addition to continuing as Chair of the TNEC Advisory Board, he appears as busy as ever.

In mid-January, he traveled to Hungary to research changes in the National Health System. Previously, about half the country's medical care was delivered by doctors located at industrial sites. Levenstein was a co-author, along with TNEC principal investigator Craig Slatin, of "Doctors by Fax," a review of the current system in which doctors are no longer on site. Levenstein was invited to present the paper in Brussels, at the conference of the Trade Union Technical Bureau, the occupational health and safety unit of the European Trade Union Congress.

He continues to work as a co-principal investigator at UMass Lowell with Prof. Supriya Lahiri on a World Health Organization-funded project examining the cost-effectiveness of intervention to prevent occupational disease. In March, he traveled with Dr. Lahiri and others to present their findings at a conference in Brazil.

Levenstein also continues his long-standing project with the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, working with trade unions on smoking issues. Additionally, he remains editor of New Solutions, an international journal of occupational and environmental health policy, published by the Alice Hamilton Library of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union.

Along with Dr. John Wooding, provost of UMass Lowell, Levenstein is general editor of a book series on workplace health and environment. He also continues his poetry column in a Zurich-based literary journal, and has recently become an editor for a new journal on policy and practice in health and safety in the United Kingdom. Although he is not teaching, he is supervising his final two doctoral students, both of whom are slated to complete their degrees this year.

What has changed since retirement? "I'm finding time to work out three days a week," he says. "I'm having a good time."
Gerald V. Poje, Ph.D.

Dr. Poje has served as a Board Member of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board since its inception in November 1997. He also has been the Board's Executive/Administrator responsible for personnel administration, conduct of work, and representing the CSB before the Congress and the Executive Branch.

Dr. Poje was on scene at the CSB's investigations into the chemical explosion at the First Chemical Corp. manufacturing facility near Pascagoula, Mississippi, the Keltech reactive chemical explosion in Manhattan, NY that injured 82, the Georgia-Pacific toxic gas incident that killed two and injured more than a dozen people near Pennington, AL, and the Sonat Exploration explosion and fire that killed four near Pitkin, Louisiana.

Dr. Poje organized and convened safety board meetings on chemical accident prevention research and efforts on reducing accident risks associated with Year 2000 computer problems. Recently he has participated in CSB endeavors on incident data collection, chemical security and improving the management of reactive hazards. Dr. Poje advocates for the board's safety recommendations to state and federal regulatory agencies, trade unions, trade associations, corporations, professional and public advocacy organizations.

Prior to joining the Board, Dr. Poje directed international programs and public health for the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, focusing on issues of disease prevention, health promotion and environmental justice. He also served on U.S. delegations to intergovernmental meetings on chemical safety and promoted the development of international information networks to enhance global understanding of chemical hazards and their risks. He is a fellow of the Collegium Ramazzini, an international community of leading scientists and other people distinguished by their concern for occupational and environmental health.

Dr. Poje received his Ph.D. from New York University and served on the faculty at Miami University of Ohio. He has been a senior scientist for the National Wildlife Federation, and as vice president for Research at Green Seal. Dr. Poje has testified before Congress advocating improvements to public health and worker protection and safety, pollution prevention policy, Clean Air policy and regulations, chemical accident prevention, and Y2K and chemical safety policies. He has lectured on chemical hazards and policies to reduce their risks in North America, Latin America, Europe and Asia.

(Turn ends November 2004)

Save the Date

the development of a new five-year grant proposal to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Worker Education Training Bureau (NIEHS WETB) for the period of September 1, 2005 through August 31, 2010, and reports on our overall training program.

An exciting feature of the meeting will be a talk by Gerald Poje of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB). Mr. Poje will go over the CSB's work and help lead us into a dialogue regarding the future direction of the worker health and safety, environmental justice and public health movements in confronting the challenge of potential chemical accidents, security, and other serious risks to our communities.