

Environmental Health Hazards: Agencies And Jurisdictions

Environmental Health Division

Niagara Region Public Health & Emergency Services

OBJECTIVES

- Describe the role of Public Health in responding to environmental health hazards
- Outline the role of other municipal and provincial agencies in responding to environmental health complaints

ONTARIO PUBLIC HEALTH STANDARDS

- Timely and effective detection, identification, and response to health hazards and associated **public health risks**, trends, and illnesses
- Engage in community and multi-sectoral collaboration with **municipal and other relevant partners** to promote healthy built and natural environments

HOW IS THIS ACHIEVED?

1. Identification of health hazards in the physical environment
2. Review of evidence regarding health impacts of environmental exposures
3. Risk assessment
4. Corrective actions to reduce exposure to health hazards while considering their impacts (eg. Infringing others' freedom)

ROLE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Public Health DOES:

- Act when a health hazard exists
- Respond to hazards that impact the population/community
 - Eg. Contaminated public pool

Public Health DOES NOT:

- Act on the basis of the theoretical potential of a health hazard
- Respond to hazards that affect a single individual
 - Eg. Mould in a private residence

COLLABORATION

- Public Health Units can work with municipalities to promote and maintain healthy and safe environments
- By-laws
 - Tool to create supportive physical and social environments that reduce exposure to **potential** health hazards
 - A type of healthy public policy
 - Example of a municipal by-law that affects environmental health – Idling control

PROPERTY STANDARDS

- Enact by-laws that address property standards and maintenance including: *structural integrity, repairs, cleanliness, waste removal, heating, plumbing, electrical, pests*

EXAMPLES

Mould



Rats



Abandoned Pool



MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT, CONSERVATION AND PARKS (MECP)

- “promoting clean and safe **air, land, and water** to ensure healthy communities, ecological protection and sustainable development...”

EXAMPLES

Aquifer contamination



Industrial operations leading to soil pollution

- Eg. Nickel contamination of soil



RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Law/By-law	Description
Residential Tenancies Act	Landlord obligations for repair and maintenance
Local property standards by-laws	Structural integrity, utilities, safety and security
Health Protection and Promotion Act	Protection of the public from imminent health risks
Ontario Human Rights Code	Accommodation without “undue hardship” to landlord
Ontario Water Resources Act	Regulates sewage disposal and prohibits the discharge of polluting materials that may impair water quality
Clean Water Act	Protect existing and future sources of drinking water
Pesticides Act	Education, license and permit requirements for pesticides
Safe Drinking Water Act	Standards for drinking water quality
Toxics Reduction Act	Reduce the use and creation of prescribed toxic substances

SUMMARY

- The responsibility of maintaining adequate environmental conditions for health and safety lies with multiple agencies
- Legislation exists that clearly defines roles & responsibilities
- Local by-law enforcement is often the most direct & nimble response
- Public Health can act when a health hazard with population impact exists
- Public Health has little authority prior to a health hazard existing; nor if a hazard affects only one person or household
- Agencies can work together to expedite resolution of a health hazard (eg. property concern) in the most efficient and cost-effective way