



Collaborative on Health and the Environment - Washington



Biweekly Bulletin August 12, 2009

This bulletin lists upcoming events plus recent announcements, news and journal articles, calls for proposals and other items related to learning environmental contributors to human health in Washington State and the Pacific Northwest. They are archived and searchable on our website: <http://washington.chenw.org/bulletins.html>

CHE-WA Highlights

New members

CHE-Washington welcomes these new members:

- Amir Jaferi, ME, Karachi, Pakistan
- Doug Mercer, PhD, Seattle
- Madrona Murphy, Lopez Island
- Vanessa Ryder, Olympia
- Lehar Zaidi, MPH, MS, Kirkland

For a searchable database of organizations with which CHE-WA members are affiliated, please visit the CHE-WA website: <http://washington.chenw.org/members.html>

Lessons Learned

Looking back to go forward

Lessons Learned is a CHE-WA bulletin feature focusing on an historical event that provides an important lesson for ensuring a more sustainable and healthy environment. Please feel free to send suggestions to [Steve Gilbert](#).

Ergot and Saint Anthony's Fire

by Steven G. Gilbert, PhD, DABT

Ergot refers to a group of fungi that grow on rye and related plants. Ergot produces a potent alkaloid that, when ingested, can cause hallucinations, irrational behavior, convulsions, and vascular restriction that can lead to gangrene and loss of limbs and death. It was first noted in writings from China as early as 1100 BCE.



In 994, 20,000-40,000 people died from infected rye bread in southern France. Ergotism was shrouded in religious superstition of sin, and monks of the order of St. Anthony the Great specialized in treating ergotism victims -- thus it became known as Saint Anthony's Fire due to the monks' partial success in treating the burning sensation in limbs. Some researchers believe that an outbreak of ergotism may have contributed to the "bewitchings" which led to the Salem witch trials in the United States in 1691. Ergot also causes uterine contractions and was used to induce abortions. Several drugs were developed from ergot to control bleeding.

Natural chemicals are not necessarily beneficial but can further our understanding of biology and lead to useful drugs.

More on ergot: <http://toxipedia.org/wiki/x/2gE>

Upcoming Events

Online Calendar. These and more upcoming events are listed in a searchable calendar: <http://www.chenw.org/cgi-bin/searchevents.cgi>.

1) Community Involvement Training Conference

Tuesday through Thursday, August 18 - 20, 2009
Seattle, Washington

Sponsor: US Environmental Protection Agency

This eleventh training conference brings together more than 450 people from EPA and its federal, state, tribal and local partners who plan and implement environmental community involvement, partnership, stewardship, outreach and education programs. The theme for the 2009 conference is "Reaching across Boundaries: Sharing Challenges and Opportunities." The theme acknowledges that boundaries exist all around us and can pose challenges to effectively solving environmental problems. However, if stakeholders can move across boundaries, they can identify mutual challenges and opportunities that can lead to sustainable environmental benefits. During the conference we will explore communication skills and processes, organizational/institutional issues and behavioral shifts as ways to reach across boundaries to achieve these environmental benefits.

Price: see [the registration page](#)

[Visit the website](#)

Contact: Community Involvement Conference Coordinator, ciconference@emsus.com

2) Pass a Safe School Siting Policy

Wednesday August 19, 2009
noon Eastern time

Sponsor: Center for Health, Environment & Justice

This is the third of a three-part conference call series on community impacts of the lack of laws preventing the building of schools on or near sources of pollution. Objectives include 1) identifying different strategies in passing a school-siting policy, 2) understanding the steps toward creating a campaign strategy and media plan, and 3) understanding general best practices in passing policy.

Price: free

[Visit the website](#)

Contact: see the [contact page](#)

3) 2nd National Safe Routes to School Conference

Wednesday through Friday, August 19 - 21, 2009
Portland, Oregon
at the Hilton Portland & Executive Tower

Sponsor: National Center for Safe Routes to School and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership

Safe Routes to School is an international movement with the goal of making it safe, convenient and fun for children to bicycle and walk to school on a daily basis. An increase in walking and bicycling improves community and personal health, benefits the environment, increases safety, and helps to decrease traffic and congestion around schools. The most successful programs incorporate the five E's: education, encouragement, engineering, enforcement and evaluation. The programmatic themes for this year's conference are 1) transportation infrastructure and safety, 2) Empowering

families and youth, 3) education and encouragement program development, 4) health and evaluation, and 5) Growing the SRTS movement.

Price: unknown

[Visit the website](#)

Contact: Bike Transportation Alliance, 503-226-0676 or info@bta4bikes.org

4) Prenatal Tobacco Smoke and Postnatal Secondhand Smoke Exposure and Child Neurodevelopment

Tuesday September 8, 2009

2:00 - 3:00 p.m. Eastern time

Sponsor: American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Michael Weitzman, MD, professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry, New York University School of Medicine, will speak.

Price: free

[Visit the website](#)

Contact: 800-424-3688

5) Introduction to Ecological Statistics

Thursday and Friday, September 10 - 11, 2009

8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Seattle, Washington

at NWETC Headquarters, 650 South Orcas Street, Suite 220

Sponsor: EOS Alliance

Many ecologists and managers often use statistical models that may not be appropriate or that violate basic model assumptions (i.e. independence), which can lead to erroneous conclusions. We will begin with an introduction to ecological statistics and then explore and discuss several methods: Non Metric Multidimensional Scaling, Classification and Regression Trees, and Non Parametric Multiplicative Regression.

Price: \$495, \$395 for Native American tribes; government employees; nonprofits; students; and NAEP, NEBC, NWAEP members

[Visit the website](#)

Contact: Northwest Environmental Training Center, 206-762-1976

Announcements & Articles

A daily news feed with these articles and announcements is now available on CHE's website: <http://www.healthandenvironment.org/news/announce>.

[Job opening: Women's Voices for the Earth, Missoula, Montana.](#)

WVE seeks a development specialist with an excellent track record and significant experience securing major gifts and foundation grants. Applications will be accepted until August 28, 2009, or until the position is filled.

[Job opening: Good Guide, San Francisco.](#)

Good Guide is seeking a full-time chief scientific officer to help refine and expand their methodologies for evaluating the environmental, social and health performance of products. A PhD or MD degree is required, with 15+ years experience in research, an internationally recognized record in publishing, policy engagement, or industry leadership.

[EPA seeks public input on clean water enforcement action plan through online](#)

[forum.](#)

EPA has launched an online discussion forum to receive public input on the future direction of EPA's national water enforcement program. The public will be able to provide feedback through the EPA website, between now and August 28, giving them a forum to address any concerns about EPA's efforts to protect the water in their communities. US Environmental Protection Agency

[EPA posts peer review of renewable fuel standards lifecycle analysis.](#)

The peer review of the renewable fuel standards lifecycle analysis is now available online. US Environmental Protection Agency.

[Insights with host Hugh Downs launches new series on environmental health.](#)

The senior producer for the series said, "Environmental health is getting traction today and our series will be aiding people to obtain answers to important questions about the environment and how it affects our health."

[Environmental Health 101: Should I test my home for mold?](#)

Tuesday, August 11, 2009

Mold will grow on many building materials that are damp for extended periods. The key to preventing mold growth is controlling moisture. Examiner.com.

[Bird flu virus a possible trigger for Parkinson's.](#)

Tuesday, August 11, 2009

The idea that viruses can trigger neurodegenerative disease has remained controversial. Now researchers report new evidence for such a link: Mice infected with the H5N1 avian influenza virus lose the same dopamine-releasing neurons that are destroyed by Parkinson's disease. Science.

[Pollutants in breast milk may fluctuate during nursing.](#)

Tuesday, August 11, 2009

Levels of contaminants in breast milk are more complicated than once thought; instead of a constant decline during nursing, levels may fluctuate from beginning to end, finds a new study that contradicts the long-held belief that the pollutants steadily wane. Environmental Health News.

['Substantial reduction' in tobacco sales to minors.](#)

Tuesday, August 11, 2009

Retail sales of tobacco products to people under 18 are at the lowest level they have been in years, says a report being released today by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. USA Today.

[Don't give swine flu drugs to under-12s.](#)

Tuesday, August 11, 2009

Children under the age of 12 should not be given Tamiflu or Relenza, the two antiviral drugs that form the cornerstone of the government's fight against swine flu, because their side-effects outweigh any benefits, Oxford University researchers said yesterday. London Guardian, United Kingdom.

[See a related article: [Canada dismisses warning about flu drug](#)]

[Breast-feeding linked to lower cancer risk.](#)

Tuesday, August 11, 2009

There is new evidence that breast-feeding is associated with a lower incidence of breast cancer among a group of younger women who are at particularly high risk: those with breast cancer in the family. New York Times.

[Germ-killing chemical from soaps, toothpaste building up in dolphins.](#)

Tuesday, August 11, 2009

A new study found that one-third of the bottlenose dolphins tested off South Carolina and almost one-quarter of those tested off Florida carried traces of the antibacterial chemical triclosan in their blood. Now some scientists are calling for its removal from consumer products because it is building up in the ocean's food web. Environmental Health News.

[Study: Nurses at higher risk of variety of health problems.](#)

Monday, August 10, 2009

Nurses who are exposed to high levels of chemicals and drugs on the job are more likely to report having asthma, miscarriages and some cancers, according to a survey released Tuesday. Sun Journal, Lewiston, Maine.

[The melamine incident: Implications for international food and feed safety.](#)

Sunday, August 09, 2009

There is a need to strengthen collaboration between food safety authorities worldwide to efficiently exchange information, and to enable tracking and recalling of affected products in order to ensure food safety and protect public health. Environmental Health Perspectives.

[Lead: 7 tips for limiting exposure.](#)

Saturday, August 08, 2009

Lead exposure and poisoning is avoidable. Prevention is still the best option for protecting your health. Examiner.com.

[Cancer risk disparities between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic white populations: The role of exposure to indoor air pollution.](#)

Friday, August 07, 2009

Hispanics appear to be disproportionately affected by certain hazardous air pollutants from indoor and outdoor sources. Environmental Health Perspectives.

[See another news article: [Hispanics who move to U.S. face higher cancer rates](#)]

[Special report: A school without windows.](#)

Friday, August 07, 2009

Richmond residents face problems like violence, poverty and pollution, but a group of teachers and students in the city have another concern. They have been fighting to change something that is rarely discussed in U.S. schools: indoor air quality. New America Media.

[New findings spur EPA to rethink perchlorate regulation.](#)

Friday, August 07, 2009

The debate over perchlorate now moves to the U.S. EPA, which requested public comments this week on possible regulation of perchlorate in drinking water. The agency said it is particularly concerned about the possible impact of perchlorate on the health of very young children. Greenwire.

[Reduce fetal exposure to BPA and phthalates, experts say.](#)

Friday, August 07, 2009

With Health Canada recently banning plastic baby bottles made from bisphenol A and proposing to ban certain toys, the question arises: what about pregnant women and their fetuses, which are even more susceptible? Toronto Globe and Mail, Ontario.

[See related articles: [Health Canada studying effect of chemicals on infant genitals](#) and [Phthalates may increase risk of preterm births](#)]

[Tackling toxicology and environmental health.](#)

Thursday, August 06, 2009

As the new head of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, home to the National Toxicology Program, Linda Birnbaum says her priorities are low-dose effects, differential susceptibility, and science communication with the public. Science News.

[Traffic pollutants may fuel adult asthma.](#)

Thursday, August 06, 2009

A new study provides more evidence that breathing in traffic-related pollutants is unhealthy -- for kids and adults. Reuters.

[See a related article: [Limiting allergy triggers may cut kids' asthma risk](#)]

[New study links booze, cancer.](#)

Wednesday, August 05, 2009

People who consume, on average, more than one alcoholic drink daily face a significantly

higher risk of developing six types of cancer, according to sobering new Canadian research. Toronto Globe and Mail, Ontario.

[See a related article: [Drink blamed for oral cancer rise](#)]

[Rural well water linked to Parkinson's: California study implicates farm pesticides.](#)

Wednesday, August 05, 2009

Rural residents who drink water from private wells are much more likely to have Parkinson's disease, a finding that bolsters theories that farm pesticides may be partially to blame, according to a new California study. Environmental Health News.

[FDA: Arthritis drugs a cancer risk.](#)

Wednesday, August 05, 2009

Federal regulators added stronger warnings yesterday to a group of best-selling drugs [tumor necrosis factor blockers] used to treat arthritis and other inflammatory diseases, saying they can raise the cancer risk in children and adolescents. Associated Press.

[Insect repellent ingredient used by thousands of holidaymakers can cause children to fit.](#)

Wednesday, August 05, 2009

Insect repellents [containing DEET] used by millions of holidaymakers each year are potentially toxic and should not be used by children and pregnant women, scientists have warned. London Daily Mail, United Kingdom.

[Environmental health 101: What is nature-deficit disorder?](#)

Tuesday, August 04, 2009

Nature-deficit disorder names the link between behavioral problems (including obesity, loneliness, depression, attention problems and greater social isolation) and minimal time spent outside. Examiner.com.

[Diverse health and environmental coalition calls for sweeping changes in U.S. chemical safety law.](#)

Tuesday, August 04, 2009

A broad coalition of health and environmental organizations unveiled today a set of key requirements for reforming the nation's antiquated chemical safety law, the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). World-Wire.

[Firefighters face high cancer risk.](#)

Tuesday, August 04, 2009

Researchers at the University of Cincinnati said firefighters have a 100 percent higher risk of developing testicular cancer, a 50 percent higher risk for multiple myeloma and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and 26 percent increased risk for prostate cancer. San Diego 10News TV, California.

[Middle-aged smokers at higher risk of dementia.](#)

Tuesday, August 04, 2009

Middle-aged people who smoke, are diabetic or have high blood pressure are far more likely to suffer from dementia, research reveals today. London Guardian, United Kingdom.

[Anxiety, inattention, poor decisions increase in kids with higher lead levels.](#)

Tuesday, August 04, 2009

Higher blood lead levels in children were associated with specific learning and behavior changes, including more anxiety and deficits in planning, abstract thinking and determining appropriate behavior, finds this large study from India. Environmental Health News.

[See other articles about children and lead: [Lead-based consumer paint remains a global public health threat](#), [More D.C. kids had elevated lead than stated](#), [Parents told to dust more in lead hotspots](#) and [California criticizes police firing range in Redondo Beach](#)]

[Millions of children in U.S. found to be lacking Vitamin D.](#)

Tuesday, August 04, 2009

Millions of U.S. children have disturbingly low Vitamin D levels, possibly increasing their risk for bone problems, heart disease, diabetes and other ailments -- according the first national assessment of the crucial nutrient in young Americans. Washington Post.

[See a related article: [Low vitamin D levels linked to metabolic syndrome](#)]

[Perfluoropolymer degrades in decades, study estimates.](#)

Tuesday, August 04, 2009

The breakdown of the main fluorinated ingredient in stain repellants and paper coatings is a significant source of fluorinated compounds such as PFOA in the environment. PFOA remains in people's bodies for years and causes developmental and other adverse effects in animals. Environmental Science & Technology.

[Gases from chemicals are a potential health disaster.](#)

Monday, August 03, 2009

Do you love the "new" smell? That interior of a new car, a freshly painted room or a newly installed carpet? Experts are discovering that the "new-smell" chemicals you are breathing can be harmful to your health. Canwest News Service.

[Hair care industry moving toward greener alternatives.](#)

Monday, August 03, 2009

Several area stylists said natural and organic products work better and make hair healthier than most synthetic lines. Harrisburg Patriot-News, Pennsylvania.

[Tox21: New dimensions of toxicity testing.](#)

Monday, August 03, 2009

New tests using automated systems that assess how chemicals interact with cellular processes may generate more accurate assessments of risks to people than current approaches, largely dependent upon animals. But will it work, and will it be enough for safety assessments? Environmental Health Perspectives.

[Chemicals can turn genes on and off; new tests needed, scientists say.](#)

Monday, August 03, 2009

Each of us starts life with a particular set of genes, 20,000 to 25,000 of them. Now scientists are amassing a growing body of evidence that pollutants and chemicals might be altering those genes -- not by mutating them, but by sending subtle signals that silence them or switch them on at the wrong times. Last week a National Academies workshop examined the evidence and implications. Environmental Health News.

[Professor finds link in cancer, manganese.](#)

Sunday, August 02, 2009

A recent study by a Wake Forest University School of Medicine researcher has found that, like cholesterol, there may be a good kind -- airborne -- and a bad kind -- groundwater -- of exposure to the chemical element. Winston-Salem Journal, North Carolina.

[Mapping cancer.](#)

Saturday, August 01, 2009

In a unique public health research project, one of Maine's oldest mapping companies and its newest genetics institute are attempting to answer questions about how the natural environment, man made toxins, and genetic factors are linked to the state's highest-in-the-nation cancer rate. Bangor Daily News, Maine.

[See a related article about environmental health tracking in Oregon: [A map to better health](#)]

[Farmers, families could benefit from pilot project.](#)

Saturday, August 01, 2009

It's a pilot project called Farms to Food Banks. If it works, the project will have fed children Kentucky-grown food, fought obesity, taught nutrition and kept Kentucky family farms going all in one stroke. Lexington Herald-Leader, Kentucky.

[Accepted ozone levels impair healthy lungs.](#)

Friday, July 31, 2009

Exposure to atmospheric ozone levels currently considered safe under federal clean air regulations can significantly impair lung function in healthy individuals, researchers found. MedPage Today.

[Childhood radiation therapy ups breast cancer risk.](#)

Friday, July 31, 2009

The results of a study confirm that girls who undergo radiation for cancer in childhood have an increased long-term risk of developing breast cancer, regardless of their age at the time of treatment. Reuters Health.

[A clash of old and new scientific concepts in toxicity, with important implications for public health.](#)

Friday, July 31, 2009

We challenge the validity of assuming that high dose testing can be used to predict low dose effects for contaminants that behave like hormones. Environmental Health Perspectives.

[Oregon AG moves to block 'E-cigarette' sales.](#)

Friday, July 31, 2009

The Oregon Department of Justice filed two settlements Thursday that prevent two national travel store chains from selling "electronic cigarettes" in Oregon. The action is the first of its kind in the country. Bend KTVZ TV, Oregon.

[Death by mint oil: Natural pesticides.](#)

Friday, July 31, 2009

Increasingly, well-known insecticide manufacturers, retailers and even professional pest-control services are rolling out solutions derived from natural materials like animals, plants, bacteria and minerals, potentially safer than their synthetic counterparts. Wall Street Journal.

[HP delays toxic phase-out.](#)

Thursday, July 30, 2009

HP has delayed a planned phase-out of toxic chemicals [polyvinyl chloride (PVC), brominated flame retardants (BFRs) and other materials] from its computer products until 2011, citing a lack of suitable alternatives. GreenBiz.com.

[Environmental health 101: Are compact fluorescent light bulbs really better than incandescent?](#)

Thursday, July 30, 2009

The up side of compact fluorescent light bulbs is that they are more energy efficient than incandescent light bulbs of an equivalent brightness. However, mercury is an essential component of the compact fluorescent light bulb. Examiner.com.

[Mercury rising.](#)

Thursday, July 30, 2009

There are no active mercury mines in the United States today. Some of the mines were properly sealed and cleaned. Some are in the process of being cleaned up. Most have been abandoned without any remediation. According to the best estimates, there are 236 mercury mines in California. San Luis Obispo New Times, California.

[What's in your water?](#)

Thursday, July 30, 2009

Have you ever wondered what the difference is between tap and bottled water, and which one is better healthwise? Stroudsberg Pocono Record, Pennsylvania.

[Playgrounds: They're safer but still can be dangerous.](#)

Thursday, July 30, 2009

Playgrounds are much safer than they were 30 years ago. Playgrounds with rubber mulch have the lowest rate of injury. Some environmental groups, however, are concerned about the safety of rubber mulch, which can contain lead. USA Today.

[See a related article: [Toxicity of play sand worries parents](#)]

[Study finds pesticide link to childhood leukemia.](#)

Thursday, July 30, 2009

Patients with childhood leukemia have elevated levels of household pesticides in their urine, according to a new study by the Georgetown University Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. Agence France-Presse.

[See a related journal article: [Residential pesticides and childhood leukemia: A systematic review and meta-analysis](#)]

['BPA-free' bottles leach chemical: study.](#)

Thursday, July 30, 2009

Health Canada scientists have found bisphenol A leaching into liquid in plastic baby bottles marketed to parents as being free of the toxic chemical. Canwest News Service, Canada.

[See a related article with Health Canada's response: [Toxin amounts in baby bottles tiny: Health Canada](#) and two about government action on BPA and young children: [State warns on bottles with BPA](#) and [Congress to FDA: Prove bisphenol A safe, or ban it](#)]

[Beach pollution still nationwide problem.](#)

Wednesday, July 29, 2009

Raw sewage and other pollution continued to foul American beaches in 2008. For the fourth year in a row, more than 20,000 beach closing days were reported in the USA, according to a report released today by the Natural Resources Defense Council. USA Today.

[U.S. data on children called badly outdated.](#)

Wednesday, July 29, 2009

Serious shortcomings in national data, including an outdated federal measure of household poverty, are undermining the task of identifying and assisting America's most vulnerable children, according to a report issued Tuesday. Associated Press.

[Parents warned of teething medicine's dangers.](#)

Wednesday, July 29, 2009

Prompted by an emergency room visit of a 22-day-old baby for potassium bromide poisoning, the city health department is warning parents about Monell's Teething Cordial, or Cordial de Monell para la Dentición, a product from the Dominican Republic that is sold illegally in the United States. New York Times.

[Health experts: Using sunbeds can give you cancer.](#)

Wednesday, July 29, 2009

International cancer experts have moved sunbeds and other sources of ultraviolet radiation into the top cancer risk category, deeming them as deadly as arsenic and mustard gas. Associated Press.

[FDA finds little mercury risk in fillings.](#)

Wednesday, July 29, 2009

In a long-awaited and somewhat surprising ruling, the FDA declared yesterday that silver-colored dental fillings contain too little mercury to harm the millions of people - including young children - who've had cavities filled with them, and that only those allergic to mercury need to avoid them. Associated Press.

Many of the news articles above come from [Environmental Health News](#).

The Collaborative on Health and the Environment offers this information as a service but does not endorse any of the events, articles or announcements.

Companion bulletins are available for different audiences:

- For those interested in general children's environmental health: http://www.healthandenvironment.org/working_groups/childrens_health/bulletins
- For those interested in environmental health and learning and developmental disabilities: <http://www.iceh.org/LDDIbulletins.html>

While there is overlap with this bulletin, there are some events and announcements unique to those bulletins.

If you would like to join the Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE) and the Washington State Regional Group, please complete the application on the CHE website: <http://www.healthandenvironment.org/application> Joining CHE means receiving up to four email messages a month from the CHE National listserv. CHE costs nothing to join and the benefit is shared information and opportunities for further engagement, if you choose. Be sure to mark that you want to join the Washington State regional group at the bottom of the application.

Nancy Snow
Collaborative on Health and the Environment

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