

Environmental Health

The Vermont Department of Health has a central office located in Burlington on the beautiful shores of Lake Champlain. The Environmental Health Section, a section of the Division of Health Surveillance, includes the following programs: Environmental Epidemiology; Toxicology and Risk Assessment; Food and Lodging; Lead and Asbestos; Radiological Health, and Drinking Water. The fellow will be supervised by the State Epidemiologist for Environmental and Occupational Health and the Radiological Health Chief. The fellow will have the rare opportunity to develop comprehensive skills in environmental, occupational, and radiological health in an environmentally-progressive state.

Proposed projects and activities include:

1. Working with the food and lodging program the fellow will: analyze 10 years of restaurant inspection data; assist in the development of a food recall protocol; investigate food-borne illness outbreaks; develop and conduct an investigation to characterize bed bug infestations; assist in the development of regulations to define sanitary lodging conditions; and perform site visits of restaurants and lodging establishments.
2. Working with the radiological health program the fellow will enter and analyze 30 years of environmental sampling data taken from sites surrounding the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant. Vermont Yankee is one of the oldest operating nuclear power stations and presents a variety of opportunities to learn about the nuclear power industry as well as the relationship with the public health sector. Other opportunities with this program include: merging the environmental sampling data set with data sets on death certificates, birth certificates, and hospital discharges, to analyze potential exposure/outcome relationships; developing a field assessment tool to rapidly collect health data during an accident at the Vermont Yankee facility or other radiological or nuclear emergency (e.g. a dirty bomb detonation or transportation incident); touring the Vermont Yankee facility; and participating in Vermont Yankee emergency exercises.
3. Evaluating data collected from medical, dental, and veterinary x-ray facilities to identify trends in exposure, site inspection findings and implication for public and occupational health.
4. Working with the lead and asbestos program the fellow will develop regulations; evaluate proposed legislation; and provide support to data analysis and health education efforts.
- 5.. Working with the environmental epidemiology program the fellow will: assist in the evaluation of poison control center data and data obtained from other syndrome surveillance systems, following-up on particular cases that may signify an emergency public health event. Other opportunities will include: conducting environmental health assessments around contaminated sites (including Brownfield sites); providing epidemiological support to Vermont's HAZMAT team, assessing the health status of members of the public who may have been exposed to a hazardous material incident; analyzing a number of untapped data sources, evaluating the relationship between certain environmental exposures (poor air quality) and certain health outcomes (asthma or other respiratory illness).

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6. Working with the State Epidemiologist for Environmental and Occupational Health the fellow will assist in the development of an occupational health surveillance system. Other opportunities will include providing epidemiological support to Project Worksafe (the consultative arm of Vermont OSHA), including joining them on site visits of industries.

7. The fellow will also learn about a number of environmental health issues by participating in weekly technical assistance meetings where all current environmental or occupational health issues are discussed and learning about the functions of other state agencies that work on environmental issues.

Assignment Location: Burlington, VT

Primary Mentor: Austin Sumner, MD, MPH
State Epidemiologist for Environmental Health
Environmental and Occupational Health Specialist
Vermont Department of Health

Advanced Degrees: MD, Louisiana State University (1999)
MPH, University of Washington (2004)

Secondary Mentor: William Irwin, ScD
Deputy Director for Planning and Radiological
Health Chief
Vermont Department of Health

Advanced Degrees: ScD, University of Massachusetts
MS, University of Massachusetts