

CHURCH AND SOCIETY

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The Environment

Larry J. Gordon

Environmental health programs, by managing the environment, are designed to solve those environmental problems involving significant health hazards. Minimally, all should have a goal of "ensuring an environment that will confer optimal health on this and future generations," but many such programs should also relate to safety, comfort, and well-being if they are to be comprehensive effective, and not disposed to undesirable program fragmentation.

Environmental health programs are organized in a variety of institutional settings including health departments, labor departments, environmental protection agencies, and agriculture departments. All environmental health programs should have a mission of public protection undiluted by conflicting special interest groups.

A few examples of major environmental problems and an indication of their relative priority are a) Level I: population numbers and density; b) Level II: resource consumption, including energy, land, and other non-renewables, and C) Level III: air pollution; solid wastes; water pollution; food contaminants; environmental safety; environmental chemicals; noise pollution; ionizing radiation; water supply; and disease vectors, such as insects and other animals. Society has not yet authorized effective programs to deal adequately with the highest priority issues of over-population and resource consumption. Environmental health programs, therefore, are dealing with the by-products of the more basic environmental issues. Commonly accepted environmental health programs include:

a) Air pollution control -- to insure an air resource conducive to positive health, safety, comfort, and well-being, and which will not injure plants and animals,

- b) Food protection -- to assure that all citizens are adequately protected from unhealthy or unsafe food and food products.**
- c) Hazardous waste and toxic chemical management -- to assure that toxic products are managed so as to prevent health problems and minimize environmental¹ effects.**
- d) Housing conservation and rehabilitation -- to assist in assuring safe and healthful housing.**
- e) Water pollution control -- to assure safe and healthful water resources that protect health and the environment.**
- f) Water supply sanitation -- to assure drinking water adequate to protect public health.**
- g) Swimming-pool safety and sanitation -- to assure the safety and health aspects of swimming pools and bathing places.**
- h) Occupational health and safety -- to assure positive health and safety in all places of employment.**
- i) Vector control -- to control disease vectors that adversely affect human health or comfort.**
- j) Noise pollution control -- to prevent hazardous or annoying noise levels in residential, recreational, or commercial areas.**
- k) Environmental safety -- to reduce the possibility of accidents through proper planning, design, and construction practices.**
- l) Land-use -- to assure that land resources are planned and utilized so as to minimize environmental problems and prevent health and safety problems.**
- m) Radiation control -- to prevent unnecessary or unhealthy radiation exposure.**
- n) Solid waste management -- to assure that solid waste does not create health problems or have an undue impact on environmental quality.**
- o) Energy management -- to promote energy conservation measures and energy production from safe, renewable resources.**

Larry Gordon, past president of the American Public Health Association, recently resigned as the Deputy Secretary of the New Mexico Health and Environment

Department and now serves as Director of the Albuquerque Environmental Health and Energy Department. He is a member of the Council on Education for Public Health, the National Accreditation Council for Environmental Health Curricula, and the National Sanitation Foundation's Council of Public Health Consultants.