



A Day in the Life of a Public Health employee

Each April communities around the country join together to celebrate the many contributions of our local public health departments. Public health is a part of our everyday lives, from the water we drink and the air we breathe to the vaccines that help us stay healthy. Here is a glimpse of a Day in the Life of one dedicated Mid-Michigan District Health Department employee who proudly serves the residents of Montcalm County each and every day.

Meet Bryan

Name: Bryan Fowler, Registered Sanitarian

Occupation: Environmental Health Specialist

Employer: Mid-Michigan District Health Department, Montcalm Office



As an Environmental Health Specialist, I am called upon daily to deal with a wide variety of environmental health programs, such as public and residential well and septic system design and inspection, food service safety and inspection, and body art facility (tattoo shop) inspections, just to name a few.

I am available in the morning to answer and return calls from clients who may be inquiring on design criteria for a new well or septic system, or specifics on remodeling a restaurant. I also frequently receive phone calls from clients who need help interpreting results from a water quality sample collected from their well.

I then spend time evaluating site specifications and criteria for a new well and septic system. Once completed, I issue the permits. I try to place special emphasis on prioritizing the issuance of well permits for households that are our of water because you don't realize how much you use water until you don't have it.

During the late morning and throughout the remainder of the day, I spend my time interacting with clients in the field, educating them on the importance of how environmentally sensitive issues such as water quality, food safety and hygiene affect the health of the general public.

In the afternoon I conduct an inspection on newly constructed wells in the county. I inspect the installation of the pressure tank and the mechanisms associated with the well. I collect a bacteriological sample along with a partial chemistry sample, which are then sent to the State of Michigan's water testing lab. The water samples will be used to determine if the water in the well is safe. Once the water samples have been collected I head outside to measure the isolation distances from the well to potential contamination sources (septic tanks, drain fields, fuel storage, etc.) around the well.

Next on my agenda is to conduct a routine food service evaluation at a local restaurant. During my visit I conduct a risk-based evaluation of the facility. The risk-based evaluation is conducted every 6 months at each licensed restaurant in Montcalm County. To help minimize the potential of a food borne illness outbreak, I make sure to educate facility managers on proper food handling and food safety.

After dropping off the water sample bottles at the post office, I am off to complete one more inspection at a residence that has had a new septic system installed and is now ready for a final inspection. I will determine if the septic system was installed according to the requirements placed on the septic permit. I will measure the size and the depth of the septic system, along with verifying that proper plumbing fixtures are connected to the septic system. Measurements will be taken from nearby wells and surface water to determine proper isolation distances are being maintained. If the septic system meets the minimum requirements stated on the permit, the system is approved.

Before going home for the day, I return to the office to process paperwork, check emails and voice messages.