

Article 4.

Registrations of Environmental Health Specialists.

§ 90A-50. State Board of Environmental Health Specialist Examiners.

(a) There is hereby created a State Board of Environmental Health Specialist Examiners to register qualified environmental health specialists to practice within the State. Each registered sanitarian and registered sanitarian intern shall be a registered environmental health specialist or a registered environmental health specialist intern as applicable.

(b) It is the sole purpose of this Article to safeguard the health, safety, and general welfare of the public from adverse environmental factors and to register those environmental health professionals practicing as registered environmental health specialists or registered environmental health specialist interns who are qualified by education, training, and experience to work in the public sector in the field of environmental health within the scope of practice as defined in this Article. (1959, c. 1271, s. 2; 1973, c. 476, s. 128; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2; 2009-443, s. 1(b).)

§ 90A-51. Definitions.

The words and phrases defined below shall when used in this Article have the following meaning unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

- (1) Board. – The Board of Environmental Health Specialist Examiners.
- (2) Certificate of registration. – A document issued by the Board as evidence of registration and qualification to practice as a registered environmental health specialist or a registered environmental health specialist intern under this Article. The certificate shall bear the designation "Registered Environmental Health Specialist" or "Registered Environmental Health Specialist Intern" and show the name of the person, date of issue, serial number, seal, and signatures of the members of the Board.
- (2a) Environmental health associate. – A public health professional who meets the educational requirements under this Article, has attained specialized training, and reports directly to a registered environmental health specialist.
- (2b) Environmental health practice. – The provision of environmental health services, including administration, organization, management, education, enforcement, and consultation regarding environmental health services provided to or for the public. These services are offered to prevent environmental hazards and promote and protect the health of the public in the following areas: food, lodging, and institutional sanitation; on-site wastewater treatment and disposal; public swimming pool sanitation; childhood lead poisoning prevention; well permitting and inspection; tattoo parlor sanitation; and all other areas of environmental health requiring the delegation of authority by the Division of Public Health of the Department of Health and Human Services to State and local environmental health professionals to enforce rules adopted by the Commission for Public Health. The definition also includes local environmental health professionals enforcing rules of local boards of health for on-site wastewater systems and wells.
- (2c) Environmental health specialist. – A public health professional who meets the educational requirements under this Article and has attained specialized training and acceptable environmental health field experience effectively to

- plan, organize, manage, provide, execute, and evaluate one or more of the many diverse elements comprising the field of environmental health practice.
- (2d) Registered environmental health associate. – An environmental health associate registered in accordance with the provisions of this Article.
 - (3) Repealed by Session Laws 2009-443, s. 2, effective August 7, 2009.
 - (4) Registered environmental health specialist. – An environmental health specialist registered in accordance with the provisions of this Article.

For purposes of this Article the following are not included within the definition of "registered environmental health specialist" unless the person is working as an environmental health specialist:

- a. A person teaching, lecturing, or engaging in research.
 - b. A person who is a sanitary engineer, public health engineer, public health engineering assistant, registered professional engineer, industrial hygienist, health physicist, chemist, epidemiologist, toxicologist, geologist, hydrogeologist, waste management specialist, or soil scientist.
 - c. A public health officer or public health department director.
 - d. A person who holds a North Carolina license to practice medicine, veterinary medicine, or nursing.
 - e. Laboratory personnel when performing or supervising the performance of sanitation related laboratory functions.
- (5) Registered environmental health specialist intern. – A person who possesses the necessary educational qualifications as prescribed in G.S. 90A-53, but who has not completed the experience and specialized training requirements in the field of public health sanitation as required for registration. (1959, c. 1271, s. 1; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2; 1989, c. 545, s. 1; 2009-443, s. 2; 2011-145, s. 13.3(ii); 2023-90, s. 10.1(a), (b).)

§ 90A-52. Practice without certificate unlawful.

(a) In order to safeguard life, health and the environment, it shall be unlawful for any person to practice as an environmental health specialist or an environmental health specialist intern in the State of North Carolina or use the title "registered environmental health specialist" or "registered environmental health specialist intern" unless the person shall have obtained a certificate of registration from the Board. No person shall offer services as a registered environmental health specialist or registered environmental health specialist intern or use, assume or advertise in any way any title or description tending to convey the impression that the person is a registered environmental health specialist or registered environmental health specialist intern unless the person is the holder of a current certificate of registration issued by the Board.

(b) The following limited exceptions apply to the practice prohibitions in subsection (a) of this section:

- (1) A person may practice as an environmental health specialist intern for a period not to exceed two years from the date of the initial registration, provided the person has obtained a temporary certificate of registration from the Board.
- (2) A registered environmental health associate, directly reporting to a registered environmental health specialist, may perform all of the following duties in accordance with the rules adopted by the Commission for Public Health:

- a. Permitting and inspections of private water wells.
- b. Inspections of Category I food establishments, temporary food establishments, and limited food service establishments.
- c. Inspections of lodging establishments.
- d. Permitting and inspections of any Type II or Type III on-site wastewater systems, including system layouts and existing wastewater systems.
- e. Inspections of migrant housing.
- f. Inspections of private, public, and religious schools.
- g. Inspections of local confinement facilities.
- h. Inspections of residential care facilities. (1959, c. 1271, s. 12; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2; 2009-443, s. 3; 2023-90, s. 10.1(b).)

§ 90A-53. Qualifications and examination for registration as an environmental health specialist or environmental health specialist intern.

(a) The Board shall issue a certificate to a qualified person as a registered environmental health specialist or a registered environmental health specialist intern. A certificate as a registered environmental health specialist or a registered environmental health specialist intern shall be issued to any person upon the Board's determination that the person meets satisfies all of the following criteria:

- (1) Has made application to the Board on a form prescribed by the Board and paid a fee not to exceed one hundred dollars (\$100.00);
- (2) Is of good moral and ethical character and has signed an agreement to adhere to the Code of Ethics adopted by the Board;
- (3) Meets any of the following education and practice experience standards:
 - a. Graduated with a bachelor's degree or a postgraduate degree from a program that is accredited by the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council (EHAC).
 - b. Graduated with a bachelor's degree or a postgraduate degree in public health and has one or more years of experience in the field of environmental health practice. degree, has earned 45 quarter hours physical, biological, natural, life, or health sciences and has one
 - c. Graduated with a bachelor's degree or postgraduate degree in public health and has one or more years of experience in the field of environmental health practice. degree, has earned or 45 quarter hours physical, biological, natural, life, or health sciences and has one
 - d. Has worked five or more continuous years as a registered environmental health associate.
- (4) Has satisfactorily completed a course in specialized instruction and training approved by the Board in the practice of environmental health.
- (5) Repealed by Session Laws 2009-443, s. 4, effective August 7, 2009.
- (6) Has passed an examination administered by the Board designed to test for competence in the subject matters of environmental health sanitation. The examination shall be in a form prescribed by the Board and may be oral, written, or both. The examination for applicants shall be held annually or more frequently as the Board may by rule prescribe, at a time and place to be determined by the Board. A person shall not be registered if such person fails to

meet the minimum grade requirements for examination specified by the Board. Failure to pass an examination shall not prohibit such person from being examined at subsequent times and places as specified by the Board.

- (7) Has paid a fee set by the Board not to exceed the cost of purchasing the examination and an administrative fee not to exceed one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00).

(b) The Board may issue a certificate to a person serving as a registered environmental health specialist intern without the person meeting the full requirements for experience of a registered environmental health specialist for a period not to exceed two years from the date of initial registration as a registered environmental health specialist intern, provided, the person meets the educational requirements in G.S. 90A-53 and is in the field of environmental health practice. (1959, c. 1271, s. 6; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2; 1989, c. 545, s. 2; 1993, c. 233, ss. 1-3; 2009-443, s. 4; 2023-65, s. 9.1(a); 2023-90, s. 10.1(b).)

§ 90A-53.1. Qualifications for registration as an environmental health associate.

The Board shall issue a certificate to a qualified person as a registered environmental health associate upon the Board's determination that the person satisfies all of the following criteria:

- (1) Has made application to the Board on a form prescribed by the Board and paid a fee not to exceed one hundred dollars (\$100.00).
- (2) Is of good moral and ethical character and has signed an agreement to adhere to the Code of Ethics adopted by the Board.
- (3) Possesses one or more of the following educational qualifications:
 - a. Graduated with an associate, bachelor's, or postgraduate degree from a program that is accredited by the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council (EHAC) and satisfactorily completed general and specialized instruction and training in environmental health approved by the Department.
 - b. Graduated with an associate, bachelor's, or postgraduate degree and earned a minimum of 15 semester hours in the physical, biological, natural, life, or health sciences and satisfactorily completed general and specialized instruction and training in environmental health approved by the Department. (2023-90, s. 10.1(b).)

§ 90A-53.2. Revocation or suspension of a registered environmental health associate.

The authorization of a registered environmental health associate by the Department under the authority provided in G.S. 130A-4(b) may be suspended or revoked as set forth in rules adopted by the Department. (2023-90, s. 10.1(b).)

§ 90A-54: Repealed by Session Laws 2009-443, s. 5, effective August 7, 2009.

§ 90A-55. State Board of Environmental Health Specialist Examiners; appointment and term of office.

(a) Board Membership. – The Board shall consist of 12 members who shall serve staggered terms: the Secretary of Health and Human Services, or the Secretary's duly authorized representative, one public-spirited citizen, one environmental sanitation educator from an accredited college or university, one local health director, a representative of the Division of Public

Health of the Department of Health and Human Services, and seven practicing environmental health specialists who qualify by education and experience for registration under this Article, six of whom shall represent the Western, Piedmont, and Eastern Regions of the State as described more specifically in the rules adopted by the Board.

(b) Term of Office. – Each member of the State Board of Environmental Health Specialist Examiners shall be appointed by the Governor for a term of four years. As the term of each current member expires, the Governor shall appoint a successor in accordance with the provisions of this section. If a vacancy occurs on the Board for any other reason than the expiration of a member's term, the Governor shall appoint a successor for the remainder of the unexpired term. No person shall serve as a member of the Board for more than two consecutive four-year terms.

(c) The Environmental Health Section of the North Carolina Public Health Association, Inc., shall submit a recommended list of Board member candidates to the Governor for the Governor's consideration in appointments, except for the two representatives of the Department of Health and Human Services recommended by the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the local health director recommended by the North Carolina Local Health Directors Association.

(d) The Governor may remove an appointee member for misconduct in office, incompetency, neglect of duty, or other sufficient cause. (1959, c. 1271, s. 2; 1973, c. 476, s. 128; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2; 1989, c. 727, s. 23; 1997-443, s. 11A.32; 2005-386, s. 1.1; 2009-443, s. 6; 2011-145, s. 13.3(jj), (kk).)

§ 90A-56. Compensation of Board members; expenses; employees.

Members of the Board may receive compensation and be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with G.S. 93B-5. Notwithstanding G.S. 93B-5(a), the per diem for eligible Board members shall not exceed fifty dollars (\$50.00). The Board may employ necessary personnel for the performance of its functions and fix the compensation therefor, within the limits of funds available to the Board. The total expenses of the administration of this Article shall not exceed the total income therefrom and none of the expenses of said Board or the compensation or expenses of any officer thereof or any employee shall ever be paid or payable out of the treasury of the State of North Carolina; and neither the Board nor any officer or employee thereof shall have any power or authority to make or incur any expense, debt, or other financial obligation binding upon the State of North Carolina. (1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1011, s. 5; 2009-443, s. 7.)

§ 90A-57. Election of officers; meetings; regulations.

(a) The Board shall annually elect a chair, vice-chair, and a secretary-treasurer from among its membership. The officers may serve more than one term. The Board shall meet annually in the City of Raleigh, at a time set by the Board, and it may hold additional meetings and conduct business at any place in the State. Seven members of the Board shall constitute a quorum to do business. The Board may designate any member to conduct any proceeding, hearing, or investigation necessary to its purpose, but any final action requires a quorum of the Board. The Board is authorized to adopt such rules and regulations as may be necessary for the efficient operation of the Board.

(b) The Board shall have an official seal and each member shall be empowered to administer oaths in taking of testimony upon any matters pertaining to the function of the Board. (1959, c. 1271, s. 3; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2; 2009-443, s. 8.)

§ 90A-58. Applicability of Chapter 93B.

The Board shall be subject to the provisions of Chapter 93B of the General Statutes of North Carolina. (1959, c. 1271, s. 5; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2.)

§ 90A-59. Record of proceedings; register of applications; registry of registered environmental health specialists and environmental health specialist interns.

- (a) The Board shall keep a record of its proceedings.
- (b) The Board shall maintain records for registration, which shall include:
 - (1) The place of residence, name and age of each applicant;
 - (2) The name and address of the employer of each applicant;
 - (3) The date of application;
 - (3a) The date of employment;
 - (4) Complete information of educational and experience qualifications;
 - (4a) A signed Code of Ethics;
 - (5) The action taken by the Board;
 - (6) The serial number of the certificate of registration issued to the applicant;
 - (7) The date on which the Board reviewed and acted upon the application;
 - (7a) Information on continuing education required to maintain registration; and
 - (8) Such other pertinent information as may be deemed necessary by the Board.

(c) The Board shall maintain a current registry of all environmental health specialists and environmental health specialist interns in the State of North Carolina that have been registered in accordance with the provisions of this Article.

(d) Records of the Board are public records as defined in Chapter 132 of the General Statutes of North Carolina. However, college transcripts, examinations, and medical information submitted to the Board shall not be considered public records. (1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2; 1987, c. 282, s. 11; 2009-443, s. 9.)

§ 90A-60: Repealed by Session Laws 2009-443, s. 10, effective August 7, 2009.

§ 90A-61: Repealed by Session Laws 2009-443, s. 10, effective August 7, 2009.

§ 90A-62. Certification and registration of environmental health specialists registered in other states.

The Board may, without examination, grant a certificate as a registered environmental health specialist to any person who at the time of application, is registered as a registered environmental health specialist by a similar board of another state, district or territory whose standards are determined to be acceptable to the Board and comply with rules adopted by the Board. A fee to be determined by the Board and not to exceed one hundred dollars (\$100.00) shall be paid by the applicant to the Board for the issuance of a certificate under the provisions of this section. (1959, c. 1271, s. 9; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2; 2009-443, s. 11.)

§ 90A-63. Renewal of certificates.

(a) A certificate as a registered environmental health specialist, registered environmental health specialist intern, or registered environmental health associate issued pursuant to the provisions of this Article will expire on the thirty-first day of December of the current year and must be renewed annually on or before the first day of January. Each application for renewal must

be accompanied by a renewal fee to be determined by the Board, but not to exceed one hundred twenty-five dollars (\$125.00). However, for renewals postmarked before January 1 of each year, the renewal fee shall not exceed one hundred dollars (\$100.00).

(b) Registrations expired for failure to pay renewal fees may be reinstated under the rules and regulations adopted by the Board.

(c) A registered environmental health specialist, registered environmental health intern, or registered environmental health associate shall complete any continuing education requirements specified by the Board for renewal of a certificate. (1959, c. 1271, s. 10; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2; 1989, c. 545, s. 3; 2009-443, s. 12; 2023-90, s. 10.1(b).)

§ 90A-64. Suspensions and revocations of certificates.

(a) The Board shall have the power to refuse to grant, or may suspend or revoke, any certificate issued under provisions of this Article for any of the causes hereafter enumerated, as determined by the Board:

- (1) Fraud, deceit, or perjury in obtaining registration under the provisions of this Article;
- (2) Inability to practice with reasonable skill and safety due to drunkenness or excessive use of alcohol, drugs, or chemicals;
- (3) Unprofessional conduct, including a material departure from or failure to conform to the standards of acceptable and prevailing practice or the ethics of the profession;
- (4) Defrauding the public or attempting to do so;
- (5) Failing to renew certificate as required;
- (6) Dishonesty;
- (7) Incompetency;
- (8) Inexcusable neglect of duty;
- (9) Conviction in any court of a crime involving moral turpitude or conviction of a felony;
- (10) Failing to adhere to the Code of Ethics; or
- (11) Failing to meet qualifications for renewal.

(a1) A registered environmental health specialist or registered environmental health specialist intern who is convicted of a felony or a crime of moral turpitude shall report the conviction to the Board within 30 days from the date of the conviction. A felony conviction shall result in the automatic suspension of a certificate issued by the Board for 60 days until further action is taken by the Board. The Board shall immediately begin the hearing process in accordance with Article 3A of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. Nothing in this section shall preclude the Board from taking further action.

(b) The procedure to be followed by the Board when refusing to allow an applicant to take an examination, or revoking or suspending a certificate issued under the provisions of this Article, shall be in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes of North Carolina.

(c) The Board may conduct investigations for any complaints alleged or upon its own motion for any allegations or causes for disciplinary action under subsection (a) of this section. The Board may subpoena individuals and records to determine if action is necessary to enforce this Article.

(d) The Board and its members, individually, or its staff shall not be held liable for any civil or criminal proceeding when exercising in good faith its powers and duties authorized under the provisions of this Article. (1959, c. 1271, s. 11; 1973, c. 1331, s. 3; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2; 1987, c. 827, s. 1; 2009-443, s. 13.)

§ 90A-65. Representing oneself as a registered environmental health specialist, registered environmental health specialist intern, or registered environmental health associate.

A holder of a current certificate of registration may append to his or her name the letters, "R.E.H.S.," "R.E.H.S.I.," or "R.E.H.A." (1959, c. 1271, s. 12; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2; 2009-443, s. 14; 2023-90, s. 10.1(b).)

§ 90A-66. Violations; penalty; injunction.

Any person violating any of the provisions of this Article is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. The Board may appear in its own name in the superior courts in an action for injunctive relief to prevent violation of this Article and the superior courts have power to grant injunctions regardless of whether criminal prosecution has been or may be instituted as a result of violations. Actions under this section shall be commenced in the superior court district or set of districts as defined in G.S. 7A-41.1 in which the respondent resides or has a principal place of business or in which the alleged acts occurred. (1959, c. 1271, s. 13; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1274, s. 2; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 104; 1993, c. 539, s. 653; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 2021-84, s. 9.)

§ 90A-67. Code of Ethics.

The Board shall prepare and adopt, by rule, a Code of Ethics to be made available in writing to all registered environmental health specialists and registered environmental health specialist interns and each applicant for registration under this Article. All registered environmental health specialists and registered environmental health specialist interns shall adhere to the Code of Ethics adopted by the Board. Publication of the Code of Ethics shall serve as due notice to all certificate holders of its contents. (2009-443, s. 15.)

§ 90A-68. Reserved for future codification purposes.

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