



## Introduction to Environmental Health and Disaster Management

Wellington, New Zealand – 18 through 21 July 2016

*Dr Peter Davey, Griffith University; Tim Hatch, MPA REHS, Alabama Department of Public Health (USA),  
and Stephen Bell, Immediate Past President, New Zealand Institute of Environmental Health*

2016 EHDM Class Participants



The international course “An Introduction to Environmental Health and Disaster Management” was proudly delivered on 18 through 21 July 2016 in Wellington, New Zealand. This was the second International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH) endorsed disaster risk reduction initiative and a continuation of the global effort which began in 2012.

The course was delivered through a partnership between IFEH, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Environmental Health Association (USA), New Zealand Institute of Environmental Health and the Ministry of Primary Industries. There were 21 environmental health and disaster management professionals who

participated from across New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific.

The course had a particular focus on strategies for addressing environmental health issues before, during and after floods. A special session on the public health effects of volcanic eruptions and the ash they produce was included by Dr. Carol Stewart, Massey University. Other presentations were on drinking water, shelters, responder safety, food safety, wastewater, disease-causing vectors, solid waste, hazardous materials and disaster management systems. The role of environmental health in the responses to the Christchurch earthquake, the Gulf Oil Spill and recent Asia-Pacific cyclones were also covered. As a new and emerging environmental health issue, Dr. Peter Davey discussed climate change and how communicable diseases must be attended to as a critical need of citizens during and after disasters. His lecture on environmental health and disaster risk reduction was timely and pertinent to the overall goals of the course.

The course concluded with an exercise, which focused on the preparation and response activities to a flood threatening a nearby community. This allowed participants to identify what was to be undertaken when preparing for and responding to a local flood event. It also allowed participants to understand disaster response frameworks, challenges faced and tools for systematically addressing environmental health risks. The course evaluation found the content met all expectations and participants indicated they would recommend the training to other professionals. On average the awareness level of environmental health risks associated with a disaster increased by 21%. Participants indicated they would use the concepts covered in their disaster management activities.

The course could not have been successful the interaction of the participants. A special thank you goes to Chris Hewins and Carol Stewart for their participation and presentations. The course was delivered by Dr. Peter Davey (Griffith University), Tim Hatch (IFEH; Alabama Department of Public Health (USA)), and Stephen Bell, Immediate Past President of NZIEH. As part of continuing to implement its disaster risk reduction initiative, IFEH plans to work with CDC, NEHA, Griffith University and its other partner organizations to continue to deliver more courses in New Zealand, Australia, Europe, India, Indonesia and Jamaica in the coming months. For further information please visit [www.ifeh.org](http://www.ifeh.org).