BOH Adopts New Fee Schedule and Welcomes New Member

A 2009 fee schedule for the Public Health Department was adopted by the Board of Health (BOH) at the November meeting. One change in the newly adopted fee schedule is an increase in the amount of family income allowed for eligibility to sliding fees for critical services such as routine immunizations. “The increase in allowed income will be very helpful to families that might be struggling with finances during this economic crisis,” said Administrative Assistant Candi Blackford. The Public Health Department operates on a cost recovery basis, and seeks to minimize profit or loss. On another note, the December BOH meeting welcomed Paul Jewell, County Commissioner District #1. Jewell defeated the sitting commissioner, Linda Huber, in the November elections and took office on November 26. All three county commissioners serve on the BOH, and are joined by two additional members who are appointed for three year terms.

Board of Health Advisory Committee

The Board of Health Advisory Committee (BOHAC) discussed a draft version of an updated Camps and Parks program policy and inspection form at the October meeting. BOHAC had a few suggestions for the Health Department, but were pleased with the revisions overall. BOHAC often gives the Health Department guidance on policy decisions. This allows the community to have input into the public health work that is done in Kittitas County. Other work that was discussed with BOHAC included a review of the school inspections conducted during the 2007-2008 school year and an upcoming proposed immunization change for daycare entry.

Environmental Health Moves to Nanum Street Office

Environmental Health (EH) staff began moving from the Permit Center, shared with Public Works and Community Development Services, to the main Public Health office on December 12. The main Public Health office is located at 507 N Nanum St., Suite 102. Business that was conducted at the Permit Center should now be brought to the Nanum Street location, including applications for permits, inspection or evaluation requests, EH fees, water samples, and records requests. Phone and fax numbers for the EH front desk and all EH staff will remain the same. For more information contact Krisly Walker at (509) 933-8261.

A Note from the Administrator, Continued

(Continued from page 1) the department’s Quality Improvement Leadership Team, program managers, and staff who work in the programs that participated in the surveys during 2008. I would like to encourage those accessing any of the services offered by Kittitas County Public Health Department to those receiving an inspection by a Public Health staff member to complete our online customer satisfaction survey on our website at www.co.kittitas.wa.us/health/survey.asp at any time to help us improve the way we work or call us directly at (509) 962-7515. Kittitas County Public Health Department staff are committed to providing the highest quality services and to continuously improving programs and services. Cathy Bambrick
Free Hepatitis C Testing for High Risk Individuals

Individuals who have been at high risk of contracting Hepatitis C anytime during their life may be able to get tested for free thanks to a grant from Washington State Department of Health. People may be considered high-risk if they have ever been an injection drug user, received kidney dialysis, or received tattoos from an unclean facility, among other things. “This is a great opportunity for people to find out their status. I hope people take advantage of it,” said Julia Karns, Community Outreach Worker. Tests have been given so far, with three confirmed as positive. For information contact Julia Karns at (509) 962-7028.

Public Health to Join Health Information Exchange

Kittitas County Public Health Department will be joining many local medical providers and the Kittitas Valley Community Hospital (KVCH) emergency room as users of a health information exchange network, thanks to financial support from KVCH and a recently funded grant from the National Association of City and County Health Officials. The goal of public health inclusion in this network is to allow rapid communication of urgent events to local medical providers, and to allow primary care physicians access to information about services received from the Health Department.

For more info call (509) 962-7515.

HIV/AIDS and Hep. C

The process of transferring several programs to Community Health of Central Washington was initiated in early 2008 based on an economic forecast which predicted a decrease in new building. New building is a major source of revenue for Public Health due to fees associated with on-site sewage system approvals and inspections (see story on page 4, “Programs Move…”). The economic forecast has since shown to be correct and, despite the transfer of these programs, predicted expenses were much greater than projected revenue for 2009. This led to the difficult decision to lay off four employees of the Health Department while maintaining as many of the important daily functions as possible. Payroll costs account for about 70% of the departmental budget.

The Kittitas County Board of Commissioners directed the Health Department to eliminate two management level positions, one administrative support staff position, and one program level staff position that was eliminated was the only staff member working in this program. Activities such as the school sealant program will continue, organized by the remaining administrative support staff. However, some services such as dental clinics at the KCPHD office can no longer be provided by paid staff.

The overall budget for the 2009 fiscal year is just over $1.65 million, with revenue offsetting expenses so no profit is made. The top three revenue sources are state and federal grants (45%), environmental health fees (22%), and Kittitas County contributions (15%).

The goal of public health inclusion in this network is to allow rapid communication of urgent events to local medical providers, and to allow primary care physicians access to information about services received from the Health Department.

For more info call (509) 962-7515.
West Nile Virus Confirmed in Kittitas County Horse

During 2008 there were two humans, 41 horses, and 22 birds that tested positive for WNV statewide. Most infections happen during times of high mosquito activity; mosquitoes are the vector that transmit the disease to other animals or people. “The best way to protect your horses is to have them vaccinated against WNV early each mosquito season,” said Kodi Still, Environmental Health Specialist.

To protect yourself and your family you can install or repair window and door screens, eliminate standing water where mosquitoes can lay eggs, and use mosquito repellent, lines, on-site sewage systems, and buildings. In this new process, to begin January 1, 2009, property owners planning to build a well must submit a well site plan before receiving a building permit. The fee for plan submission and review by the Health Department especially during early morning and evening hours.

For more info call (509) 962-7698.

Mobile/ Volunteer Clinics

Food Safety

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Drinking Water

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PUBLIC HEALTH CONNECTION

New Process Implemented for Well Siting

A new process and fee were approved by the Board of Health and the Board of County Commissioners after two public hearings. The new process and fee will allow for Health Department staff to review well site plans prior to the drilling of wells.

Chlamydia Cases Up in 2008, Better Reporting?

More than three times the number of cases of chlamydia were reported in 2008 than in 2007. Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that is treated with antibiotics. The increase in the number of reports could be due to better reporting rather than an increase in cases; Kittitas County began participating in the Expedited Partner Therapy program in early 2008.

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Trainings Held for Teens Against Tobacco Use (TATU)

TATU is a peer education program where Health Department staff train middle school and high school students about the dangers of tobacco use and the students give presentations relaying the information to their peers. Trainings have been led by a new staff member, Health Educator.

Programs Move to Community Health of Central Washington

Community Health of Central Washington (CHCW) will take over the programs for WIC, First Steps, and Children with Special Health Care Needs on January 1, 2009. All staff of these programs will be leaving Kittitas County employ to join the CHCW team to offer these services.

Kasey Knutson, who joined the Health Promotion team in October. A total of 69 students were trained between October and December. For more information contact Kasey Knutson at (509) 962-7090.

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More complaints about trash are being reported to Public Health and Code Enforcement than ever before. Only 46 complaints were received in all of 2007; the total for 2008 was 139.

For more information contact Kasey Knutson at (509) 962-7090.

**Dramatic Increase in Trash Complaints Since 2007**

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**On Site Sewage Permits**

- New 49
- Existing 69
- Maintenance Complaints 78
- Permit Renewals 220
- New Permits Issued 468
- Inspections Performed 28
- Trash Complaints 139
- Incidents 46
- Total 420

**Programs Move to Community Health of Central Washington**

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**Medicaid Nutritional Therapy**

- New Referrals 0
- Returning Patients 0

**Children with Special Health Care Needs**

- Established Clients 76
- Last or Closed Files 9
- New Clients 22
- Home Visits 17
- Office Visits 3
- Early Intervention Program 6

**Zoonotics and Vector**

- Animal Bites/Complaints 18
- Rabies – Animals Tested 0
- Quarantine Required 3
- Dead Birds Collected/Mailed 0
- Mosquito Colonies Clustered 0
- Dead Bird Phone Calls 0

**Sewage Systems**

- Complainants 3
- Inspections 1
- Total 4

**Water Quality**

- Complainants 2
- Inspections 1
- Total 2

**Soil Logs**

- Complaints 1
- Total 1

**Realtor Requests**

- New 22
- Existing 22
- Total 44

**Medical Nutritional Therapy**

- New Referrals 0
- Returning Patients 0

**Environmental Health**

- Soil Logs: Long and Short 4
- Final Re-inspections 12
- Permit Approvals 11

**Appointments**

- New 14
- Total 14

**Complaints**

- New 14
- Total 14

**Remitters**

- New 14
- Total 14

**Public Health Connection**

- More complaints about trash are being reported to Public Health and Code Enforcement than ever before.
- Only 46 complaints were received in all of 2007; the total for 2008 was 139.
- James Risdal, Environmental Health Specialist, attributes the increase in the number of trash complaints to the recent economic downturn. “People are trying to save money by taking their own garbage to the transfer station. This means they are holding it at their homes for longer periods of time,” said Risdal. Accumulation of garbage can attract animals that are vectors of human illnesses so it is important that trash is cleaned up.

- Other situations that have led to complaints are remitters leaving town and leaving their landlords holding the bag, literally. This is what happened at the house shown in the before and after pictures below.
- To register a trash complaint or for more information call (509) 962-7698.