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AB-1288 Registered environmental health specialists. (2025-2026)

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Assembly Bill No. 1288

CHAPTER 297

An act to amend Sections 106615, 106625, 106635, 106665, 106670, 106675, 106680, 106685, and 106690 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to public health.

[Approved by Governor October 03, 2025. Filed with Secretary of State October 03, 2025.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1288, Addis. Registered environmental health specialists.

Existing law provides for the certification of registered environmental health specialists by the State Department of Public Health and establishes application, examination, and renewal fees for this certification. Existing law prescribes educational requirements for the registration of an environmental health specialist and requires all basic science coursework to be equal to what is acceptable in an approved environmental health degree program. Existing law provides that only a person who meets those educational and experience requirements is eligible for admission to the environmental health specialist examination. Existing law prohibits an applicant who fails to pass the written examination twice from taking the examination additional times unless specified time periods have elapsed. Existing law prohibits a person from taking the examination more than once in a 2-year period. Existing law requires the department to maintain a current registry of all registered environmental health specialists and environmental health specialist trainees in the state.

Existing law defines the scope of practice for a registered environmental health professional to include, but not be limited to, the prevention of environmental health hazards and the promotion and protection of the public health and the environment in specified areas, including, among others, food protection, housing, and hazardous materials management. Existing law authorizes a local health department to employ a registered environmental health specialist to enforce public health laws, as specified. Existing law authorizes an environmental health specialist trainee to work under the supervision of a registered environmental health specialist for a period not to exceed 3 years. Existing law defines "environmental health specialist trainee" as a person who possesses a bachelor's degree, as specified, and who is engaged in an approved environmental health training plan. Existing law requires an environmental health training plan to include specified elements.

This bill would instead prohibit an applicant from being reexamined for 90 days after failing to pass the written examination. The bill would revise the educational requirements for the registration of an environmental health specialist, as specified, and would delete the requirement that basic science coursework be equal to what is acceptable in an approved environmental health degree program. This bill would extend the period of required supervision to instead not exceed 5 years. The bill would include body art and medical waste in the scope of practice of registered environmental health specialists and would revise the environmental health training plan elements, as specified. The bill would require the department to make its registry of registered specialists and trainees publicly available on its internet website within 90 days of the administration of an exam.

Existing law requires an Environmental Health Specialist Registration Committee to be appointed to advise and to make recommendations to the department. Existing law prescribes the membership of the committee, including 2 members with

experience as local directors of environmental health, as specified, 2 members from environmental health faculty from California universities and colleges, 2 public members who have not been engaged in the field of environmental health in the 5 years preceding their appointment, and the Chief of the Environmental Planning and Local Health Services Branch, who serves as executive officer in a nonvoting role. Existing law prohibits a committee member from serving no more than 2 successive terms and requires a committee member to serve until the appointment and qualification of their successor or until one year after their term has expired, whichever occurs first.

This bill would instead make the State Environmental Health Director serve as the executive officer of the committee and would revise the committee membership, as specified. The bill would delete the prohibition on a committee member serving more than 2 consecutive terms. The bill would delete the requirement that a committee member serve until one year after the expiration of their term. The bill would make clarifying technical changes to the terminology used in those and related provisions to distinguish local directors of environmental health from the State Environmental Health Director.

Existing law requires the committee to meet at least twice annually and defines a quorum for these purposes as 6 members of the committee. Existing law requires the committee to keep a record of its proceedings.

This bill would require the committee to meet at least quarterly, in person or virtually, and would redefine a quorum of the committee to mean a simple majority of the filled committee seats. The bill would authorize the chairperson to cancel a committee meeting, as specified. The bill would also require the committee to keep a record of its meetings.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 106615 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

106615. For purposes of this article, the following definitions apply unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

- (a) "Department" means the State Department of Public Health.
- (b) "Committee" means the Environmental Health Specialist Registration Committee.
- (c) "Registered environmental health specialist" means an environmental health professional educated and trained within the field of environmental health who is registered in accordance with the provisions of this article.
- (d) "Environmental health specialist trainee" means a person who meets both of the following requirements:
 - (1) Possesses a minimum of a bachelor's degree, including 30 semester units of basic sciences, from a department-approved educational institution or an educational institution of collegiate grade listed in the directory of accredited institutions of postsecondary education compiled by the American Council on Education but who has not completed the specific coursework and experience requirements in the field of environmental health as required by Section 106660 for registration.
 - (2) Is engaged in an approved environmental health training plan.
- (e) "Scope of practice in environmental health" means the practice of environmental health by registered environmental health specialists in the public and private sectors within the meaning of this article and includes, but is not limited to, organization, management, education, enforcement, consultation, and emergency response for the purpose of prevention of environmental health hazards and the promotion and protection of the public health and the environment in the following areas: food protection; housing; institutional environmental health; land use; community noise control; recreational swimming areas and waters; electromagnetic radiation control; solid and liquid waste and hazardous materials management; underground storage tank control; onsite septic systems; vector control; drinking water quality; water sanitation; emergency preparedness; body art; medical waste; and milk and dairy sanitation pursuant to Section 33113 of the Food and Agricultural Code. Activities of registered environmental health specialists shall be regulated by the department upon the recommendation of the committee.
- (f) "Certificate of registration" means a signed document issued by the department as evidence of registration and qualification to practice as a registered environmental health specialist under this article. The certificate shall bear the designation "registered environmental health specialist" and shall show the name of the person, date of issue, registration number, and seal.
- (g) "Experience requirement" means on-the-job training and experience, as stated in this article, that all environmental health specialist trainees shall complete prior to obtaining eligibility for the environmental health specialist examination.
- (h) "Approved environmental health training plan" means a training program in an organization that plans to utilize environmental health specialist trainees and has a copy of its training plan on file with the department that conforms with the requirements of Section 106665 and that has been approved by the committee.

(i) "Examination" means a written professional examination prescribed by the department, administered in person or online, for registration in accordance with this article.

SEC. 2. Section 106625 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

106625. The governing body of a local health department may employ on a full-time basis one or more registered environmental health specialists, each of whom shall be a registered environmental health specialist as provided for in this article, for the purpose of the enforcement of statutes related to public health, the regulations of the department, and any local ordinances of a local health department that relate to activities pursuant to subdivision (e) of Section 106615. However, a person who is known as an environmental health specialist trainee may be employed to work under the supervision of a registered environmental health specialist, until the trainee is qualified by examination pursuant to Section 106670, for a period that shall not exceed five years. Prior to employment, the trainee shall have a current evaluation letter from the department stating that the education qualifications specified in Section 106660 have been met.

SEC. 3. Section 106635 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

106635. (a) The requirements for registration of environmental health specialists shall be a minimum of a bachelor's degree from a department-approved educational institution or an educational institution of collegiate grade listed in the directory of accredited institutions of postsecondary education compiled by the American Council on Education.

(b) A transcript shall demonstrate both of the following:

(1) Basic science coursework taken from a department-approved educational institution in accordance with Section 106640 or an educational institution of collegiate grade listed in the directory of accredited institutions of postsecondary education compiled by the American Council on Education.

(2) Basic science coursework, as follows:

| Basic Requirements | Experience | Training |
|--|------------|-------------|
| I. 30 semester or 45 quarter basic science units. Three of the required basic science courses shall include a laboratory. General Chemistry General Physics or Organic Chemistry General Microbiology General Biological Science Calculus or College Algebra | 18 months | 600 hrs. |
| II. 45 semester or 68 quarter basic science units. Three of the required basic science courses shall include a laboratory. General Chemistry Organic Chemistry General Physics General Microbiology General Biological Science Calculus or College Algebra | one year | 450 hrs. |
| III. 30 semester or 45 quarter basic science units. Three of the required basic science courses shall include a laboratory. | 9 months | 300 hrs. |

General Chemistry

General Physics or Organic Chemistry

General Microbiology

General Biological Science

Calculus or College Algebra

plus

Three semester or four quarter unit
courses in each of the following:

Epidemiology

Statistics

Public Administration or Environmental Health Adminis-
tration and;

10 semester or 15 quarter units in environmental health
science, including one or more of the following:

water quality, waste management, food and consumer
protection, housing and institution sanitation, vector control, recreational health, air quality, milk and dairy products, occupational health,
electromagnetic radiation, noise
control, toxicology, soil science, or land use development.

| | | |
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| IV. 45 semester or 68 | 6 months | 200 |
| quarter | | hrs. |

basic science units, including the following:

Three of the following required basic
science courses shall include a
laboratory:

General Chemistry

Organic Chemistry

General Physics

General Microbiology

General Biological Science

Calculus or College Algebra

plus

Three semester or four quarter
unit courses in each of the following:

Epidemiology

Statistics

Public Administration or Environmental Health Adminis-
tration and;

10 semester or 15 quarter units in

Environmental Health Science, including one or more of
the following:

water quality, waste management, food and consumer
protection, housing and institution sanitation, vector control, recreational health, air quality, milk and dairy products, occupational health,
electromagnetic radiation, noise control, toxicology, soil science, or land use development.

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| V. Possess a minimum of | None | None |
| a bachelor's degree | required | required |
| in environmental health from a | | |
| National Environmental Health Science | | |
| & Protection Accreditation Council | | |

(EHAC) approved institution or an institution approved by the committee, which includes:
One year of lecture and laboratory coursework in each of the following:

General Chemistry

General Physics

General Biological Science, and

One semester course in:

Calculus or College Algebra

Organic Chemistry

General Microbiology with Laboratory

Public Administration or Environmental Health Administration

Epidemiology

Statistics

Field Orientation Course in Environmental Health

Fifteen semester units of environmental health science courses selected from:

water quality, waste management, food and consumer protection, housing and institution sanitation, vector control, recreational health, air quality, milk and dairy products, occupational health, electromagnetic radiation, noise control, toxicology, soil science, or land use development.

(c) (1) For purposes of this section, "basic sciences" include life sciences, natural sciences, physical sciences, and health sciences.

(2) Social science courses, such as sociology or psychology, shall not count toward the basic science requirements.

SEC. 4. Section 106665 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

106665. An approved environmental health training plan shall include program elements in the training, duration of training, and types of training.

(a) Program elements, duration of training, and experience are as follows:

(1) All environmental health specialist trainees shall complete a basic training period in an approved program. The training period shall include training in at least three of the following primary elements:

(A) Food safety.

(B) Solid waste.

(C) Liquid waste.

(D) Water quality.

(E) Housing and institutions.

(F) Recreational health.

(G) Body art.

(H) Hazardous materials or other Certified Unified Program Agency elements.

Additional training content may include any other primary element or any of the following secondary elements: air sanitation, safety and accident prevention, land development and use, disaster sanitation, radiation, milk and dairy products, noise control, occupational health, medical waste, and vector control, including rabies and animal disease control.

(2) Training in each of the three selected primary elements shall not be less than 20 percent of the total required training hours. Time spent in the remaining primary and secondary elements shall be not less than 40 percent of the total required training

hours. The employer shall designate the methods, elements, and types of training or experience for the remaining part of the time required for entrance to the registered environmental health specialist examination as specified in Section 106670. The specified training may be cumulative and scheduled at the discretion of the employing agency over this period.

(3) The training may be accomplished by assignments chosen by the employing agency and under the supervision of a registered environmental health specialist.

(4) For environmental health specialist trainees requiring more than one year of experience, the additional experience will be in one or more elements of environmental health listed in this section and may be outside of a local environmental health program.

(5) Training and experience gained working for a governmental or a nonprofit entity, or both, may be counted toward the first-year training experience requirement if the training and experience is determined by the department to be equivalent to what would be gained in a local environmental health jurisdiction.

(b) Types of training:

The training program shall be integrated into the environmental health specialist trainee's job assignment and shall include the items described in paragraphs (1) and (2) and may include the items described in paragraphs (3), (4), and (5):

(1) A minimum of 20 hours per month of field instruction with direct supervision by a registered environmental health specialist for the first six months of employment. The total minimum requirement in this area shall be 150 hours.

(2) Independent time with adequate supervision and guidance.

(3) Office training with pretesting and posttesting.

(4) Lectures.

(5) Adequate office time to review and study.

(c) Requirements for certification of training:

(1) Environmental health specialist trainees shall receive their training from the department or agency that has a training plan approved by the committee.

(2) A log for the certification of the environmental health specialist trainee shall be maintained by the local director or their designee.

(A) A log covering elements and hours spent of all training shall be kept by the environmental health specialist trainees and verified by the trainer or supervisor.

(B) Short narrative reports or copies of the monthly schedule of the environmental health specialist trainee's training and progress shall be submitted by the training coordinator to the local director every month throughout the traineeship.

(C) The local director, or their designee, shall review the trainee's records on a monthly basis and shall certify on a quarterly basis that the records of training are accurate.

(D) The local director, or their designee, shall notify the department within 30 days of the date an environmental health specialist trainee is hired or terminated.

(E) Copies of the environmental health specialist trainee's log, as well as the narrative reports or copies of monthly schedules, shall be retained in the personnel file of the environmental health specialist trainee for at least one year after the environmental health specialist trainee successfully completes the registered environmental health specialist examination.

(3) When an environmental health specialist trainee completes the training program, the local director shall forward certification to the department. This certification shall include the program areas, length of time, dates for the areas of training, and a statement that the environmental health specialist trainee followed the approved training plan.

(d) Those jurisdictions that cannot provide the required training elements within their jurisdictions shall initiate a program of training exchange with another jurisdiction that has an approved training program.

(e) For purposes of this section, "local director" means a local director of environmental health or the director's designee.

SEC. 5. Section 106670 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

106670. (a) On and after January 1, 1989, only a person who meets the educational and experience requirements as established under Section 106635 shall be eligible for admission to examination for registration as an environmental health specialist.

(b) The professional examination shall be prescribed by the department with the concurrence of the committee, and a passing score on the examination shall be required prior to registration.

(c) An applicant who fails to pass the written examination shall not be eligible to be reexamined until 90 days have elapsed from the date of the previous examination. Reapplication and reexamination shall be made by submitting a new application with the required fee.

SEC. 6. Section 106675 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

106675. (a) (1) An Environmental Health Specialist Registration Committee shall be appointed to advise and to make recommendations to the department with respect to, and to take other actions as described in this article for the establishment of rules and regulations necessary to ensure, the proper administration and enforcement of the registration of environmental health specialists whose duties in public health and environmental health require knowledge and skills in the physical, biological, and environmental health sciences and whose performance of professional duties is necessary for the promotion of life, health, and the well-being of the public.

(2) The members of the former Sanitarian Registration Certification Committee shall serve as members of the new committee until the expiration of their terms.

(b) The committee shall consist of the State Environmental Health Director, or their designee, who shall serve as executive officer, but who shall not vote, and the following 10 members who are residents of the state:

(1) Two members appointed by the State Environmental Health Director from the California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health who shall be environmental health specialists with at least two years of experience as local directors of environmental health in this state.

(2) Three members appointed by the State Environmental Health Director, each of whom shall be a qualified, practicing environmental health specialist registered in California for a period of five or more years. For purposes of this subdivision:

(A) One member shall be employed in the public sector at the time of appointment.

(B) One member shall be employed in the private sector at the time of appointment.

(C) One member shall be from the California Environmental Health Association.

(3) One member appointed by the State Environmental Health Director from the California Conference of Local Health Officers.

(4) Two members appointed by the State Environmental Health Director from faculty of California universities and colleges with curricula leading to a degree in environmental health or public health with at least one from environmental health.

(5) Two public members who are not currently within the field of environmental health or the profession regulated by the committee of which they are members. The Senate Rules Committee shall appoint one public member and the Speaker of the Assembly shall appoint one public member.

SEC. 7. Section 106680 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

106680. An appointment shall be for a four-year term. A committee member may serve successive terms. Each member shall serve on the committee until the appointment and qualification of their successor. A vacancy occurring prior to the expiration of the terms shall be filled by appointment for the unexpired term. The director, upon the recommendation of the committee by a two-thirds vote, may remove an appointee member for misconduct in office, incompetency, neglect of duty, or other sufficient cause after due notice and hearing.

SEC. 8. Section 106685 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

106685. (a) The members of the committee shall, annually, in the month of April, elect from their number a chairperson and a secretary.

(b) The committee shall meet at least quarterly, in person or virtually, and at other times as it may determine, to evaluate applications for registration as environmental health specialists, review and update examinations and transcript review guidelines, prepare and recommend reports relative to the administration of this article, and transact all other business as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this article.

(c) The committee may hold informal hearings for denial, suspension, refusal to renew, and revocation of registrations for environmental health specialists as provided in Section 106715.

(d) The committee may hold informal hearings for the purpose of administrative items, make the necessary determinations in conjunction therewith, and issue recommendations to the department consistent with the findings. The department may designate the committee to appoint one or more of its members to serve as a hearing agent. The agent or representatives shall conduct hearings in the manner provided by law.

(e) A simple majority of the filled committee seats shall constitute a quorum and special meetings of the committee shall be called by the executive officer upon written request by two members of the committee.

(f) The members of the committee shall serve without compensation but shall receive their actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties on the committee. However, no funds shall be disbursed for those purposes without the prior approval of the department.

(g) The chairperson may cancel a meeting if, in their discretion, there is insufficient business to warrant convening a scheduled meeting.

SEC. 9. Section 106690 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

106690. (a) The committee shall keep a record of its meetings and proceedings.

(b) The department shall maintain a register of all applications for registration and retain examination papers and records pertaining thereto for a length of time to be determined by the department.

(c) (1) The department shall maintain a current registry of all registered environmental health specialists and all environmental health specialist trainees in the state.

(2) The department shall make the registry required in paragraph (1) publicly available on its internet website within 90 days of the administration of an examination.

(d) Individuals registered under this article are responsible for ensuring that the department has a current mailing address for them.