

# **NEHA Credentialing Handbook**

Guide to Policies and Procedures for  
NEHA's Credentialing Programs



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**NEHA's Mission is "to advance the environmental health and protection professional for the purpose of providing a healthful environment for all."**

In pursuit of its mission, NEHA sponsors a variety of credentialing programs. Today, the association offers nine national credential programs: the Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS), the Certified Environmental Health Technician (CEHT), the Registered Hazardous Substances Professional (RHSP), the Registered Hazardous Substances Specialist (RHSS), the Registered Environmental Technician (RET), the Healthy Homes Specialist (HHS), the Certified Professional of Food Safety (CP-FS), and the Certified Installer Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (CIOWTS) – *Basic and Advanced Levels*.

Congratulations on taking a step towards becoming NEHA credentialed. Holding a NEHA credential benefits not only you as an individual in proving your competency and capability in the field of environmental health and protection, but also benefits the community and employers. It is through the device of a credential that a community gains assurance that the workforce handling this responsibility is *competent, properly trained, and equipped to carry out their responsibilities*. The credential serves to verify that a professional has achieved what is perceived as a baseline level of competence in this complicated subject area of environmental health. By having credentialed people on their staff, employers are assured of having a workforce of employees that are reasonably capable of handling whatever challenges their job responsibilities and their employer present.

## **Description of Each NEHA Credential**

**Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS)** - The NEHA REHS/RS is the premier credential available to environmental health field professionals. Individuals holding the REHS/RS credential show competency in environmental health issues, direct and train personnel to respond to routine or emergency environmental situations, and frequently provide education to their communities on environmental health concerns. The advantages of NEHA's REHS/RS registration program are: the nationwide recognition and reputation of the REHS/RS credential, the continual update of the REHS/RS examination and study guide based on the ongoing assessment of the dynamic environmental field, and the continuing education by individuals to maintain their registration.

**Certified Professional of Food Safety (CP-FS)** - The CP-FS is designed for individuals within the public and private sectors whose primary responsibility is the protection and safety of food. This prestigious credential integrates food microbiology, HACCP principles, and regulatory requirements into questions that test problem solving skills and knowledge expertise.

**Certified Installer Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (CIOWTS) Basic and Advanced Levels** – The CIOWTS credentials are designed to test the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for the successful installation of an onsite wastewater treatment system. Since it is a national credential, and state and local codes are not covered, this credential is meant to enhance a state or local regulatory program.

**Healthy Homes Specialist (HHS)** - The HHS credential, developed in partnership with the National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH), was designed to test an understanding of the connection between health and housing and how to take a holistic approach to identify and resolve problems that threaten the health and well-being of residents.

**Registered Environmental Technician (RET)** - NEHA's RET is a baseline credential for entry-level hazardous materials professionals. The credential is an excellent way for recent, two year graduates (AA) or career changing professionals, to demonstrate competency in the Core requirements of hazardous materials handling and management. The RET exam encompasses the skill standards defined by the U.S. Department of Education and the Center for Occupational Research and Development.

**Certified Environmental Health Technician (CEHT)** - The CEHT is for individuals who are interested in field intensive environmental health activities—such as testing, sampling, and inspections—and who are required to provide information on safe environmental health practices to eliminate environmental health hazards. Individuals holding the CEHT provide technical support and assistance to a variety of professionals (environmental health, specialists, health officers, sanitary engineers, health physicists, etc.) and often coordinate sanitation and environmental health activities with state and local public health units.

**Registered Hazardous Substances Professional (RHSP)** - The RHSP provides technically qualified professionals with national recognition for proven expertise in hazardous materials and toxic substances management. The RHSP examination tests a standard knowledge base and is designed to measure how well a professional understands both the principle and practice of hazardous materials and toxic substances management and their related laws.

**Registered Hazardous Substances Specialist (RHSS)** - The RHSS credential is for individuals who are interested in performing to protocol, field intensive hazardous materials activities—such as testing, sampling, and handling—and/or who are required to follow procedures to ensure: personal, public and site safety; safe handling, transportation and disposal of hazardous materials and waste; and proper documentation of hazardous materials activities.

## **Introduction**

### Definition of Holding a NEHA Credential

NEHA has adopted the following definition of being credentialed:

Credentialing is a process by which a non-government agency validates, based upon predetermined standards, an individual's qualifications and knowledge for practice in environmental health and protection.

NEHA's credentials (REHS/RS, CP-FS, CEHT, CIOWTS, HHS, RET, RHSS, RHSP), nationally recognized in scope, validates your specialized knowledge and experience, thus promoting the practice of environmental health and protection. NEHA credentialed individuals are viewed as leaders, mentors, and role models in environmental health and protection. Studying for and maintaining a NEHA credential keeps you up to date on the latest developments in your specialty and demonstrates your commitment to life-long learning.

### Sponsorship/Administration

NEHA's credentialing programs are owned and sponsored by NEHA. Professional Testing, Inc., administers the examinations at various testing sites around the country and throughout the world. The exams are also offered on computer through Pearson VUE, which has over 4,400 locations worldwide.

### Membership Requirements

Membership in any association or organization, including NEHA, is **not** required to participate in any of NEHA's credentialing programs.

### Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of NEHA that no individual shall be excluded from the opportunity to participate in NEHA's credentialing programs on the basis of ethnic origin, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability.

### Name/Address Change

It is your responsibility to notify NEHA, in writing or via fax or email of any change in your name and/or address. Without this information NEHA is unable to send you important information on testing and maintaining your credential.

### Contacting NEHA

The NEHA Office may be contacted by writing, faxing, calling, or emailing:

NEHA

720 S. Colorado Blvd., Ste. 1000-N

Denver, CO 80246

(303) 756-9090 (ext. 337 or ext. 339 for credentialing)

Fax: (303) 651-9490

Email: [credentialing@neha.org](mailto:credentialing@neha.org)

Web: [www.neha.org](http://www.neha.org)

# Credentialing Exams and Application Procedures

## Examination Standards

NEHA is committed to offering fair, valid and reliable credentialing examinations. A **fair** examination is not biased for or against any groups because of ethnic background, geographic locale or any other demographic criterion. A **valid** examination accurately reflects the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for competent practice. All questions appearing on the examinations have been validated using accepted psychometric practices. **Reliability** means the examination is consistent in its measurements of the knowledge, skills and abilities of competent practice. Each examination question is evaluated on a regular basis for reliability, fairness, and validity. Each examination question has been verified for accuracy and reliability and referenced to a published source.

## Application Procedures

All applicants for NEHA credentialing examinations (with the exception of the CIOWTS and HHS) must complete the **NEHA Application for Professional Credential** prior to being approved to take the examination\*. All sections, supporting documentation (i.e. official transcripts, work experience verification, and references), and fees must be completed and submitted prior to being approved to take the examination. Applications can be downloaded from NEHA's website at [www.neha.org/credential](http://www.neha.org/credential).

\*Applicants applying for one of the CIOWTS credentials must complete the **Application for Certified Installer Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems**. This application can be downloaded from NEHA's website at: [www.neha.org/onsite](http://www.neha.org/onsite)

\*Applicants applying for the HHS credential must complete the **Application for Healthy Homes Specialist Credential**. This application can be downloaded from NEHA's website at: [www.neha.org/credential/HHS](http://www.neha.org/credential/HHS)

Eligibility to sit for any of NEHA's credentialing examinations is determined by NEHA. Eligibility requirements are different for each of NEHA's credentialing examinations. Please review eligibility requirements for the particular examination you are interested in taking by reviewing the appropriate candidate information brochure. Candidate information brochures can be viewed on our website at [www.neha.org/credential](http://www.neha.org/credential). To have a candidate information brochure or application sent to you please contact NEHA's credentialing department directly at:

Attn: Credentialing Department  
NEHA  
720 S. Colorado Blvd., Ste. 1000-N  
Denver, CO 80246  
(303) 756-9090 (ext. 337 or ext. 339)  
fax: (303) 691-9490  
email: [credentialing@neha.org](mailto:credentialing@neha.org)

Once your completed application is received by NEHA, the review process takes approximately 4-6 weeks. You will receive notification from NEHA once the review process is complete in the form of an admission ticket (scheduled paper and pencil administrations), a testing voucher (for those choosing to take the exam on computer at

Pearson VUE testing centers), an incomplete letter (stating your application is incomplete with reasons lists), or a denial letter (indicating you are not eligible to take the exam with explanation).

If you would like to take the examination within 4 weeks of submitting your application, you can expedite the application review process. The fee for expediting an application is \$45.00.

#### Foreign Applicants

All NEHA credentials are available to all those who are eligible. For foreign applicants or those that have attended and received a university degree outside of the United States, a third party review of your transcript is necessary to determine equivalency to schools within the United States. The report given by the third party will need to accompany your NEHA *Application for Professional Credential*.

You may contact a service such as the International Education Research Foundation [www.ierf.org](http://www.ierf.org) to conduct the third party equivalency review.

#### Reciprocity

Reciprocity is offered solely for the REHS/RS credential. Eligibility requirements and application procedures for reciprocity are detailed on the *Application for Professional Credential*.

#### Fees

All application and examination fees are detailed on the *Application for Professional Credential (and on the Application for CIOWTS and the Application for HHS)*.

NEHA members are eligible for reduced application and examination fees. You can become a member of NEHA at the same time you are applying for a credential and be eligible for the reduced fees.

## **Examination Procedures**

### Exam Security

The NEHA examinations are the exclusive property of NEHA. Candidates who take a NEHA examination acknowledge that they understand the following:

1. Federal copyright law protects the examination and questions contained therein. No part of the examination may be copied or reproduced in part or whole by any means whatsoever, including memorization.
2. The theft or attempted theft of an examination booklet is punishable as a felony.
3. Candidate participation in any irregularity occurring during the examination such as giving or obtaining unauthorized information or aid, as evidenced by observation or subsequent statistical analysis, may be sufficient cause to terminate the candidate's participation, invalidate the results of the a candidate's examination, or take other appropriate action deemed necessary.

### Examination Scheduling/Rescheduling/Cancellation Fees

Exams can be scheduled at Pearson VUE testing centers by phone or online at [www.pearsonvue.com/neha](http://www.pearsonvue.com/neha). You must schedule your exam no less than 24 hours in advance. If you need to reschedule your exam, you may do so at no additional cost up to 24 hours before your appointment.

If you cancel your exam less than 24 hours in advance, or if you fail to show up for a scheduled exam, or if you are denied admission because you were late, you had inadequate identification, or your identification did not match the name under which you registered, you will be considered a no show and forfeit the exam fee.

### Examination Results

Examination results are reported directly to NEHA. NEHA, in turn, will notify you of your results. Examination results will be mailed 4 to 6 weeks following the examination. Neither NEHA nor our test vendor will release examination results over the telephone, via fax, or email.

Examination scores will be reported to candidates as a raw score and percent score. For individuals that do not pass, the option to purchase a strength/weakness report detailing their examination performance across the various exam content areas is made available. Strength/weakness reports are available through NEHA for \$20.00.

### Credentialing Packets

Credentialing packets are mailed to individuals that pass the exam. The credentialing packet includes your examination results, wall certificate, wallet card, NEHA Code of Ethics, and continuing education information.



## **Credentialing Period and Continuing Education**

### Credentialing Cycle

All of NEHA's credentials run on a two-year cycle. The first day of your credential period is the first day of the month after you have taken the examination. For example, if you took an examination on November 9, 2004, your credential period would begin December 1, 2004 and end November 30, 2006.

### Credential Renewal

At the end of the two-year credential cycle, NEHA credentialed individuals must have submitted the appropriate number of contact hours and the appropriate renewal fees. All fees and continuing education contact hours must be submitted or postmarked to NEHA no later than the credential expiration date.

If materials and/or fees are received after the credential expiration date a late fee of \$25.00 will apply.

### Continuing Education Contact Hours

Part of maintaining and renewing a NEHA credential is the submission of NEHA-approved Continuing Education (CE) within the two-year credential period. You can log onto the NEHA website: [www.neha.org/CEweb/CE.asp](http://www.neha.org/CEweb/CE.asp) and submit your continuing education submissions electronically. Once your submission is received by NEHA, an email will automatically be generated and sent back to you indicating your submission was received. NEHA staff will be checking the submissions for approval every other week. Once your submission is reviewed you will receive an email indicating your submission was approved or denied.

Since you will be submitting your submissions electronically, we will no longer require you to submit supporting documentation (i.e. certificate of completion, course agenda, etc). However, we do require that you keep a record of the supporting documentation, as we will be randomly auditing individuals to provide such documentation on a biannual basis (please see below where it outlines the audit procedures and processes). Notice will be sent to individuals in January and July each year if you are chosen for an audit. Those selected for an audit will have 6 months to provide the appropriate documentation to NEHA regardless of their credential expiration date.

## **AUDIT PROCEDURES AND PROCESS**

1. Notice will be sent in January for those whose credentials expire in the January 1 – June 30 window. All those chosen at random will have until June 30 of that year to provide their CE submissions, for their two-year credential period, WITH supporting documentation (i.e. course agenda, certificate of completion, etc) to NEHA.
2. Notice will be sent in July for those whose credentials expire in the July 1 – December 31 window. All those chosen at random will have until December 31 of that year to provide their CE submissions, for their two-year credential period, WITH supporting documentation (i.e. course agenda, certificate of completion, etc) to NEHA.

3. If you are chosen for an audit CE submissions can be entered electronically but will also need to be sent as a hard copy with supporting documentation.
4. If you are chosen for an audit your credential will go into an *active- in audit mode* until the audit window closes. For example if your credential expires 3/31/2007 and you are chosen for the January 1 – June 30, 2007 audit, you will have until 6/30/2007 to provide your credential renewal fees and supporting documentation for CE submissions (that should still fall within your two-year credential period of 4/1/05 – 3/31/07) without being penalized. Your credential will remain in the *active- in audit mode* even after your expiration date, as you will be in the audit process.
5. If an individual cannot provide supporting documentation for a continuing education submission he/she will not be given credit for those hours.
6. If an individual falls short of meeting the minimum CE hour requirement for the credential and/or does not submit the appropriate renewal fees, he/she will be entered into a one-time grace period that can last for a period of up to two (2) years from their credential expiration date. At the end of the grace period all appropriate fees and continuing education hours must be submitted in order to become active status.

If a candidate fails to submit the appropriate fees and continuing education hours prior to the end of the grace period, his/her credential is revoked. In order to re-obtain the credential the individual must reapply and retake the examination.

If an individual has entered into a grace period once and brings their credential up to date but then fails on another occasion to fulfill the renewal requirements the individual's credential is automatically revoked. In order for an individual to re-obtain his/her credential once it has been previously revoked, he/she must wait for a period of one (1) year to reapply and retake the examination.

7. If an individual is chosen for an audit in 2007 it does not preclude him/her from being chosen again for an audit in 2009 (the next time the credential would be up for expiration). Audit participants are chosen at random. Therefore it is possible to be chosen for an audit more than one time.
8. The first audit notices will be sent out in January 2007.

Please keep copies of your CE Submissions and supporting documentation for your records.

During the two-year credential period you must accumulate the appropriate number of continuing education contact hours:

CEHT	12 Contact Hours	RET	12 Contact Hours
CIOWTS	12 Contact Hours	HHS	15 Contact Hours
CP-FS	24 Contact Hours	RHSP	24 Contact Hours
REHS/RS	24 Contact Hours	RHSS	24 Contact Hours

Please note one (1) contact hour is equal to one (1) clock hour of class time.

#### Continuing Education Requirements

Content must relate to the environmental health field in one of the following areas: air, land, water, counter bioterrorism, environmental health management, environmental health research, food protection, general environmental health, GIS, swimming pools, environmental justice, emerging pathogens, vector control, zoonotic diseases, hazardous and toxic substances, individual environmental responsibilities of the applicant, injury prevention (i.e. OSHA), institutional environmental health, international environmental health, or onsite wastewater management.

#### Acceptable Continuing Education

Certification programs, Computer-Based training/on-line courses, Home study courses, Training modules, *JEH* Self Assessment Quizzes (NEHA members only), Military training, National/State/Local conferences, NEHA book reviews (up to 4 CE hours), University/College courses, and videos (up to 4 CE hours).

Credentialed individuals may also receive up to 10 contact hours of continuing education for giving a presentation at a conference, publishing an article, or being a course instructor.

## **General Policies**

#### Denial of Credential Due to Ineligibility

It is the policy of NEHA that no individual shall be excluded from the opportunity to participate in the NEHA credentialing program on the basis of ethnic origin, religion, sex, age or disability. A review and appeals process is available to individuals seeking an amendment of a decision denying eligibility to sit for a NEHA examination. The NEHA Board of Directors conducts the review and appeals process. The decision of the Board is final. Failure of any NEHA credentialing examination is not subject for appeal.

### NEHA Code of Ethics for Credentialed Professionals

NEHA credentialed individuals must acknowledge, accept and abide by the NEHA Code of Ethics for NEHA Credentialed Professionals. All NEHA credentialed individuals must agree to and sign the statement below as part of their application to NEHA credentialing and after they have achieved credential status:

- As long as my credential is in an active status, I shall endeavor to keep myself current and informed and satisfy my continuing education requirements that may be in effect for my credential.
- I will proudly represent my credentialed status and the credential itself to my professional peers, and to the public I serve.
- In the course of performing my duties, I will conduct myself in a professional manner befitting of my credentialed status.
- For the sake of elevating the recognition and status of my field, I will actively encourage my professional colleagues to consider earning this credential for themselves.
- I will do nothing to undermine, detract from, or otherwise cause to develop any damaging associations with respect to this credential. I accept that any activity on my part that will cause this credential any measure of injury serves as a breach and a failure on my part to uphold this code of ethics. Moreover, I accept that such action, for which I might be responsible, could result in the revocation of my credential.
- I commit that my professional goal is to serve humankind by doing whatever I am able to do in the course of carrying out my professional responsibilities to maintain and provide a healthful environmental for all.

### Revocation of Credential – Due to Misconduct

NEHA reserves the right to revoke the credential of any individual holding a NEHA credential due to misconduct. The right to deny, revoke, or suspend a NEHA credential is vested in the NEHA Board of Directors. All decisions shall be verified and upheld by NEHA's Board of Directors. Prior to a credential being denied, revoked, or suspended the individual shall be notified in writing of the charges that warrant such action. Any individual whose credential comes under review for denial, revocation, or suspension may submit a written appeal to the NEHA Board of Directors within thirty (30) calendar days after notification of charges. Misconduct includes but is not limited to:

- Falsification of credential application;
- Falsification of credential renewal application;
- Falsification of any information requested by NEHA;
- Failure to submit appropriate number of Continuing Education hours;
- Failure to submit appropriate credential fees;
- Misrepresentation of credential status;
- Gross or repeated malpractice or negligence;
- Cheating or other irregularities related to the administration of a NEHA examination;
- Revocation or suspension of their state credential (if applicable);

- Failure to maintain the confidentiality of credential examination questions or answer sheet;
- Limitation or sanction imposed by another professional organization relating to environmental health/food sanitation;
- Unauthorized possession of, use of or access to NEHA examinations, certificates, wallet identification cards, logos of NEHA, the terms of Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS), Certified Professional of Food Safety (CP-FS), Certified Environmental Health Technician (CEHT), Certified Installer Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (CIOWTS), Healthy Homes Specialist (HHS), Registered Environmental Technician (RET), Registered Hazardous Substances Professional (RHSP), and Registered Hazardous Substances Specialist (RHSS), and abbreviations relating to these terms, and any other NEHA documents and materials;
- Habitual use of alcohol, any drug or any substance, or any physical or mental condition which impairs competent and objective professional performance;
- Failure to report a known violation of NEHA's standards, policies or procedures;
- Violation of any provision of the NEHA Code of Ethics for NEHA Credentialed Professionals;
- The conviction or plea of guilty or plea of nolo contendere to a felony or misdemeanor related to environmental health/food sanitation.

### **Special Accommodations for Candidates with Disabilities or Impairments**

NEHA is committed to ensuring that no individual is deprived of the opportunity to take a credentialing examination solely by reason of a disability or impairment. All test centers are fully accessible and compliant with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

To make a request for special accommodations you must complete the Accommodation Request Form and Documentation of Disability Related Needs Form, including the specific diagnosis of your disability; medical records, or other written proof of the diagnosis by an appropriate licensed professional; and the type of accommodation being requested. Both forms must be returned to NEHA at least 30 days prior to the scheduled test date.

If the forms are not returned to NEHA within 30 days prior to the scheduled test date your request for special accommodations may not be honored.

With respect to all matters related to testing accommodations, NEHA will only communicate with the candidate, professionals knowledgeable about the candidate's disability or impairment, and the candidate's authorized representative (if applicable).

### **Application Withdrawal Policy**

Withdrawal of a credentialing application after it has been submitted to NEHA must be requested in writing to NEHA. The application fee is non-refundable for all applications, including those found to be ineligible, *no exceptions*. **Effective January 1, 2009, written requests for refunds of examination fees will be honored only up to ninety (90) days after the fees have been processed by NEHA.**

### **Credential Grace Period Policy**

When a NEHA credentialed person fails to submit the credential renewal fees and/or fulfill the required number of continuing education hours within the specified credential period, he/she is automatically entered into a "grace" period that can last for a period of

up to two (2) years from their credential expiration date. At the end of the grace period all appropriate fees and continuing education hours must be submitted in order to become active status.

If an individual has entered into a grace period once and brings their credential up to date but then fails on another occasion to fulfill the renewal requirements the individual's credential is automatically revoked.

#### In-Training Status

When a candidate has successfully obtained a credential with "In-Training" status he/she must submit verification of the required work experience to NEHA by the end of the 3-year acquisition period. If a candidate fails to submit experience verification by the end of the acquisition period, the "In-Training" status expires. The candidate must re-apply to take the examination in order to obtain the credential.

#### Active Military Duty

Should a NEHA credentialed individual be deployed under active military duty a "freeze" can be put on the credential until the individual returns from duty. During this "freeze" period an individual's credential is still active, however, the individual is not responsible for submitting renewal fees or continuing education hours. Upon returning from the military assignment, the individual's credential would then be "unfrozen".

For example, if a credentialed individual is in a credential period from 11/1/03 to 10/31/05 and gets called up for military duty and deployed 4/1/04, a freeze is put on the credential. Once the individual returns from duty, he/she would still have 18 months before the credential is set to expire.

A request to put a freeze on a credential due to military duty must be submitted in writing to NEHA with a copy of orders. In order to unfreeze the credential, a request must be submitted in writing to NEHA with a copy of discharge papers.

#### Emeritus Status

NEHA's Emeritus Status credential honors those individuals who have spent their careers in the pursuit of a healthier environment. Attainment of this credential signifies the individual's tremendous quality and commitment to the field of environmental health. To qualify for the "Emeritus" Status, an individual must meet the following requirements:

1. Has worked in the environmental health and protection field for at least 15 years prior to the application date.
2. Is retired and not currently employed in the environmental health and protection field in any capacity.
3. Is currently credentialed through NEHA.

Those who qualify for the Emeritus credential must renew their credential on a biennial basis, but without a continuing education requirement. In recognition of their services and retired status, NEHA has kept the fees for this credential at a minimum. Current NEHA members may apply for this credential for \$25.00 (non-member fee is \$50.00).

Once awarded this credential an "E" will be attached to your credential letters (i.e. REHS/RS-E, CP-FS-E, CEHT-E, etc.) and a new wallet card and wall certificate will be issued.