

# Health Wise Quarterly

Brought to you by the friendly staff at your

## Environmental Health Services Division

### COVID-19 EFFORTS AND DAY TO DAY FUNCTIONS

Since the pandemic began in March, the Environmental Health Services Division (EHSD) has been operating at full tilt with administrative staff manning the office in-person and Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) performing their regular inspection duties plus anything else that is thrown their way. Our Division has offered support to the University of Texas at a home game, performed weekend sweeps of West Campus and Downtown areas, participated in Zip Code Target enforcement operations, and are continuously responding to citizen complaints.

The UT and weekend sweeps have been extremely effective in both efficiency and productivity. In all our teams have spent three weekend shifts with Austin Code to visit 160 establishments issuing 24 COVID-guideline violation Warning Letters. Most of the Warning Letters cite violations of mask requirements and social distancing violations, sometimes to repeat offenders.

In September, Austin Public Health Director Hayden and the Health Authority identified 6 zip codes in Travis County that had a higher number of reported COVID cases, public health inequities, or saw an increased number of complaints, for EHSD to perform compliance visits. In just one month these Zip Code Targeted operations resulted in 11 EHOs completing 1,139 compliance visits and issuing 213 Warning Letters!

The latest task set-forth on EHSD is to review proposals for local events to ensure COVID guidelines are met and public health is uncompromised. Luckily this extra duty is being supplemented by two temporary Planners to assist in reviewing and approving proposals as they are submitted allowing for expedited responses from the Division.

As always, EHSD has not stopped our regular function of food-facility inspections to ensure the food supply of our City and County remains safe. We constantly adapt to ever-changing requests to fulfill our duty to our neighbors, families, and fellow citizens of Travis County to prevent disease, promote health and protect the well-being of all.

### We're Hiring!!

#### City of Austin is Recruiting Consumer & Environmental Health Professionals

Current or Upcoming Postings in Environmental Health Services Division:

- ◆ Program Manager II
- ◆ Environmental Health Officer III
- ◆ Environmental Health Officer I or II
- ◆ Temporary Environmental Health Officer I or II
- ◆ Temporary Planner I or II

The City of Austin offers great benefits for regular employees, including paid holidays, medical and dental insurance, 5 year vesting period, retirement plans and pension with COA matching pension funds, public service student loan forgiveness, tuition reimbursement, and more!

**For more information:**

[City of Austin Job Search](#)

[EHSD's main Webpage](#)

[City of Austin Job Descriptions](#)

[Regular Employee Benefits](#)





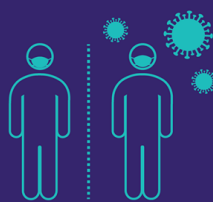

# CUTTING EDGE VECTOR CONTROL

Austin Public Health – Environmental Vector Control Program implemented a new cutting edge technology to “Fight the Bite.” In an effort to minimize, or if possible eliminate, the use of harmful chemicals and pesticides used in the control of mosquitoes, Environmental Vector Control has put into service a new device called the Larvasonic Field Arm. It is a portable, chemical-free larvaciding tool that uses sound energy which kills or cripples both mosquito larvae and pupae. The device works by transmitting sound energy into water at the resonance frequency of a mosquito larva’s internal air volume causing the larva’s organs to rupture. It has a near 100% mortality rate up to 1 meter (3.28 feet) which makes it ideal for small bodies of puddling water that can sometimes persist in the environment throughout the mosquito breeding season. In some environments such as an abandoned pool, which has hard concrete walls, the walls of the pool amplify the sound energy thus increasing its effectiveness up to 3 meters (9.84 feet). Any mosquito larvae that are not killed by the initial effects of the sound energy are typically damaged to a point to where any resulting adult mosquitoes emerge with deformities that render them flightless. The fact that this is done without chemicals makes the Larvasonic Field Arm a much more desirable option for mosquito control.


It is the goal of Austin Public Health and Environmental Vector Control to minimize if not mitigate any potential harm caused to the environment by using non-chemical, non-pesticide control measures whenever possible. It is our hope and our goal to ultimately provide effective control of mosquitoes by using as little harmful chemicals and pesticides as possible.

## DO YOUR PART

TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 AND THE FLU

<b>WEAR A MASK</b> 	<b>WASH YOUR HANDS</b> 
<b>WATCH YOUR DISTANCE - STAY 6 FT AWAY FROM OTHERS</b> 	<b>GET YOUR FLU SHOT</b> 

**PROTECT YOURSELF  
PROTECT YOUR FAMILY**



**PROTÉJASE Y  
PROTEJA A SU FAMILIA**



CENTRAL HEALTH



The flu and [COVID19](#) both spread through droplets when someone talks, coughs or sneezes. Protect yourself from both.

Get your flu vaccine now. If you're insured or have MAP, call your doctor to schedule your vaccination. If you are uninsured, Austin Public Health offers community vaccines. Call 512-972-5520.



November 2020 — January 2021



# Congratulations to New and Promoted EHSD Staff!

BE SO GOOD THEY CAN'T IGNORE YOU. ~Steve Martin~

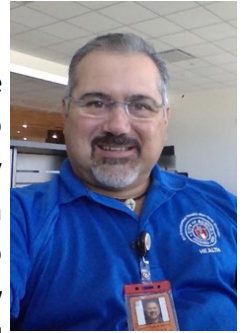


## **Catherine Cruz: Environmental Health Officer I**

Catherine is a recent graduate of UT Austin and is excited to begin her career with Austin Public Health. During her time at UT, Catherine worked with DSHS as an intern with the foodborne illness team and was able to study abroad in Antigua, Guatemala. In her spare time, Catherine enjoys reading, watching Netflix, and going to karaoke with her friends.

## **Daniel “Danny” R. González, R.S.: Environmental Health Officer III**

Danny graduated a long time ago from Southwest Texas State University, '92, he currently Texas State University, with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture majoring in Animal Science. Danny is returning to Austin Public Health after retiring in 2015. Danny started his Environmental career at Hays County Environmental Health in 1993, then joined the City of Austin in 2005 and worked as the Chief Sanitarian for the City of San Marcos after retiring. With over 27 years of experience Danny is returning to performing commercial plan reviews for swimming pools/spas and restaurants at the One-Stop Shop now located at the new Permitting and Development Center (PDC). During his off-time Danny likes to spend time with his two kids, Chris & Bekah, & Doberman, Zeus, and enjoys mountain biking, softball and the outdoor/ranch life.

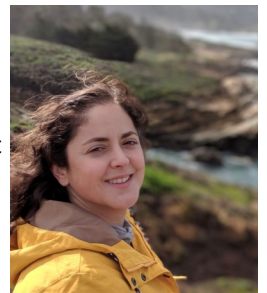


## **Natalie Requenez: Environmental Health Officer I**

Natalie is a recent Masters of Public Health Graduate from the University of North Texas Health Science Center in Fort Worth. During her time in Fort Worth, she interned with the Tarrant County Vector Control Division conducting quality control on gravid mosquito traps. Native to Central Texas, she was raised in Killeen. She is the oldest sister of both a brother and a sister. Her interests include soccer, spending time outdoors, and learning random science facts. She also loves animals and spending time with family and friends.

## **Carolina Zertuche: Environmental Health Officer I**

Carolina Zertuche was born and raised in Mexico and is new to Austin Public Health. Although her most recent focus has been entrepreneurial ventures, Carolina obtained a B.S in Biochemistry from St. Mary's University. Right after graduation, she worked for a food manufacturing company in San Antonio as a Quality Assurance & Food Safety Technician. In her spare time, Carolina works closely with Manor/Elgin Lost & Found Pets and TRAPRS, non-profit organizations that reunite lost pets in the Austin area. Carolina is excited to see what Austin Public Health has to offer.



## **Arlene Johnson, R. S.: Environmental Health Supervisor**

Arlene has worked for Austin Public Health as a registered sanitarian and senior sanitarian for over four years. She previously worked as a local compliance manager for a nationwide egg producer, establishing their internal food safety program. Arlene has been serving as interim supervisor over the Central Austin consumer health team since January and has provided great support to her team and peers in that time. Arlene is dedicated to public service having previously served in the U.S. Air Force and in our sister APH/WIC division. Arlene is currently assisting in mass gathering reviews and will act as support to Special Permitting Unit for future mass gathering application reviews.

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# LEGAL COMPLIANCE INFORMATION

## For City of Austin

## Smoking in Public Places Chapter 10-6



The Smoking in Public Places Ordinance (SIPPO) prohibits smoking in most public places and work places unless listed as an exemption in the Smoking Ordinance.

For a list of SIPPO Exemptions, click here: [EXEMPTIONS](#)

For the complete SIPPO, click here: [SIPPO](#)

### SMOKING PROHIBITED

A person commits an offense if the person smokes in a public place or in a park.

A person commits an offense if the person smokes in an enclosed area in a building or facility owned, leased, or operated by the City.

A person commits an offense if the person smokes in an enclosed area of a workplace.

A person commits an offense if the person smokes within 15 feet from an entrance or openable window of an enclosed area in which smoking is prohibited.

The owner or operator of a public place commits an offense if the person fails to take necessary steps to prevent or stop another person from smoking in an enclosed area in a public place.

### SIGNS REQUIRED / ASHTRAYS AND SMOKING ACCESSORIES

The operator of a public place shall conspicuously post a "No Smoking" sign, the international "No Smoking" symbol (depiction of a burning cigarette enclosed in a red circle with a red bar across it), or other sign containing words or pictures that reasonably prohibit smoking:

- (1) in each public place and workplace where smoking is prohibited by this chapter; and
- (2) at each entrance to a public place or workplace.

The operator of a public place and an employer shall remove any ashtray or other smoking accessory from a place where smoking is prohibited.

### VIOLATION AND PENALTY

A person who violates the provisions of this chapter commits a Class C misdemeanor, by a fine not to exceed \$2,000.

Each day an offense occurs is a separate violation.

To report a violation of this ordinance, please: Call **3-1-1** -or- submit an **online smoking complaint form**, [HERE](#).



#### **OFFICES CLOSED! Plan Accordingly. EHSD will be CLOSED on:**

- ◆ Thursday and Friday, November 26 - 27 for Thanksgiving
- ◆ Thursday and Friday, December 24 - 25 for Christmas
- ◆ Friday, January 1 for New year's Day
- ◆ Monday, January 18 for Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- ◆ Monday, February 15 for President's Day



## **KNOW YOUR PATHOGEN**



Listeriosis is a serious infection usually caused by eating food contaminated with the bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes*. Outbreaks of *Listeria* infections in the 1990s were primarily linked to deli meats and hot dogs. Now, *Listeria* outbreaks are often linked to dairy products and produce. Investigators have traced recent outbreaks to soft cheeses, celery, sprouts, cantaloupe, and ice cream.

**Is listeriosis a serious disease?** Listeriosis is usually a mild illness for pregnant women, but it causes severe disease in the fetus or newborn baby. Some people with *Listeria* infections, most commonly adults 65 years and older and people with weakened immune systems, develop severe infections of the bloodstream or brain. Most people with invasive listeriosis require hospital care, and about one in five people with the infection die. When listeriosis occurs during pregnancy, it can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, or newborn death. Listeriosis during pregnancy results in fetal loss in about 20% and newborn death in about 3% of cases.

**What are the symptoms of listeriosis?** Depending on the person and the part of the body affected, listeriosis can cause a variety of symptoms. *Listeria* can cause fever and diarrhea, similar to other foodborne pathogens.

- **Pregnant women:** Pregnant women typically experience only fever and other flu-like symptoms, such as fatigue and muscle aches. However, infections during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, or life-threatening infection of the newborn.
- **People other than pregnant women:** Symptoms can include headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, and convulsions in addition to fever and muscle aches.

People with invasive listeriosis usually report symptoms starting 1 to 4 weeks after eating food contaminated with *Listeria*; some people have reported symptoms starting as late as 70 days after exposure or as early as the same day of exposure.

**How do people get infected with *Listeria*?** Usually caused by eating food contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*. If infection occurs during pregnancy, *Listeria* bacteria can spread to the baby through the placenta.

**Prevention** – Soft cheeses made with unpasteurized milk are estimated to be 50 to 160 times more likely to cause *Listeria* infection than when they are made with pasteurized milk. Before consuming, make sure labels say, “made with pasteurized milk.” Sprouts need warm and humid conditions to sprout and grow. These conditions are also ideal for the growth of bacteria, including *Listeria*, *Salmonella*, and *E. coli*. Cook sprouts thoroughly to reduce your risk for getting sick. Harmful bacteria can grow in unrefrigerated cut melon. Keep cut melon refrigerated at 41° F or colder and for no more than 7 days.

**What should I do if I ate a food that may have been contaminated with *Listeria*?** You should seek medical care and tell your doctor about eating possibly contaminated food or if you have a fever and other symptoms of possible listeriosis, such as fatigue and muscle aches, within two months after eating possibly contaminated food. This is especially important if you are pregnant, age 65 or older, or have a weakened immune system.

The information above was collected from Centers of Disease Control and Prevention to educate and prevent foodborne illnesses in the communities served by Austin Public Health. <https://www.cdc.gov/listeria/index.html>

## ONLINE APPLICATIONS

Did you know that you could submit applications online? These include Certificate of Occupancy Inspection, Change of Ownership Inspection, Custodial Care Inspection, Central Preparation Facility Registration and Food Manager Registration.

To better serve our customers and simplify our processes, there are now fillable forms for the types of applications and requests noted above. You will not need to print the form out or scan the form either. We hope that this feature saves you time, energy and resources.

Simply fill out the form, attach any required documents listed on the form, and click Submit. Once you submit the form, you will get a confirmation email it has been received. EHSD intake staff receives your submission and processes it.

If the request is for an establishment in the city limits of Austin or our Interlocal Agreement areas such as Sunset Valley or Lakeway, you will receive an email with instructions of how to make payment by credit card over the phone.

If the request is for an establishment in unincorporated Travis County, there is no cost of service for Certificate of Occupancy, Change of Ownership or Custodial Care Inspection requests. The request will be processed and an inspector will be notified of the request.

Links:

Custodial Care Inspection: <http://austintexas.gov/online-form/custodial-care-inspection>

Food Certificate of Occupancy Inspection: <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/certificate-occupancy-inspection-request>

Food Change of Ownership Inspection: <http://www.austintexas.gov/online-form/change-ownership-inspection-request>

Central Preparation Facility Registration: <http://austintexas.gov/page/central-preparation-facility-registration>

Food Manager Registration: <http://austintexas.gov/page/food-manager-certificates>

## EHSD LOBBY HOURS AND PERMIT APPLICATION PROCESS DURING COVID-19

Since April 1, 2020, the Environmental Health Services Division (EHSD) of Austin Public Health closed its lobby to walk-in customers and will accept permit applications only by mail or email. For those customers who are not able to submit their application by mail or email, EHSD will accept appointments for service at our office located at 1520 Rutherford Lane, Building 1 Suite 205, Austin, TX 78754. Please call 512-978-0300 to schedule an appointment.

Mobile Food Vendor application reviews are conducted on Tuesday and Thursday from 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM are also by appointment only. Walk in appointments are no longer available. To schedule an appointment, call 512-978-0300. Mobile Food Vendor inspections will still occur in the parking lot of our building by appointment only.

Any questions and concerns can be submitted via email to [EHSD.Service@austintexas.gov](mailto:EHSD.Service@austintexas.gov) or by contacting (512) 978-0300. For the most current public information, including information about the 'Stay Home, Work Safe' order, please continue to visit: <http://austintexas.gov/COVID19>.

EHSD services can be submitted via mail or email for processing and payment as follows:

- Mail: APH EHSD, PO BOX 142529, Austin, TX 78714
- Email: [EHSD.Service@austintexas.gov](mailto:EHSD.Service@austintexas.gov)
- Note: Email submissions will receive email notification with instructions how to make payment over the phone.



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### **Todd Mers, R.S.: Environmental Health Supervisor**

Todd Mers is originally from Columbus, Ohio. He and his family have lived in the Austin area since the Fall of 2019. He holds an Environment and Natural Resource, Bachelor of Science Degree from The Ohio State University. Todd is a Registered Professional Sanitarian in Texas and has worked in the fields of Environmental and Consumer Health for a combined total of 26 years. Todd started work as a Health Inspector with the Franklin County Board of Health in Columbus, Ohio in 1994. He spent the last twelve years working in the Administrative Office of the Ohio Department of Agriculture as the local health department liaison and coordinator involving the Retail Food Safety Program, directing audits of the local health department retail food establishment programs. Todd has worked determinedly in the field of Environmental and Consumer Health to organize, teach, encourage, and verify systems regarding the prevention of foodborne illness. He has served multiple years in various roles at the Conference for Food Protection as a Council Member of Council II, Executive Board Member, Chair and Co-Chair of Council I, as well as the Voting Delegate for the State of Ohio.

### **Matthew Reid, M.S., R.S., CPO: Environmental Health Supervisor**

Matthew graduated from Baylor University in May of 2014 with a BS in Environmental Health Science then completed his Master's Degree in Nutrition and Human Performance in 2017. Matthew began working with the City of Austin in the Environmental Health Division in 2016 and is honored to have the opportunity to bring his leadership and expertise to Austin Public Health to help keep the people of our beautiful city safe. Matthew can often be found wearing a mask and staying indoors looking forward to when he and his wife can start traveling again.



### **Marcel Elizondo, MPH, R.S.: Program Manager II**

Marcel is the new program manager for the Environmental Health Services Division within Austin Public Health. He graduated with a BA in biology from the University of Texas at Austin and has a Masters in Public Health from the Texas A&M Health Science Center. Marcel has been an Environmental Health Officer and supervisor for almost 17 years with EHSD. During his tenure he has worked with food, pools, environmental complaints, interlocal contracts and plan review.



**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION CUSTOMER WALK IN HOURS**  
**Lobby Hours** Rutherford Lane Campus 1520 Rutherford Lane by Appointment ONLY  
**Planning Development Center** 6310 Wilhelmina Delco Drive Electronic Submissions ONLY  
**Mobile Vending Physical Permitting Inspections** Rutherford Lane Campus  
 1520 Rutherford Lane 7:45 AM - 11:00AM Tuesday and Thursday by Appointment ONLY



EHSD is partnering with Austin 3-1-1 to handle all citizen complaints and environmental investigations. To request services, get general assistance or submit a citizen complaint, dial 3-1-1 or 512-974-2000 if you are calling from outside the Austin service area.

If you feel an inspection issue or complaint investigation has not been satisfactorily addressed, or to speak with a manager regarding administrative issues, please call us directly at 512-978-0300 between the hours of 7:45AM - 4:45PM Monday - Friday.

Mailing Address: EHSD Post Office Box 142529, Austin, TX 78714

Physical Address: Rutherford Lane Campus 1520 Rutherford Lane Building 1 Suite 205 Austin, TX 78754

Email Address: [EHSD.service@austintexas.gov](mailto:EHSD.service@austintexas.gov)

Web Address: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/environmental-health-services>

Feedback: Please complete our online survey to help us better serve our customers: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/EHSDSurvey](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/EHSDSurvey)

