

**INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE – BEMIDJI AREA
2018 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST OF THE YEAR
LCDR TIMOTHY M. TAYLOR**

Introduction:

The 2018 Bemidji Area Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) of the Year is LCDR Timothy M. Taylor, REHS, MPH. LCDR Taylor is recognized for leadership, dedication, mentoring and professionalism that substantially elevated environmental health services to the Bemidji Area Tribes. He has sustained quality performance throughout the year and most noteworthy has been his dedication to expanding and implementing institutional environmental health services and providing essential coverage during staffing shortages.

Professionalism:

LCDR Taylor is the Institutional Environmental Health Officer (O-5 billet) for the Bemidji Area Indian Health Service (BAIHS), Office of Environmental Health and Engineering. He is responsible for leading, administering and implementing institutional EH services across three states with a service population exceeding 130,000 American Indians; three IHS service units and nearly forty tribal clinics. He previously served the BAIHS as a staff environmental health specialist and as a safety officer for the Great Plains Area. He is a true asset to the BAIHS, DEHS program as a technical expert and someone often relied upon for his general environmental health competencies.

LCDR Taylor has a Master of Public Health degree from the Uniformed Services University and is a graduate of the IHS Institutional Environmental Health Residency program. His professional credentials include, Registered Environmental Health Specialist (NEHA), Aquatic Facility Operator Certification and Registered Paramedic through the National Registry of Paramedics.

In 2018, LCDR Taylor was deployed to the IHS Pine Ridge Indian Hospital for 30 days as a lead advisor on safety and infection control. He conducted an occupational safety & health (OSH) program review; assisted in implementing OSH program improvements and provided staff cross-training. These efforts assisted them in regaining temporary accreditation from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

LCDR Taylor led, administered and implemented the Bemidji Area IHS Radiation Safety Program. In doing so, he provided technical assistance and completed 45 medical x-ray surveys and investigations at health care facilities throughout our service region. He led an effort to update the area radiation safety protocol, working closely with medical physicists to transition the Bemidji Area program from medical x-ray performance testing to a radiation safety survey/audit process. This best practice approach can and should be duplicated throughout the IHS, DEHS programs.

LCDR Taylor is quick to assume collateral functions in a lead capacity and provides essential mentoring to junior staff. He is the Bemidji Area Emergency Response Point of Contact and an active team leader to the Bemidji Area Commissioned Corps Awards program. In addition to his supervisory responsibilities to the Area Staff Environmental Health Specialist, he has served as a JrCOSTEP Preceptor and mentor for each of the last four years (2015 - 2018).

Special Accomplishments:

Dental Sharps Injury Reduction: LCDR Taylor's accomplishments illustrate the complete range of the public health approach/ten essential services while implementing best practices. One such example was his approach to reducing injury in dental departments. He utilized assessment, education, forming partnerships, research, policy development, and evaluation to address sharp related injuries at three

federally operated dental departments. LCDR Taylor completed analysis of the WebCident database and found 27 needle stick/bloodborne pathogen (bbp) injuries at the Federal service units; 18 of which were sustained by the dental staff (2013 to 2017). After meeting with the dental chiefs, they discussed and implemented best practice recommendations noted in the literature (ADA, OSHA, etc.). The following best practice interventions were implemented: changing needle recapping to a one handed technique; providing self-sheathing anesthetic needles and scalpels; closer placement of sharps containers to operatory areas; supplying and ensuring the use of thicker utility gloves when cleaning and sterilizing dental instruments. With these control measures in place, there was a reduction in needle stick/bbp incidents with only two occurring to the Federal dental staff in 2018.

Healthcare Accreditation: In response to an IHS nationwide push for health care accreditation and to better direct his technical services, LCDR Taylor started tracking the likely occurrence of health care accreditation inspections in the tristate service area and those seeking accreditation for a first time. He assembled mock survey teams, led the assessment/audit process, and was the primary author for reporting deficiencies and recommendations. Since starting this initiative, over 30 health care accreditation mock surveys have been completed and all resulted in successful accreditation. Two of the clinics were newly accredited. In 2018, he completed four mock surveys under a system structure he previously established.

Foodborne Illness: LCDR Taylor has exercised and maintained his general environmental health competencies for which he has been relied upon during emergent situations and staff shortages. He quickly stepped in as the IHS lead investigator of a foodborne illness outbreak at a large casino. As an immediate response and to prevent the outbreak from spreading he interviewed over 100 casino staff members to determine the index case of the illness, which was identified as norovirus. He was able to identify and exclude symptomatic employees for the required period of time necessary to stop the spread of illness. He also recommended further risk reduction strategies to casino management upon completing EH assessments on the kitchen and the four restaurants within the facility; thus controlling the outbreak and preventing further infections. Without LCDR Taylor's quick, decisive response, this norovirus outbreak would have become more serious and widespread.

Coverage during Staffing Shortage: LCDR Taylor has been a valued technical expert and true asset in the way he has maintained a wide range of environmental health competencies. During staff shortages he is always quick to assist with the District EHS workload, while still managing an area institutional EH program. In 2018 alone, he completed 3 investigations, 21 environmental health surveys to include 2 Pow Wows and training to nearly 150 head start staff.

Nitrous Oxide Assessments: LCDR Taylor has developed OSH services not previously offered by the BAIHS, DEHS such as nitrous oxide exposure assessments for dental healthcare providers. These assessments included real time healthcare provider exposure monitoring, leak testing the delivery equipment and policy and procedure review. This comprehensive assessment process required him to acquire and familiarize himself with a Miran gas analyzer, completing nearly 20 assessments under this protocol and two in the last year. LCDR Taylor's efforts have directly lowered exposures and reduced the risk of negative health outcomes for all BAIHS dental healthcare providers.

Summary:

LCDR Taylor has exemplified dedication, professionalism, leadership and mentoring as an Institutional Environmental Health Officer. His attention to quality services while expanding the Institutional EH program and providing field level environmental health coverage during staffing vacancies has elevated the DEHS program. The BAIHS, DEHS program proudly recognizes LCDR Taylor as our 2018 Environmental Health Specialist of the Year with nomination to the IHS, EHS of the year.