

# HEALTH PROFESSIONS ACT 56 OF 1974

## REGULATIONS DEFINING THE SCOPE OF THE PROFESSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER

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The Minister of National Health has, in terms of [section 33](#) (1) of the Medical, Dental and Supplementary Health Service Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 of 1974), on the recommendation of the South African Medical and Dental Council, made the regulations set out in the Schedule hereto.

### SCHEDULE

- [1.](#)
- [2.](#)
- [3.](#)
- [Annexure](#)

1. In these regulations “**the Act**” means the Medical, Dental and Supplementary Health Service Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 of 1974), and any expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the Act shall bear such meaning.
2.
  - (1) The following acts are hereby specified as acts which shall for the application of the Act be deemed to be acts pertaining to the profession of health officer:
    - (a) The identification of all unhygienic conditions and the evaluation of all factors of hygiene regarding the interaction between man and his environment.
    - (b) The undertaking of acts supplementary to statutory duties to-
      - (i) eliminate unhygienic conditions;
      - (ii) execute monitoring actions in order to give effect to acts for the safeguarding and maintenance of the health of the population;
      - (iii) give health education in order to make the population self-sufficient in respect of the creation and maintenance of an environment that is safe for health;

- (iv) co-operate with a multi-disciplinary team in accordance with the principles of interdependency for the establishment of an environment that is safe for health.
- (2) For the purposes of subregulation (1) the acts of an environmental health officer shall pertain to-
  - (a) general or environmental hygiene which is applicable to the population and which consists mainly of the provision of dwellings that are safe for health, sewerage, rubbish removal, the disposal of effluent and healthy hygienically handled foodstuffs and supervision over environmental health factors which may have a detrimental effect on the population;
  - (b) industrial hygiene, a branch of general hygiene, which concerns the provisions of healthy working conditions in industries and the prevention of occupational diseases and accidents and which includes operational and factory hygiene.
- 3. The regulations published under Government Notice No. R.2610 of 29 December 1978 are hereby withdrawn.

## **ANNEXURE**

### **SCOPE OF PRACTICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS**

In addition to the scope of the profession as prescribed in the regulations, the following acts fall within the scope of practice of environmental health practitioners.

Environmental health services include performance of the following acts:

#### **(1) WATER MONITORING**

- (a) Monitoring water quality and availability, including mapping water sources and enforcing laws and regulations related to water quality management;
- (b) ensuring water safety and accessibility in respect of a safe quality (microbiological, physical and chemical) and an adequate quantity for domestic use as well as in respect of the quality for recreational, industrial, food production and any other human or animal use;
- (c) promoting access to water for all communities by providing inputs toward the planning, design and management of the water supply system and ensuring healthy community water supplies through surveillance;
- (d) ensuring monitoring of effective waste water treatment and water pollution control, including the collection, treatment and safe disposal of sewage and other water-borne

waste, and surveillance of the quality of surface water (including sea water) and ground water;

(e) advocating proper and safe water usage and waste water disposal;

(f) sampling and testing water in the field and examining and analysing it in a laboratory.

## **(2) FOOD CONTROL**

(a) Ensuring food safety in respect of acceptable microbiological and chemical standards, quality of all food for human consumption and optimal hygiene control throughout the food supply chain from the point of origin, all primary raw material or raw products production, up to the point of consumption;

(b) inspecting food production, distribution and consumption areas;

(c) monitoring informal food trading;

(d) inspecting food premises and any nuisances emanating therefrom;

(e) enforcing food legislation and the Codex Alimentarius;

(f) applying food quality monitoring programmes and principles through various techniques, e.g. Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points System (HACCP System) audits;

(g) promoting the safe transportation, handling, storage and preparation of foodstuffs used in the Primary School Nutrition Programme (PSNP), prisons, health establishments, at airports, etc.;

(h) promoting the safe handling of meat and meat products through, amongst others, meat inspections and examination of abattoirs;

(i) promoting the safe handling of milk and milk products.

## **(3) WASTE MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL HYGIENE MONITORING**

(a) Ensuring proper refuse storage, collection, transportation, transfer and processing, materials recovery, and final disposal;

(b) ensuring proper management of liquid waste including sewage and industrial effluents;

(c) ensuring the proper storage, treatment, collection, transportation, handling and disposal of medical waste and hazardous waste;

- (d) sampling and analysing any waste or waste product such as sewage or refuse;
- (e) investigating and inspecting any activity relating to the waste stream or any product resulting therefrom;
- (f) advocating proper sanitation;
- (g) controlling the handling and disposal of diseased animal tissue;
- (h) ensuring safe usage of treated sewage sludge and ensuring that reclaimed waste is safe for health;
- (i) ensuring waste management including auditing of waste management systems and adherence to the 'cradle-to-grave' approach.

#### **(4) HEALTH SURVEILLANCE OF PREMISES**

- (a) Conducting environmental health impact assessments of, amongst others, housing projects;
- (b) assessing aspects such as ventilation and indoor air quality, lighting, moisture-proofing, thermal quality, structural safety and floor space;
- (c) assessing overcrowded, dirty or other unsatisfactory health conditions on any residential, commercial, industrial or other occupied premises;
- (d) monitoring all buildings and all other permanent or temporary physical structures used for residential, public or institutional purposes (including health care and other care, detainment, work and recreation, travel, tourism, holidaying and camping) and the facilities in connection therewith and the immediate precincts;
- (e) ensuring urban and rural land-use planning and practices that are conducive to sustainable development by conducting sound environmental health impact and other assessments;
- (f) ensuring the prevention and abatement of any condition on any premises, which is likely to constitute a health hazard;
- (g) ensuring the health safety of public transport facilities such as buses, trains, taxis, boats and aeroplanes as well as all other facilities in connection therewith;
- (h) ensuring compliance with the principles of Local Agenda 21 and the Healthy Cities approach to integrated service rendering and the practical minimising of any environmental health risk.

**(5) SURVEILLANCE AND PREVENTION OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASES, EXCLUDING IMMUNISATIONS**

- (a) Promoting health and hygiene, aiming at preventing environmentally induced diseases and related communicable diseases;
- (b) collecting, analysing and disseminating epidemiological data and information;
- (c) using the Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) training approaches and any other educational training programmes or approaches for effectual control measures at community level;
- (d) conducting epidemiological surveillance of diseases;
- (e) establishing an effective environmental health surveillance and information system within the different spheres of governance;
- (f) developing environmental health measures, including protocols, with reference to epidemics, emergencies, diseases and migrations of populations.

**(6) VECTOR CONTROL MONITORING**

- (a) Identifying vectors, their habitats and breeding places;
- (b) conducting vector control in the interest of public health, including control of arthropods, molluscs, rodents and other alternative hosts of diseases;
- (c) removing or remedying conditions resulting in or favouring the prevalence of or increase in rodents, insects, disease carriers or pests;
- (d) ensuring the residual spraying of premises and precincts;
- (e) investigating zoonotic diseases and vector-borne diseases in the working and living environment;
- (f) surveying imported cargo and livestock for the prevalence of disease vectors;
- (g) undertaking serological testing of rodents, dogs and other pets or animals.

**(7) ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION CONTROL**

- (a) Ensuring hygienic working, living and recreational environments;
- (b) identifying the polluting agents and sources of water, air and soil pollution;

- (c) conducting environmental health impact assessments of development projects and policies, including assessments of major hazard installations;
- (d) identifying environmental health hazards and conducting risk assessment and mapping thereof;
- (e) preventing accidents, e.g. owing to paraffin usage;
- (f) approving environmental health impact assessment reports and commenting on environmental impact assessment applications;
- (g) ensuring clean and safe air externally (ambient and point sources) through emission inventory monitoring, modelling and toxicological reports, reviews and complaint investigations;
- (h) controlling and preventing vibration and noise pollution;
- (i) preventing and controlling soil pollution that is detrimental to human, animal or plant life;
- (j) ensuring compliance with the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 (Act No. 85 of 1993), and its regulations, including anticipating, identifying, evaluating and controlling occupational hazards;
- (k) taking the required preventative measures to ensure that the general environment is free from health risks;
- (l) ensuring the registration, permitting, monitoring and auditing of all industries, activities, trade, etc., which involves controlling the internal effects of pollution on the worker and the external effects of pollution on the community and the environment;
- (m) monitoring management of infrastructure integrity, including management of the infrastructure integrity of pipelines and tanks;
- (n) ensuring, jointly with other role players, a readiness for abnormal operating conditions and disasters;
- (o) developing sustainable indicators appropriate for monitoring the effectiveness of environmental management systems of industries.

## **(8) DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD**

- (a) Controlling, restricting or prohibiting the business of an undertaker or embalmer, mortuaries and other places or facilities for the storage of dead bodies;

- (b) monitoring practices at cemeteries, crematoria and other facilities used for the disposal of dead bodies;
- (c) managing, controlling and monitoring exhumations and reburials or the disposal of human remains.

#### **(9) CHEMICAL SAFETY**

- (a) Monitoring and regulating all operators, fumigation firms and formal and informal retailers that deal with the manufacture, application, transport and storage of chemicals;
- (b) permitting, licensing and auditing the premises of the above, e.g. by issuing Scheduled Trade Permits;
- (c) facilitating advice, education and training on pesticides and/or chemical safety.

#### **(10) NOISE CONTROL**

- (a) Assessing the extent of noise pollution and its effects on human health;
- (b) facilitating noise control measures;
- (c) measuring ambient sound levels and noise levels.

#### **(11) RADIATION (IONISING AND NON-IONISING) MONITORING AND CONTROL**

- (a) Ensuring ionising and non-ionising radiation sources are registered with the Department of Health;
- (b) ensuring registered ionising and non-ionising sources meet licence conditions;
- (c) monitoring the safe transportation of radioactive material to ensure compliance;
- (d) ensuring radioactive sources are licenced at the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (NECSA);
- (e) ensuring the proper disposal of all radiation waste materials from hospitals and other licensed establishments;
- (f) ensuring protection against any form or sources of electromagnetic radiation.

#### **(12) PORT HEALTH**

- (a) Monitoring, inspecting, sampling and labelling all imported foodstuffs, cosmetics and disinfectants at all ports of entry (harbours and border posts);

- (b) monitoring all imported foodstuffs, cosmetics and disinfectants for which a certificate of approval is required;
- (c) sampling foodstuffs consumed on board all aeroplanes and ships;
- (d) monitoring, inspecting and sampling (for chemical and bacteria testing purposes) all maize and wheat imports;
- (e) monitoring continuous rodent and vector control at airports and harbours;
- (f) monitoring imports of used pneumatic tyres for the prevalence of mosquitoes such as the Aedes species (vectors for yellow fever, dengue fever and encephalitis);
- (g) providing a continuous vaccination programme for seafarers at all ports;
- (h) monitoring and inspecting all hazardous cargo entering the country;
- (i) monitoring and preventing communicable diseases on a 24 hour-basis;
- (j) monitoring water on board ships to ensure that it is safe for human consumption;
- (k) monitoring food wastes and medical waste for disposal.

### **(13) MALARIA CONTROL**

- (a) Ensuring, developing and implementing a malaria control programme for the country, thus lowering parasite levels in the population and preventing deaths through rapid diagnosis and prompt treatment;
- (b) ensuring a continued active and feasible malaria surveillance programme;
- (c) carrying out house-to-house surveys to actively detect malaria cases;
- (d) ensuring blood smears are taken from foreigners and people who have visited malaria-endemic countries for malaria parasitaemia screening;
- (e) ensuring randomised screening of the population by blood sampling for testing during seasonal changes in high-risk malaria areas;
- (f) carrying out epidemiological surveys to research the extent of transmission and gather data on the infected population;
- (g) undertaking vector control on an annual basis by application of residual insecticides on inner wall surfaces, roofs and eaves of dwellings in malaria areas;



(h) conducting continued health education and awareness programmes on malaria, for example by distributing pamphlets and launching campaigns.

#### **(14) CONTROL AND MONITORING OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES**

(a) Ensuring the correct labelling of hazardous substances;

(b) ensuring all active ingredients are indicated;

(c) ensuring warning signs are indicated;

(d) ensuring precautions are taken during storage and transportation, and the appropriate protective gear is used during handling;

(e) ensuring all hazardous substances are registered with the Departments of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs and Tourism;

(f) ensuring hazardous substances control to prevent injury, ill-health or death by reason of the toxic, corrosive, irritant or flammable nature of substances;

(g) ensuring control over the importation, manufacture, sale, operation, application, modification or dumping of such substances;

(h) ensuring premises are licenced and registered with the appropriate authorities;

(i) inspecting premises to ensure compliance with safety, storage and other precaution measures;

(j) ensuring sampling is done according to approved procedures;

(k) ensuring all labelling regulations are complied with;

(l) checking all stock records and ensuring the hazardous substance register is up to date;

(m) ensuring that empty containers are disposed of according to statutory requirements.

[Annexure added by GN R698/2009]