

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT PARTICIPATION IN INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE

Full time industrial hygiene activities at the local level are not widespread at the present time, although there is a definite movement to bring local health departments more into the picture, particularly in view of the possible passage of federal legislation aimed at strengthening local health departments. Twelve city and county health departments have industrial hygiene units of their own, ranging in size from one hygienist to the full complement of professional personnel found in St. Louis, Baltimore, Detroit, and Los Angeles County. Although the local units are administratively autonomous, their programs are generally integrated with those of the state units. As a matter of fact, most of the smaller local units depend entirely on state facilities for laboratory work and for much of the necessary field equipment.

Various types of working relationships prevail between the state units and those local health departments which do not provide for separate industrial hygiene services. As a rule, the state agencies keep local health officers informed of prospective services to industries in their areas and invite their participation. Copies of plant reports are usually sent to the local health officers either to inform them or to be referred by them to plant management. In the several states that have decentralized their central staffs, such as Michigan, Illinois, and Texas, the local health departments physically house the district personnel. Local health departments have assisted state industrial hygiene personnel in dealing with sanitation problems in industrial plants and nuisance complaints, in air pollution control, in industrial waste disposal, in determining the extent to which industry has complied with recommendations, in distributing educational materials, locating new industries or establishments for special studies, following up cases of tuberculosis and venereal disease among workers, and in furnishing nursing services for demonstrations of small plant part-time nursing services.

Several divisions have gone beyond the usual type of integrated services. For example, the California bureau is encouraging local health departments to establish their own industrial hygiene services when they are justified in doing so. A cooperative county-wide survey was completed in San Diego in 1949, with the result that the health department is ready to initiate its own program, pending the procurement of personnel. The California bureau also routinely distributes to county health departments current information on occupational diseases reported in their jurisdictions. Another illustration is the program under way in Oregon, where all full-time health officers were visited concerning their participation in industrial health activities. Sanitarians in two areas received some preliminary industrial hygiene training, and county-wide surveys are being conducted in other counties to demonstrate the industrial health problem. The New Jersey bureau likewise has been making community-wide surveys in cooperation with local health departments as a means of enlisting the participation of local county health departments in the industrial health program.

The Kentucky division solicited local aid in obtaining information for a state-wide survey of health and medical services in industry. The counties responded by providing trained sanitarians, who are now making industrial sanitation inspections for which special forms have been developed as a guide. Arrangements have also