

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
California Environmental Protection Agency

Strategic Plan: 2018 Update



Message from the Director

In a changing landscape of environmental threats, California remains both a land of promise and a state that is unwavering in its commitment to environmental protection. The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)—through the work of its talented and dedicated staff—is playing an increasingly important role in advancing the state’s commitment. We are dedicated to using science to inform good decisions and protect public health, particularly for the state’s most vulnerable communities and populations.



By providing the scientific foundation for the regulatory and other activities of the boards and departments in the California Environmental Protection Agency, we contribute to efforts to address climate change, improve the quality of our air and water, ensure pesticides are used safely, and clean up contamination. We also help ensure that Californians are informed about chemical exposures and the steps they can take to reduce those exposures. Science is—of course—always evolving, and we are ensuring that we can use new types of scientific data and confront emerging environmental challenges.

We remain mindful that there is still much work to do. Many communities remain subject to disproportionate pollution burdens and vulnerabilities. In light of this, environmental justice and children’s health are key considerations in all of our activities.

This strategic plan outlines the strategies for our collective work. We are guided by principles of accountability, credibility, innovation, integrity, objectivity, and respect for a range of opinions, open and cooperative communication, respect for staff, rigorous scientific analysis, and support for advancing environmental justice.

In recent years, OEHHA has made many important contributions to public health. I am confident that through our shared endeavors, we will continue to produce world-class science to support protections and improvements to the environment for Californians.

Lauren Zeise, PhD
Director

OEHHA Strategic Plan: 2018 Update

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About OEHHA

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) is one of six constituent organizations of the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA). OEHHA is the lead state agency assessing health risks posed by hazardous substances.

To fulfill this role, we provide scientific expertise to all CalEPA boards and departments and to state and local agencies to assist them in making regulatory and public health

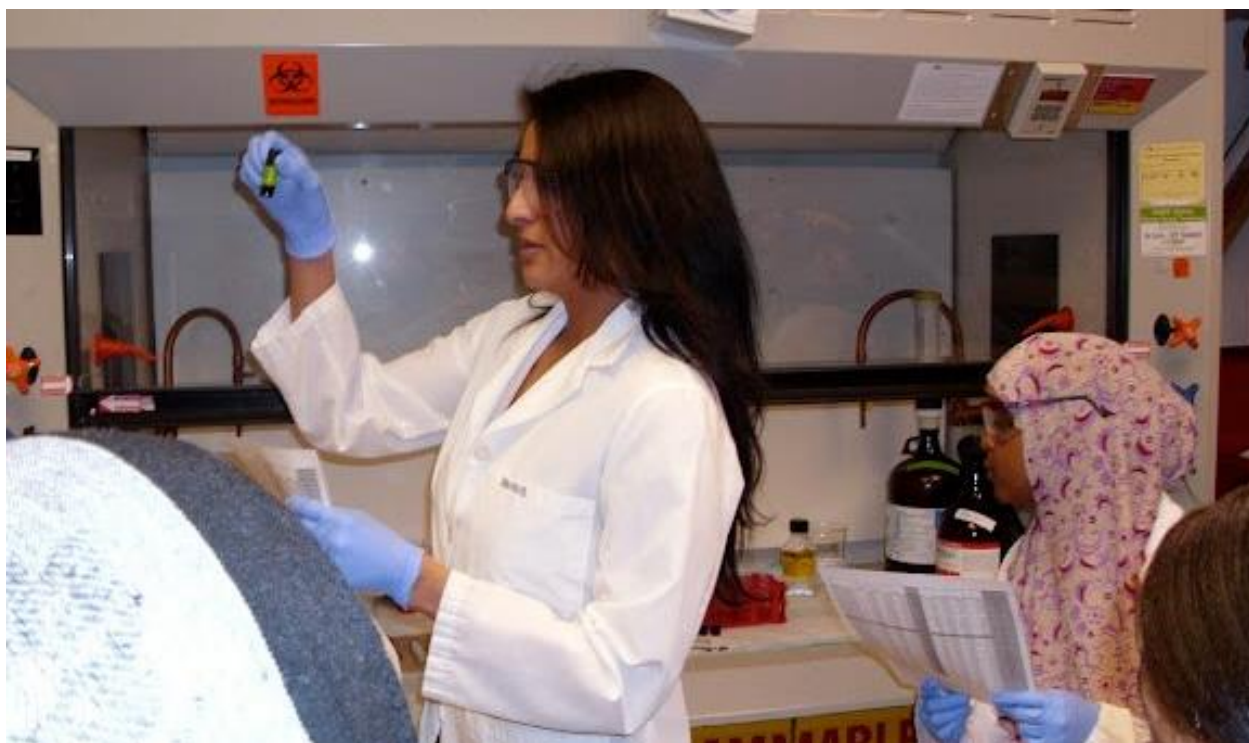


decisions. We also work with federal agencies, the scientific community, industry, and the general public on environmental and public health issues. Our additional responsibilities

include implementing the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, better known as Proposition 65.

OEHHA's Division of Scientific Programs is comprised of four branches: Air and Site Assessment and Climate Indicators; Community and Environmental Epidemiology Research; Reproductive and Cancer Hazard Assessment; and Pesticides and Environmental Toxicology. Our scientific staff hold master's and doctoral degrees in public health, science, or medicine. OEHHA's Office of External and Legislative Affairs also includes implementation support for Proposition 65. The Office of the Chief Counsel provides legal advice to support OEHHA's programs. OEHHA's Administrative Services Division coordinates the work of its four branches: Information Technology; Fiscal Services; Contracts and Business Services; and Human Resources.

OEHHA's main office is located in the Joe Serna Jr. CalEPA Headquarters Building in downtown Sacramento. A second office is in the Elihu Harris State Building in downtown Oakland.



OEHHA's 2018 Strategic Plan Update: Guided by Vision, Mission and Values

This strategic plan charts the direction we will take to accomplish our governing mission. The plan consists of four primary goals. Each goal is supported by a hierarchy of objectives and strategies intended to address California's environmental and human health challenges in the air, in the water, on land, and in communities.

Mission

Our mission is to protect and enhance the health of Californians and our state's environment through scientific evaluations that inform, support and guide regulatory and other actions.

Vision

Our vision is to be California's leading scientific organization for evaluating environmental risks to health, and to provide scientific tools to ensure a California where people of all races, cultures, and incomes are protected from undue chemical exposures.



Values

OEHHA developed this plan keeping in mind CalEPA's balanced approach towards advancing environmental protection and economic vitality in California.

The following principles guide OEHHA in meeting the goals and objectives of the strategic plan:

- Accountability in programs and activities
- Credibility in scientific findings and reports
- Honesty in actions and communications
- Innovation across scientific disciplines
- Integrity in all arenas
- Objectivity and respect for a range of opinions
- Open and cooperative communication
- Respect for staff
- Stewardship for wildlife and ecosystems
- Rigorous scientific analysis
- Support for advancing environmental justice and tribal relationships

Guiding Strategies

These are the guiding strategies for advancing our mission and vision, acting in accordance with our values, and achieving our goals:

- Consistently use rigorous science to inform good decisions
- Integrate environmental justice considerations in analyses and evaluations
- Act in timely, transparent, consistent, and equitable manner
- Maximize our program effectiveness through strong internal coordination and external collaboration
- Provide useful and timely information to the public
- Ensure opportunities for public participation that can meaningfully inform work products
- Make use of the advances in scientific knowledge, understanding, and techniques to develop risk assessment guidelines and methods
- Identify and research ways to address emerging environmental challenges

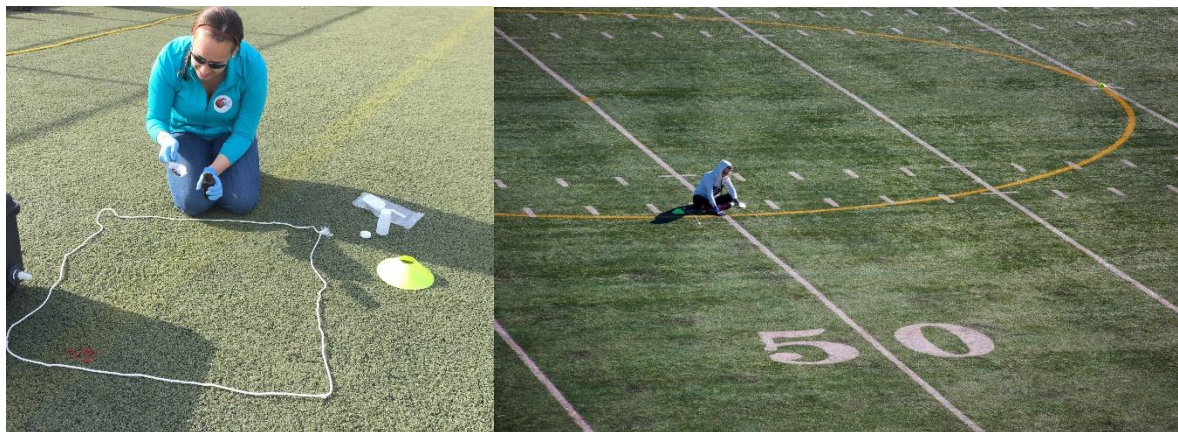
Goals

In fulfilling our mandate to protect the public's health and the environment, we assess contaminants in all environmental media, including air, water, and land as well as in consumer products and food. Much of OEHHA's work is linked to the activities of other boards and departments within CalEPA to reduce the risks to people and the environment from chemical exposures. Our work also furthers science in our own areas of expertise. This section discusses the larger context of the Agency's shared environmental work and how OEHHA's activities support broader objectives and the Agency's mission to restore, protect, and enhance the environment, to ensure public health, environmental quality, and economic vitality. Our sister boards and departments fulfill this mission by developing, implementing, and enforcing environmental laws that regulate air, water, and soil quality, pesticide use and waste recycling and reduction.

The following four goals encompass the priorities we have established for our strategic plan and illustrate our responsibilities as well as our role as a national leader in the field of health risk assessment:

Goal 1: Improve the quality of the public's health and the environment

OEHHA's primary responsibility is to provide the scientific basis to protect the public's health and the environment. We do not issue permits or implement enforcement actions, as we are not a "traditional" regulatory agency. Rather, our role is to provide California with the scientific information necessary for making sound decisions involving public and environmental health related to risks posed by exposure to toxic substances.



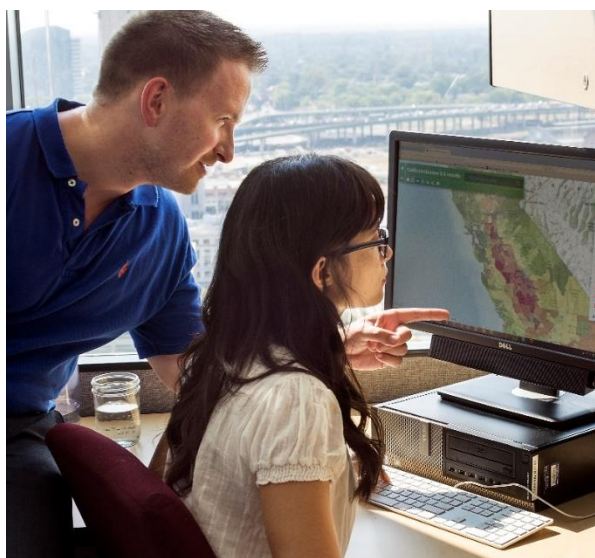
OEHHA Scientists sample artificial turf on a soccer field for health study

For example, chemical listings under our Proposition 65 program (the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986) often result in voluntary reformulation of products or reductions in exposure. As a result of recent OEHHA regulations and other activities, we expect that improved Proposition 65 warnings and supplemental information on our new Proposition 65 website (<http://p65warnings.ca.gov>) will help the public make better-informed decisions on buying products or frequenting locations where they may be exposed to chemicals that cause cancer or reproductive harm.

Goal 2: Advance the science for the evaluation of risks posed to the public health and environment, and provide risk assessment leadership for the State of California.

Through risk assessments, OEHHA identifies chemical hazards and guides regulatory agencies in developing and revising chemical exposure rulemakings, including standards for air pollutants, drinking water contaminants, hazardous waste remediation and disposal, and pesticide use. As the lead risk assessment authority for California, we recognize our responsibility for developing and promoting scientific knowledge and advancements that will enable us to better assess potential risks related to exposure to toxic substances. OEHHA will work to advance scientific methods and discourse for risk assessment processes.

We will continue to investigate and assess the health effects of exposures to air pollutants, pesticides, drinking water contaminants and other hazardous substances to



CalEnviroScreen staff and the mapping tool

determine potential environmental causes of disease and mortality. These assessments allow us to develop health-based guidelines for affected areas and activities, as well as for sensitive populations, such as children and the elderly. To promote environmental justice, we will provide expertise to other CalEPA organizations to minimize any disproportionate impacts that hazardous substances may have on low-income and other disadvantaged communities.

Goal 3: Provide high quality information about environmental health hazards to the public.

Through our various programs, such as the Proposition 65 program, sport fish advisories, the Children's Environmental Health Center, the California Communities Environmental Health Screening (CalEnviroScreen) tool and support for the Biomonitoring California program, we inform the public about risks and impacts related to exposures to environmental pollutants



*Volunteers help distribute OEHHA's fish advisories.
(Photo courtesy of Sierra Fund)*

and provide compliance assistance to businesses subject to the Proposition 65 program.

Goal 4: Effectively and efficiently use of our internal resources to accomplish our mission.

We recognize that without sufficient staff training and development, recruitment and retention and an efficient infrastructure, we cannot accomplish the three goals above. We will continue to mentor graduate students at OEHHA, and give lectures in risk assessment and related topics at colleges and universities. This will introduce the Office's work to a broader audience and encourage students to pursue careers with the office. With our goals in mind, we will also promote staff training, update and improve office procedures, and collaborate with other state organizations to integrate and improve our information technology systems.



Public workshop on CalEnviroScreen

OEHHA's Strategic Activities

Goal 1: Improve the quality of public health and our environment

CalEPA's Boards and Departments engage in a number of regulatory activities aimed at achieving this goal. OEHHA aids in their efforts to protect public health and the environment through the following activities.

Activities

Water

- Develop public health goals for drinking water.
- Develop a screening tool for evaluation of drinking water quality, affordability, and accessibility in localities throughout California, complementing the State Water Resources Control Board's Human Right to Water Portal.



Air

- Develop health-based advisory levels for toxic contaminants emitted into the air and ensure they are sufficiently protective of children.
- Recommend protective ambient air quality standards for adoption by the Air Resources Board (ARB).



OEHHA scientist participates in response to oil spill, evaluating fish consumption hazards

Risk Assessments

- Provide support to state and local government agencies, and other stakeholders, on risk assessment, including a special assessment of the possible health effects of synthetic athletic turf on student and adult users.
- Make recommendations to the Department of Fish and Wildlife on the closure and reopening of fisheries following oil spills and during periods of harmful algal blooms.
- Develop child specific toxicity criteria for chemicals that may be found at school sites.

- Identify threshold quantities for reporting and toxic endpoints for prevention of accidental releases of hazardous substances.

Environmental Justice

- Identify California communities with the highest pollution burdens and vulnerabilities, such as with the CalEnviroScreen tool, in order to support CalEPA's boards and departments and other entities in using this information to inform their activities and decisionmaking.



CalEnviroScreen 3.0

Pesticides

- Conduct peer reviews of Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) risk assessments for pesticides.
- Work collaboratively with DPR on the development of regulations for pesticide worker health and safety.
- Train California physicians to recognize pesticide illness and register those who monitor cholinesterase levels in pesticide workers.
- Provide advice and scientific support to the Department of Food and Agriculture in its use of pesticides to control and eradicate invasive pests.

Proposition 65

- Manage and update the state's Proposition 65 list of chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects and other reproductive harm.
- Develop Maximum Allowable Dose Levels and No Significant Risk Levels for listed chemicals under Proposition 65 to inform the public about safe levels and help guide compliance with Proposition 65.



OEHHA's Chief Counsel at a regulatory hearing

Goal 2: Advance the science for the evaluation of risks posed to the public health and environment, and provide risk assessment leadership for the State of California

This goal is linked to a number of broader objectives, which include efforts to ensure all environmental protection activities are based on scientific principles, and understanding the impacts of chemicals and pollution on vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, children, and disadvantaged communities.

Activities

- Identify and update indicators of the impacts that climate change is having on California.
- Investigate the effects of air pollutants and climate change on human health, including heat exposure, wildfires and drought
- Collaborate with the Departments of Public Health and Toxic Substances Control on measuring levels of environmental chemicals in Californians.
- Develop, maintain, and update guidelines for risk assessments, as needed, for:
 - Chemical risks to wildlife and ecosystems
 - Toxicants that may affect infants and children
 - New and proposed school sites
 - High-volume chemicals, such as fuel additives using life cycle analysis
 - Air pollutants from facilities subject to the Air Toxics Hot Spots program
- Develop, improve, and define methods and sources of information for risk assessment, such as databases and models, to enhance and streamline efforts of CalEPA, its boards and departments, and others, to predict the effects of chemicals on humans and wildlife.
- Incorporate changes to risk assessment guidelines and methods regarding parameters that recognize and protect susceptible populations.



- Create opportunities for, and participate in, an active exchange of ideas and information among the scientific community.

Goal 3: Provide high quality information about environmental health hazards to the public

This goal is linked to efforts to inform the public about chemical pollutants in the environment and how California residents can reduce their exposures, businesses about sustainable business practices, and governmental efforts to address pollution burdens and vulnerabilities in California.

Activities

- Develop advisories for the consumption of sport fish and safe-eating guidelines for fish caught in California's lakes, rivers and bays, and along its coastline.
- Provide recommendations on fisheries closures and re-openings in response to oil spills and the accumulation of toxic substances.



- Maintain and develop a website with information for the public on chemicals listed under Proposition 65, products and locations commonly associated with exposures to those chemicals, and ways to reduce or avoid exposures to those chemicals.
- Assist businesses with assessments and guidelines that help determine when Proposition 65 warnings are required.
- Train physicians and other medical professionals on the recognition, management and reporting of pesticide illnesses.



chemicals in Californians, and ways to reduce or avoid exposures to those chemicals.

- Operate a website with information for the public on environmental chemicals tracked by Biomonitoring California, the state's program that measures levels of these

- Identify art and craft materials containing toxic substances and list materials not to be purchased in schools for grades K-6.
- Post interactive maps and related information with CalEnviroScreen results on OEHHA's website so that Californians can learn more about pollution levels and vulnerabilities in their community, and how their locality compares to others throughout the state.
- Expand external communication and outreach programs.
- Seek public feedback to improve customer service and improve communications with stakeholders so that they have a better understanding of OEHHA's actions and to ensure the transparency of our actions.
- Increase public awareness of OEHHA's programs through expanded distribution of current advisories, fact sheets, press releases, website postings, and other publications in multi languages as appropriate.
- Actively support efforts of CalEPA and its boards and departments to ensure environmental justice for California inhabitants.
- Train staff in the principles of environmental justice and their relationship to our mission.

Goal 4: Effectively and efficiently use internal resources to accomplish our mission

This goal is supported by efforts to recruit and retain highly qualified scientists and other professionals.

Activities

- Recruit and retain qualified employees.
- Ensure timely and appropriate exams are given to fill positions and promote staff in critical classifications.
- Expand recruitment advertising efforts.
- Promote training and other opportunities to enhance professional growth.
- Review, and revise as appropriate, department administrative policies and procedures.
- Ensure all fiscal activities are accurately completed and made available, in a timely

manner, to appropriate staff.

- Strengthen internal communication and collaboration. Recognize employees for their good work.
- Streamline contracting and business services procedures to more effectively and efficiently process contracts and perform other procurement activities.
- Promote a "green" working environment.
- Identify and assess current and projected resource needs for all new and expanded mandates.
- Identify and pursue appropriate funding sources for all mandated work. Ensure all approved work for outside entities is appropriately reimbursed. Seek additional funding resources for unfunded program activities.
- Improve staff members' use and understanding of information technology and tools, particularly internet-based applications, to meet OEHHA's mission.
- Provide an integrated system to support increased access to the OEHHA's internal business applications.
- Enhance the OEHHA's network architecture in the CalEPA building's shared network environment.



Performance Measures: How will we measure success?

We will derive several performance measures to determine how well we are achieving our priorities. These measures will help us to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of our internal processes and financial management. The measures will incorporate the collection and analysis of data on office functions and employee satisfaction.

We will also communicate with government agencies, industry, the scientific community, and the public regarding our services to help us determine where our operations need improvement. Measuring the following elements will help us gauge our effectiveness:

- The use of OEHHA work products by the public, including information presented on our main website such as fish advisories and CalEnviroScreen results; the Proposition 65 warnings website; the Biomonitoring California website; and fact sheets on pesticides used to control or eradicate invasive pests.
- Frequency with which agencies adopt or refer to our work products, guidance, or other criteria.
- Feedback from our stakeholders on the openness, clarity, and thoroughness of our decision-making process.
- Overall ability to accomplish legislative mandates within sufficient time frames.
- Number of staff serving on or making presentations to professional advisory committees, panels, and meetings.
- Participation in and feedback from our workshops and other public meetings and participants' increased knowledge and awareness of environmental health hazards.
- Distribution of our publications and visits to our website.
- Overall satisfaction of support provided to our sister CalEPA boards and departments.



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California Environmental Protection Agency**

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