

Making the Workplace Safer, One Graduate at a Time

By Anna Mangum

Take a minute and think about how different life was in the 1960s and 70s. It was a different time with different priorities and in some ways, a whole different world. One major difference between today and 40 years ago is how we work and interact with our environment. 1970 marked the year that this interaction changed. It was the year that started the two regulatory agencies that protect the American workforce and the environment, OSHA and the EPA.

Now more than ever, companies and the American people have proven that they value both safety and the environment. Therefore, the need for environmental, health and safety professionals is growing every year.

As the number of environmental, health and safety professionals grows in North Carolina, there is one professional development program that stands above the rest, the Manager of Environmental Safety and Health (MESH) certificate program.

Starting in 1996, North Carolina State University partnered with the North Carolina Department of Labor and the Safety and Health Council of North Carolina to create a certificate program for environmental, health and safety professionals around the state. The program consists of 100 hours of training on issues ranging from ergonomics, to indoor air quality, environmental chemistry, emergency management, and accident investigation. The program has been a tremendous success with over 1,000 MESH graduates in 12 years. There was even a demand for an advanced program along with a construction program, which were both added in recent years.

In November of 2008, I represented North Carolina State University and the Industrial Extension Service at the Safety and Health Council Congress in Charlotte, North Carolina. Being new to IES and fairly new to the MESH program, I was surprised at what I found over the 2 day congress. This was a gathering of seasoned safety professionals throughout North Carolina. My booth was visited by over 100 graduates of the MESH, Advanced MESH and Construction MESH programs from all different industries and backgrounds. Each graduate demonstrated such pride in their accomplishments and made me feel so honored to be the new MESH coordinator for NC State. This certificate program is truly valued and recognized among the environmental, health and safety community.

North Carolina's Commissioner of Labor Cherie Berry said, "The certificate reflects a commitment to workplace safety and health, an objective that we consider essential in making sure that workers in this state go home safe at the end of the workday."

For the environmental, health and safety professionals in North Carolina that are not a part of the MESH program, I highly encourage you to learn more. The best way to find out is to visit the MESH website at <http://www.ies.ncsu.edu/mesh/meshcertificate.cfm>. As the MESH coordinator, I would also be happy to answer any questions you may have about the program. You can contact me via e-mail or phone.

MESH even has a Facebook page. To become a fan, search NC State University MESH. I am always eager to talk and interact with our MESH students and prospective students.

Anna Mangum is an NC State graduate in environmental technology with a minor in toxicology. Prior to accepting the position as NC State's MESH coordinator and environmental, health and safety specialist, Anna conducted research at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. There, she focused her research on familial pulmonary fibrosis and molecular genetics. She also completed an internship with the NC State IES, environmental, health and safety group focusing on HazWOPER and landscaping safety.