NEHA Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS) Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide

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Questions

1. What chlorine concentration in drinking water would be considered excessive?

A. Excessive

B. Just right

C. Too low

D. Would not kill E. coli

2. What is the primary concern regarding leachate in landfill management?

A. Exposure to wildlife

B. Contamination of water supplies

C. Cost of management

D. Volume of waste

3. What key design factor should be considered for public pools?

A. To fit the expected numbers of swimmers

B. With oversized filters for unexpected peak demands

C. With oversized pumps for peak demands

D. With a variety of filter options for the operator

4. What aspect of CFCs is responsible for their widespread use?

A. Chemical stability

B. Cost effectiveness

C. Environmental impact

D. Efficiency in use

5. When should a warrant for a routine inspection of a private dwelling be obtained?

A. After working hours

B. After consent has been refused

C. When surprise is important

D. In an emergency

6. What aspect is not covered by the Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act?

- **A. Municipal wells**
- **B. County reservoirs**
- **C. Private wells**
- **D. Public water systems**

7. How often should water quality testing be conducted in a public water system?

- **A. Annually**
- **B. Monthly**
- **C. Weekly**
- **D. Daily**

8. Xeriscape landscaping involves what type of plant selection?

- **A. Using rocks as the basis for yard landscapes**
- **B. Eliminating the use of trees in yards for landscaping**
- **C. Selecting plants that can thrive on natural precipitation**
- **D. Using sand as the basis for all landscaping needs**

9. Which of the following would be classified as a non-transient, non-community water system (NTNCWS)?

- **A. Water supply serving a campground**
- **B. Water supply serving a small city**
- **C. Water supply serving a highway rest area**
- **D. Water supply serving a factory with at least 25 employees**

10. Why is burning off poisonous plants not advisable?

- **A. Smoke will carry particles long distances and spread the infection**
- **B. It causes severe allergic reactions to bystanders**
- **C. It is illegal in many areas**
- **D. It does not effectively eliminate the plants**

Answers

1. A
2. B
3. A
4. A
5. B
6. C
7. B
8. C
9. D
10. A

Explanations

1. What chlorine concentration in drinking water would be considered excessive?

A. Excessive

B. Just right

C. Too low

D. Would not kill E. coli

Chlorine is commonly used in municipal water systems as a disinfectant to kill harmful bacteria, including E. coli, and to ensure that drinking water remains safe. However, there are established guidelines regarding the acceptable levels of chlorine in drinking water to balance effective disinfection and consumer safety. When considering what constitutes an excessive chlorine concentration in drinking water, it's important to refer to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations. The EPA recommends that the residual chlorine levels in drinking water should not exceed 4.0 mg/L (milligrams per liter) for safety reasons. Concentrations above this level can create a variety of health risks and unpleasant side effects, such as water with a strong chemical taste and possible irritations to skin and mucous membranes. The correct identification of excessive chlorine aligns with the understanding of these safety parameters. Therefore, a designation of "excessive" refers to any concentration that significantly exceeds this limit, posing a threat to health and making the water less palatable. This understanding connects to the broader context of water quality management, emphasizing the importance of maintaining appropriate chemical levels to ensure both safety and public confidence in drinking water supplies.

2. What is the primary concern regarding leachate in landfill management?

A. Exposure to wildlife

B. Contamination of water supplies

C. Cost of management

D. Volume of waste

The primary concern regarding leachate in landfill management is the contamination of water supplies. Leachate is the liquid that percolates through waste and comes into contact with it, resulting in the dissolution of various substances, including harmful chemicals and pathogens. If leachate is not managed properly, it can infiltrate the surrounding soil and groundwater, posing significant risks to both drinking water sources and aquatic ecosystems. Contamination of water supplies is especially critical because it can lead to serious public health issues, such as exposure to toxic substances and diseases. Ensuring that leachate is adequately treated and contained is essential for protecting environmental health and maintaining the safety of water resources. Effective leachate management practices, such as utilizing liners, leachate collection systems, and treatment technologies, are vital to mitigate these risks.

3. What key design factor should be considered for public pools?

A. To fit the expected numbers of swimmers

B. With oversized filters for unexpected peak demands

C. With oversized pumps for peak demands

D. With a variety of filter options for the operator

To ensure the safety and enjoyment of users in public pools, a crucial design consideration is the need to accommodate the expected numbers of swimmers. Designing a pool to fit the anticipated maximum occupancy helps maintain water quality, sanitation, and overall user experience. When a pool is properly sized based on the expected number of swimmers, it allows for sufficient circulation and filtration of the water, reduces the risk of overcrowding, and aligns with safety regulations and standards that prioritize the health and safety of patrons. While other factors, such as having oversized filters and pumps, play essential roles in managing water quality and handling peak demands, the primary focus in the design phase should be on ensuring the facility can appropriately serve the projected number of users. This foundational aspect influences how effectively other components of the pool system function, thereby upholding health and safety requirements in public aquatic facilities.

4. What aspect of CFCs is responsible for their widespread use?

A. Chemical stability

B. Cost effectiveness

C. Environmental impact

D. Efficiency in use

The widespread use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) can largely be attributed to their chemical stability. CFCs are composed of carbon, chlorine, and fluorine, which gives them a structure that is resistant to breakdown under normal environmental conditions. This stability makes them ideal for various applications, including refrigeration, air conditioning, and aerosol propellants, because they do not easily react with other substances. Their ability to remain intact in the atmosphere meant that they could effectively transfer heat without degrading too quickly, which contributed to their initial popularity in consumer products. However, this chemical stability is a double-edged sword, as it also leads to their accumulation in the atmosphere and subsequent harmful effects, such as ozone layer depletion. In contrast, aspects such as cost effectiveness, environmental impact, and efficiency in use, while relevant to the context, do not primarily account for their widespread adoption. CFCs were initially favored for their effectiveness and chemical properties before the environmental impacts became fully understood.

5. When should a warrant for a routine inspection of a private dwelling be obtained?

A. After working hours

B. After consent has been refused

C. When surprise is important

D. In an emergency

The correct answer pertains to the scenario in which consent has been refused. This situation highlights the importance of respecting the legal boundaries surrounding private property while ensuring compliance with health and safety regulations. Obtaining a warrant becomes necessary when an individual has not granted permission for inspection, as this legal document allows for the enforcement of inspection protocols without infringing on individual rights. In cases where consent is denied, officials must secure a warrant to proceed with a routine inspection. This process ensures that the inspection is conducted lawfully and upholds the rights of the property owner while fulfilling the obligations of environmental health specialists to protect public health. Other circumstances, such as conducting inspections after working hours or in emergencies, do not inherently require a warrant since they may rely on different legal justifications or operational needs. Moreover, while surprise inspections might have their own strategic benefits, the primary consideration for acquiring a warrant is the refusal of consent, ensuring that proper legal channels are followed to maintain the integrity of both the inspection process and the rights of individuals.

6. What aspect is not covered by the Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act?

A. Municipal wells

B. County reservoirs

C. Private wells

D. Public water systems

The Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act primarily focus on ensuring the safety and quality of drinking water for public distribution systems. They provide regulations and standards for public water systems, including municipal water supplies and reservoirs that serve communities. Private wells, on the other hand, are typically not regulated under this act. This is because they are not considered part of the public water system and are the responsibility of the individual homeowner to manage. The federal government does not have jurisdiction to enforce standards for private wells, thus establishing a clear distinction between public systems, which receive oversight and regulations to ensure compliance with safety standards, and private wells, which do not have the same level of regulatory oversight. Therefore, private wells are the correct choice as they fall outside the scope of the amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, reflecting the act's focus on public drinking water safety and not on individual, privately-owned sources.

7. How often should water quality testing be conducted in a public water system?

A. Annually

B. Monthly

C. Weekly

D. Daily

Conducting water quality testing in a public water system on a monthly basis is critical for ensuring that the water supply remains safe and meets health standards. This frequency allows for timely detection of any contaminants or variations in water quality that may arise due to environmental changes, maintenance activities, or incidents that could impact the water supply. Monthly testing strikes a balance between being proactive in monitoring water quality and the practicalities of resource allocation such as time, staffing, and costs. Public water systems are subject to regulations that specify the parameters and frequency of water quality assessments based on factors like population served, water source, and historical data of water quality issues. This ensures that trends or patterns indicating potential problems can be addressed rapidly. Conducting tests less frequently, such as annually, wouldn't provide enough data to identify potential issues in a timely manner, particularly in larger systems where changes can be more dynamic. Testing on a weekly or daily basis, while thorough, may not be necessary or feasible for many systems, especially if previous tests show consistent compliance with water quality standards. Hence, monthly testing is a widely accepted standard that allows for effective monitoring and necessary interventions in public water supply safety.

8. Xeriscape landscaping involves what type of plant selection?

A. Using rocks as the basis for yard landscapes

B. Eliminating the use of trees in yards for landscaping

C. Selecting plants that can thrive on natural precipitation

D. Using sand as the basis for all landscaping needs

Xeriscape landscaping focuses on water-efficient gardening practices that utilize plants specially chosen for their ability to thrive in the local climate, especially in areas with low precipitation. Selecting plants that can rely primarily on natural rainfall minimizes the need for additional irrigation, which is essential for sustainable landscaping in arid or semi-arid regions. This method not only conserves water but also supports a more resilient ecosystem by incorporating native and drought-resistant species that are well-adapted to local environmental conditions. This strategy allows homeowners and landscapers to create visually appealing green spaces that require less maintenance and are less stressful for the environment, promoting biodiversity and reducing overall water consumption. Emphasizing the selection of hardy plants that can tolerate dry conditions aligns with the core principles of xeriscaping, making it a practical and eco-friendly approach to landscaping in regions prone to drought.

9. Which of the following would be classified as a non-transient, non-community water system (NTNCWS)?

A. Water supply serving a campground

B. Water supply serving a small city

C. Water supply serving a highway rest area

D. Water supply serving a factory with at least 25 employees

A non-transient, non-community water system (NTNCWS) is defined as a water supply system that regularly serves at least 25 of the same people for at least six months of the year, but it is not a primary residential facility. This characteristic clearly applies to the scenario where a water supply serves a factory with at least 25 employees, as the factory provides consistent water service to a stable group of individuals on a regular basis throughout the year. In contrast, a water supply serving a campground may experience fluctuations in population as visitors come and go, which does not meet the criteria for NTNCWS. Similarly, a water supply that serves a small city is classified as a community water system since it provides water to a residential population, while a water supply serving a highway rest area does not meet the requirement of serving a stable population of at least 25 people consistently throughout the year. Therefore, the situation with the factory aligns perfectly with the definition of a non-transient, non-community water system, making it the correct choice.

10. Why is burning off poisonous plants not advisable?

A. Smoke will carry particles long distances and spread the infection

B. It causes severe allergic reactions to bystanders

C. It is illegal in many areas

D. It does not effectively eliminate the plants

Burning off poisonous plants is not advisable primarily because smoke generated during the combustion process can carry harmful particles over long distances. When poisonous plants such as poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac are burned, the smoke contains urushiol, the toxic oil responsible for skin reactions. This smoke can be inhaled or come into contact with individuals nearby, leading to allergic reactions or respiratory issues. In addition to the immediate health hazards associated with smoke inhalation, the dispersal of toxic particulates can contaminate larger areas, potentially affecting people and wildlife that were not directly in contact with the plants. Thus, the risk of spreading the plant's toxicity through smoke makes burning an ineffective and dangerous method of removal. Other factors, like the possibility of allergens affecting bystanders or legal restrictions on burning in certain areas, do contribute to why this method is discouraged, but the primary concern lies in the health risks posed by airborne particles.