FYI
DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling
For Your Information...

Environmental Careers

Ever think of an environmental career? If you have, the possibilities are, well, out of this world.

An environmental career gives you the opportunity to protect public health and the environment. Not only is this type of job important, it can be very cool.

Where are the jobs?

You may be surprised at all of the places you can work and all of the different kinds of jobs available when considering an environmental career. You can work for local, state and federal government. You can work a in private business or for a non-profit organization. You can teach, do research or both. The possibilities are endless.

The federal government is one of the largest employers of people with environmental careers. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) employs about 18,000 people. But there are many other agencies that have environmental jobs including the U.S. Forest Service (foresters), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (biologists) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (oceanographers and atmospheric scientists). Even the nation's armed forces have environmental career opportunities.

Many more people have environmental jobs in state and local governments than the federal government. Many of the jobs are in areas such as environmental protection, environmental education and outreach, parks and recreation, fisheries and wildlife management, coastal zone management, public health, agriculture, water resources, energy services, emergency response and planning.

Environmental careers are found in many areas of the private sector. You can be an attorney. Environmental law is a specialty in both law schools and law firms. You can work in the media and be an environmental reporter. Larger companies have their own environmental, health and safety departments to deal with federal, state and local laws, pollution prevention and other environmental issues. Many companies are set up to consult – that is, provide technical assistance on environmental issues to clients including government.

In addition, there are thousands of environmental non-profit organizations throughout the country. Most of the non-profits have just a few staff members, but there are several large organizations such as the Nature Conservancy, Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund. Full-time staff positions at some of the best-known environmental non-profit organizations are among the most competitive of all environmental career offerings.

Many people choose teaching for their environmental career. Many teach in elementary, middle and high schools while others teach or do research at colleges or universities.

Career Opportunities at DHEC

The mission of the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is to protect public health and the environment.

That's why DHEC has a combination of health and environmental careers. The quality of the environment impacts the quality of your health. You cannot be healthy if you do not have clean air, water and land. DHEC has many different kinds of jobs and in many ways is like a city. DHEC has attorneys, doctors, nurses, engineers, geologists, hydrologists, accountants, meteorologists, graphic artists and law enforcement officers.

DHEC has epidemiologists who investigate disease outbreaks. DHEC staff inspects restaurants, school cafeterias, dairies, soft drink plants, hospitals, nursing homes as well as waste management and treatment facilities. DHEC staff patrols shellfish beds for illegal harvesting, responds to environmental emergencies and tracks underground storage tanks for possible

pollution. DHEC has staff that develops and offers environmental education programs for schools and the public. DHEC even has drug agents who investigate illegal use of prescription drugs – and all of them are pharmacists.

DHEC has staff that travels frequently and make inspections around the state and people who work in the laboratory every day. Some of the jobs have direct contact with health and environmental issues. Some of the jobs – such as the people who buy supplies, keep track of funding and handle personnel issues – provide the necessary support for the jobs that have direct contact with health and environmental issues.

DHEC also has health and environmental regional offices throughout the state. That means you can work in lots of different places – not just Columbia. Like the coast? You could work in Charleston or Myrtle Beach. If the Upstate sounds better, you could, for example, work in Greenville.

Consider the possibilities.

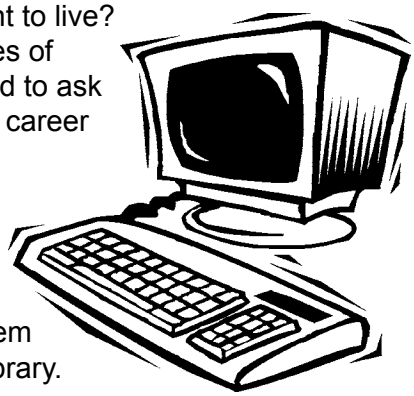
Be smart. Look into all kinds of opportunities. Once you decide what you want to do – go for it. Find a career you love.

No matter what your job, you can always protect the environment.

Think of all the things you can do at home, school and work. Recycle. Buy recycled-content products. Compost. Turn off lights and computers to save energy. Turn off the water while brushing your teeth to conserve water and install water saving devices on your shower. Car pool when possible – it helps keep the air clean by reducing emissions. Better yet, walk or ride a bicycle. Just do your part.

Learn more about environmental careers.

If you could have any job in the world, what would it be? Begin thinking about it. Talk with your parents, teachers and guidance counselors. What skills do you have? What subjects do you like to study? What do you want to study in college? Where do you want to live? These are the types of questions you need to ask when thinking of a career choice.



There are many books available on environmental careers. Check them out at your local library.

There are numerous Web sites that target students about making career choices including the U.S. Department of Labor's Web site at **www.bls.gov/k12/index.htm**.

If you are interested in a career in solid or hazardous waste management, visit this U.S. EPA Web site – **www.epa.gov/epaoswer/education/careers.htm**.

If you would like to look at a sampling of the jobs available in S.C. state government, visit **www.state.sc.us/jobs/agency.html**.

For more information about other DHEC environmental outreach and education programs and materials, visit **www.scdhec.gov/eqc/outreach**.

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1-800-768-7348 ● www.scdhec.gov/recycle

DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling FYIs provide general information on environmental topics. Readers are encouraged to reproduce this material. For more information about solid waste issues, please call **1-800-768-7348** or visit our Web site at **www.scdhec.gov/recycle**. Please send written correspondence to: DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, SC 29201.

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