

THO Exercise Identifying a Public Health Hazard

Group 1

Part A:

You've received a complaint from a town resident that a property within your jurisdiction has a lot of garbage in the yard. The complainant said specifically that there are several broken down vehicles on the site, piles of scrap metal and scrap lumber, and general trash "everywhere." The complainant also said there was a foul sewage smell emanating from the property.

Question 1: Should you inspect and why?

Part B:

Let's say you've chosen to inspect. You arrive at the property to speak to the land owner and conduct an inspection. The property is very remote and there doesn't appear to be another resident for miles. You see at least 5 vehicles on the property and scrap metal and wood in piles scattered throughout the yard. There is some garbage on the property in overflowing garbage cans. You do not notice a sewage smell. When you speak to the property owner he becomes very irate and insists that his ex-wife must have called you to complain because she thinks the truck out back should belong to her. He insists that his septic system is working fine and he refuses to let you go behind the house to look at the leach field.

Question 2: What are your next steps and why?

Question 3: Who could you contact for assistance with this issue?

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Group 2

Part A:

You've received a complaint from a renter within your jurisdiction that their apartment has no running water and the landlord refuses to fix it. They also complain that there is mold throughout the unit and no matter how much they clean, it keeps coming back. Finally, they insist that their landlord is dumping his own personal garbage in the backyard of the apartment building and calling to harass them several times a day.

Question 1: Which issues should you inspect for and try to address?

Part B:

After conducting your inspection you find that there is visible mold in the bathroom, there is no running water, and there is garbage in the back yard in an overflowing dumpster. For the purposes of this exercise, assume all three of those findings are a violation of the Rental Housing Health Code. You call the landlord to discuss what you find and he tells you that the tenant hasn't paid rent in 10 months and that he is trying to evict him. The landlord refuses to have the water turned back on until the tenant pays the back-owed rent. He also insists that the bathroom became moldy because the tenant wouldn't open the window or use the overhead fan when he showered. Finally, he claims that the tenant is responsible for trash removal.

Question 2: What are your next steps and why?

Question 3: Who could you contact for assistance with this issue?

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Group 3

You are driving through town after work and you notice a construction dumpster sitting outside an old abandoned commercial property that is next to several houses and a church. You see a sign that says “Charlie’s Contracting” out front. There aren’t any visible permits posted on the building and you notice they’ve already started scraping paint off of one side. There are paint chips all over the ground in-between the building and a house. You also see what looks like part of an old fuel oil tank in the dumpster and a few puddles of oil on the ground nearby.

Question 1: Is this an issue for a Town Health Officer? Why or why not?

Question 2: What are your next steps and why?

Question 3: Who could you contact for assistance with this issue?