

PUBLIC HEALTH ENVIRONMENTALIST - 20652



HOW TO PREPARE BOOKLET

**State of Alabama Personnel Department
64 North Union Street
PO Box 304100
Montgomery, AL 36130-4100
(334) 242-3389**

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I. Introduction

A written examination is being given in order to establish a register for the classification of Public Health Environmentalist. The purpose of this booklet is to help you prepare for the written exam. Since all the material you will need to take the exam will be provided at test administration, you will not be allowed to bring this booklet to the exam with you.

II. The Job

Public Health Environmentalist positions are with the Department of Public Health, Bureau of Environmental Services. The Bureau's goals and objectives are to enhance the quality of services and products of food, milk and lodging establishments and to enforce State Board of Health rules and policies relating to sewage disposal, vector control, indoor air quality, and lead assessment. Public Health Environmentalist positions are located throughout the state.

Positions within this classification may be in a general or specific field of environmental health such as on-site sewage, food protection, lodging, solid waste, or vector control. Employees in this class are responsible for providing inspection services, collecting samples for laboratory analyses, and investigating complaints. Work is usually performed under the jurisdiction of a local health department and employees receive specific instructions about assignments.

III. The Examination

The examination for this classification is a multiple-choice exam. This multiple-choice exam is designed to measure specific knowledges and abilities. The test is divided into six sections with each section measuring a different knowledge or ability. Applicants are presented with a test question and four possible responses to that question. Applicants then select the BEST possible response to the question.

During the exam, you will be required to respond to approximately 85 questions regarding six topics. These topics include prioritizing/organizing work, completing documentation, basic/intermediate math, following instructions, reading/comprehending, and English. You will have 3 hours to respond to the items.

IV. How The Written Examination Was Developed

A study of the Public Health Environmentalist classification was conducted before developing the examination. Employees who work in this position and their supervisors participated in this study to determine what job duties are performed by Public Health Environmentalist and what knowledges and abilities a Public Health Environmentalist must possess in order to perform the job duties of the position.

The study showed that the following knowledges and abilities are associated with the job duties of the position. A Public Health Environmentalist must possess the knowledges and abilities listed below their first day of work before training:

- **Knowledge of basic math to include addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division as needed to calculate mileage, inspection scores, leave time, fee collection, monthly reports, and daily activity reports.**
- **Knowledge of intermediate math to include calculation of area, volume, flow rate, and calorimetry as needed to determine lot size, volume of septic tank, size of disposal field, and calculate head pressure on field lines and percent solution.**
- **Knowledge of basic English to include spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and word usage as needed to coherently converse and communicate thoughts orally and in writing.**

- Ability to operate standard office equipment such as Fax machine, calculator, telephone, copier, and computer as needed to prepare reports, communicate with medical personnel, communicate with the general public, and complete work assignments.
- Ability to communicate orally in one-on-one situations such as inspection reviews, complaint investigations, and technical assistance interviews as needed to obtain/provide information and ensure compliance.
- Ability to communicate orally in group situations such as meetings, conferences, training workshops, and seminars as needed to educate others and receive training.
- **Ability to follow instructions as needed to adhere to procedures and complete assignments.**
- **Ability to read/comprehend narrative information such as federal and state guidelines, legal documents, blueprints, grants, lab reports, and medical documents as needed to interpret/apply information, gain knowledge and understanding, and ensure compliance with rules/regulations.**
- Ability to interact effectively with individuals and individuals with socio-economic backgrounds such as law enforcement officials, county officials, judiciary officials, engineers, developers, government officials, contractors, attorneys, and the general public as needed to educate, ensure compliance, and requests assistance.
- **Ability to prioritize/organize work to include records, assignments, travel, and work time as needed to create monthly reports, maximize efficiency of organization, and complete work in a timely manner.**
- Ability to deal with irate or upset people as needed to diffuse a volatile situation and provide information concerning the situation.
- Ability to adjust level of communication to individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds as needed to provide information to the public concerning technical topics.
- Ability to operate a personal computer to include word processing, spreadsheet application and databases as needed to document, access, store, and analyze information, process reports and evaluate program needs.
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships to include co-workers, superiors, and the general public as needed to improve performance, communication, and achieve departmental goals.
- **Ability to complete documentation to include reports and forms as needed to document work, record information, and efficiently manage caseload.**

The examination for Public Health Environmentalist will measure the four abilities and three knowledges that appear in **bold print**. The remaining abilities and knowledges cannot be measured by a written test.

V. What To Do Before You Come To Take The Examination

Here are some suggestions for what to do before the examination and for getting to the exam location on the correct day, on time, and with the proper materials that you will need to take the examination.

- **Get there early.** Give yourself plenty of extra time to get to the test center and to park. If you are rushed and late, you will be upset when you get there. Plan to get there before the scheduled exam time.
- **Do not bring this booklet or any study materials with you to the exam location.** This includes notes and any manuals and source documents that you may have used to prepare for the examination. All test materials needed for the examination will be provided.
- **You must bring the test-scheduling card** that you received from the State of Alabama Personnel Department. This card lists the examination title, location of exam, and day and time of examination.
- **You must bring two sharpened #2 lead pencils.**
- **You must also bring picture identification to the exam location.** This may be your driver's license, a military identification card, or a passport.
- You may bring a calculator to use for the examination. Small solar powered or battery operated calculators that perform basic functions such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, square roots, or percentages are allowed. Calculators that plug-in, utilize tape, have word processing, spelling, thesauruses, or other storage and retrieval capabilities (except basic memory functions) are not allowed. **Calculators that are a feature on a cell phone are not permitted.** Calculators are subject to inspection by exam monitors. Applicants may not borrow or share calculators at the exam site.

Test Taking Tips

- **Listen** to the test monitors and follow their instructions carefully.
- If you are not sure of an answer, **go with your first choice.**
- Work through the test **without spending too much time on any one item.**
- If you cannot decide on the best answer to a question, **skip it and go back to it later.**
- Use your watch or the clock in the room to **keep track of your time** during the test.
- It is to your advantage to **answer as many questions as possible**, even if you must guess.
- **Mark your answers on the answer sheet and NOT in the test booklet.** Only answers clearly marked on the answer sheet can be given credit.
- If at **any time before or during the exam**, you have a question, **ask the monitor for assistance.**

VI. How To Prepare Using This Guide

This pretest booklet can be used as a practice guide. The questions contained in the booklet are a representation of some questions that will be on the actual examination. Familiarize yourself with the sample questions that begin on page 8. You would be well-advised to read the instructions and answer each question carefully. Like the examination questions (all of which are multiple choice), the sample items are presented in the following categories:

- Section I. Ability to prioritize/organize
- Section II. Ability to complete documentation
- Section III. Knowledge of basic/intermediate math
- Section IV. Ability to follow instructions
- Section V. Ability to read/comprehend
- Section VI. Knowledge of basic English

The sample items which follow are representative of the type of items that will appear on the exam. They are not necessarily based on the same information, diagrams, etc., as the actual exam. All questions will be multiple choice.

In addition, please review the [General Instructions to Candidates Taking Written Examinations](#) provided at the exam site on the day of the test.

VII. Sample Test Questions

Section I. Ability to plan/organize



Read the situation and then answer question 1. Base your response on the situation only. Do not base your response on previous experience. Select the MOST APPROPRIATE choice.

Your supervisor will be out of the office today. You arrived at work at 7:55 A.M. You and your spouse have an appointment today at 11:00 A.M. with your family doctor who has advised you that the appointment should not be rescheduled. You need to leave by 10:30 A.M. and will be unable to return to the office later today. Sue Beck, a clerical aide and office receptionist, is the only other employee in the office today. However, she does not type. Your supervisor left a note listing the following tasks that must be done today.

- Type the Zicker report (2 hours to complete).
- Sort and distribute the mail (30 minutes to complete).
- Call Virginia Hall about the Zicker project (10 minutes to complete).
- Post new dividend rates by 12 noon, today (20 minutes to complete).
- Set up the conference room for the next day's 8:00 A.M. meeting (30 minutes to complete).
- File dividend reports (2 hours to complete).

1. Which of the following tasks below would you be forced to perform yourself?

- A. file dividend reports
- B. set up the conference room
- C. type the Zicker report
- D. sort and distribute the day's mail

Section II. Ability to complete documentation



For Form 1 you are given a scenario. Review the form and read the scenario. Answer the questions, basing your answers solely on the information provided and not on any prior knowledge you may have of the subject. Remember to mark the most appropriate response for each question on your answer sheet.

FORM 1

CLIENT SCHEDULE CHANGES

DATE: _____ (a) _____

CLIENT NAME: _____ (b) _____

CLIENT CHART NO: _____ (c) _____

ACTIVITY TO BE DROPPED: _____ (d) _____

TIME/PERIOD: _____ (e) _____

ACTIVITY TO BE ADDED: _____ (f) _____

TIME/PERIOD: _____ (g) _____

INSTRUCTOR FOR ADDED ACTIVITY: _____ (h) _____

Signature of employee submitting changes: _____ (i) _____

(Send to clerical section by noon on Thursday.)

Answer questions 2-4 based on Form 1 and the scenario.

Scenario

Bobby White, a client of Alabama's Mental Health Rehabilitation Center strained his ankle and could no longer participate in Mr. Pool's 3rd period Swimming class.

On May 18, 2004 Kerry Short, an Activity Program Aide, was asked to pull Bobby's chart, # 846, to drop the swimming class from Bobby's schedule and to include Mr. Gray's 3rd period Pottery class.

2. According to the scenario, section (g) of Form 1 should read _____.
- A. Pottery class
 - B. Swimming class
 - C. 3rd period
 - D. Mr. Pool

3. According to the scenario, section (i) of Form 1 should read _____.
- A. Mr. Pool
 - B. Bobby White
 - C. Mr. Clay
 - D. Kerry Short
4. According to the scenario, what should the Activity Program Aide type or write in section (f) of Form 1?
- A. His signature
 - B. 3rd period
 - C. Pottery
 - D. Swimming

Section III. Knowledge of basic/intermediate math



Read each math question carefully before attempting to solve the problem.


5. Convert 28 grams into milligrams
 - A. 28000 milligrams
 - B. 2.8 milligrams
 - C. 280 milligrams
 - D. .28 milligrams

6. Thirty-seven percent of 826 is equal to
 - A. 275.60
 - B. 280.75
 - C. 295.50
 - D. 305.62

7. In the fiscal year of 2004-2005, a total of 109,782 on-site sewage inspections were performed, $\frac{2}{3}$ of which were for rural areas. The monthly average for rural areas was closest to
 - A. 3659
 - B. 6099
 - C. 6100
 - D. 9149

8. For the month of December, a local health unit reported that more restaurant inspections were performed than on-site sewage inspections. If the ratio of restaurant inspections to on-site sewage inspections is 9 to 7, and 270 restaurant inspections were performed during December, how many on-site sewage inspections were performed during the same period?
 - A. 187
 - B. 210
 - C. 237
 - D. 250

Section IV. Ability to follow instructions

 **Directions:** Assume you are employed with the Department of Public Health as a Public Health Environmentalist. You have been given an office manual and written directions. Read them carefully and answer the questions that follow. You may refer to the directions as often as needed.

Reports

Each Public Health Environmentalist is responsible for making and up-dating reports required by the Central and Area Offices. These reports are as follows:

1. Weekly itinerary including weekly work summary
2. Monthly Report
3. Travel Expense Report
4. Unsanitary Conditions Abatement Report

Original copies of the weekly itinerary including weekly work summary and monthly report will be sent directly to the Central Office with copies to the Area Office. The weekly itinerary, including the weekly work summary should reach the State Office each Monday. The deadline for submitting information needed to compile the Monthly Report is the last working day of each month.

The Unsanitary Conditions Abatement Report will be due upon notification by the Central Office.

9. Which of the following is to be sent directly to the Central Office?
 - A. Monthly Report
 - B. All printouts
 - C. Travel Expense Report
 - D. Unsanitary Conditions Abatement Report
10. What is the deadline for submitting information needed to compile the Monthly Report?
 - A. Upon notification by the Central Office
 - B. The last working day of each month
 - C. In time for it to reach the Central Office each Monday
 - D. Weekly

Section V. Ability to read/comprehend

What is Influenza?

It is an illness caused by influenza viruses. It generally affects people of all ages. Typically, people with influenza have fever, chills, headache, cough, and muscle soreness and may be sick for several days to a week or more. Most people recover fully. A small portion of cases are particularly severe, and patients may develop pneumonia or other complications. In some past epidemics, about one case out of every thousand was fatal. The risk of complications and death from influenza is highest for people with chronic health problems like diabetes; disease of the heart, lungs, or kidneys; severe anemia; or chronic illnesses (or medications) which lower the body's resistance to infection. It is also high for older persons generally—particularly those 65 years or older.

Influenza viruses frequently undergo changes in their chemical makeup. These changes make it possible to catch influenza even though immunity (antibodies) may have been developed against previous strains of influenza. Thus, having had influenza or influenza vaccine in past years may not prevent getting influenza again.

Although influenza epidemics are unpredictable, some influenza occurs each year. In very large epidemics as much as 1/3 of the population has become sick and thousands have died.



Questions 11-13 are based on the information contained in the passage above.

11. Influenza is caused by a _____.
 - A. virus
 - B. bacterium
 - C. type of fungus
 - D. protozoan

12. Why do people get influenza over and over again?
 - A. The body develops no immunity against influenza.
 - B. The influenza virus often mutates so that natural immunity is not effective.
 - C. Both A & B
 - D. None of the above

13. Influenza would be most dangerous to a _____.
 - A. seventy-three year old nursing home patient
 - B. five month old infant
 - C. six year old child in first grade
 - D. forty year old man who works outdoors in all types of weather

Section VI. Knowledge of basic English

 For question 14, choose the answer that demonstrates the most appropriate English usage.

14. A. The supervisor and the aide, together with the rest of the office force, has unanimously agreed to send a representative.
B. The supervisor, together with the aide and the rest of the office force, have unanimously agreed to send a representative.
C. The entire office force, including the supervisor and the aide, have unanimously agreed to send a representative.
D. The entire office force, including the supervisor and the aide, has unanimously agreed to send a representative.

 For question 15, choose the phrase that best expresses the statement.

15. It is imperative that the owner _____ the changes now.
- A. effect
B. affect
C. effects
D. affects

Answers to Sample Questions

Section I. Ability to prioritize/organize

1. C

Section II. Ability to complete documentation

2. C

3. D

4. C

Section III. Knowledge of basic/intermediate math

5. A

6. D

7. B

8. B

Section IV. Ability to follow instructions

9. A

10. B

Section V. Ability to read/comprehend

11. A

12. B

13. A

Section VI. Knowledge of English

14. D

15. A

VIII. Banded Scoring

When the written exam for Public Health Environmentalist is graded, the scores will be grouped into bands. When you receive notification of how you performed on the exam, you will not be given a numerical score (i.e., 67 out of 80, 93 out of 100). Rather, you will be informed into which band (i.e., 1, 3, 6, 10) your score fell. The following information is provided to help you understand the banding procedure.

What is banding?

Banding is one way to reduce the impact of fluctuations in test scores that do not provide meaningful information about differences in the ability to perform the job. One important purpose of testing is to identify the differences in test scores that reflect real differences among candidates. Banded scoring is a statistical procedure for grouping raw test scores that statistically are not meaningfully different from one another. In banded scoring, bands are set objectively and statistically. They are not manipulated arbitrarily.

Misconceptions about banding.

There are many misconceptions about banding and the use of banded scores. Some of the most common misconceptions are listed below. Each misconception is followed by a clarification.

Misconception: Each band should have the same number of people.

We do not force bands to be a certain size. The people in a band are similar to each other in that statistically there is no meaningful difference in their scores. Sometimes Band 1 may be very large, and at other times it may be small. People's scores determine the size of the bands. We never know how many people will be in each band until we receive the test scores.

Misconception: Band numbers have no meaning. I don't have a score.

Band numbers do have meaning. Think of a band as a group of tied scores. Consider that in school two students with average grades of 94.5 and 94.3 would both be grouped into the same band. Just because one student made a 94.5 and one student made a 94.3, the teacher cannot be sure that 0.2 of a point means that the student who scored 94.5 is smarter or is a better student. The scores are so close to each other that they are basically the same.

For example, think of the achievement tests that children take in school. The fine print on these tests always informs you not to focus on the numerical score but rather on the comparative score, which uses some type of grouping technique such as percentiles, stanines, standard deviations, grade levels, etc. These grouping techniques are considered forms of banding. Banding compares your performance on the test to the other test takers' performance and groups your score with others that are statistically the same.

Misconception: Band numbers are the same as letter grades.

Band numbers are not the same as letter grades. Band 1 does not equate to an "A," Band 2 to a "B," and so on. In school, a predetermined numerical range of scores (i.e., 90-100, 80-90, 70-80) equals an alphabetical value (i.e., A, B, C). This grading system is a form of banding. In this case, unlike grade school, the width of bands is not set in advance. Scores are banded only in relation to one another, so you compete against other test takers. The scores of all test takers determine the width of the bands, and your score is set in relation to the scores of your peers.

Misconception: A banded score on one test has the same value as a banded score on another test.

Banded scores are test specific and cannot be compared from test to test. Consider that a test taker scored 88 on one test, and the highest score of all test takers was 89. It is likely for this exam that the test taker who scored 88 would be in Band 1. However, if the same person scored the same grade on another test, and the highest score of all test takers was 100, he/she may be in Band 2 or Band 3. Candidates' scores vary on each test, and since candidate scores determine the width of bands and into which band test takers fall, the value of a banded score varies from test to test.

Misconception: *People with the most seniority who have been on the job longest should be in the top bands.*

People with the most experience do not always fall into the top bands. Time spent in a job may not be the same as possessing a knowledge, skill, or ability needed to perform the job. The people with the strongest knowledges, skills, and abilities (or who did best on the exam) will be in the top bands. Some of the people in the top bands will have been in similar jobs for a long period of time, and others will have been in similar jobs for a short period of time. Years of service do not always equal proficiency. Candidates with seniority or experience do not automatically perform best on the test. Regardless of seniority, candidates who display the appropriate knowledges, skills, and abilities perform best on the test.

Misconception: *A standing in Band 4 or below automatically indicates failure or ineligibility for jobs.*

A band number of 4 or lower is not automatically equated with failure. For one test, there may only be 4 bands, and for another test, there may be 14 bands. So, your success on the test based on your position in a band varies from test to test. Your standing in a band does not indicate whether or not you pass or fail the test. The true test of success in your employment opportunities is whether or not you can be certified and considered for a job vacancy.

Misconception: *Banding replaced the "Rule of 10."*

Banding did not replace the "Rule of 10." The "Rule of 10" determines the number of bands to be certified. In the past, tied scores referred to an actual numerical score (e.g., two candidates with a score of 98.98 were considered tied) while now all of the scores within a band are considered tied.

Misconception: *People in a band do not differ.*

When several people are placed in the same band, it does not mean that those people do not differ at all. Instead, it means that their scores on the exam do not differ enough to be separate scores.

IX. Frequently Asked Questions

Are there any vacancies for the Public Health Environmentalist?

You may contact the personnel office of the Department of Public Health to determine current or future vacancies.

How are vacancies filled for the Public Health Environmentalist?

The top ten applicants on the register are sent to the Department of Public Health for consideration. Since the banded scoring process is used, all of the scores within a band are considered tied. Therefore, all names within a band are certified out to the agency, which may include more than 10 names. The names of people not selected stay on the register to be considered for future jobs. Persons are usually hired at the minimum of the pay range.

How long will I remain eligible for appointment?

If you pass the examination, your name will remain on the employment register for two years from the date you were placed on the register. You will be notified by mail when to reapply.

How do I request reasonable accommodations?

If you would like to request special testing accommodations or have any questions concerning the test site or testing conditions, please contact the State Personnel Department at (334) 242-3389.

What do I do if I have a scheduling conflict?

If there is a conflict in your schedule, and you are unable to attend the written exam at the time and date for which you have been scheduled, you must resubmit your Application for Examination. The State Personnel Department will schedule you for the next available administration of this written test.

When will I get my score?

Four to six weeks after completing the exam, you will receive a Notice of Examination Results postcard in the mail. This postcard will identify your score or Band placement for the written exam. If you have not received your score within four to six weeks, you should call the State Personnel Department.

In addition to your Band placement, you may also obtain your standing, or rank on the register, online at www.personnel.alabama.gov. From the home page, you should click on "Applicants" and then "Register Standings", and follow the instructions. For security purposes, you must now create an online profile in order to access your standing.