

CATEGORY | Outstanding Military Environmental Health Professional

WINNER | Hannah McMorran, British Army



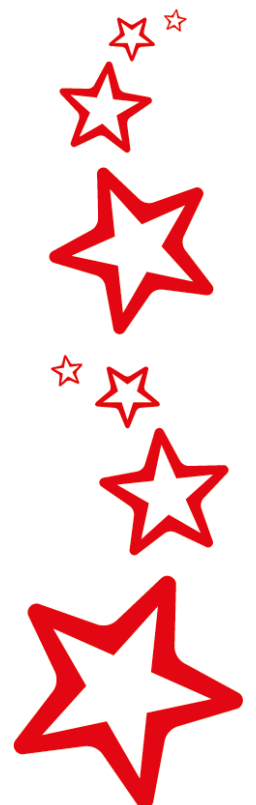
INTRODUCTION

I couldn't imagine the doors that would open for me when I qualified as an Environmental Health Officer (EHO) with the Highland Council in 2013. Only 6 months after qualifying I joined the Royal Navy and found myself as a brand new EHO and a brand new Naval Officer. Today I am a chartered EHO wearing the rank of Lieutenant with 3 years' experience. I have worked overseas in Bahrain, the Falklands, Cyprus and Italy. I have been on every class of ship and submarine within the Naval Fleet and have undertaken training in tropical medicine, pest control, management, medical planning and leadership. I was proud to gain my chartered status in January this year following three years of CPD and project work. This year also presented the opportunity to arrange the Tri-Service EH Conference which brought together EHOs from all three services as well as civilian practitioners and CIEH to promote networking and share common interests. I have tried to improve the skills of the catering personnel I work alongside, and in 2014 arranged a 3-day HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) course for military chefs and logistics personnel to increase awareness and capability in the area of food safety.

During a routine inspection of a shore based facility, it came to light that HACCP was not in place and the premises was undertaking high-risk cooking practices such as sous vide, smoking, torching and ice cream manufacture. They were catering for high profile dinner parties and food was being transported to a different location for service presenting a challenge in maintaining temperature. Safety of personnel and guests was being put at risk and a proper paperwork system and food management system was required.

No-one in the galley had the HACCP skills to begin working on the necessary paperwork and it was clear that immediate intervention was necessary. As a military EHO my job is to educate and support: I decided to initiate a HACCP working group with myself as chair and the catering team forming the remaining members. Over several weeks we met regularly and drafted HACCP flow grams to properly represent the food preparation occurring in the galley.

Having previously completed a HACCP level 3 course, I used this as an opportunity to put into practice everything I had learnt. It was the first time I had run a HACCP working group and it posed a significant challenge in terms of organisation. As chairman, I remained distant from the main workload, setting specific tasks and requirements then commenting on drafts. This way the chefs actually undertaking the cooking could claim ownership of the HACCP and better understand the food safety within their galley.



As a result, I am much more confident in assessing complicated HACCP flow grams. I have started recommending HACCP training for chefs working in the Royal Navy to increase their skills and ability to create individual HACCPs and flow grams for whatever environment they find themselves working in. My professional knowledge of alternative cooking methods has increased greatly and gave me a better understanding of managing food safety in the military environment.

I am most proud of a project I undertook to reintroduce food sampling to the Royal Navy. This started with a pilot in ATP monitoring and microbial food sampling in Faslane Naval Base during my first draft. The aim was to monitor food safety through a monthly programme of microbial food sampling.

Food establishments within the base had been missed off the LA sampling programme due to increased security which made access difficult. This meant that no sampling had occurred for many years and while the premises were being inspected, the end products had never been formally tested. After consultation with the military laboratory – The Institute of Naval Medicine (INM) – I secured one days testing per month which would enable me to send between 10 and 20 food samples from Faslane Naval Base. Tiny Tag temperature monitors were purchased to ensure the temperature of food in transit remained below 8°C.

It was decided that ships and submarines would be tested as part of their ship sanitation inspection and food producers such as dining facilities and burger vans would be tested using surveillance sampling.

Results were measured against the HPA guidelines for assessing the microbiological safety of ready-to-eat foods. Passes were formally presented to the food business for inclusion within their HACCP; failures presented an opportunity to allow swift intervention to stop food safety issues. The pilot was a success and raised the profile of EH within the base. Of particular note was the closure of a burger van which did not meet food safety regulations. Previous inspections had highlighted ongoing problems which were slow to resolve and the food samples taken provided the final evidence needed to remove them from the base.