



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## Athol Board of Health FY 2012



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The Health Department is on the front line of protecting the health and safety of the community each and every day. A wide range of responsibilities are mandated under the state law and regulation including the enforcement of state sanitary, environmental, housing, and health codes. The Board of Health has jurisdiction including, but not limited to:

- ❖ *Protection of the food supply:* Our office conducted eighty-five (85) inspections to ensure public food safety at restaurants, school cafeterias, food concession stands at local events, and church kitchens including two (2) inspection due to complaints received from the public. The Board issued permits to eighty five (85) food service operations, fifteen (15) temporary food vendors, and reviewed one (1) food establishment plans.
- ❖ *Protection of the water supply by enforcing compliance with Title V Septic Code:* The health agent observed six (6) perc tests, conducted twenty-one (21) septic system inspections , reviewed twenty-three (23) Title V reports , reviewed and issued nine (9) Disposal Septic Construction Permits. The Board issued permits to eight (8) septic system installers, ten (10) septage haulers and issued four (4) well permits.
- ❖ *Enforcement of state lead poisoning regulations and sanitary codes:* We received sixty-two (62) housing complaints; which fifty-eight (58) required inspections and twenty-one (21) follow-up inspections to enforce the MA State Sanitary Code. Our goal is to work with landlords and tenants to correct code violations without resorting to legal action; however, four (4) court appearances were necessary. There were also seventeen (17) pre-rental housing inspections.
- ❖ *Enforcement of No-Smoking laws and addressing other nuisance complaints such as noise, odor and trash:* The Board issued seventeen (17) tobacco permits to local businesses; one method to help ensure compliance of not selling tobacco products to minors. Fifty-one (51) trash complaints were investigated. Illegal dumping continues to be a problem especially along the rural roads of Athol. The Board issued twenty (20) permits to refuse haulers.
- ❖ *Inspection of pools, beaches, camps, mobile home parks, tanning salons:* The Board licensed two (2) tanning salons, three (3) public and semi-public swimming pools, two (2) mobile home parks and one (1) recreational camp. This resulted in two (2) tanning salon, three (3) pool and five (5) camp inspections.
- ❖ *Participation in hazardous waste collection Day:* Residents are able to drop off hazardous materials free of charge at this yearly fall event funded by the Health Department.

- ❖ *Board of Health compost bin and rain barrel sales:* Twenty (20) compost bins were sold to help reduce the waste stream by diverting organics into useable compost. Fifteen (15) rain barrels were sold to encourage water conservation.
- ❖ *Disease prevention and health promotion:* The office contracts the Athol Memorial Hospital to provide public health nursing services. The public health nurse conducted eleven (11) investigations of communicable disease and forwarded these reports to the State Division of Communicable Disease Control. Fourteen (14) blood pressure clinics were held for seniors, sponsored jointly by the Board of Health and the Council on Aging. Our office jointly with the Athol Memorial Hospital held nine (9) flu & pneumonia clinics for Athol and surrounding communities. Three hundred seventy-eight (378) flu and nine (9) pneumonia vaccinations were administered. Thirteen (13) animal bites were reported to the animal inspector for follow up on rabies prevention.
- ❖ *Participation in emergency preparedness mandated by the federal government:* The Health Department continues to be an active participant in the Region 2 Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coalition and the AMH Emergency Preparedness Group. Region 2 consists of seventy four (74) cities and towns in Worcester County and Orange. The Health Agent was actively involved with the emergency shelter at the Town Hall for the "Halloween" snowstorm. The shelter was then moved to the Athol High School, as the number of residents needing shelter grew. The shelter was staffed by "CERT" (Community Emergency Response Team) members overseen by the Athol Fire Department.
- ❖ *Public Health Regionalization:* The Athol Health Department entered into an agreement to be a part of the Montachusett Public Health Network (MPHN), one of five grants awarded by the MA Department of Public Health to fund regionalization. Eleven (11) towns are participating; Athol, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Leominster, Phillipston, Princeton, Royalston, Sterling, Templeton, and Westminster. There is a large public health disparity statewide. Regionalization is one way to increase the capacity of the Health Departments in each town. An inter-municipal agreement is being developed and a health assessment is being conducted to identify gaps in each participating MPHN town. Public Health focuses on the whole community. We mostly work behind the scenes. We are about prevention and we cover everything from dog bites to disasters.

Respectfully submitted,

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