

The Winnebago County Health Department provides environmental health services to promote safer and healthier neighborhoods through a variety of programs addressing the physical environment.

Neighborhood Code Enforcement

Neighborhood Code Enforcement in partnership with the Winnebago County Knock Out Crime initiative enforces the Housing and Health and Sanitation sections of the Winnebago County Code. The program also responds directly to concerns from the public and provides community education on making homes healthier.

Complaints and violations are investigated by one of three full-time Neighborhood Code Enforcement Officers. These violations generally fall into one of three categories:

- Minimum Housing Standards, which are defined in the International Property Maintenance Code. Winnebago County has adopted the 2006 version of the IPMC. Examples of these codes include requirements for functioning bathroom and kitchen facilities, safe and functional building components, and safe means of egress.
- Health and Sanitation, which generally concern the condition of the interior of a property. Examples may include hoarding situations or infestations of rodents and insects.
- Nuisances, which are generally violations regarding the exterior of a property. Examples may include inoperable vehicles, accumulation of garbage or rubbish, or stagnant water.

Neighborhood Code Enforcement Officers respond to all complaints within 5 business days, however issues that pose an immediate safety risk (such as a no heat in winter complaint) are investigated as quickly as possible. If violations are discovered after an investigation, a Notice of Violation is sent to the responsible party within 24 hours. This Notice outlines a timeframe in which the violations must be corrected. If the violations are not corrected within the timeframe, responsible parties are brought in for an informal in-house hearing in which stricter requirements may be set. By seeking voluntary compliance through these procedures, the WCHD has been able to have a compliance rate of over 95%. Should violations remain uncorrected after these procedures, responsible parties are issued a ticket and must appear at an administrative hearing.

Please see page 2 for additional Environmental Health Program summaries.....

Environmental Health Programs

Lead Program

The Lead Program provides case management services for children with elevated blood lead levels, as well as environmental inspections of the homes where these children live. Elevated lead levels impact almost every system in the body but are especially harmful to the developing brain and neurological system in children. There is no safe level of lead. This program is responsible for enforcing the Illinois Lead Code and holds property owners accountable for correcting lead hazards when required. The Lead Program is also able to assist low-income residents with mitigating the lead hazards in their home. Elimination of lead hazards from homes along with case management for those with elevated lead levels is essential to ensuring the health of the community.

Radon Screening

The Winnebago County Health Department provides equipment through a lending program to homeowners interested in testing their homes for radon. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, exposure to radon in the home is responsible for an estimated 20,000 lung cancer deaths per year. Homeowners who test their homes are provided information and education on how to remove the risk of radon from their homes.

Wells and Septic Program

The WCHD Wells and Septic Program ensures groundwater protection by permitting & inspecting all private sewage disposal systems and water wells. The program enforces the County and State water well and sewage disposal system codes, permits and inspects all new and repaired private wells and sewage disposal system installations, and licenses sewage pumpers and installers. The program also provides well and septic inspections that are often required during real estate transactions.

West Nile Virus Program

Winnebago County monitors the community for potential sources of West Nile Virus throughout the season and provides education, management, and control activities to prevent the spread of the disease in the community.

Environmental Health Laboratory

The Winnebago County Health Department hosts an EPA- and IDPH- certified laboratory which provides the public with water quality testing. The WCHD environmental lab is the chief water testing facility for the Department's other environmental programs, as well as for many other municipalities and water operators. The lab provides insect identification services for the public, as well.

Public Pool Inspection

The Winnebago County Health Department inspects public swimming pools to ensure compliance with standards and codes that protect the public from communicable diseases and chemical exposures associated with pools.

Partner Agencies Addressing the Built Neighborhood with the Winnebago County Health Department

- City of Rockford
- Illinois Department of Public Health
- Winnebago County Animal Control
- Winnebago County Highway
- Winnebago County Building and Zoning
- Winnebago County Knock-Out Crime

Residents who have a question on services or wish to file a housing or other environmental complaint should call the WCHD's Center for Environmental Health at 815-720-4100. For more information, visit our website at: www.wchd.org. Like us: [facebook.com/Winnebago County Health Department](https://www.facebook.com/Winnebago-County-Health-Department). Follow us: twitter.com/Winncohealth. Or Contact us at: Winnebago County Health Department 401 Division Street, PO Box 4009, Rockford, Illinois 61110.000.