

Luke Sears

has turned an interest in biology and business into a way to keep thousands of people safe every day. The Environmental Health Specialist has been with Catawba County Public Health since 2008 and is currently working in the food, lodging and institutional side now.

“I did not set out to go into environmental health, but what drew me to it is my background in biology and business,” said Sears. “I’m using my biology background in being able to look at the disease process for foodborne illness and public safety, and business

helps me understand the needs of the business owners I work with every day.”

He also enjoys the work environment – being out in the field and getting to meet people.

“One of the biggest things we do is just being a presence in a lot of these places and working through with the owner ways to keep everyone safe. We get a chance to build a rapport with people and also feel like you’re doing something good,” he said.

Public safety is also important to Sears.

“There are a few times when you go into a restaurant or inspect a swimming pool and something is just not right, something that could really make someone sick or cause injuries, so you really feel like you’ve done something good for the day,” he said.

A typical day for Sears begins with paperwork and phone calls. After that, he could be at a restaurant, hotel, swimming pool or tattoo parlor – or all in the same day.

“We do the inspection, then sit down with the owner and go over everything with them. Then, it’s on to the next one,” he said.

Environmental Health Specialists also respond to complaints, so it might be 4 p.m. on a Friday when they start an outbreak investigation.

“We know the importance of keeping people safe, so we go the extra mile to respond quickly,” said Sears.

“We also deal with restaurant fires. We might be called out at 2 a.m. to make sure that food didn’t spoil, he said. After power outages, Environmental Health Specialists can be very busy.

“After the tornado in October 2017, all of Highway 127 was out of power. We were busy making sure everyone had a plan in place on how to keep the food safe,” said Sears. “We’re protecting everyone in the public. Everybody eats out,” he said.



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Luke Sears is #makinglivingbetter every day in Catawba County.