My rickshaw driver weaved in and out of traffic with the skill and agility of Houdini, skirting high impact collisions by mere millimeters. What in the world was I doing in Bangladesh? I represented NEHA and moderated a panel session at the International Conference on Urban Health in Dhaka, May 24–27, 2015. In the midst of the inner city bedlam I marveled that 1,000 people a day move to Dhaka, a teeming metropolis of some 18 million, most who are seemingly committed to being on the road all at the same time. One thousand people a day. That’s one city absorbing more people per day than the number who migrate to the entire state of Colorado, over the same time period.

We find ourselves in the midst of the Century of Urbanization. Today, for the first time in history, more than half of the world’s population resides in cities, with an estimated migration trend inflating that number to 70% by 2050. For the record, this is not news. Today, 5% of the nation’s 2,800 local health departments provide services to 50% of the U.S. population, which suggests that most of us already prefer to reside in large urban areas.

This reversal of suburbanization creates a wealth of opportunities and challenges for those of us in the environmental health professions, bringing new significance to trans-disciplinary collaboration. Ironically, this lesson came home to roost recently during a torrential downpour here in Denver. As shown at right bottom, the vehicle I was in stalled in three feet of water just outside an apartment complex in the downtown area of Cherry Creek, a hop, skip, and jump from NEHA’s office. As the water gushed in through the seams of the vehicle door, I opted to partially disrobe and escape the deluge through an open window. The city estimates it will require a $1.5 billion investment to redesign the drainage system to accommodate heavy downpours, just like those predicted by climate change models. A good land use planner with an environmental health orientation would be a welcomed addition to the design and development team dedicated to urban conditions that maximize percolation and minimize run-off during torrential precipitation. That’s environmental health in the great outdoors; the indoor environment merits its own consideration.

Indoor air quality specialists take note. Forty percent of global energy consumption originates in buildings, producing some 40% of the CO₂ emissions, a major greenhouse gas. Undoubtedly greater emphasis on heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) system efficiency will be achieved over the near term, which will drive a commensurate demand in preventive environmental health services as each of us takes some 23,000 breaths a day in highly sealed, energy efficient building conditions. Ironically, building ventilation systems frequently use public water as a source of humidification and cooling. Many U.S. water distribution systems are plagued by biofilm, a product of aging pipes. Again, environmental health professional skills and sensibilities will be highly desired at the intersection of engineering and health in the modern built environment. Speaking of aging, the silver tsunami is upon us.

In 2010 roughly 13% of the world’s population was over the age of 65. By 2050 that proportion is estimated to be roughly 20%. That’s a boatload of old folks, of which I will be one. What are the characteristics of an

continued on page 69
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