

UNMET NEEDS

Support \$10 million for EPA's Homeland Security Laboratory Program to fund the Office of Emergency Management to:

- Maintain funding for the state chemical warfare agents program;
- Restore support for the state radiological grant program;
- Increase efficiency of electronic data exchange and review with states;
- Develop and validate methods for transfer to state and local labs.

Provide EPA with \$20 million to ensure continued function of the Water Laboratory Alliance (a nationwide laboratory network protecting our drinking water).

- Investigate areas to gain efficiency with regard to laboratory capacity across EPA.
- Continue capability-building exercises related to the National Response Plan.
- Develop and validate methods for transfer to local and state labs.
- Build relationships between EPA, states and small water systems.
- Fund additional FTEs in the Water Security Division to carry out this work.

BACKGROUND

The air we breathe, the water we use, the soil in which we plant, the buildings and neighborhoods in which we live – everything around us affects our health.

Environmental laboratories routinely monitor air, water and soil samples to prevent unintentional (as well as intentional) environmental contamination, and to ensure

CDC FUNDING

EPA Laboratory Funding
(Dollars in millions)

ERLN

FY 2013 \$5.6 (APHL Required Amount)

WLA

FY 2013 \$5.9 (APHL Required Amount)

that populations are not exposed to unhealthy levels of contaminants.

HOMELAND SECURITY LABORATORY PROGRAM

Environmental emergencies endanger not only human life and health, but also the national economy, due to the need for evacuation and later remediation of the affected environment.

EPA conducts the environmental sampling that feeds into the decision-making process following an 'incident of national significance' involving the environment. State and local laboratories, however, are typically the first receivers during an incident; therefore, EPA must coordinate with environmental laboratories around the country.

The majority of state and local environmental laboratories, however, lack the proper resources to adequately respond to such events. They need federal guidance such as validated methods, standards and proficiency testing programs.

To meet this need, APHL asks EPA to restore funding for the Environmental Response Laboratory Network, particularly to support the state chemical warfare agents

program and the state radiological grant program. This network provides a mechanism for state, federal and local environmental laboratories to collaborate and leverage capabilities. To date, only two states can test environmental samples for chemical warfare agents, while only four states receive funding for radiological testing.

This latter fact remains concerning, given the Fukushima disaster and the fact that not much has changed since a 2007 Congressional hearing on US laboratory capacity to effectively respond to a radiological attack – expert testimonies revealed that analysis of environmental samples could take as long as six years.

DRINKING WATER SECURITY

Notably, 250 million Americans get their drinking water from public water systems. A terrorist attack on a large municipal water supply could endanger the lives of millions of Americans.

During a threat to our water supply, state and local laboratories would be hard pressed to analyze thousands of samples. To meet this need, EPA's Water Security Division created a network of laboratories to increase collaboration and mutual aid: the Water Laboratory Alliance (WLA).

The WLA provides a resource into which several other EPA program offices should connect. In an era of increasing efficiencies across government services, such a network provides a model for tapping into under-utilized capabilities available at state and local laboratories.

Dedicated funding should be directed toward exercising the WLA's National Response Plan in order to increase coordination of environmental laboratories and for building capability in the states to analyze threats (for example, as directed by HSPD-9). ■

CONTACT

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