

EPA Regional Laboratory Contacts

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Water Laboratory Alliance BENEFITS



EPA, NRML, Office of Research and Development, photo by F.P. Williams, Jr.

Office of Water (4608-T)
www.epa.gov/safewater

EPA 817-F-10-001
April 2010

Water Laboratory Alliance: Purpose and Background

The EPA Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (OGWDW) Water Laboratory Alliance (WLA) has the goal of providing the Water Sector with an integrated nationwide network of laboratories. This network will provide the capabilities and capacity to analyze water samples in the event of natural, intentional, or unintentional water contamination involving chemical, biological, or radiochemical contaminants. The WLA is composed of drinking water, public health, environmental, and select commercial laboratories. The WLA focuses solely on drinking water and is an integral part of the EPA Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Environmental Response Laboratory Network (ERLN).

WLA Implementation Status

Prior to the WLA launch in the Fall of 2009, EPA and its partners established regional laboratory networks through development and testing (table-top and functional exercises) of Regional Laboratory Response Plans (RLRPs) in collaboration with each of EPA's 10 Regions and Hawaii. These 11 RLRPs provided the basis for development of the WLA-Response Plan (WLA-RP), which serves as the foundation of the WLA on a national level.

The WLA-RP establishes a comprehensive, national laboratory response approach to water contamination that covers a spectrum of activities including utility and laboratory preparedness, response, remediation, and recovery. The WLA-RP is being practiced through full-scale exercises, which include participants from drinking water utilities, EPA Regions, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, state public health and state environmental laboratories, first responders, and law enforcement.

WLA membership is structured to expand in phases with the first phase being coordinated through a joint roll-out with the ERLN. This first phase will include regional, state, and water utility labs that meet ERLN requirements. A second phase of WLA expansion will include additional laboratories that do not meet ERLN membership requirements.

Benefits for Participating Laboratories

- Improved preparedness for analytical support to respond to emergencies
- Improved communications with peer laboratories to help address emerging analytical capability and capacity, laboratory security, or laboratory operational challenges
- Partnership with neighboring laboratories to support surge capacity needs
- Knowledge of neighboring laboratory analytical capability and available personnel
- Analytical support to address analyses not performed by your laboratory (e.g., select agent pathogens, chemical warfare agents)
- Coordination and standardization of data reporting systems
- Coordination and standardization of analytical methods
- Priority access to planned EPA water security-related exercises and training opportunities
- Coordination of technology transfer efforts from EPA and other Federal agencies to laboratories
- WLA name recognition for governmental initiatives
- Opportunity to review and comment on Federal documents related to drinking water laboratory issues
- Future access to EPA-provided Proficiency Testing (PT) samples for unregulated contaminants of interest to the Water Sector

For More Information

on the WLA, contact Latisha Mapp, EPA Office of Water (OW) at Mapp.Latisha@epa.gov. Information on OW's activities, tools, products, and the latest advances to protect drinking water and wastewater utilities are available online at <http://cfpub.epa.gov/safewater/watersecurity/wla.cfm>

ERLN/WLA Membership Criteria

Participation in the ERLN is based on a laboratory's ability to meet ERLN's core requirements, which apply to both public and private laboratories. Each laboratory must establish, maintain, and demonstrate:

- A quality system consistent with ISO 17025, TNI, or State/EPA Regional Drinking Water Certification (as applicable);
- Documented policies and procedures;
- Sample management systems;
- Facilities for sample handling and secure storage;
- Data management and exchange procedures;
- Analytical capabilities and capacities for chemical, biological, and radiochemical contaminants.

Joining the WLA

Laboratories participating in the WLA may be part of EPA's ERLN, if they apply and meet ERLN criteria. Laboratories applying for membership must:

- Review ERLN Laboratory Requirements and Policy for Membership;
- Complete Laboratory Membership for ERLN application;
- Indicate WLA Membership on ERLN application;
- Provide supporting documentation with your application, as appropriate;
- Read and sign Acknowledgement of Laboratory Responsibilities checklist, and;
- Register in the EPA Laboratory Compendium (separate compendium factsheet available).

Admission into the ERLN is based on review of the application package. A laboratory will be notified by EPA of their membership status within sixty (60) days of receipt of the completed application.

Laboratories interested in joining the ERLN should contact Schatzi Fitz-James, EPA Homeland Security Laboratory Response Center, at Fitz-James.Schatzi@epa.gov.