

EPA established the Environmental Response Laboratory Network (ERLN) to assist in addressing chemical, biological, and radiological threats during nationally significant incidents. The ERLN is managed by EPA's Office of Emergency Management and serves as a national network of laboratories that can be accessed as needed to support large scale environmental responses by providing consistent analytical capabilities, capacities, and quality data in a systematic, coordinated response. Public laboratories play an invaluable role in the network given their existing relationships with federal, state, and local decision-makers, and political leadership. As ERLN members, public laboratories may be responsible for providing analytical data or performing quality assurance/quality control functions.

## Goals for Public Laboratory Participation in the ERLN

- Identify, quantify, verify, and supplement existing laboratory testing capability and capacity to support surveillance of, response to, and recovery from incidents involving release of chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants to the environment;
- Play an integral role in a coordinated and operational system of laboratories capable of efficiently and effectively responding to large-scale incidents;
- Work as a partner in planning for and the addressing of incidents, which may involve other response networks, during a major environmental event; and
- Participate in ERLN exercises and other opportunities that enhance preparedness, communications, operations, and technical competencies to respond to major environmental incidents.

**For more information please visit [www.epa.gov/erln](http://www.epa.gov/erln).**

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is a public laboratory?

A public laboratory is a laboratory operated by a federal, state, local, or municipal government agency.

### What support will members receive to help establish or maintain special capabilities?

The ERLN is designed to access existing laboratory capability and capacity. If there is a special capability or capacity needed, the ERLN may help support the

development and maintenance of this capability. See the ERLN Overview factsheet for more information on ERLN member benefits.

### How will ERLN public laboratories be compensated or reimbursed for providing analytical services?

Interagency Agreements are used to reimburse federal laboratories. The primary mechanism for compensating and reimbursing non-federal, public laboratories for performing analytical services is a basic ordering agreement (BOA).

The BOA can only be used to compensate laboratories for analytical services. If a non-federal, public laboratory is not capable of entering into a BOA with EPA, or if a laboratory provides other services to support a response, EPA will use other appropriate forms of reimbursement.

### Are there Proficiency Testing (PT) requirements for membership?

Yes, the analysis/methods will supplement, rather than duplicate, existing PT programs.

### What are the responsibilities of membership?

ERLN laboratories are responsible for managing their own internal quality system and other core ERLN requirements.

### Can ERLN Public Laboratories participate in Method Development studies?

Yes, based on a laboratory's specific capability.

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## Contact Information

## Frequently Asked Questions (contd)

### How do the ERLN and the Water Laboratory Alliance (WLA) intersect?

Both the ERLN and the WLA were created by EPA to provide laboratory analytical support. The ERLN is EPA's overarching laboratory network, created to address all types of environmental responses. The WLA is specifically focused on water laboratories and therefore is limited to incidents associated with water.

Laboratories that participate in the ERLN and have the necessary capability for analyzing drinking water automatically qualify as WLA members. However, the WLA may have laboratories in their network that do not meet the ERLN core requirements and therefore would not be accessed during a large scale response effort.

### What is the role of ERLN Regional Labs?

As part of the ERLN, EPA Regional Labs:

- Are responsible for the identification, organization, and coordination of overall regional capacity, including screening and confirmatory laboratories during incidents;
- Serve as regional points of contact with EPA Headquarters for analytical issues during emergencies;
- Coordinate sample flow to ERLN member labs (both within and outside the Region) in consultation with Headquarters during nationally significant incidents;
- Coordinate training and terrorism-related exercises for ERLN member labs to ensure efficient sample flow to member labs as part of national training exercises; and
- Partner with regional emergency/disaster coordinators to strengthen relationships and establish operational roles and procedures within the Region's emergency response Incident Command System.

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## Contact Information

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