

Washington State Public Health Laboratories: Chemical Incident Response

Where We Came From

The Department of Health received funding for the Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Program from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Administration of the Chemical Terrorism Grant by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began in the summer of 2003. The Department of Health Chemical Incident Response Program recruited and hired staff March 2004 through May 2004.



The program consists of four members who operate under the leadership of the Office Director, Office of Environmental Laboratory Sciences, in Shoreline. The Chemical Incident Response Coordinator (CIRC) works outside the Public Health Laboratories as the program's point of contact for local health jurisdictions, public health and environmental officials, and the clinical laboratory network which initially collect specimens submitted for analysis. The Assistant Chemical Incident Response Coordinator (ACIRC) is responsible for the development of emergency responder, first receiver, and clinical laboratory protocols, informational materials, and technical guidance. Equipped, trained, and certified by the CDC, the two full-time analytical chemists are the technical experts responsible for the analyses of chemical agents in clinical specimens.

Other laboratory personnel, including the ACIRC, can be drawn on if necessary during an event.

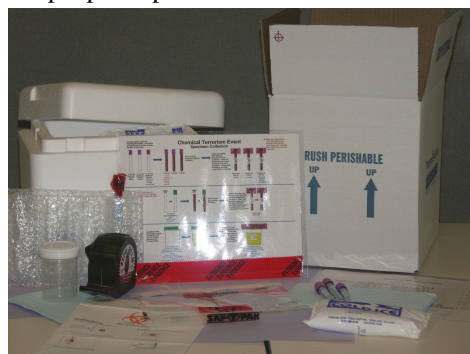
What We Do

The goal of the Chemical Incident Response Program is to provide technical assistance and support to local health jurisdictions monitoring public health during a chemical terrorism event or incident. Technical assistance consists of training in proper specimen collection, specimen packaging, evidentiary procedures, shipping and transport. Support consists of the addition of personnel and supplies during events larger than can be handled by one local health jurisdiction alone. Specimens collected will be analyzed within the state or by a laboratory within the National Laboratory Response Network certified to perform the appropriate type of analysis to detect and measure the presence of a chemical agent. The Chemical Incident Response Program is based on combined local, regional, and state emergency response to chemical incidents/terrorism events, and establishes lines of communication among emergency response organizations.



What This Means To You

Upon request of the LHI, the program provides assistance in obtaining laboratory analysis of clinical specimens for people exposed to an unknown chemical or chemicals during a chemical incident. This includes assisting in the collection, packaging, and transport of specimens collected for analysis by the Washington State Public Health Laboratory, or CDC for confirmatory analysis of specific chemical agents.



Specimen collection, packaging, and shipping protocols are available upon request by contacting the Chemical Incident Response Coordinator or the Assistant Coordinator (206-418-5643).

The Chemical Incident Response Laboratory Program is dedicated to the analysis of clinical specimens only. The Washington State Public Health Laboratories may perform the analysis in-house, or may facilitate the analysis by another suitable laboratory. The analytical instrumentation required for these analyses is extremely sensitive and not generally available in most clinical laboratories. This instrumentation has been purchased under the CDC Grant and is dedicated to the sole purpose of analyzing clinical specimens. Environmental and food samples sent to the Public Health Laboratory by the LHJ must be properly packaged, and will be routed to the appropriate agency if the PHL is unable to perform the analysis.

Chemical Incident Response staff are not licensed for collection of clinical specimens, but will provide consultation and assistance regarding any specimens, and on the collection receptacles necessary for those specimens. The staff are also prepared to assist in the packaging of specimens for transport to designated laboratories upon request. Methods for environmental sample analysis are published and practiced by the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Ecology, and Washington State Patrol Fire Service Hazardous Materials Unit.

What We Need From You

For more information about the WADOH Chemical Incident Response Laboratory Program, contact the Chemical Incident Response Coordinator, (360) 236-3387 or the Assistant Coordinator, (206) 418-5643. If you are aware of or suspect a potential chemical terrorism or industrial event call (877) 485-7316. For after-hours assistance, call the 24-hour emergency pager at (360) 709-4203.

TO REPORT A CHEMICAL EVENT

CALL THE OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS AT:

360-236-3784 or

877-485-7316

or the pager at:

360-709-4203 after normal business hours

Please provide as much of the following information as is available:

Telephone number for callbacks at the scene

Whether or not local officials have been notified

Material and quantity involved in the incident, if known

Responsible party, if known

What kind of assistance is requested

What has already happened/is happening