



# Environmental Health Laboratory

## KEY MESSAGES

### Environmental health is public health.

- People frequently come into contact with man-made and natural contaminants that may cause health problems or harm our environment. Environmental health scientists test for such contaminants to protect our health.
- Results from environmental health laboratory tests help to detect harmful environmental exposures and prevent disease.

### Environmental health laboratories help safeguard the health of entire communities with every sample tested.

- Environmental health laboratories test water, soil, air, food, manufactured products and clinical samples such as blood and urine, for agents that could harm humans, animals or the environment.
- When contaminants are detected, environmental health laboratories alert the appropriate public health partners so the site can be remediated or the contamination source removed.
- Environmental health laboratories proactively test for new contaminants that may pose a threat to human health.
- Clinical test results identify individuals in need of specialized medical treatment and guide policies to reduce further exposure.
- Environmental health laboratories conduct water testing for public drinking water and private wells, beaches/recreational areas and ground water.

### Environmental health laboratories produce reliable, high quality data that help shape health and environmental policy and guide response to emergencies.

- Environmental health laboratories respond to natural and man-made disasters, such as hurricanes, floods, chemical spills and harmful algal blooms.
- Environmental health laboratories monitor and test for chemical, biological and radiological threats.
- Environmental health laboratories work with local, state and federal partners in public health, environmental protection and law enforcement. Examples include medical professionals, food inspectors, hazardous materials teams and Poison Control Centers.

### What Are Environmental Health Laboratories?

Governmental laboratories that conduct testing to protect human health and the environment vary in name and capability. They are all **environmental health laboratories**—meaning they protect humans from environmental exposures—but they may be named “environmental,” “environmental health” or “public health” laboratories, and they may test environmental samples—air, water, soil, surfaces, food and manufactured products—or human samples to determine if people have been exposed to an environmental contaminant.

