

Position Statement

Ensure Emergency Preparedness and Response

The Issue: From the September 11 attacks in 2001, and the catastrophic flooding of the Iowa and Cedar Rivers in 2008, to threats such as Ebola and Zika in recent years, emergencies can strike unexpectedly, threatening health. To keep Iowans safe from chemical and biological threats, natural disasters and other emergencies, a strong emergency preparedness program is essential for implementing effective response and recovery efforts. Public health emergency preparedness is a continuous process of organizing, training, exercising and evaluating.¹ Because emergencies are unpredictable, processes need to be in place and practiced routinely. To do so effectively, it is important to maintain a strong network of partners to evaluate threats, practice highly specialized training exercises and consistently provide a quick response.²

Background: Pursuant to Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 5.1, the State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL) is responsible for providing surveillance information, disaster and terrorism response, education and training of professionals and the public, and applied research to solve public health problems. Public health laboratories, including SHL, are essential to prepare for and responding to public health threats. With its scientific expertise, the laboratory identifies threats, ensures reliable results, disseminates information regarding threats, and deploys new technologies to combat them.³ SHL is the Iowa affiliate to the national Laboratory Response Network, the Food Emergency Response Network, the Radiological Emergency Response Team, Homeland Security, the FBI, fire departments and hazmat teams, state and local law enforcement, and other emergency responders. SHL also hosts regular trainings and participates in emergency response drills throughout Iowa to ensure state and local readiness for a diverse range of threats.⁴

Solutions:

- **Preparedness:** Sustain funding for SHL to ensure continuous capacity for monitoring, training and emergency response to public health threats.
- **Infrastructure:** Support funding for the public health infrastructure necessary to respond to emergencies of any kind at any time, such as emergency response networks.⁵
- **Training:** Invest in professional training provided by SHL and others to ensure a highly skilled workforce that is ready to detect and respond to emergencies.
- **Communication:** Ensure support for public communication and education efforts for a coordinated community response to emergencies.

¹ <https://www.dhs.gov/topic/plan-and-prepare-disasters>: Plan and Prepare for Disasters

² State Hygienic Laboratory Emergency Preparedness Fact Sheet

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/phpr/whatwedo/laboratory.htm>: Laboratory Response: On The Front Lines of America's Health

⁴ State Hygienic Laboratory Annual Report

⁵ https://www.aphl.org/policy/Position_Documents/FINAL%20Need%20for%20Sustained%20Funding%20of%20PHL%20to%20Ensure%20All%20Hazard%20Preparedness%2010.18.pdf: APHL Position Statement: The Need for Sustained Funding of Public Health Laboratories to Ensure All-Hazard Preparedness