



# Massachusetts Department of Public Health

## Public Health Council Meeting September 10, 2025

Robert Goldstein, Commissioner

*Today's presentation is available on [mass.gov/dph](https://mass.gov/dph) under "Upcoming Events" by clicking on the September 10 Public Health Council listing.*

# Warehouse Opening



# National Preparedness Month



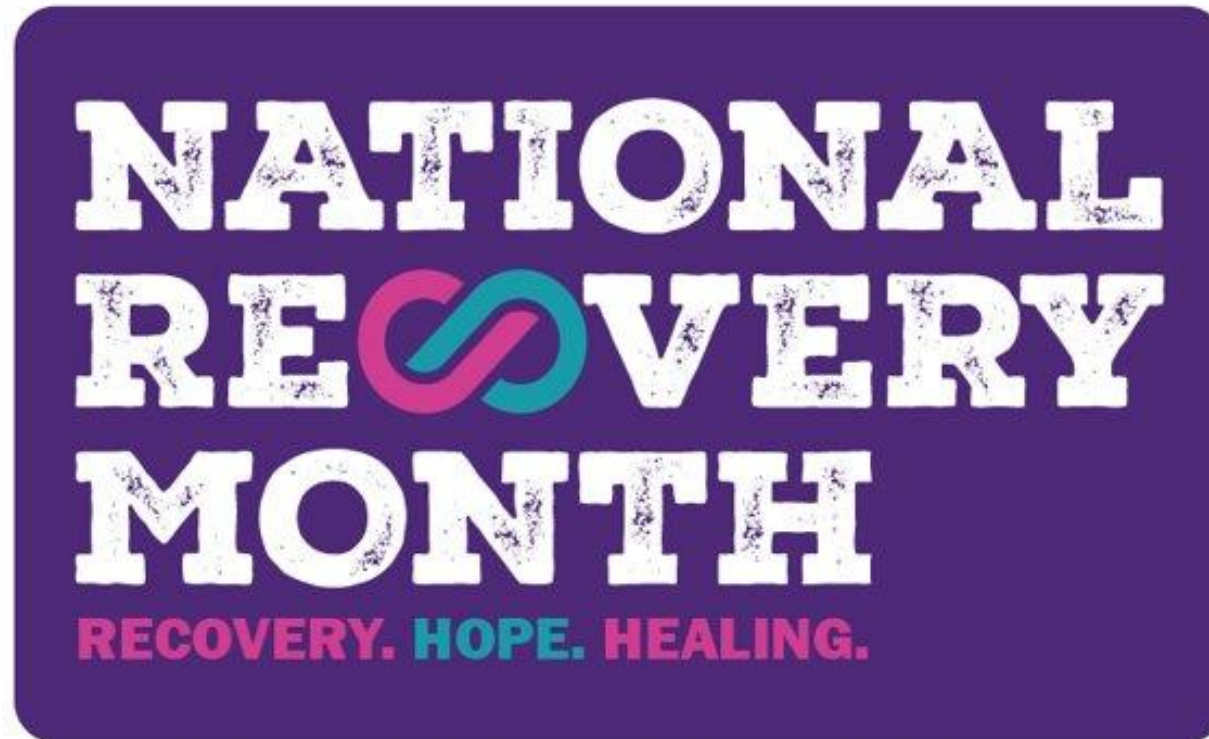
**[mass.gov/BePrepared](https://mass.gov/BePrepared)**

# International Overdose Awareness Day



*Flag planting on Boston Common*

# National Recovery Month



Recovery Month events and recovery-related trainings:  
[careersofsubstance.org/trainings-and-events/calendar](https://careersofsubstance.org/trainings-and-events/calendar)

# Arbovirus

## Prevent Mosquito Bites



[mass.gov/MosquitoesAndTicks](https://mass.gov/MosquitoesAndTicks)



Massachusetts  
Department of  
Public Health

**massDOT**  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation

# Respiratory Illness Preparedness



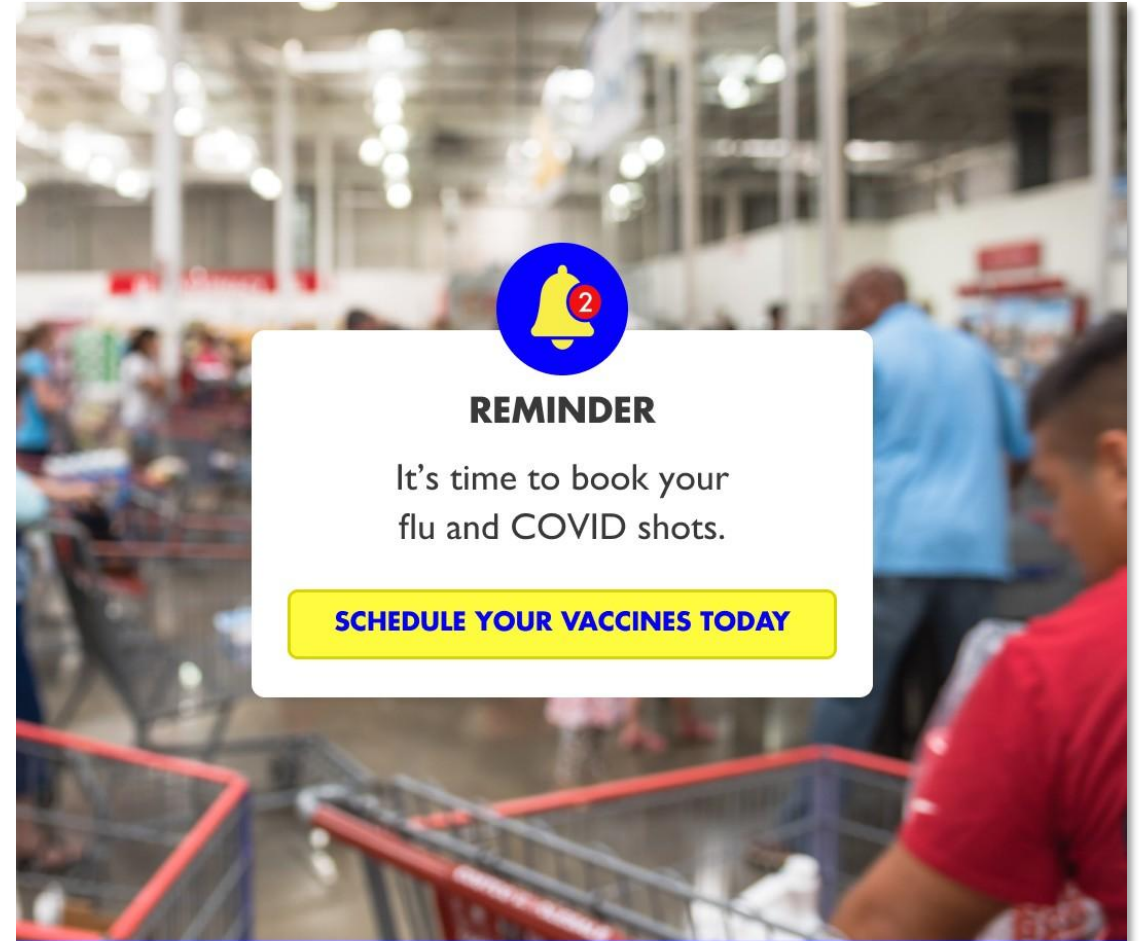
**REMINDER**

It's flu and COVID season.

**SCHEDULE YOUR VACCINES TODAY**



[mass.gov/SeasonalVaccines](https://mass.gov/SeasonalVaccines)



**REMINDER**

It's time to book your flu and COVID shots.

**SCHEDULE YOUR VACCINES TODAY**



[mass.gov/SeasonalVaccines](https://mass.gov/SeasonalVaccines)

# Preserving Access to Vaccines in Massachusetts

PRESS RELEASE

## Governor Healey Announces Immediate Steps to Ensure Vaccine Availability in Massachusetts Amid Trump, RFK Rollbacks

Healey Administration takes first-of-its-kind action to guarantee insurance coverage of vaccines recommended by the state

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

9/04/2025

Governor Maura Healey and Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll

Department of Public Health

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

**BOSTON** — Governor Maura Healey today announced a series of immediate measures to ensure that vaccines remain available to Massachusetts residents of all ages, while President Donald Trump and Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. restrict access to vaccines and make cuts to public health across the country.

[Link to Press Release](#)



Massachusetts Department of Public Health

# Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management

---

Kerin Milesky, Director

# Overview

OPEM coordinates overall preparedness and response efforts for DPH, as well as supporting inter- and intra-agency response to public health incidents.

With colleagues across the department we:

- Lead public health activities, monitor health threats, and provide health care guidance
- Support hospitals, clinics, and long-term care providers
- Coordinate with local, state, and federal partners to protect health



OFFICE OF  
PREPAREDNESS  
AND EMERGENCY  
MANAGEMENT

# Preparedness and Response

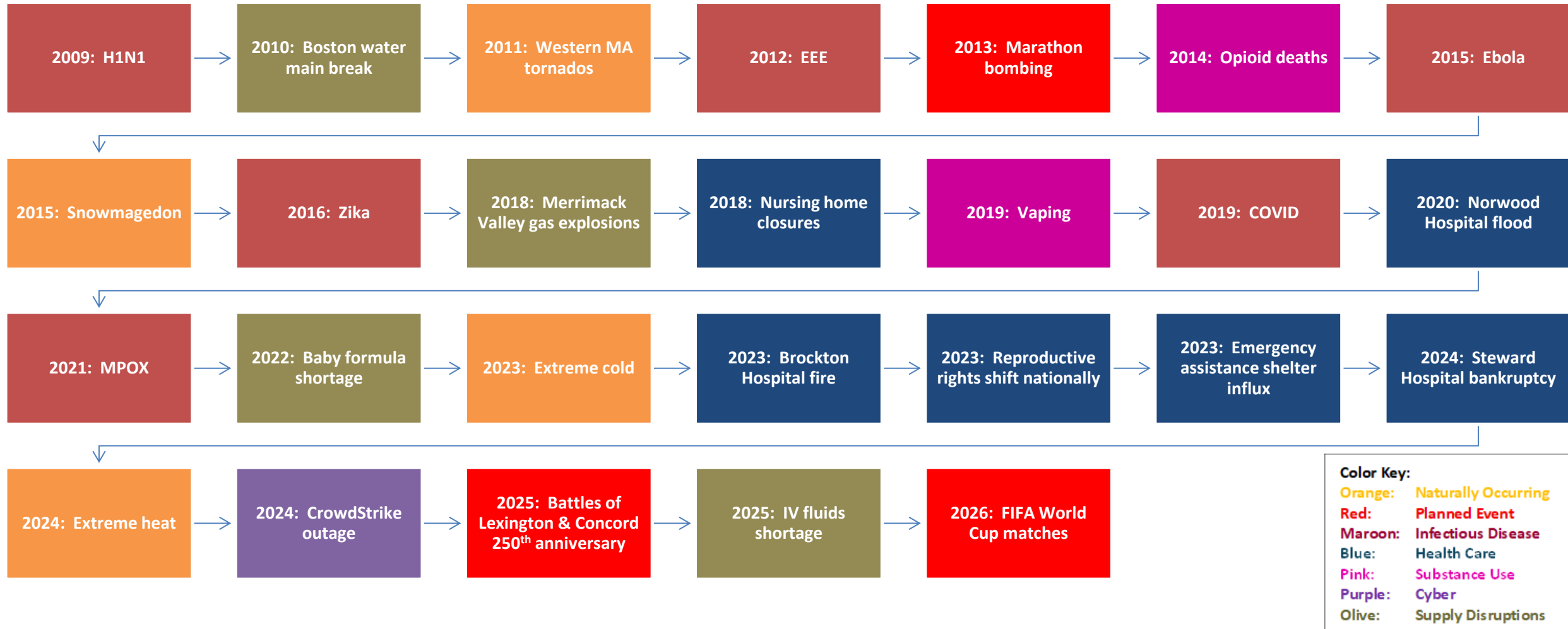
## **MEMA**

Supports the state and its communities through coordination and leadership to prepare for, mitigate against, respond to, and recover from all disasters.

## **DPH OPEM**

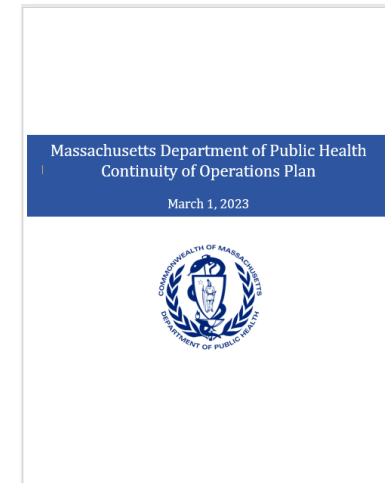
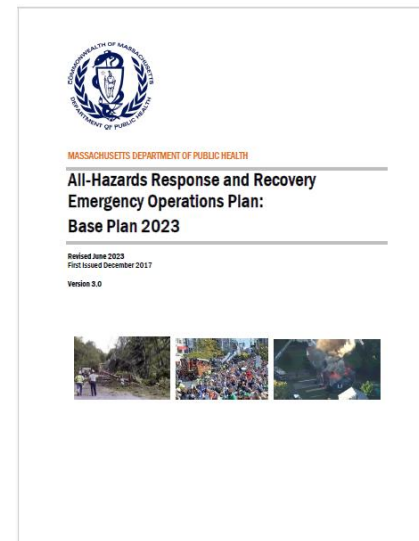
Supports public health and health care partners to ensure they have the knowledge, plans and tools to prepare for, respond to and recover from threats to public health.

# Examples of Emergencies Affecting Public Health



# Federal, State, Local, and Tribal Coalition

- Maintain effective and ongoing federal, state, local, and tribal relationships
- Collaborate with local public health, health care facilities and systems, and other partners to ensure they have the knowledge, plans, and tools to prepare for, respond to, and recover from threats to public health



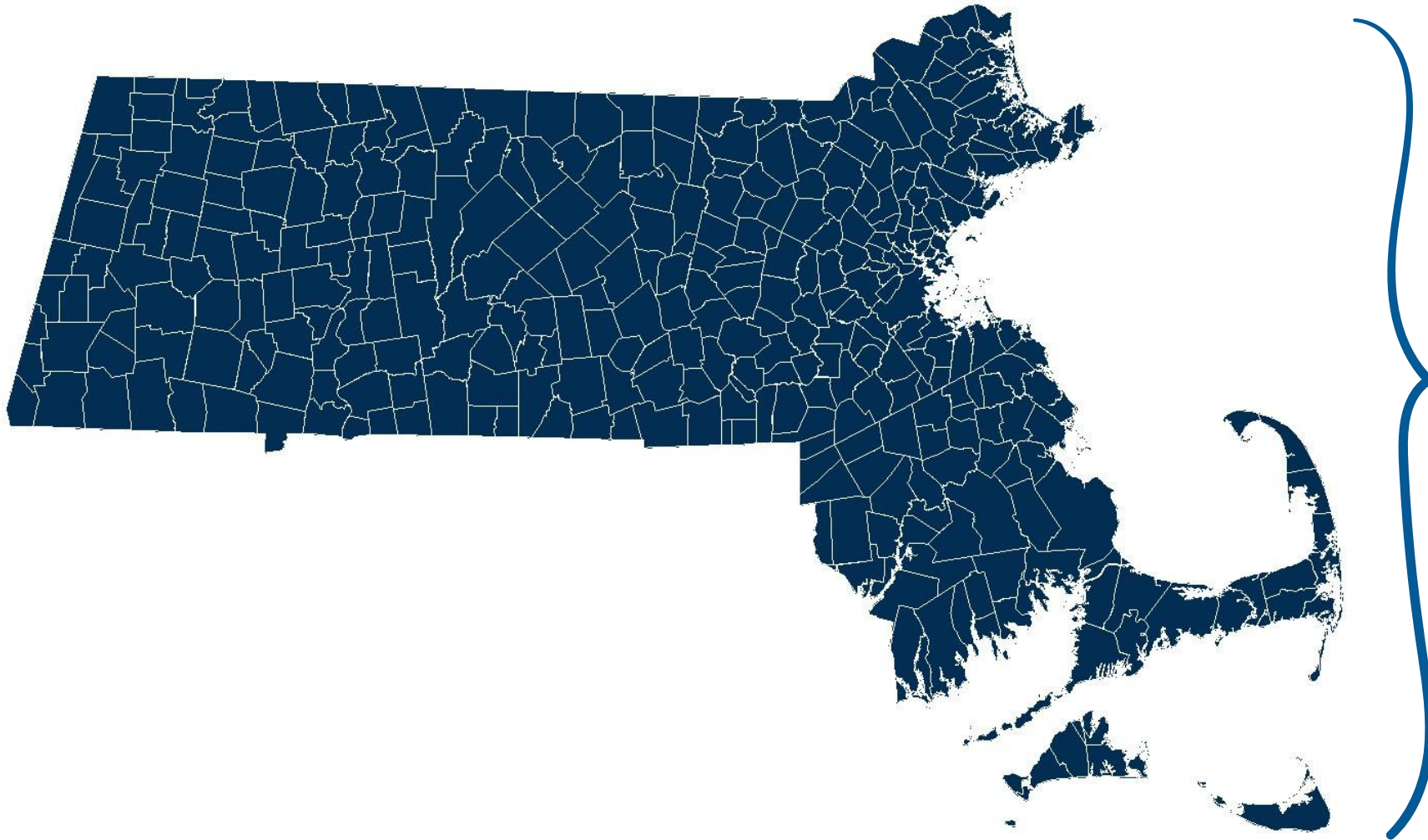
# Commonwealth Landscape



- Population: 7,029,917 \*
- DPH Licensed Healthcare Facilities: 3,558
- Acute Care Hospitals: 70
- Non-Acute Hospitals: 26
- Nursing/Rest Homes: 406
- EMS Agencies: 375

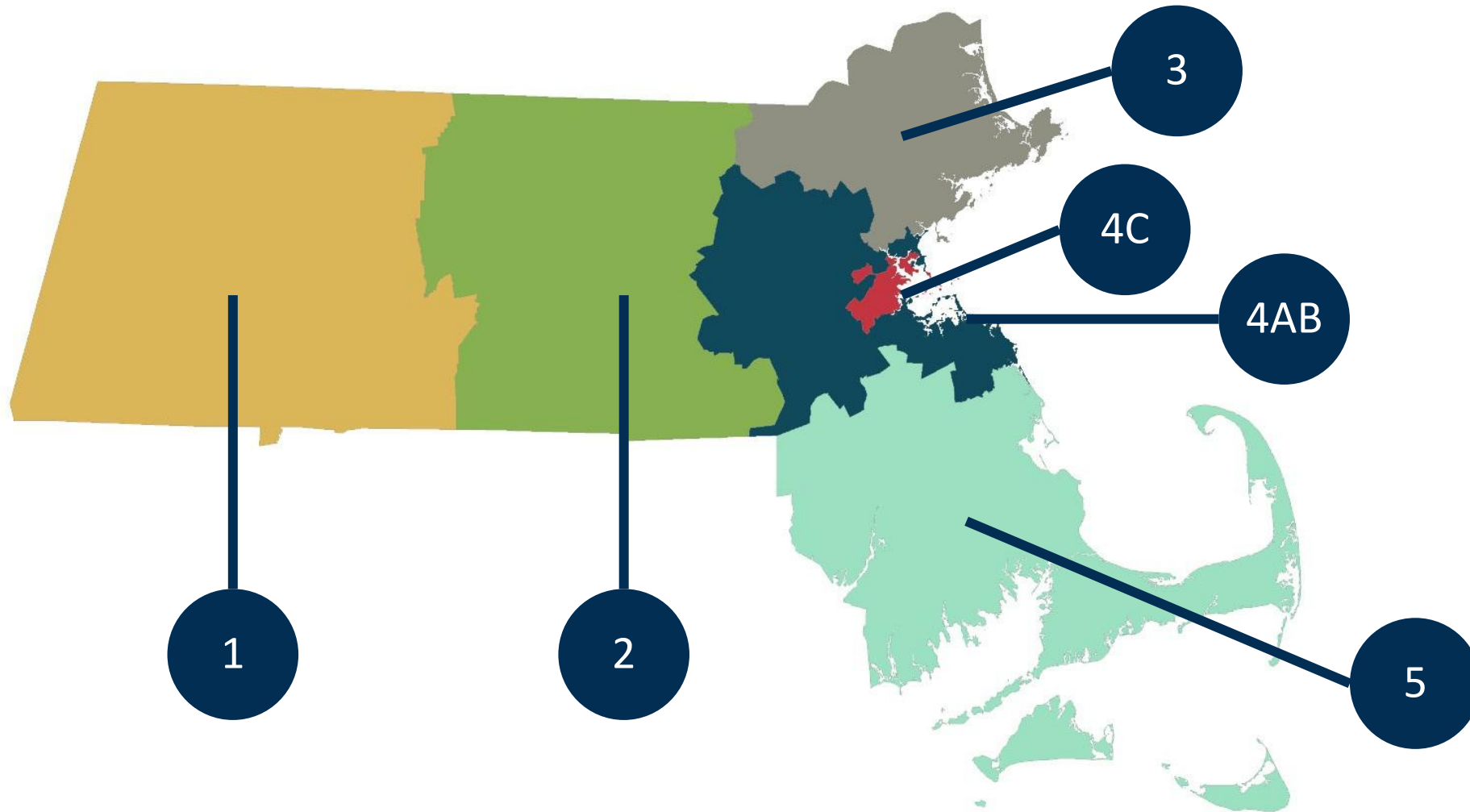
\*2020 Census Data

# Structure



351  
Independent boards  
of health having  
jurisdiction

# Health and Medical Coordinating Coalitions Structure



# OPEM Spotlights

## Preparedness & Response

1

Public Health  
Response  
Capabilities

2

Public Health  
Stockpile

3

Health Care  
System Capacity

4

Ready Responder  
Program

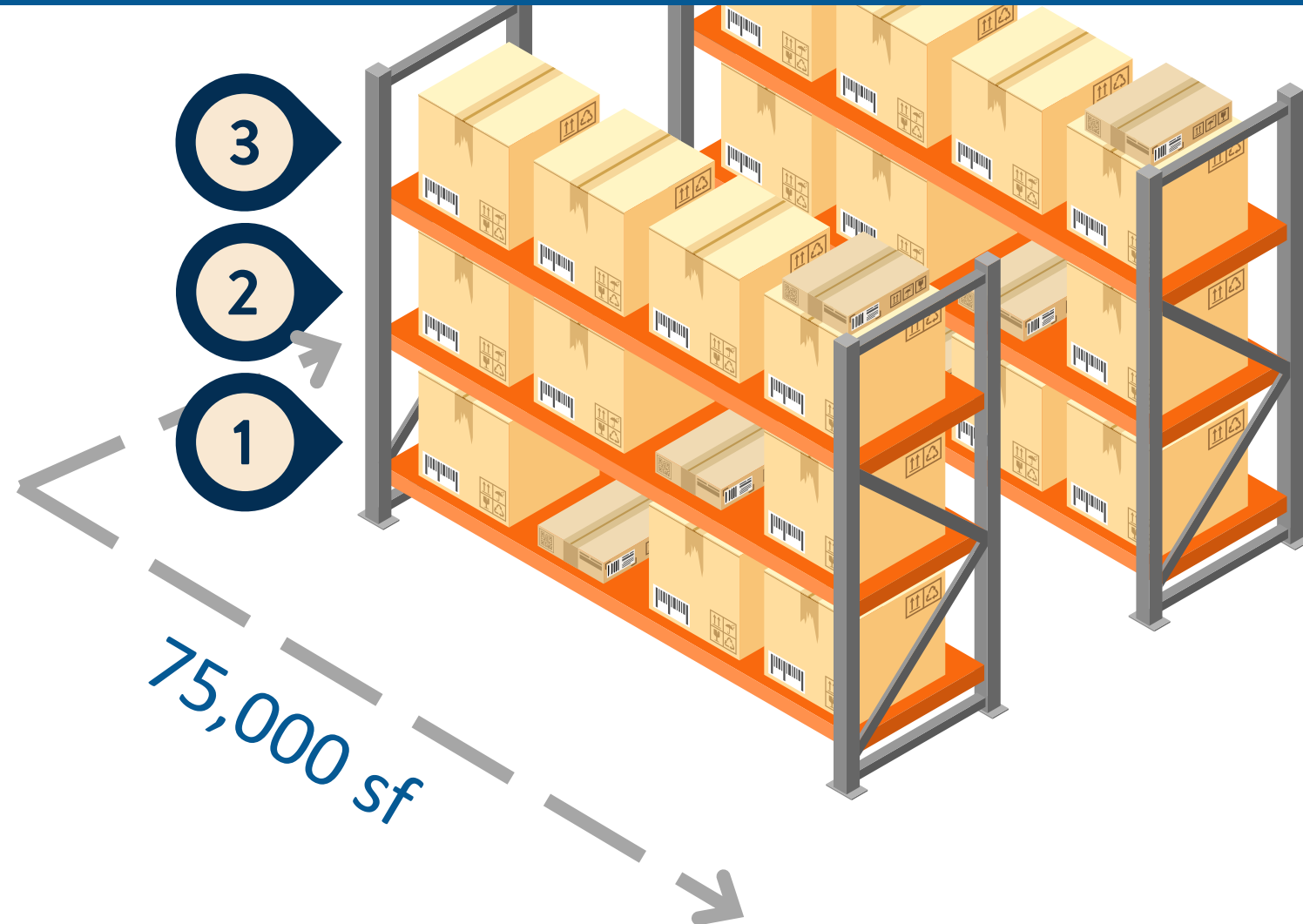
## PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE CAPABILITIES

- 24/7 Duty Officer Program
- Department Operations Center (DOC)
- DOC in a Box



# Public Health Stockpile

- DPH Operated
- Adjacent to MEMA warehouse
- In-house Staff
- Scalable
- PPE, supplies, equipment, and medication



# Stockpile Overview

## PPE

- Masks
- Gowns
- Gloves
- Face Shields
- Goggles
- Respirators

## Diagnostics

- COVID-19
- FLU

## DME

- Ventilators
- HFNC
- O2 Concentrators

## Medication

- Antibiotics
- Antivirals
- IV Solution
- Others

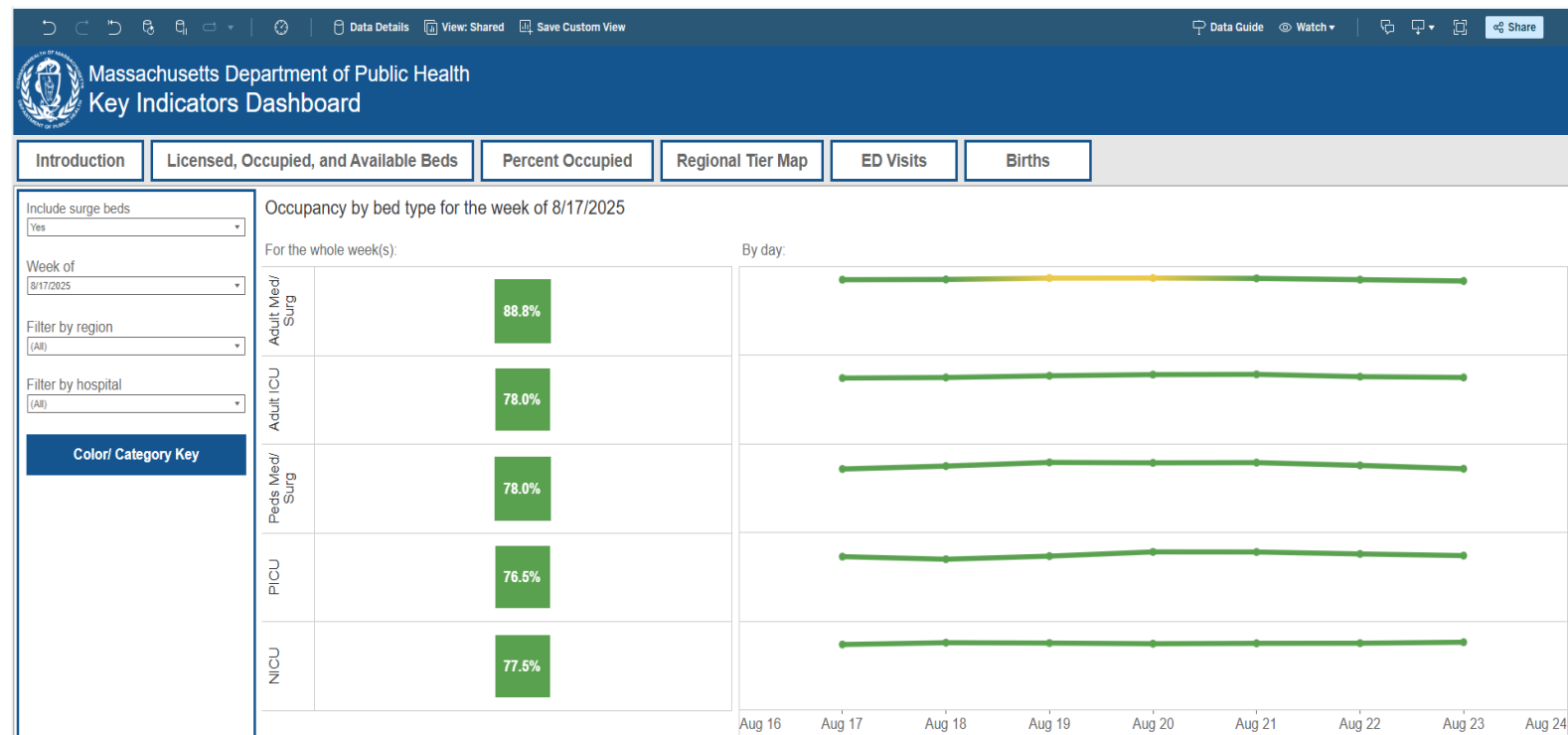
## Medical Supplies

- Saline Flush
- Needles
- Syringes
- NP Swabs
- Bio Bags



# Health Care System Capacity

- Massachusetts has one of the highest post-pandemic hospital occupancy rates in the nation
- DPH Capacity Planning Framework supports ongoing collaboration and mitigation strategies
- Working to implement MA ACORN to automate the collection of capacity data from hospitals



# Ready Responder Program



## Goal

A DPH workforce ready and able to respond to emergencies while continuing to protect the health and wellness of all people in the Commonwealth

The Ready Responder Program (RRP) is a DPH initiative to:

- ✓ Build a **scalable, trained, and deployable** workforce
- ✓ **Support** urgent public health staffing needs
- ✓ Address both **emergency events and routine workforce gaps**
- ✓ **Organize responders** into cadres with specialized skills for rapid mobilization

# Public Health Preparedness Funding

## **CDC Public Health Emergency Preparedness and ASPR Hospital Preparedness Program Grants**

- \$18M annually
  - Funds DPH, Local Health, HMCCs, Hospitals, Clinics, Long Term Care, Emergency Medical Services, MRCs
- Est 2002 to support activities related to preparing for acts of bioterrorism and other public health threats
- July 1, entered Year 2 of five-year cooperative agreements
  - Partial funding awarded
  - Final award notices pending
- Requires 10% state match
  - Sole state appropriation for public health preparedness

# Connect with DPH



@MassDPH



Massachusetts Department of Public Health



[mass.gov/dph](https://mass.gov/dph)



# Massachusetts Department of Public Health

## Public Health Council Meeting Role of Public Health Laboratory in Emergency Preparedness & Response

Dr. Nicolas Epie, Director, State Public Health Laboratory

Dr. Sanjib Bhattacharyya, Associate Director, SPHL

**Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences (BIDLS)**

# Protecting the Health of the Community

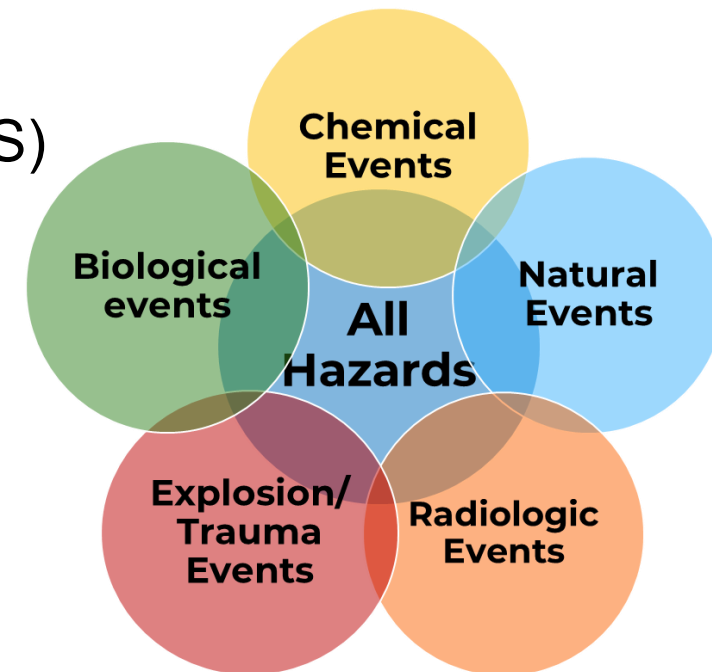
## The State Public Health Laboratory Services are an Integral Part of the DPH Emergency Response Infrastructure

Coordinated Efforts Across DPH Operations:

- State Public Health Laboratory (SPHL)
- Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences (BIDLS)
- Massachusetts Environmental Radiation Laboratory (MERL)
- Office of Preparedness & Emergency Management (OPEM)

There is a laboratory component in all types of hazard response

- Chemical, Biological, Radiologic etc. events
- Emerging Infections and Outbreak Response
- Natural events, Explosion and Trauma
- Special Events (Boston Marathon and World Cup Soccer 2026)



# Critical Laboratory Activities to Support Public Health Emergency Response

- Detection of Biological and Chemical terrorism threats
- Testing for high-consequence infectious diseases and emerging pathogens
- Early Detection of clusters of infections, support outbreak investigations
- Advanced genomic testing for re-emerging/novel infections, vaccine failures
- Identification of antimicrobial resistance patterns
- Testing for environmental pollutants
- Serving the Commonwealth as a second level reference Laboratory after the CDC

# Resilient Public Health Laboratory Structure

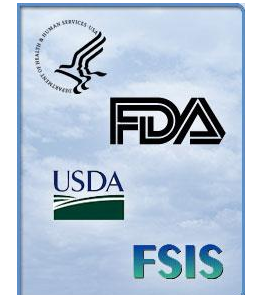
## Sustaining Laboratory Operation

- 24/7 lab operations- Surge response
- Renovated and highly secured Facility- Cutting edge SPHL
- Updated security measures in Renovated Building.
- Available 21st century laboratory instrumentation
- Implementing a robust but flexible Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS)
- Advanced Molecular Detection (AMD) and Next Generation Sequencing (NGS), Bioinformatics and Data Transmission



# Emergency Response Partners

- Law enforcement- State Police & Fire department
- United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Civil Support Team (CST)
- Hospital Emergency Management
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
  - Laboratory Response Network (LRN)
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
  - Food Emergency Response Network (FERN)
- US Department of Agriculture (USDA)
  - Food Safety & Inspection Services (FSIS)
- Department of Homeland Security
  - BioWatch



# Laboratory Response Network- Biological (LRN-B)

## Sentinel Laboratories

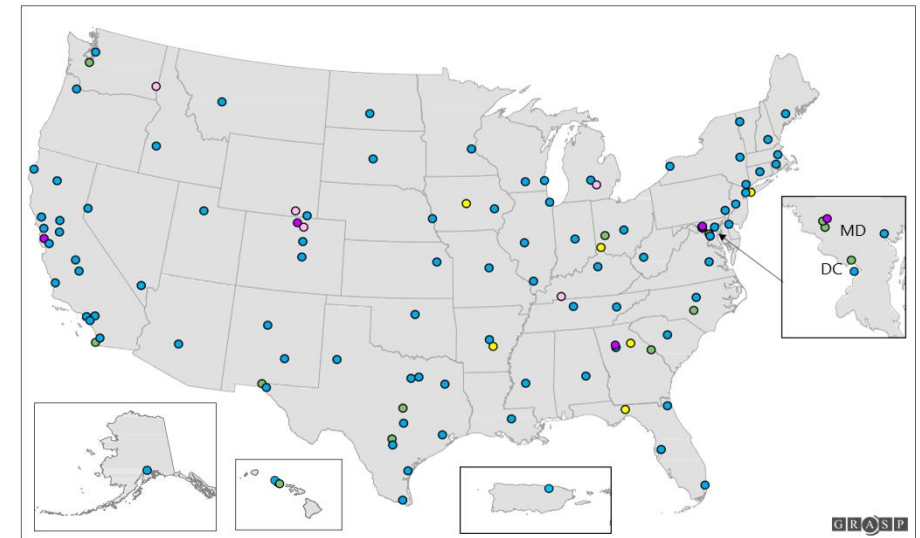
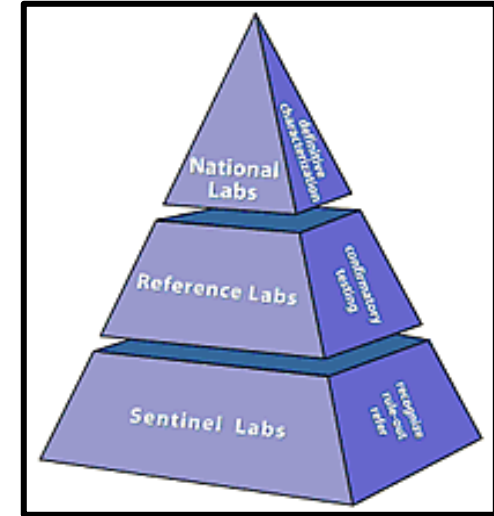
- Hospital, reference, veterinary, military, water, and food labs
- Perform routine clinical testing

## Reference Laboratories

- State PHL's, military and research labs
  - MA SPHL Tier-1 laboratory
- Perform confirmatory testing
  - Rule out biological threat agents
- Secure and electronic transfer of results to CDC

## National Laboratories

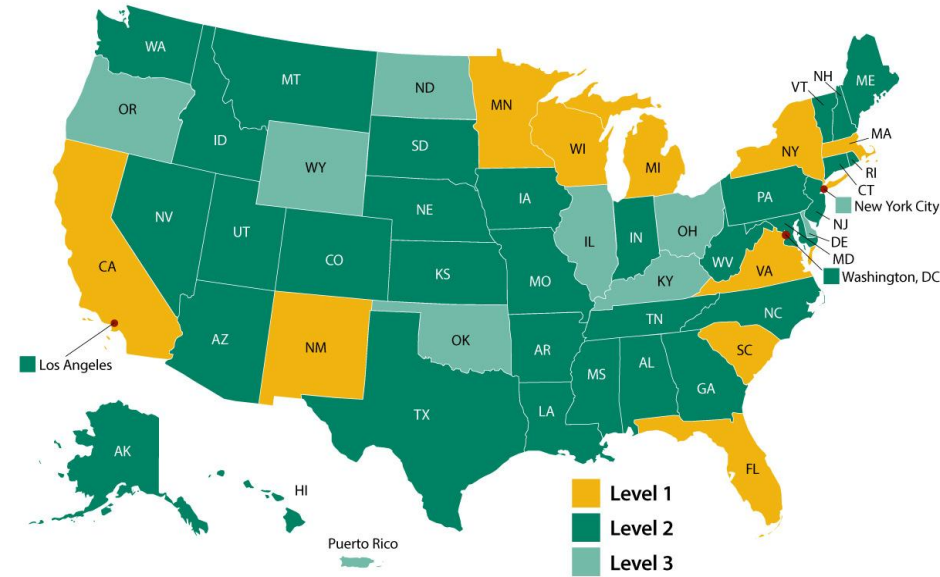
- CDC & US Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID)
- FBI Laboratory



# Laboratory Response Network- Chemical (LRN-C)

## A National Network that Responds to Chemical Terrorism and Other Public Health Emergencies

- Founding partners- CDC, FBI and the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL)
  - **54** LRN-C member laboratories in the U.S., and territories
  - **44** laboratories can identify exposures to toxic chemical agents such as cyanide, nerve agents, and toxic metals
  - MA SPHL is one of the 10 laboratories (Level 1) with higher level chemical threat testing capabilities
- **8,500** clinical samples can be processed, tested, and reported to CDC within a 24-hour period



# MA SPHL Biothreat Response Laboratory- Case Study

## Case Study 1: *Burkholderia* (causative agent of Melioidosis)

*MA SPHL Collaboration with Division of Epidemiology, DPH and CDC*

- **2023:** Index patient presented at MA Hospital. Blood culture drawn and isolated forwarded to MA SPHL and Biothreat response (BT) lab confirmed as *Burkholderia pseudomallei*
  - Another patient presented at the same symptoms. Urine cultured, and isolate was forwarded to MA SPHL, and confirmed as *Burkholderia pseudomallei*
- Investigated for potential lab exposures, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) was recommended for high-risk individuals
- Expanded serologic, molecular testing and symptom monitoring was implemented
- MA SPHL Biothreat response lab and Division of Epidemiology collaborated with the testing facility to mitigate cases and prevention of laboratory exposures by training laboratory staff

This response enhanced flagging of patients, improved case management and identified need for improved collaborations

# MA SPHL Responses to Chemical Agents Investigations

**2010:** An accidental exposure to Sulfur Mustard a known blister agent when a patient tested positive at MA SPHL, allowing for rapid treatment and prevention of further exposures.

**2015:** Unknown substance submitted for analysis tested Positive for MDMA (3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine)

**2015:** Cyanide exposure investigation due to suicide

**2017:** Unknown substance investigation requested by Poison Control - A child ingested designer drugs

**2019:** Mercury exposure investigation- Boiling of teeth to remove silver that caused Mercury contamination of an apartment building



# Other Emergency Laboratory Response Programs: BioWatch

## BioWatch

- Federally managed, and locally operated laboratory in MA SPHL
- Laboratory processes and analyzes filters to determine presence of select biological agents from air-monitoring collectors in multiple strategic locations
- State and local officials develop plans to respond to a biological agent detection if laboratory declares BioWatch Actionable Results (BAR)
- Performs environmental surveillance 24/7/365 days including the special events



# Other Emergency Laboratory Response Programs: Vector-borne Diseases

## Vector-borne Diseases

- Mosquito-Borne Disease Surveillance in Collaboration with different agencies
  - Mosquito Control Projects (with 11 counties)
  - State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board
  - Local Health MDPH Bureau of Environmental Health
  - Bureau of Emergency Preparedness, State and Local Agencies
- Invasive mosquito species monitoring, including WNV and EEE and Tick-borne Disease Surveillance



# Laboratory Quality and Security

## **Meeting Quality Standards**

- Clinical
- Food and Dairy
- Water

## **Security of Special Pathogens**

- Security of space and personnel
- Ensure special pathogens and samples are securely stored

# Continuity of Laboratory Operations

## **Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP)**

- Coordinated COOP
- Laboratory Incident Command System Structure
- Cross training of Microbiologists across the laboratory divisions
- Rapid test development and implementation for improved response to emerging pathogens or chemical threats

## **Incident Command System (ICS)**

- A standardized approach to the command, control, and coordination of emergency response across the SPHL
- SPHL implement a common hierarchy for command system aligned with DPH programs and emergency responders from multiple agencies to effectively respond to PH threat

# Thank You

## Questions?



# Massachusetts Department of Public Health

**Next Meeting:**  
**Wednesday, October 8, 2025**