

DAY ONE IN THE LRN-C: TIPS FOR NEWLY-HIRED CHEMICAL THREAT STAFF

Welcome to the **Laboratory Response Network for Chemical Threats (LRN-C) Program!** Your role within the LRN-C is vital to ensuring swift and effective responses to chemical threats.

This guide will help you navigate your first few weeks by introducing you to the LRN-C program structure, key contacts and essential resources. Please don't hesitate to reach out to the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) or the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with any questions as you begin your journey with us.

On behalf of the network, we're excited you have joined our team that's dedicated to protecting public health and safety!

Key Tasks for Your First Two Weeks

Your first two weeks are essential for laying a solid foundation. Below are important activities to complete during this time:

Engage with APHL's Environmental Health Team: Let us know who you are! Contact eh@aphl.org so we can facilitate your access to key resources.

Obtain SAMS Access: Register for access to the **Secure Access Management Service (SAMS)** system, which will connect you to the CDC hub. Read the **SAMS Frequently Asked Questions** document for more information.

Understand Your Laboratory's Structure: Review your lab's internal structure, including divisions and the roles of key contacts. Take time to introduce yourself to important internal figures—such as the safety officer, biosafety officer, facility manager, epidemiologists and LRN-B colleagues—as they will be critical partners for ensuring your work aligns with safety and operational protocols.

Coordinate with Your Team: As part of orientation, reach out to your laboratory's Quality Assurance (QA) department to understand key standards and processes.

Connect with External Partners: To strengthen your own network, we encourage you to connect with the LRN-C's external partners, including the FBI Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordinator, Poison Control Center, your local Civil Support Team, Fire Department and Hazmat. Reach out within your first two weeks to establish these connections, as they'll be crucial in future response efforts. Ask your laboratory director or biothreat coordinator for contact information.

Review LRN-C Program Structure and PHEP Requirements: Familiarize yourself with the PHEP requirements for your laboratory's level (1, 2 or 3).

About the LRN-C

The LRN-C is a national network of local, state and federal laboratories that possess specialized expertise and play a critical role in chemical threat preparedness and response. It was co-founded by CDC, APHL and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to identify individuals with concerning chemical exposures.

Program Structure: Where You Fit In

State and local laboratories in the LRN-C are designated as Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3, each with distinct responsibilities. The LRN-C is a performance-based network of laboratories poised to respond to jurisdictional concerns.

- **Level 1 laboratories provide 24/7 response and surge capacity testing in the event of a large-scale chemical emergency.** These laboratories maintain sufficient personnel, expertise and instrumentation to support high volume testing with quick turnaround times. CDC requires these laboratories to maintain testing capabilities for exposures to high threat chemical agents, such as mustard and nerve agents. In addition to surge capacity and these advanced analytical capabilities, Level 1 laboratories maintain all Level 2 testing and Level 3 outreach capabilities.
- **Level 2 laboratories maintain testing capabilities for exposures to chemical agents, such as cyanide, toxic metals and select industrial chemicals.** Although Level 2 laboratories test for fewer chemical threat agents, the instrumentation and expertise developed in this program enable detection for new and emerging threats. In addition, Level 2 laboratories must maintain Level 3 outreach capabilities.
- **Level 3 laboratories ensure local support with training and outreach to local hospitals, appropriate specimen collection and sample logistics.** All LRN-C laboratories maintain Level 3 capabilities.

PHEP Grant Requirements and Responsibilities

The LRN-C Program is funded through the Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) cooperative agreement with CDC, which has several foundational requirements for the program:

- **SPaSE Proficiency:** Successful participation in Specimen Packaging and Shipping Exercises (SPaSE) ensures you're meeting critical standards.
- **Method Compliance:** Maintain minimum required methods for testing, specific to Level 1 and 2 laboratories.
- **Outreach:** Participate in community outreach initiatives as outlined in the cooperative agreement requirements and successful participation in quality assessment challenges.

Review the full [PHEP LRN-C Supplemental Guidance](#) for level-specific requirements.

Essential Program Resources

LRN-C Partner Contacts

- **CDC:**
 - Quality assurance, proficiency testing, materials and other programmatic questions: LRN-C_QA_Program@cdc.gov
 - CDC Emergency Operations Center: **770.488.7100** (ask for ATSDR Duty Officer)
- **APHL:** General LRN-C questions on accessing resources and connecting with other network members: EH@aphl.org

Regular Meetings and Work Groups

- **CDC LRN-C Monthly Conference Call:** CDC holds a required monthly conference call to discuss ongoing initiatives and provide updates across the program, held on the third Wednesday of each month at 2:30 pm ET. Plan to attend so you can stay informed and ask any questions about your work or program goals.
- **LRN-C Technical Meeting:** Scientists from LRN-C laboratories meet annually to discuss technical issues, the proficiency testing program, technology and methods. This meeting is traditionally convened in-person in the spring and rotates location, dependent on the host LRN-C laboratory.
- **APHL LRN-C Community of Practice:** Join APHL's [LRN-C Community of Practice \(CoP\)](#) to connect with peers across the network. Contact Jennifer Liebreich (jennifer.liebreich@aphl.org) for access (she can also add you to the CTCWG, see below for more information).
- **APHL Chemical Threat Collaborative Work Group:** Contact Jennifer Liebreich at jennifer.liebreich@aphl.org to join the [Chemical Threat Collaborative Work Group \(CTCWG\)](#), which meets every other month to discuss training, outreach and exercises.

APHL Resources Materials

You can find extensive lists of resources on APHL's [Environmental Health Resources](#) webpage (under Chemical Threats) and the [LRN-C CoP](#) and the [CTCWG](#) sites. If you have any questions regarding these resources and how to use them don't hesitate to contact eh@aphl.org.

Key Resource: LRN-C Level 3 Resource Handbook

The [LRN-C Level 3 Resource Handbook](#) is a guide for providing outreach and training to hospital personnel, first responders and personnel of other agencies that would respond to an accidental or intentional chemical release resulting in human exposure. This is a must-read to familiarize yourself with common LRN-C terminology, programmatic details, and your role and responsibilities in the network.

We're Excited to Work with You!

Thank you for taking the time to review this guide. The entire network is available to support you every step of the way. Your dedication to public health and preparedness is invaluable, and we look forward to all that you'll bring to our team. Welcome to the LRN-C Program!