



# Northeast Environmental and Public Health Laboratory Directors (NEEPHLD) – Almost A Half Century of Partnership

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the goals of the Laboratory Efficiencies Initiative (LEI) is to improve the collection of and access to public health test service information required for decision making, planning, and collaboration with state and local public health laboratories (PHL). The NEEPHLD Group has been in existence for almost 50 years and embodies the principles of the LEI.

## History

In the mid-1970s, newborn screening legislation was introduced in the New England states. The Public Health Laboratory Directors recognized problems and concerns common to each of them and began to meet regularly to brainstorm and troubleshoot solutions. Since the region covered is relatively small, the meetings were able to occur on a regular basis. This group became the New England Public Health Laboratory Directors Group (NEPHLD).

Those initial meetings were so valuable that the group decided to expand the focus of their activities to include other functions of the Public Health Laboratory. Since each state also had an environmental laboratory either co-located or closely associated with the public health laboratory the second “E” was formally added to the group in the 1980’s. The membership expanded to include New York State and the EPA Region 1 Laboratory thus creating the Northeast Environmental and Public Health Laboratory Directors Group (NEEPHLD).

As NEEPHLD evolved, the group began to meet more formally on a quarterly basis. Because of its central location, the majority of the meetings were held at the New Hampshire Public Health Laboratories. Over time, the meeting location shifted, with the host lab rotating to other states.

NEEPHLD agenda items cover topics including quality assurance, emergency response and preparedness, laboratory regulations, billing, procurement, and facilities issues.

In recent years one meeting has been dedicated to a training event, inviting other regional partners outside of the NEEPHLD group. Training topics have included radioanalytical testing of both clinical and environmental samples, and development of a plan for continuity of operations in an emergency.

In 2013, CDC released a funding opportunity to investigate shared laboratory services. NEEPHLD invited New Jersey and New York City to join and submitted a proposal which was accepted. A Consortium was formed that meets in conjunction with the core group quarterly and holds monthly conference calls to develop a shared services model for the region.

## NEEPHLD Partners Key Statistics

### Maine



Public Health/Environmental/Forensic Laboratory  
58,000 clinical tests per year  
83,000 environmental tests per year  
56 FTE's  
Population Served: 1,328,361  
Square miles: 30,842

### New Hampshire



Public Health/Environmental Laboratory  
17,000 clinical tests per year  
71,000 environmental tests per year  
64 FTEs  
Population Served: 1,316,469  
Square miles: 8,952

### Vermont



Public Health/Environmental Laboratory  
36,000 clinical tests per year  
38,000 environmental tests per year  
44 FTE's  
Population Served: 625,745  
Square miles: 9,216

### Massachusetts



Public Health/Environmental Laboratory  
225,000 clinical tests per year  
15,000 environmental tests per year  
127 FTE's  
Population Served: 6,646,144  
Square miles: 10,554

### Massachusetts DEP Laboratory



Environmental Laboratory  
13,000 environmental tests per year  
22 FTE's  
Population Served: 6,646,144  
Square miles: 10,554

## NEEPHLD Partners Key Statistics

### Connecticut



Public Health/Environmental Laboratory  
120,000 clinical tests per year  
41,000 environmental tests per year  
90 FTE's  
Population Served: 3,574,097  
Square miles: 4,842

### Rhode Island



Public Health/Environmental/Forensic Laboratory  
93,000 clinical tests per year  
35,000 environmental tests per year  
73 FTE's  
Population Served: 1,052,567  
Square miles: 1,033

### New York State



Public Health/Environmental Laboratory  
373,000 clinical tests per year  
120,000 environmental tests per year  
686 FTE's  
Population Served: 19,378,105  
Square miles: 47,126

### New York City



Public Health/Environmental Laboratory  
150,000 clinical tests per year  
3,200 environmental tests per year  
135 FTE's  
Population Served: 8,175,133  
Square miles: 302

### New Jersey



Public Health/Environmental/Agricultural Laboratory  
5,300,000 clinical tests per year  
19,000 environmental tests per year  
155 FTE's  
Population Served: 8,791,894  
Square miles: 7,354

### EPA Region 1



Environmental Laboratory  
12,500 environmental tests per year  
22 FTE's  
Population Served: 14,444,868  
Square miles: 62,685

## NEEPHLD Activities

- Serves as a resource for new Laboratory Directors in the region
- Developed a comprehensive Regional Emergency Response Plan in conjunction with EPA
- Participated in first multi-state exercise involving environmental and human clinical samples
- COOP planning
- Developed analytical methods for both environmental and clinical matrices
- Shared costing information and reviewed financial approaches to meeting budgets
- Coordinated grant submissions for biomonitoring and data exchange
- Shared job descriptions
- Provided forum for scientific staff to meet and share methods and train on high complexity methods
- Shared LIMS implementation strategies and experiences
- Hosted EPA Regional activities, and served as a forum for EPA to provide training when Drinking Water Compliance methods were initially released (1980's)
- Discussed legislative issues that could affect multiple states
- Shared analytical services (Connecticut served as a regional resource for asbestos testing in drinking water)
- Applied for and received EPA waivers on methods and detection limits more specific to New England needs

## CONCLUSION

For almost 50 years, NEEPHLD (the first group of its kind in the nation) has been a resource to the region and has served as a forum to help new laboratory directors develop the skills to effectively perform their jobs. The NEEPHLD members share information and challenges to develop joint solutions for problems that arise and can serve as a resource and model for laboratories as they work towards the concepts of sustainability.

## For More Information

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Reference: Population & Square mileage, US Census Bureau, 2010