

EPA's Office of Research & Development Engagement Efforts with State, Local, and Tribal Government

Viktoriya Plotkin | *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

ORD has been working for the past seven years to strengthen its direct relationship with states. Starting with its partnership with the Environmental Council of States (ECOS) and the Environmental Research Institute of the States (ERIS), ORD has worked with its stakeholders to determine environmental research priorities, engage early on in product development, and disseminate research information and tools. These collaborations with end-users of ORD research have been further enhanced through partnerships with several public health associations, such as the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO), and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO). Recognizing that ORD's efforts can also support organizations outside of ECOS and public health associations, in March 2018, ORD announced the creation of a Framework to strengthen its relationship with states and tribes by building engagements with Natural Resources Agencies, State Scientists, Tribes, and Emergency Management.

Recent natural disasters, such as Hurricanes Harvey, Maria, and Irma, as well as man-made disasters, like the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, highlight the importance of state and local emergency responders, who are first on the scene when disaster strikes. To assist in these efforts, EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) conducts research and acquires expertise to improve water utilities' ability to prepare for and respond to incidents and to advance the Nation's capabilities to respond to wide-area contamination incidents. To ensure that the research products being developed are relevant and timely for state and local responders, as well as our federal partners, ORD has embarked on a systematic approach to engaging these end-users and building relationships.

ORD's collaboration effort in Emergency Management has employed a three-pronged approach for reaching first-responders at the state and local level, such as engaging with national level state associations that represent emergency responders. This approach has further broadened appeal to organizations and state officials that may not have otherwise known or heard of the capability and expertise that ORD can provide during emergency events. ORD plans to further pursue awareness activities for first-responders as well as find ways to work in collaborative fashion to understand state and local needs during an event that would make our research tools more impactful.