

Story 2: Texas Public Health Laboratory Celebrating 90 years of Excellence

To find Part 1 History of the DSHS Laboratory 1928-2002 please go to:

<https://dshs.texas.gov/lab/newsletter.shtm>

2003

Shortly before 2003, the Texas Department of Health was consolidated with other agencies to form the Texas Department of State Health Services. Soon after this transition, the Bureau of Laboratories was renamed the Laboratory Services Section (LSS), and a four year building project was completed. The new building enabled state-of-the-art testing services for achieving DSHS mission of a healthy Texas. In addition, Biosafety Level 3 technology was implemented in the Austin laboratory to test for biological and chemical threats.

2006

In 2006, additional expansions occurred as the newborn screening program testing panel expanded from 7 to 26 tests.

2009

During the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, testing was performed around the clock by the DSHS Laboratory and 10 Laboratory Response Network (LRN) laboratories located in Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, Lubbock, San Antonio, Harlingen, and Tyler. During this time, the Austin Laboratory received over 13,500 influenza specimens and all Texas LRN labs tested over 38,000 influenza specimens. This means the Austin Lab tested almost 10 times as many flu specimens during the H1N1 pandemic as during a regular flu season!

2012

2012 through 2015 brought great demand on Texas' Public Health Laboratory as Texas experienced outbreaks of West Nile and Ebola. But the DSHS Laboratory persevered and stayed resilient, testing more than 11,863 mosquito pools with over 798 positive specimens.

2014

In 2014, the Austin LRN Laboratory was one of 12 labs in the nation selected to bring Ebola testing online.

2015

Another milestone was achieved in May 2015 when Texas' newborn screening program added secondary target screening for a total of 53 screens (29 core + 24 secondary tests).

2016

Experiencing the West Nile outbreak helped the DSHS Laboratory prepare for the upcoming Zika response. As a result, in 2016 the DSHS Laboratory and Texas' LRN laboratories brought Zika testing online in anticipation of mosquito season. In 2017, DSHS Laboratory staff volunteered to assist State Medical Operations Center (SMOC) personnel with logistical support and a myriad of tasks related to Hurricane Harvey.

2018

Now in 2018, the DSHS Laboratory continues to press forward in making Texas, and in some cases the world, a safer place.

90 years of public health service is significant! We have met our mission year after year to improve the health and well-being of Texans, however without our history of continuous improvement for nearly a centennial, this would not have been possible.

"Happy 90th Birthday, Texas' Public Health Laboratory!"

Interested in a topic? Let us know! Please write to us at Laboratorian@dshs.texas.gov to submit your questions.