



Tracking, responding to, and preventing costly food and water contamination and disease outbreaks is essential to protecting the public's health.

PREVENTING EPIDEMICS



A young woman unknowingly infected with measles at Disneyland traveled to Washington over the holidays in late-2014. Coordinating a multi-agency response involved the state, three counties, British Columbia, and multiple businesses to successfully prevent the spread of this highly contagious illness. In Yakima, Benton, and Franklin counties, more than 40 mothers have lost babies to anencephaly since 2010. This rate for a rare and fatal birth defect is five times higher than the national average, but investigators say the cause is still unknown. Rapidly changing viruses and diseases, growing populations, and increasing numbers of travelers and visitors are straining our tracking and prevention capacity.

TRACKING OUTBREAKS



During last year's Chipotle E. coli poisoning, a response team coordinated local, state, and federal partners to analyze supply records to identify and remove the food that sent people to emergency rooms in Clark, Skagit and other counties. Doctors, nurses, and first responders depend on epidemiologists tracking disease outbreaks, as well as local public health coordinating quick responses to stop the spread of diseases. We simply can't expect our state and local public health departments to coordinate crisis response, such as E. coli or whooping cough outbreaks in a school, when they don't have the needed resources.

RESPONDING QUICKLY & EFFICIENTLY TO CRISES



When dozens of people in South King County were rushed to the hospital with carbon monoxide poisoning, public health experts worked to find translators to contact immigrant communities to caution against using heat sources that give off deadly gases. After the devastating mudslide in Oso on March 22, 2014, state and county public health employees were integral in disaster response – they tested and monitored drinking water wells and potentially toxic materials in the slide zone, keeping first responders and the surrounding community safe. We need to provide our local public health departments with resources that allow them to respond to health emergencies at the local level.