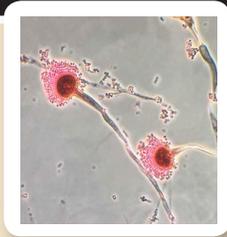


# Public Health Laboratory Timeline

## 100 Years of Public Health



**1900s** – The first state Health Department laboratory had its origin when the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission began an attack on diseases prevalent in the South in the early years of the 20th century.

**1913** – When the state's political leaders created the Board of Health, they also established a Health Department with a vital records section and a laboratory.

The first public health laboratory was on the second floor of what is now the Old State House Museum located on W. Markham St. in downtown Little Rock.

**1923** – The public health lab moved to the State Capitol building.

**1969** – A new building for the Health Department central offices and laboratory was opened at its current location on W. Markham St. in Little Rock next to the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences campus.

**1977** – An addition was built to the public health lab because its scope of work and services had markedly expanded.

**Late 1990s** – U.S. authorities became increasingly concerned that anthrax spores and other highly dangerous microbial agents could be used as weapons for bioterrorism.

**2001** – Anthrax spores were released in a building in Florida, and soon afterward anthrax spores, enclosed in envelopes, were sent through U.S. mail to congressional leaders and others in Washington and other cities.

**2003** – An Arkansas family received a letter containing small amounts of white powder from a New Jersey mail-processing center that handled other tainted letters.

Although no one fell ill, the FBI requested Department testing of the substance. The powder was sent to the Health Department laboratory for identification, and it was immediately apparent that the facility did not have properly constructed laboratory space where laboratorians could work with these highly dangerous agents with safety for themselves and the environment. The Health Department took quick action by asking the legislature and Governor Mike Huckabee to permit the Health Department to issue bonds to finance the construction of a new Public Health Laboratory.

**2004** – Construction of a new laboratory began and was completed in October 2006 as a state-of-the-art structure with 80,000 square feet of space to accommodate approximately 140 laboratory workers.

Of great importance, the 5,000-square-foot Level 3 bio-safety lab has special rooms constructed with ventilation so that laboratorians can safely work with some of the most dangerous known microbes.

**2009** – The new laboratory features were essential in the Health Department's round-the-clock response for testing the massive volume of potential H1N1 specimens.



Old State House, original site of the Arkansas Department of Health

