

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS



● Chronic Disease ● Environmental Health ● Emergency Preparedness ● Family Health
● Immunizations ● Infectious Disease ● Public Health Laboratory ● Local Public Health ● Minority Health

Some might imagine that emergency preparedness, as it is known today, didn't become a major responsibility of the Health Department until after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. In fact, emergency planning and response have been public health concerns since early in the 20th century. External events – floods, earthquakes, pandemics, and man-made threats – have dictated the actions the Department has taken to protect its citizens.

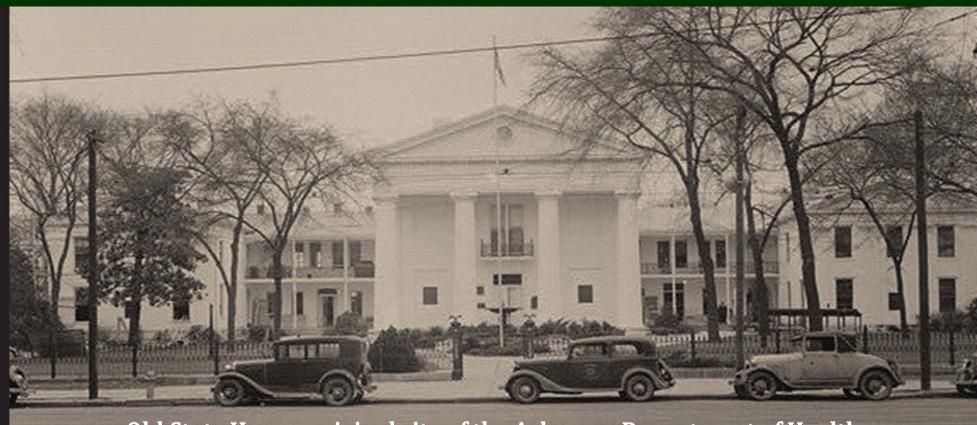
Early on came the 1927 Flood and the droughts in the 1930s. After WWII, events propelled the Department into a civil defense role, including directing and coordinating a radiological health program in the 1950s and 1960s in the event of thermonuclear war.

Following the 1979 nuclear incident at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania, the legislature made the Health Department responsible for enhancing protective measures and providing services in the event of an incident at Arkansas Nuclear One. That role was first called into play in May 1980 when a seal ruptured, creating a leak of radioactive water followed by venting of radioactive gases into the air.

Using federal funding appropriated after 9/11, the Health Department established the Division of Bioterrorism, now the Public Health Preparedness and Emergency Response Branch. A high-tech Emergency Operations Center (EOC) became operational in April 2007. The Health Department is the lead agency to coordinate emergency health and medical response for the state.

The Department has guided the response to disasters such as Hurricanes Katrina, Ike, and Gustav; West Nile virus; the 2009 ice storm; H1N1 influenza A pandemic; tornadoes; and the 2010 Albert Pike Campground flood.

100
Years
of Public Health
in Arkansas



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