

# CELEBRATING 70 DECADES OF FIRSTS



CDC, circa 1946



CDC, mid 1970s



CDC Today

## Then

When you think of CDC, what comes to mind? Back in the beginning, it was mosquitoes and malaria. On July 1, 1946, the Communicable Disease Center (CDC) was founded by a visionary leader in public health, Dr. Joseph Mountin.

The new agency, which was established the year after World War II ended, descended from the wartime agency, Malaria Control in War Areas (MCWA) and was part of the United States Public Health Service.

At first, CDC was located on the sixth floor of the Volunteer Building on Peachtree Street, in Atlanta, Georgia, hundreds of miles from Washington, DC and other federal agencies, and deep in the South, once the heart of the malaria zone.

The agency initially focused on fighting malaria by killing mosquitoes. In fact, the pursuit of malaria was the main focus of CDC. During the first year of operations, 59 percent of CDC's personnel were engaged in the eradication effort.

Among its 369 employees, the key jobs at CDC originally were entomologists and engineers. In 1946 the agency had only seven medical officers on duty.

DDT, available since 1943, was CDC's primary weapon against malaria, and the agency's early challenges included obtaining enough trucks, sprayers, and shovels necessary to wage the war on mosquitoes. Over six and a half million homes were sprayed.

But CDC was soon to spread its wings. Mountin continued to advocate for public health issues and to push for CDC to be responsible for other communicable diseases.

In 1947, CDC made a token payment of \$10 to Emory University for 15 acres on Clifton Road in Atlanta, the home of CDC headquarters today. CDC employees collected the

money to make the purchase.

Malaria was the catalyst for the agency's creation. Now the scene was set for CDC to expand its mission, and reach.

## Now

Today, CDC is the nation's premier health promotion, disease prevention and emergency preparedness agency and a global leader in public health. During the past 70 years, the name has changed to reflect a more complex mission. While still known as CDC, today the initials stand for Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

As CDC celebrates its 70th anniversary, the agency remains committed to its 24/7 mission of saving lives and protecting people. But many other things have changed dramatically.

In the seven decades since its founding, CDC has grown dramatically, in staff and mission. The world authority on communicable disease, CDC has broadened its focus to include chronic diseases, disabilities, injury prevention and control, workplace non-communicable public health issues.

Whereas malaria was once considered a threat to the country's security, now new threats have emerged. CDC tackles emerging diseases and other health risks, including Ebola, Zika virus, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), West Nile virus, monkey pox, anthrax, avian and pandemic flu, and bioterrorism, to name a few.

Today the staff numbers nearly 22,000 (including 9,000 contractors and 971 Commissioned Corps) in 171 occupations.

Engineers and entomologists have been joined by epidemiologists, biologists, physicians, veterinarians, behavioral scientists, nurses, laboratorians, public health

advisors, economists, health communicators, toxicologists, chemists, computer scientists, and statisticians, each dedicated to the pursuit of public health.

CDC is still headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, but also has other locations in the US. Those locations include Anchorage, Alaska; Cincinnati, Ohio; Fort Collins, Colorado; Hyattsville, Maryland; Morgantown, West Virginia; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Research Triangle Park, North Carolina; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Spokane, Washington; and Washington, DC, and quarantine stations in California (Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco); Miami, Florida; Honolulu, Hawaii; Chicago, Illinois; Boston, Massachusetts; Detroit, Michigan; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Newark, New Jersey; New York, New York; and Texas (Dallas, El Paso and Houston).

CDC staff also work in state and local health agencies, quarantine/border health offices at ports of entry, and in more than 50 countries around the world, from Angola to Zimbabwe.

The workforce is diverse and educated. More than one-third of CDC's employees are members of a racial or ethnic minority group, and women account for over 60 percent of CDC's workforce. Disabled employees account for 12 percent.

Nearly 40 percent of employees have a master's degree, 25 percent have a PhD, and 10 percent have medical degrees. Around 12 percent are veterans. The average age of a CDC worker is 47.

In 70 years, CDC has grown in size and stature, in scope and science, in reputation and reach. While much has changed since 1946, the heart of CDC is still its people: dedicated and diligent, persevering and professional, making a difference in lives around the world... a legacy to celebrate, on this anniversary and beyond.

# CDC MILESTONES: 7 DECADES OF FIRSTS

- 2016** » CDC responds to the Zika virus outbreak in the Americas and US territories.
- 2015** » Ebola outbreak (West Africa) response continues.
- 2014** » CDC activates its Emergency Operations Center to respond to the largest Ebola outbreak in history, affecting multiple countries in West Africa.
- 2013** » CDC activates its Emergency Operations Center to investigate a novel coronavirus called Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV).
- 2012** » CDC responds to the largest healthcare-associated outbreak in United States history, the fungal meningitis outbreak.
- 2011** » CDC continues to support the global polio eradication effort by activating the Emergency Operations Center to strengthen the agency's partnership engagement through the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.
- 2010** » In the aftermath of the 7.0 magnitude earthquake in Haiti, CDC's response effort helps prevent 7,000 deaths from cholera.
- 2009** » CDC identifies the novel H1N1 influenza virus. The H1N1 flu pandemic dominates CDC activity for the year, and demonstrates CDC's unique ability to assess and explain risk.
- 2008** » Salmonella and E. coli outbreaks, large multi-state foodborne outbreaks are detected and investigated, revealing gaps in food safety and the need to improve prevention efforts.
- 2007** » For the first time since 1963, CDC issues a federal order of isolation for a TB patient.
- 2006** » CDC responds to a multi-state mumps outbreak involving more than 6,500 reported cases. This resurgence predominantly affects college-aged students living in the Midwest.
- 2005** » CDC provides response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.
- 2004** » Rubella is eliminated in the United States.
- 2003** » Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is first discovered in Asia. CDC responds by providing guidance for surveillance, clinical and laboratory evaluation, and reporting.
- 2002** » Congress mandates that issues related to children's neurobehavioral disorders, including ADHD, be included as part of NCBDDD's research agenda.
- 2001** » World Trade Center and bioterrorist anthrax attacks and response. CDC learns of the first case of inhalational anthrax in the US since 1976. The person, a 63-year-old Florida man, is the first of 22 victims of domestic terrorism infected by anthrax sent through the mail.
- 2000** » CDC and West Virginia University release Women and Heart Disease: An Atlas of Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Mortality, the first national atlas of heart disease death rates among US women 35 and older. The new maps indicate a woman's risk of dying from heart disease depends in part on where she lives.



- 1999** » CDC launches the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile (now the Strategic National Stockpile), a stockpile of drugs, vaccines, and other medical products and supplies, to provide for the emergency health security of the US and its territories.
- 1998** » Cereal grains are enriched with folic acid by federal mandate to reduce birth defects.
- 1997** » CDC participates in the nationally-televised White House event of the Presidential Apology for the Tuskegee Study.
- 1996** » PulseNet, a national network of laboratories, launches to help detect and define outbreaks using the DNA of the foodborne bacteria making people sick.
- 1995** » Emerging Infections Programs (EIP) are established in response to CDC's 1994 strategy, Addressing Emerging Infectious Disease Threats: A Prevention Strategy for the United States.
- 1994** » Polio elimination is certified in the Americas.
- 1993** » *MMWR* reports on an outbreak of a mysterious illness in the southwestern US, later recognized as Hantavirus infection. The deadly virus is transmitted by infected rodents through urine, droppings, and saliva. CDC responds by developing prevention and information materials for the disease.
- 1992** » The agency is renamed Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to reflect a broader role and vision. The agency is asked by Congress to continue using the initials "CDC."
- 1991** » CDC begins development of a national strategic plan for early detection and control of breast and cervical cancers among all American women.
- 1990** » CDC reports on the viral agents of gastroenteritis, which causes diarrhea. Before 1990, severe diarrhea was a serious public health threat causing 5 to 10 million deaths worldwide. Identifying viral agents as the cause of gastroenteritis enables CDC to determine the necessary measures to prevent and manage outbreaks of severe diarrhea.
- 1989** » To improve laboratory training programs and communication among participants, the National Laboratory Training Network is established with the Association of State and Territorial Public Health Laboratory Directors in seven sites.
- 1988** » Worldwide Polio Eradication Initiative launches a public-private partnership led by national governments and spearheaded by the World Health Organization (WHO), Rotary International, CDC, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
- 1987** » The National Center for Health Statistics becomes an organizational component of CDC.
- 1986** » Office on Smoking and Health, which targets a preventable health problem, becomes part of CDC.
- 1985** » CDC co-sponsors the first International Conference on AIDS.
- 1984** » CDC study supported by Congress and funded by the US Veterans Administration shows that male Vietnam veterans are at no higher risk than other men for fathering babies with birth defects, and produces the first of many publications on risk factors for birth defects.
- 1983** » The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is established; collecting data on emergency events involving the release of hazardous substances in the US.



- 1982** » National surveillance for Lyme disease, a tick-borne disease begins.
- 1981** » First AIDS cases reported in *MMWR*. CDC develops an investigative team to identify risk factors and to develop a case definition for national surveillance.
- 1980** » *MMWR* (*Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*) publishes the first report on a newly-recognized illness associated with tampon use: toxic shock syndrome. CDC organizes a task force to study the illness.
- 1979** » CDC publishes the first Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. The report establishes for the first time ambitious, quantifiable objectives for improving the nation's health, to be achieved by 1990.
- 1978** » An expanded maximum containment laboratory (hot lab) is opened to handle viruses that are too dangerous to handle in ordinary laboratories.
- 1977** » CDC receives the report of the last case of naturally-acquired variola minor, the milder strain of the variola virus that causes smallpox, from the Merca District of Somalia. The World Health Organization declares global eradication of smallpox in 1980.
- 1976** » Epidemiologists investigate a deadly outbreak of a respiratory disease among attendees at a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania convention. Legionnaire's disease discovery and response.
- 1975** » CDC establishes the vessel sanitation program in cooperation with the cruise ship industry.
- 1974** » CDC establishes the Bureau of Health Education, developing health curriculum for schools.
- 1973** » The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) transferred to CDC from Health Services and Mental Health Administration.
- 1972** » CDC establishes the national gonorrhea control program.
- 1971** » Investigations into lead exposure associated with an ore smelter in El Paso, Texas, increases the scientific understanding of the effects of lead poisoning in children, as it can affect children's developing nerves and brains.
- 1970** » The National Communicable Disease Center (NCDC) is renamed Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
- 1969** » CDC opens its first biological containment lab to protect scientists while they work with deadly and infectious pathogens.
- 1968** » CDC responds to its first major initiative in famine relief within Nigeria during the Biafran war, assisting local health officials in conducting nutrition and disease assessments.
- 1967** » The Foreign Quarantine Service, one of the oldest units of the US Public Health Service, is transferred to CDC.
- 1966** » The global smallpox eradication effort is launched.
- 1965** » New surveillance systems added to the original National Surveillance Program of 1952 include measles, shigellosis, tetanus, and trichinosis.
- 1964** » The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) approaches CDC for help to ensure that germs from earth do not get transported into space.
- 1963** » Immunization Assistance Grant Program is established and CDC administers Vaccination Assistance Act through project grants. The program is designed to raise and maintain high levels of immunization against poliomyelitis, diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus.



- 1962** » The first EIS investigation for chronic disease (leukemia cluster).
- 1961** » CDC takes over publication of *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (*MMWR*). *MMWR* is a weekly publication, containing a few short narrative reports and the weekly morbidity and mortality tables. It also publishes the annual "Summary of Notifiable Diseases."
- 1960** » CDC opens new permanent headquarters buildings in Atlanta, Georgia.
- 1959** » Fluorescent antibody test is developed for rabies and field trials demonstrate 100 percent accuracy.
- 1958** » CDC participates in a cooperative program to develop accurate, standard cholesterol measurement procedures. From this research the Cholesterol Standardization Program is developed.
- 1957** » The Venereal Disease Division is transferred from the US Public Health Service to CDC, bringing two important innovations to CDC's activities: a grant program and a new kind of employee, public health advisors.
- 1956** » The first practical use for the fluorescent antibody technique is utilized in CDC laboratories to research communicable diseases of bacterial origin.
- 1955** » During the National Polio Immunization Program, EIS officers trace 260 polio cases to improper vaccine production methods. As a result, CDC establishes the Polio Surveillance Program.
- 1954** » EIS is expanded to include other professional disciplines besides medicine.
- 1953** » CDC reports first case of rabies in a bat.
- 1952** » The Epidemic Intelligence Service participates in 205 outbreaks; most common are infectious hepatitis, poliomyelitis, histoplasmosis, gastroenteritis, encephalitis, typhoid fever, leptospirosis and influenza.
- 1951** » The Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) is established, recognizing the need for an adequate corps of trained epidemiologists who can be deployed immediately for any contingency, including chemical or biological warfare.
- 1950** » A team of CDC physicians, engineers, and entomologists is sent to Southeast Asia to assist in developing malaria control programs and public health programs as part of an overall technical and economic assistance program.
- 1949** » CDC's Reference Diagnostic Service Center becomes available to all public health laboratories. Practicing physicians who have hard-to-identify specimens submit through their health department.
- 1948** » CDC investigations expand to include typhus, dysentery-diarrheal, fly control-poliomyelitis, viral encephalitis, plague, Q fever, brucellosis, creeping eruption, rabies, histoplasmosis, insecticides, and rodenticides.
- 1947** » Emory University deeds 15 acres of land to the federal government for the development of CDC headquarters on Clifton Road in Atlanta, Georgia. Also, CDC offers disaster aid in response to multiple chemical explosions in Texas City, Texas. Afterwards, CDC is designated as the official response agency for future epidemics and disasters.
- 1946** » Malaria Control in War Areas, a program within the US Public Health Service, transitions into the Communicable Disease Center (CDC) on July 1. That same year, the US becomes malaria-free.



## MISSION

CDC works 24/7 to protect America from health, safety and security threats, both foreign and in the US. Whether diseases start at home or abroad, are chronic or acute, curable or preventable, human error or deliberate attack, CDC fights disease and supports communities and citizens to do the same.

CDC increases the health security of our nation. As the nation's health protection agency, CDC saves lives and protects people from health threats. To accomplish our mission, CDC conducts critical science and provides health information that protects our nation against expensive and dangerous health threats, and responds when these arise.

## Former CDC Directors



## INSIGHTS: CDC DIRECTOR TOM FRIEDEN, MD, MPH

**Can you summarize the changes CDC has undergone over 70 years?**

Some things never change. In 1946 we were fighting mosquitoes – and in 2016 we're again fighting mosquitoes. Then we were focused on malaria; now we're

fighting not only the threat of Zika but also other relatively new mosquito-borne threats such as West Nile virus, chikungunya, and dengue. Infectious diseases know no borders, and protecting Americans at home means helping to find and stop outbreaks wherever they arise. But the biggest changes have been in our understanding of public health and how central public health is to health. There's more to disease prevention than stopping infectious diseases. It is as important for us to respond to threats from chronic diseases, injuries, violence, pollution, climate change, drug overdose, antimicrobial resistance, tobacco use, disasters and more – in short, every major cause of preventable injury and death.

**What do you think CDC will look like 70 years from now?**

Given our 70-year track record, I'm confident that in 2086 CDC still will be at the forefront of protecting the health, safety, and security of Americans and supporting work around the world. I'm confident that on the 140th anniversary, the director of what still will be the world's premier health agency will list among CDC's accomplishments the elimination of polio, measles, HIV, filariasis and more; the preservation of life-saving antibiotic medicines; the establishment of global health security; and a non-smoking public that is living longer and healthier lives – all because of our work in the early 21st century.

**What single effort stands out as CDC's greatest achievement in our 70-year history?**

Throughout our history, CDC's leadership in evidence-based public health science has attracted the most dedicated professional staff in the world. This extraordinary collaboration of topnotch experts in every conceivable field of public health is a remarkable achievement – and it's why I'm confident that whatever future challenges we face, we'll continue to do our job of keeping people safe and healthy.

## Pledge to the American People

- 1 BE A DILIGENT STEWARD OF THE FUNDS ENTRUSTED TO OUR AGENCY.
- 2 PROVIDE AN ENVIRONMENT FOR INTELLECTUAL AND PERSONAL GROWTH AND INTEGRITY.
- 3 BASE ALL PUBLIC HEALTH DECISIONS ON THE HIGHEST QUALITY SCIENTIFIC DATA THAT IS DERIVED OPENLY AND OBJECTIVELY.
- 4 PLACE THE BENEFITS TO SOCIETY ABOVE THE BENEFITS TO OUR INSTITUTION.
- 5 TREAT ALL PERSONS WITH DIGNITY, HONESTY, AND RESPECT.

## CDC in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

- On the cutting edge of health security – confronting global disease threats through advanced computing and lab analysis of huge amounts of data to quickly find solutions.
- Putting science into action – tracking disease and finding out what is making people sick and the most effective ways to prevent it.
- Helping medical care – bringing new knowledge to individual health care and community health to save more lives and reduce waste.
- Fighting diseases before they reach our borders – detecting and confronting new germs and diseases around the globe to increase our national security.
- Nurturing public health - building on our significant contribution to have strong, well-resourced public health leaders and capabilities at national, state and local levels to protect Americans from health threats.

