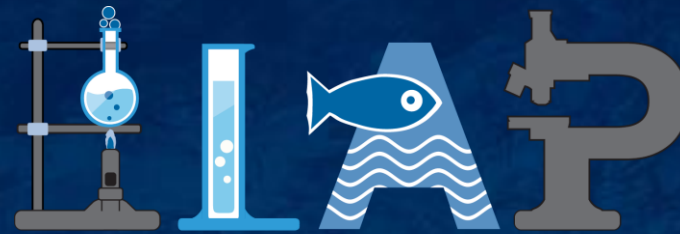


# Elevating California's Environmental Laboratories as Essential Workforce

And other 2020 Emergency Response Activities



Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program  
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD




NEMC 2021

# California Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP)

- We are a multidisciplinary team of chemists, environmental scientists, and microbiologists
- Investigate fraud and inappropriate laboratory practices
- Offer technical expertise in laboratory and regulatory science
- Accredite over 600 laboratories that generate data for California regulatory agencies





Environmental  
Laboratory Analysts  
are Essential  
Workers



# Timeline: COVID-19 in California

- **March 19, 2020:** Statewide Stay-at-Home Order Issued – only essential workers can leave home
- **March 21, 2020:** the California State Public Health Officer releases a list of “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers”
  - Environmental Testing laboratories are not included
- **March 22, 2020:** CA ELAP begins receiving calls from regulatory agencies that some laboratories have closed their doors

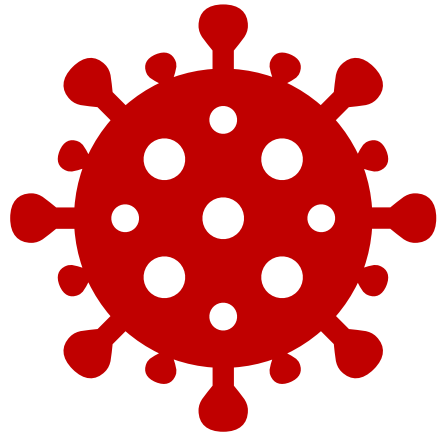


# *Never Fear, ELAP is Here!*

- Let the disruption of laboratory services threaten environmental and public health protection??

***NEVER!***

- ELAP began intervening in local cases
- Meanwhile, working with the Governor's Office to have laboratory workers declared essential



# ELAP Emergency Response Activities

- Contacted all California laboratories to update them on the stay-at-home orders
- Vaccine prioritization
- Travel documentation
- Created a [COVID-19 website specifically for environmental labs](#)

# 7

# Screenshot of ELAP COVID-19 Website

## Contents

- Environmental Testing Laboratories are Essential
- How to Respond to a Confirmed Case of Coronavirus (COVID 19) in the Laboratory
- Actions to Take if Your Laboratory Has To Close or End Service
- Laboratories Accepting Additional Samples
- Laboratory Equipment and Supply Vendors
- Proficiency Testing Providers
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Contacting ELAP During COVID-19 Emergency
- Additional Resources

The information on this webpage is based on the latest statewide and national directives in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP) will be regularly updating this information, so please continue to visit this webpage for the latest information or contact laboratories and businesses directly for their current status of operations.

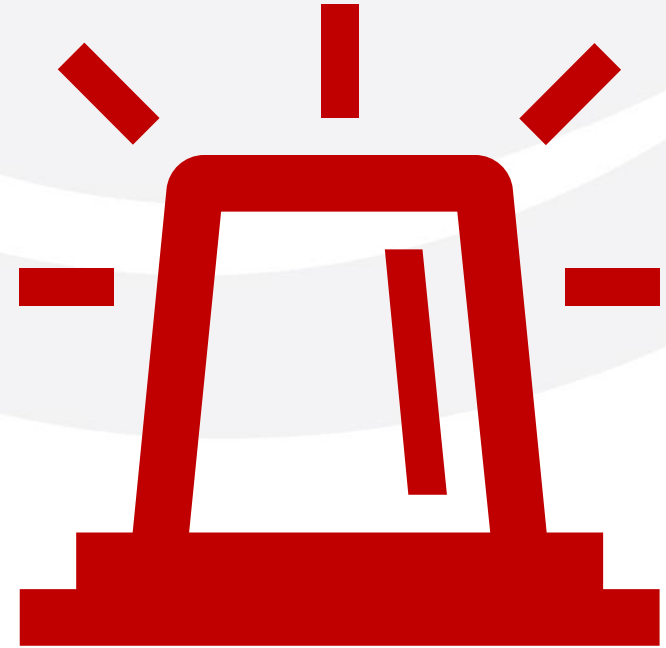
ELAP is determined to provide the information and support required for environmental testing laboratories to continue operations and provide testing services to help regulatory agencies make important public health decisions during this emergency.

## Laboratories fall under “essential” exception to shelter-in-place orders

Environmental testing laboratories are considered essential to public health and environmental safety during the COVID-19 emergency and are within the essential activities excepted from the shelter-in-place directives provided by local public health officials.

# What is an Emergency at the Water Boards?

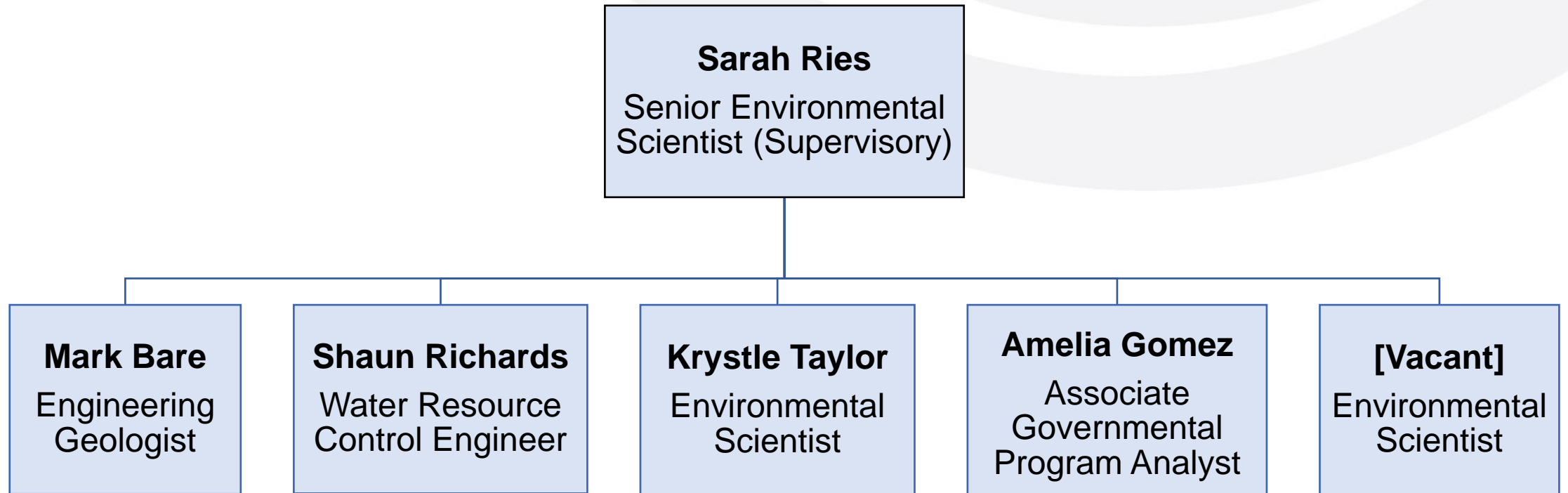
A situation that poses an immediate risk to waters of the state, to people's access to drinking water or sanitation, environmental testing laboratories, or to water or wastewater utilities and their supply chains.



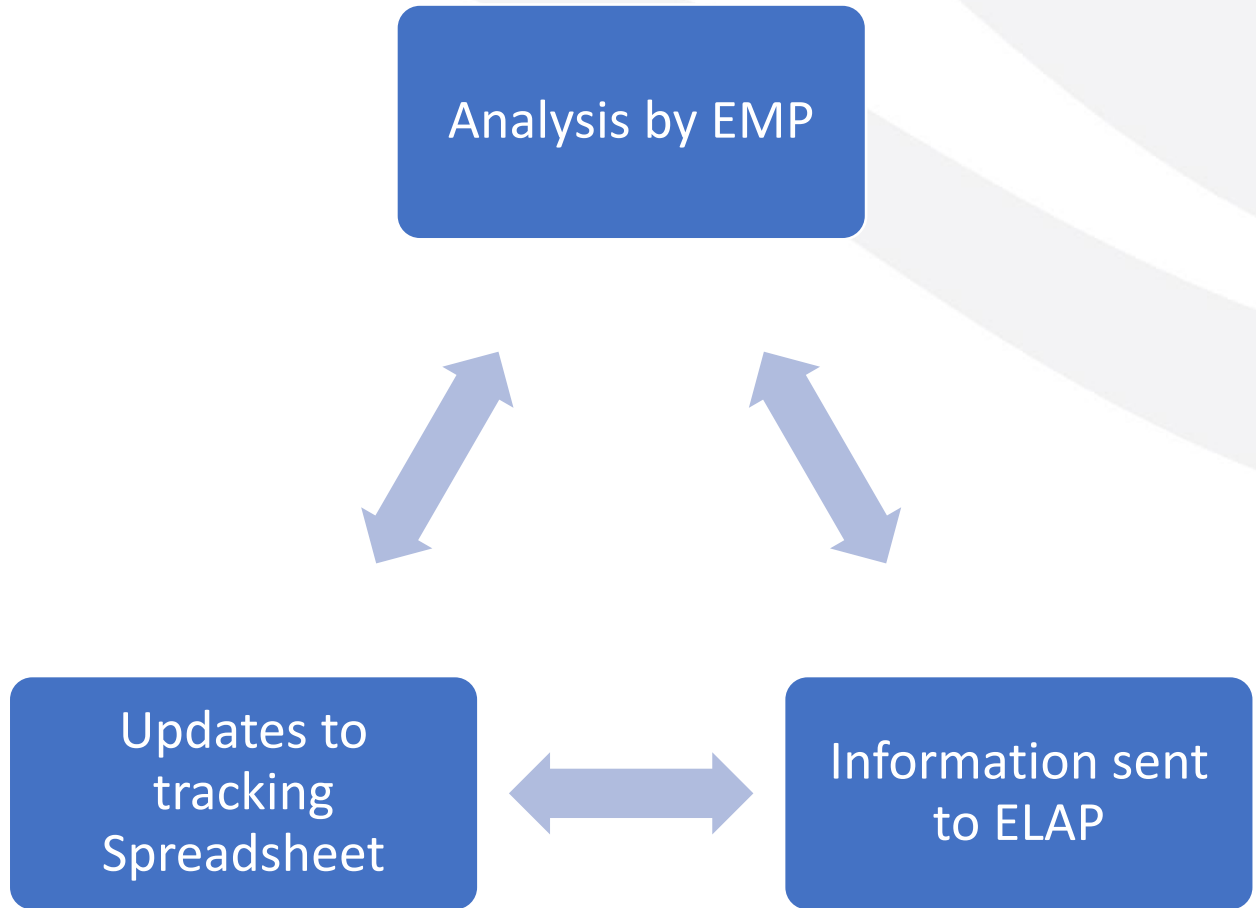




# State Water Resources Control Board, Emergency Management Program



# Situational Awareness Process





# EMP & ELAP Collaboration



# Wildfires

- 4,177,855 acres burned, 9,369 incidents total in 2020
- GIS analysis by EMP used to find laboratories within or near active fire perimeters
- Outreach conducted to labs by ELAP staff
- Any unmet needs elevated by EMP





# Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) Events & Rolling Blackouts

- August 2020 Heatwave – Rolling Blackouts
- GIS analysis by EMP used to find laboratories with potential impacts due to PSPS monitoring event, and impacts during actual shutoffs
- Outreach conducted to labs by ELAP staff





# Areas of Concern Identified During 2020

# Areas of Concern

- The environmental laboratory testing community was not aware of essential worker status
- Supply chain disruptions with no means of securing resources
- Existing federal and state networks are not working for all California accredited labs
- No structure to request aid for processing samples if absenteeism occurs due to COVID-19 or other emergencies
- Laboratory closures in Environmental Justice communities



# Next Steps

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- Creation of an environmental testing laboratory mutual aid network
- Interested to hear from the national laboratory community how their state emergencies are addressed

*Thank you!*

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[Christine.Sotelo@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Christine.Sotelo@waterboards.ca.gov)

CALIFORNIA

Water Boards

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD