

PLENARY SESSION

Welcome & Introduction

David Travers, Director, Water Security Division in the Office of Water | *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

Dr. David Travers thanked participants for joining the 2021 Decontamination Conference. EPA strives to train upwards of 5,000 water/wastewater utilities, state officials, and federal partners each year, while addressing all hazards from natural disasters, to cybersecurity, to climate change, and any other incident that could disrupt water or wastewater systems operations. In 2020, over 15,000 individuals were reached and trained, and the conference's Day 3 programming features discussions on water research and oil-spill response, as well as COVID-19 decontamination.

Whether from the onset and lingering effects of the pandemic such as supply-chain issues, or major cyber incidents to the outages resulting from natural disasters, Dr. Travers mentioned that the last year has underscored some of the latent and ongoing challenges facing the water sector. Baseline challenges still persist, including spills (usually of petroleum-related products into waterways), aging infrastructure, and regulatory compliance, to name a few. With this context in mind, decontamination is an important priority for discussion and poses real challenge to address for a variety of reasons stemming from the complexity of technical challenges associated with assessing a decontamination event to the bewildering roles and responsibilities that can change during an event or as we move an event from locality to locality.

Dr. Travers went on to say, despite the challenges, EPA's Water Security Division has managed to advance work on decontamination issues, including the development and release of flushing guidance to address stagnation of water in office and other large buildings to address disuse during the COVID-19 pandemic and developing a methodology to support the eventual release of a guidance document for flushing premise plumbing in residential buildings following a contamination incident. EPA's Water Security Division will also soon publish a fact sheet for VOC contamination in drinking water following wildfires.
