

PLENARY SESSION

Welcome & Introduction

Christopher Frey, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Science Policy for the Office of Research and Development | *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

Dr. Christopher Frey welcomed everyone to the Decontamination Conference and introduced himself. He joined EPA nine months prior to the conference as a member of the Biden/Harris Administration leadership team. Dr. Frey, previously a faculty member of the North Carolina State University for 27 years, was attracted to his role within EPA as an environmental engineer and researcher because of the Administration's commitment to scientific integrity and the role of science to inform decisions.

Dr. Frey acknowledged the community attending the conference and recognized how important it is to have the best available science to inform decisions, and commitment to mission to protect the public. Dr. Frey provided a brief introduction for the Day 2 concurrent sessions, including a virtual lunch and networking opportunity.

Dr. Frey noted, from the first day of the Biden/Harris Administration, one of the highest priorities has been addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Scientists at EPA, and around the world, have been developing and delivering promising methods and technologies to help get through the crisis. For example, EPA's ORD has been focused on cleaning, disinfection, and evaluation; modeling of aerosols and evaluation of devices and products to inactivate aerosolized viruses; wastewater virus monitoring; salivary antibody assay development; and tracking community transmission. Dr. Frey noted that effective approaches and solutions are not just based on the physical, chemical, and biological sciences; one of the greatest challenges in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from manmade disasters, is understanding factors that affect community resilience and responses to these disasters.

Dr. Frey continued by noting some of the key questions that need to be addressed include how we protect those who are the most vulnerable to disasters, how we protect and empower those that have been marginalized, how we engage communities in planning and mitigation efforts, and how we account for disparities in baseline conditions and community resilience. In developing mitigation or response options, how do we account for and encourage behaviors that will lead to the most effective outcomes? These were acknowledged as difficult questions to answer but necessary to help develop response and recovery programs that protect everyone regardless of race, sex, or economic status. They are only answerable through collaboration and across disciplines.
