WCIT NEWSLETTER

WATER CONTAMINANT INFORMATION TOOL, Summer 2022

WCIT Modernization

The new and modernized WCIT is now live! The user interface has been redesigned to improve navigation and allow for access from mobile devices. The core functions of WCIT that users rely on will continue alongside additional enhancements, including customizable print reports, expanded profile comparison capabilities, and an improved "Other Resources" module. Further enhancements are expected in the upcoming months and users are encouraged to explore the new database and submit any feedback to the WCIT team.

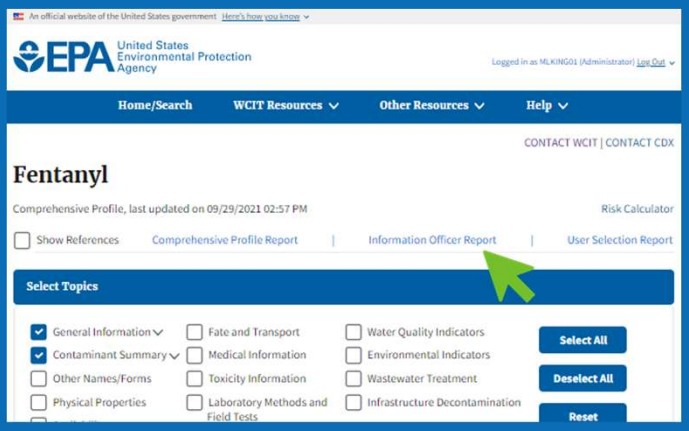
Inside the Database

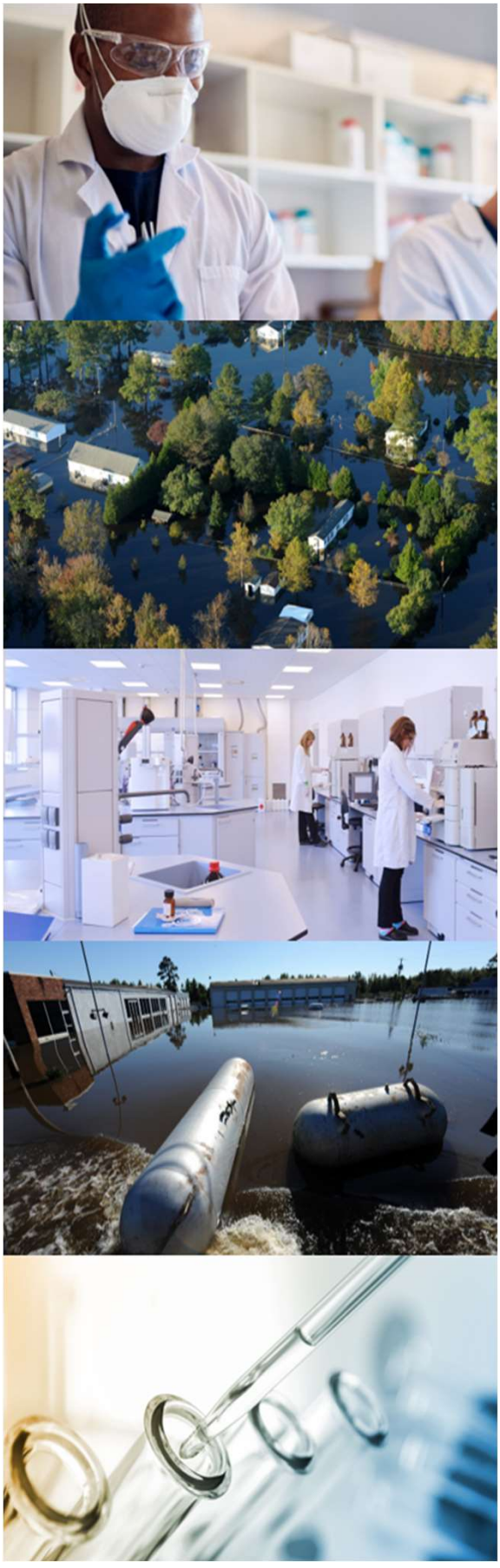
Information Officer Report

Need to quickly gather pertinent information on a contaminant for a media report or to prepare a briefing for response partners? Consider using WCIT's Information Officer Reports, which are provided in every comprehensive profile.

The Information Officer Report presents basic information about a contaminant and relevant considerations for the Water Sector. The report is intended for use as a reference when communicating with the public, media, administrators, and response partners during emergency response.

How can you access this report? At the top of each comprehensive profile, you will find three links that allow users to access additional features within the profile. The Information Officer Report can be accessed through the second of the three links.





New Profile in the Database: Pathogenic *Leptospira*

In July 2022, the comprehensive profile Pathogenic *Leptospira* was added to WCIT. Pathogenic *Leptospira* are responsible for leptospirosis, a waterborne disease in animals and humans that is an emerging public health threat. Symptoms of leptospirosis range from mild flu-like symptoms to meningitis and meningoencephalitis. Globally, there are an estimated 350,000-500,000 severe cases each year. Leptospirosis can be transmitted via contaminated drinking water, recreational water, and animal vectors. The risk of exposure increases significantly after heavy rainfall events, which can mobilize the pathogen, and droughts, which can concentrate the pathogen in limited water supplies.

The Pathogenic *Leptospira* profile contains information on a wide range of topics, including medical information, early warning indicators, drinking water and wastewater treatment, and much more. **EPA will continue developing WCIT profiles, and we value your input on which contaminants are of greatest concern. Please reach out to the WCIT team at WCIT@epa.gov with your contaminant nominations!**

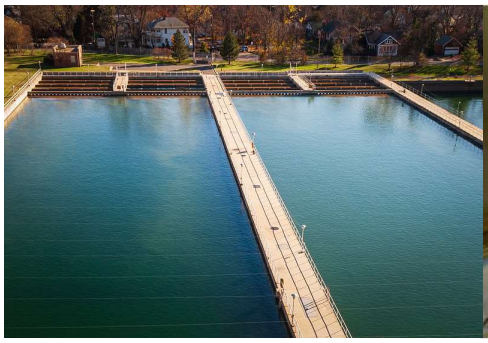
WCIT Online Training

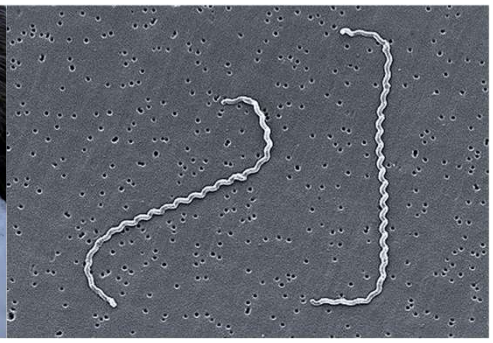
Whether you are new to WCIT, in need of a refresher, or an experienced user who wants to learn how to get more out of the resource, EPA has a training for you!

EPA offers two live webinar-based trainings.

- Learning the Basics – provides an introductory overview of WCIT.
- Becoming an Advanced User – provides in-depth training on features within WCIT, to help users develop their capabilities in a hands-on way.

To learn more or sign up for live trainings, visit the WLA Learning Center website.





"A Powerful Tool for Any Event"

Wilbur Frehner
SNWA, Principal Laboratory Scientist

Wilbur (Willie) Frehner is the Principal Laboratory Scientist in the Microbiology section at the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA). He leverages a strong relationship with the EPA Water Laboratory Alliance (WLA) to help ensure that the SNWA is prepared to provide uninterrupted service to its 2.2 million water and wastewater customers. Mr. Frehner has been an active WCIT user since 2019 and has used WCIT in the context of both full-scale exercises and real contamination incidents.

In early 2019, the SNWA used the WLA's Analytical Preparedness Full-Scale Exercise toolkit to conduct a practice incident. WCIT was used as a reference in the planning of the exercise, and it was also used by participants during the exercise to support decontamination, medical treatment, and communications with the public. In October of 2019, shortly after conducting the exercise, there was a legionellosis outbreak at the nearby Rawson-Neal Psychiatric Hospital. The hospital shut off their water internally to deal with the problem. Although the problem did not originate in the public water system, the news media contacted the SNWA for comment. The SNWA Public Information Department quickly needed talking points about Legionella, and Mr. Frehner was able to help by downloading and sharing with his communications colleagues the WCIT Information Officer Report for *Legionella*. The Information Officer Report is designed to provide concise and consistent information that can be used to brief administrators, the media, and the public.

In his experience with WCIT, Mr. Frehner has seen that people sometimes do not realize they are eligible to use the tool. He encourages lab personnel in particular to apply. "[WCIT] really is a powerful tool for any event . . . don't wait to get access." And Mr. Frehner recommends taking full advantage of WCIT by staying current with new WCIT trainings. "Become familiar and utilize the features," he urges.

WCIT Challenge

Read the scenario below and use WCIT to answer the questions. (Log in at https://cdx.epa.gov/)

There has been an outbreak of leptospirosis in your community. Log into WCIT and use the Information Officer Report for Pathogenic *Leptospira* to compose a briefing that answers the following questions:

1. How is leptospirosis spread?
2. Can *Leptospira* survive in water for an extended period of time?
3. How serious is the disease?
4. How soon do symptoms start after exposure?
5. Can boiling be effective for preventing spread by drinking water?

Send your answers to WCIT@epa.gov!

Congratulations to those readers who successfully completed the Winter 2022 challenge.