



The Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) has been a member of the Food Emergency Response Network (FERN) since 2004. The FERN is a national network, co-directed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The goal of the FERN network is to integrate the nation's food-testing laboratories at the local, state, and federal levels to respond to emergencies involving biological, chemical, or radiological contamination of food. DCLS FERN Scientists continually participate in training exercises, proficiency testing, and method validations to improve Virginia's response capacity and capability in the event of FERN activation.

Recent notable achievements by DCLS FERN scientists include: food testing for the 2013 Presidential Inauguration, for the Republican and Democratic) National Conventions.

DCLS also participates in FERN by serving as a Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)/USDA FERN National Training Center. FERN Training Centers offer hands-on courses to FERN laboratorians from all over the country in the latest FERN, USDA, and FDA-approved methods for screening and confirming biological, chemical and radiological threats in food. Building Network capability to screen food for pathogens, toxins, and chemicals is critical in the event of a local, state or federal emergency which would result in FERN activation. DCLS offers FERN trainees an opportunity to learn in a state-of-the-art training facility which includes almost 2000 square feet of wet laboratory space equipped with two BSL-3 isolation rooms.

For more information on FERN and food protection please visit the following links:

[www.fernlab.com](http://www.fernlab.com)

[www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov)

[www.fda.gov/Food](http://www.fda.gov/Food)