

Moving beyond the crisis cycle: A drug policy future

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Civil Society Dialogue

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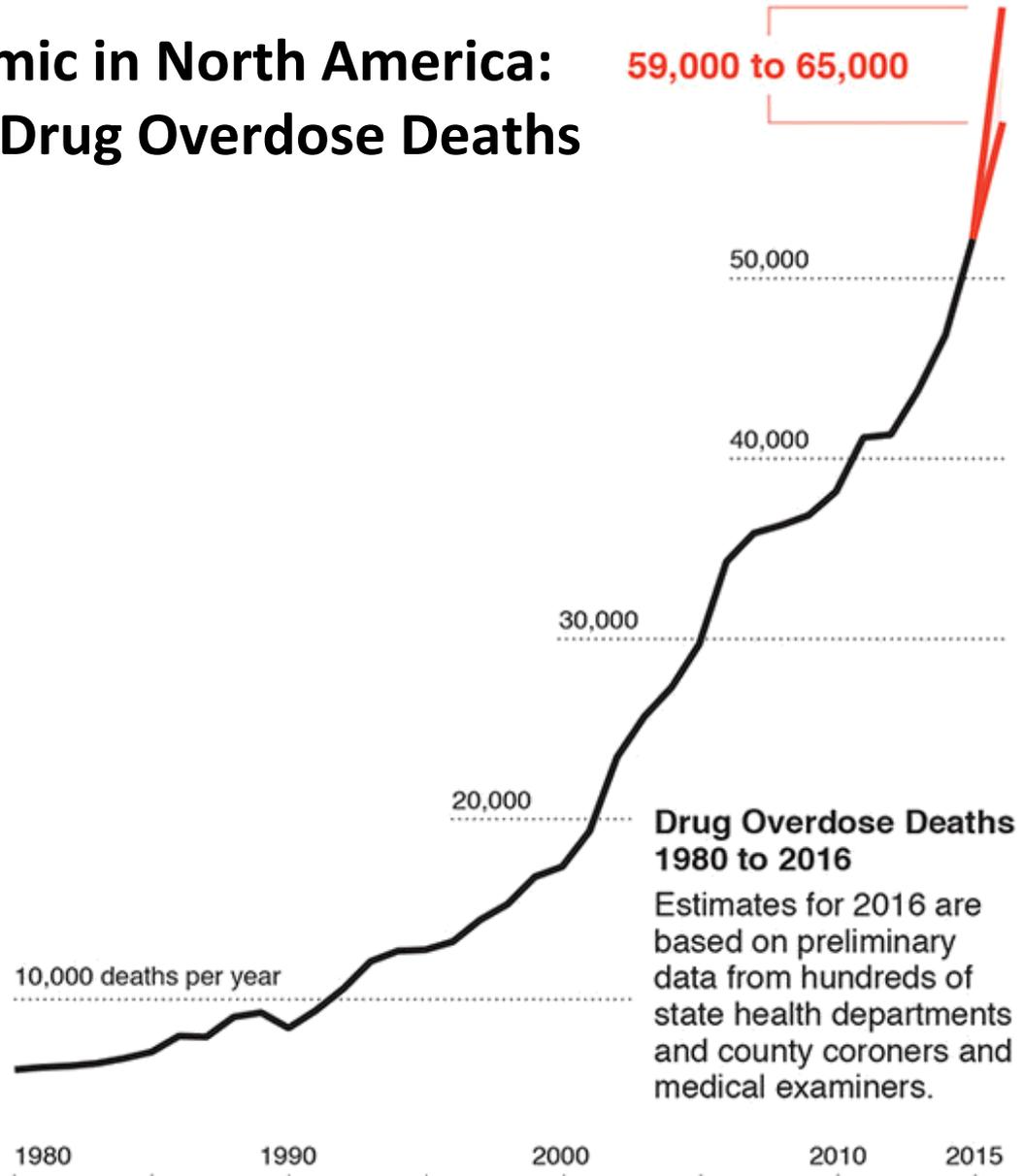
The Opioid Epidemic in North America: Sharp Increases in Drug Overdose Deaths



B.C. opioid crisis: Province on pace for more than 1,400 overdose deaths in 2017

SCOTT BROWN
More from Scott Brown

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This is no longer a crisis of drug use

- Over-reliance on supply reduction as a form of drug prevention
- Global in scope
- Irreversible

...This is a crisis of contamination

A predictable 'next step' in opioid trafficking

- Opium
- Laudanum
- Heroin
- Fentanyl
- Carfentanil
-?????

Is fentanyl here to stay?

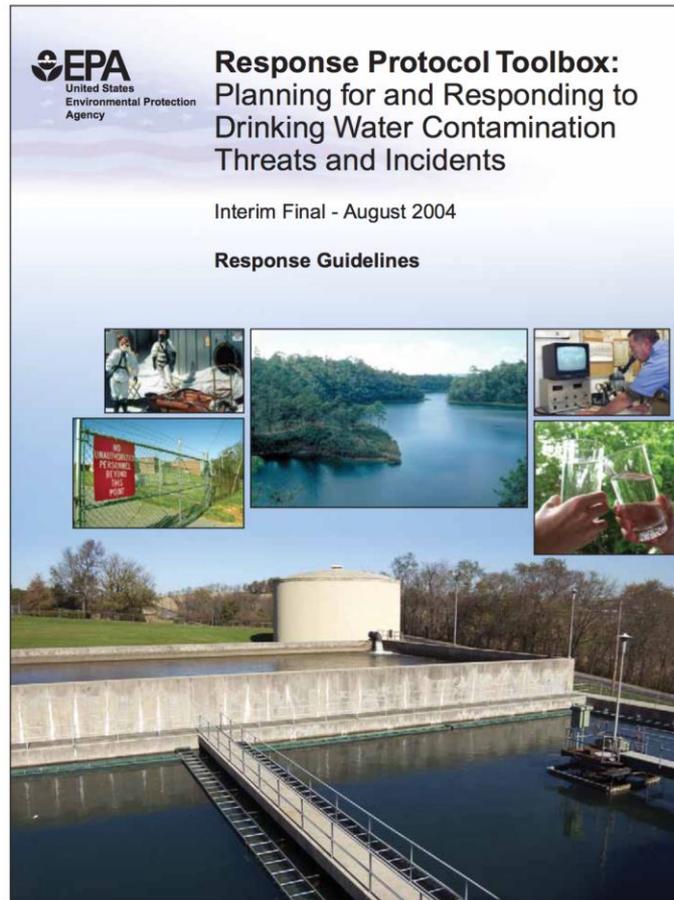
- Difficult to turn back market efficiencies
- Is fentanyl affecting market size?
- Likely that left unchecked this will be the new normal

How to treat contamination?

- We have a crisis of toxic supply
- Supply has overwhelmed policy and interventional levers
- *BUT*: There is a playbook

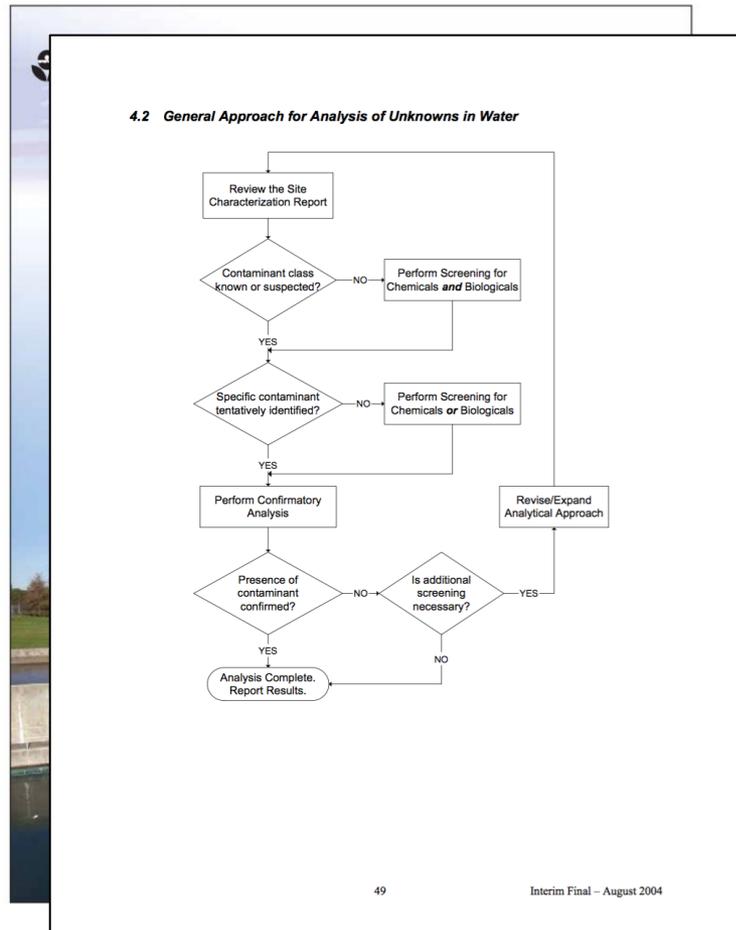
This is not the first case

Protocols exist – we just need to adapt them.



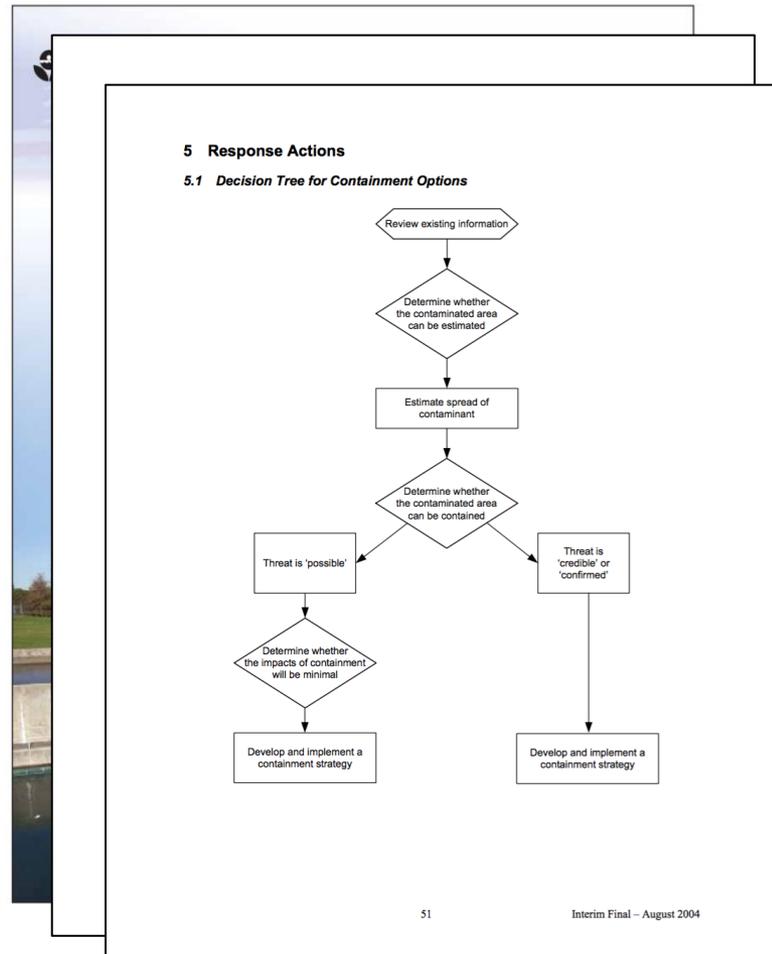
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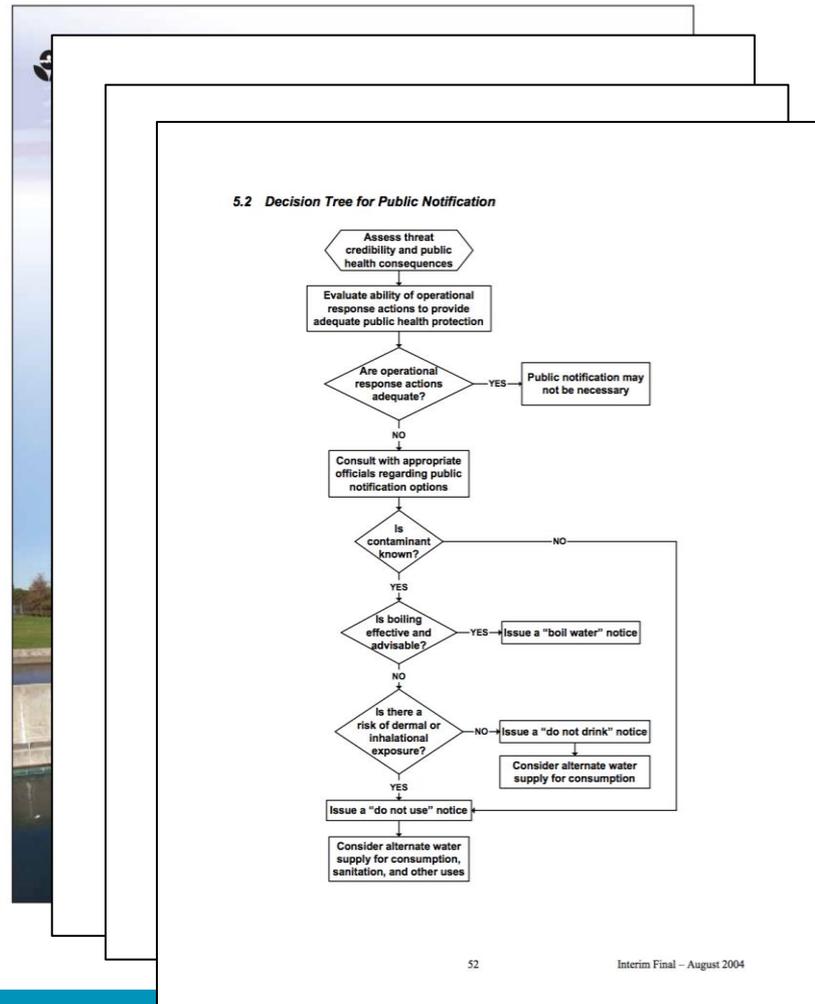
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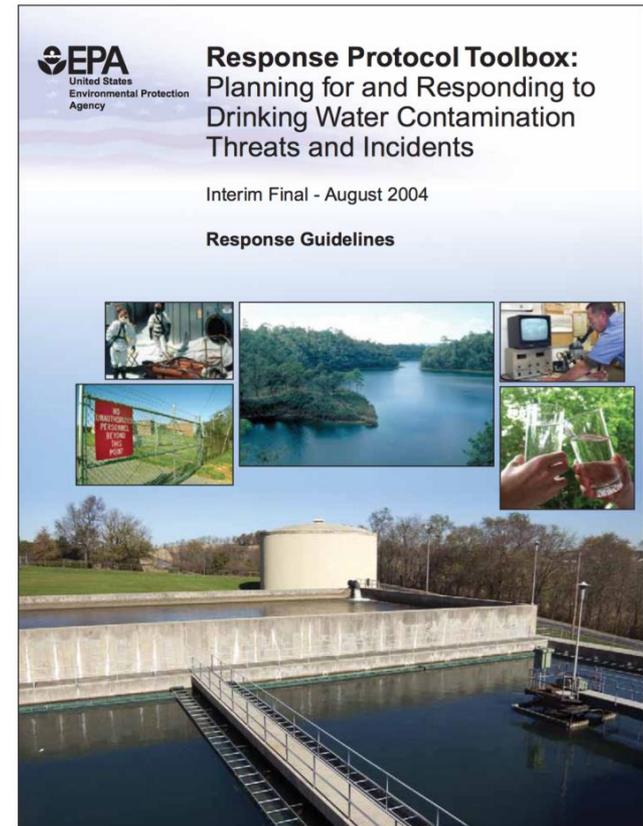
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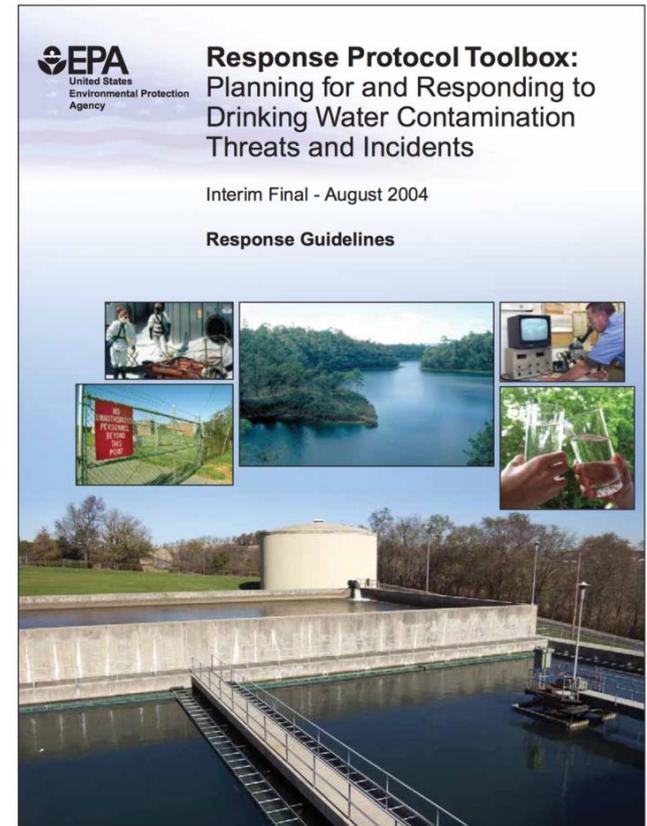
Responding to contamination: 4 steps

- **Step 1:** Communicate risk
- **Step 2:** Treat poisonings
- **Step 3:** Remove contaminants
- **Step 4:** Replenish supply



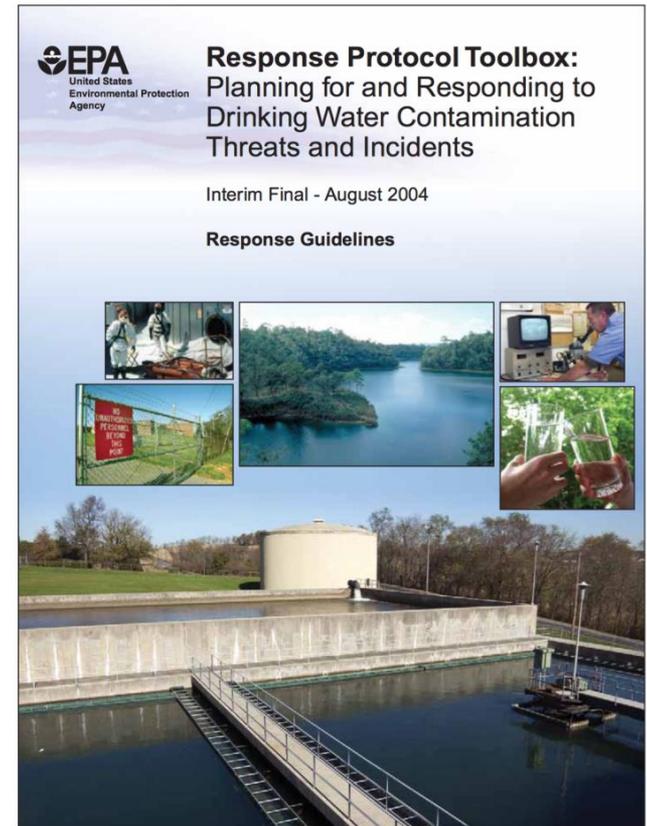
Responding to contamination: 4 steps

- **Step 1: *Communicate risk***
 - Engagement with people relying on supply
 - Based on peer knowledge
 - Must be reliable + trustworthy
 - Must be devoid of moralizing
 - “It’s your fault you drank poisoned water”



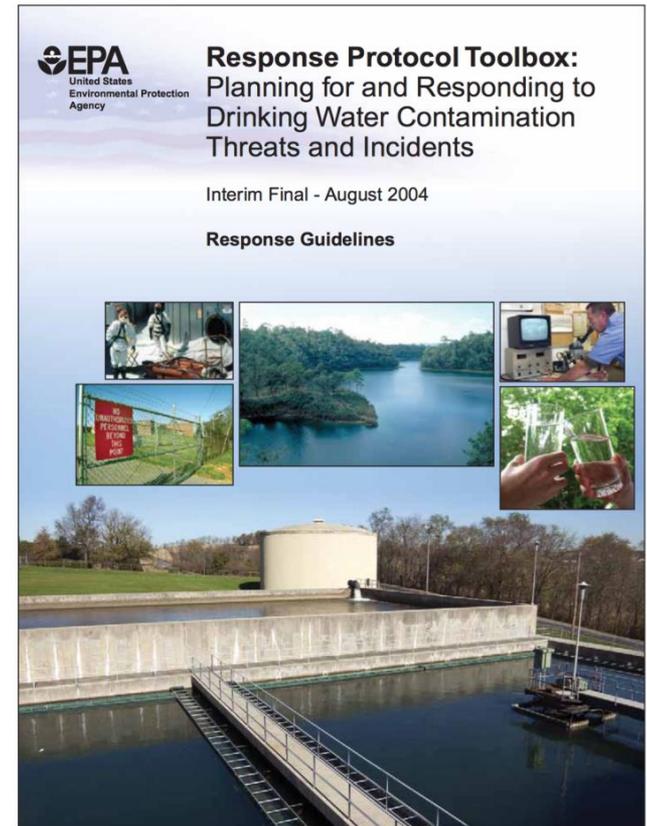
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- **Step 2: *Treat poisonings***
 - Oxygen, naloxone
 - Medical attention (SIF, OPS)
 - Connecting with ‘hidden’ populations



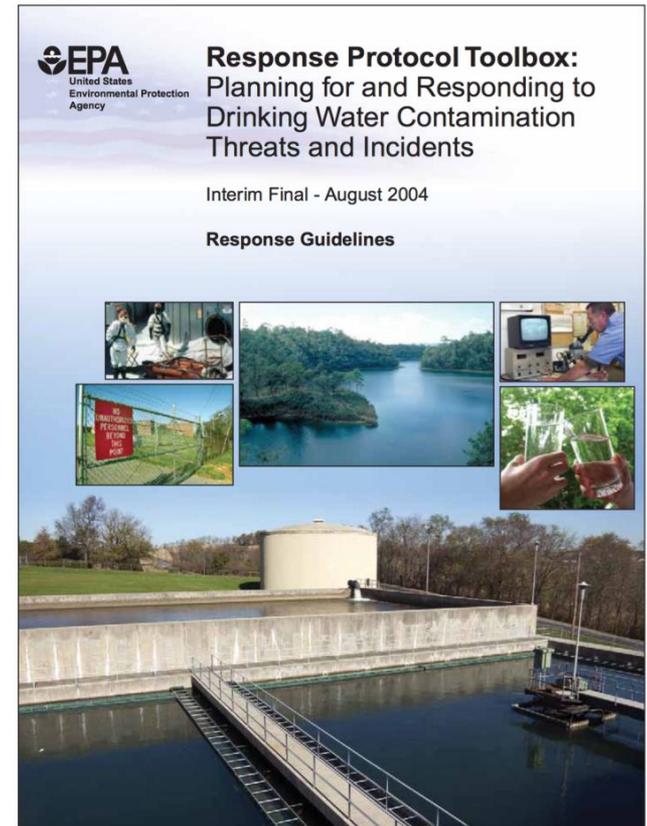
Responding to contamination: 4 steps

- **Step 3: Remove contaminants**
 - Street drug checking
 - Identify toxic substances
 - Knock on effect if person is using with a friend or is dealing
 - Increases ‘risk competency’
 - Only intervention that mitigates risk of OD *prior* to drug use



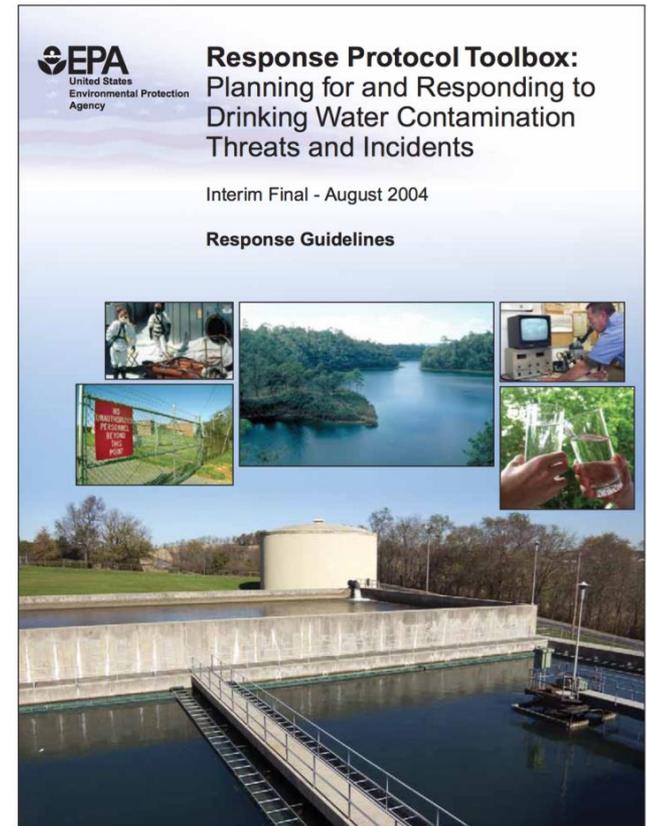
Responding to contamination: 4 steps

- **Step 4: Replenish supply**
 - Not enough to respond to poisoning
 - New normal \neq Business as usual
 - “Oh well, I guess the water’s poisoned from now on”
 - Need to introduce stasis to the market



Responding to contamination: 4 steps

- **Step 4, con't: Replenish supply**
 - Medication-assisted treatment
 - Methadone
 - Buprenorphine
 - Suboxone
 - Prescription heroin
 - Standard-dose opioids



Responding to contamination: Barriers

- We have most of the tools we need to respond to the OD crisis
- Three major barriers remain:
 1. Stigma
 2. Scale-up
 3. Political will

How do we move forward?

- *Change starts with a realization that we are already halfway there*
 - Heroin prescription, medication-assisted treatment, SIF, street drug checking: de facto ‘micro-regulation’
 - Consider that multiple regulatory structures exist:
 - recreational cannabis vs. heroin prescription
- *Need to confront where our policies are taking us*

Conclusions

- We need to scale up the tools we already have
- Scale up happens by addressing stigma
- Stigma can be reduced through policy change
- Policy change happens by recognizing what already exists: a poor system of regulation

Questions?

Thanks for listening.

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