Issue 2

1VAC30-41 Newsletter — November 2026

DRINKING WATER LABORATORY CERTIFICATION



Your quick guide to updates, reminders, and resources to support your laboratory operations provided by the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) Virginia Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (VELAP).

Success Stories

Do you have a SUCCESS STORY? The VELAP Team interacts with laboratories --- like yours --- every day and we know the answer that question is "Yes!" We know you have learned from your experiences and have some helpful ideas to share with other laboratories. Please consider sharing something with your laboratory community that you wish you'd known without having to learn by trial and error. Feel free to submit a brief article to VELAP for consideration for the next newsletter. We all benefit when we learn from and support each other. Email submissions to Lab_Cert@dgs.virginia.gov. Our team will be in touch with you before sharing your submissions.



Spotlight on Assessments

Common Findings and How to Avoid Them

Avoidable Frequent Findings

A common finding from Chapter 41 laboratory assessments is that basic requirements for the Quality Assurance Plan and Standard Operating Procedures, per EPA's Drinking Water Manual, Section III-11, are overlooked. Specifically, common issues relate to:

- Ensuring SOPs are reviewed annually and revised as changes are made
- Ensuring SOPs have signature pages and revision dates
- Ensuring the QA Plan is reviewed/updated at least annually
- Ensuring the laboratory has records reflecting that the current QA Plan and SOPs have been reviewed by staff

Compliance Tip: Develop and use checklists to help monitor activities like onboarding of new staff, annual internal audits, and processes for updating policies and procedures. Checklists for these types of activities put these reminders or "safety nets" in place to support tasks or processes that may be done infrequently.

Spotlight on Cyber Security

Digital Safety Reminders and Tools

Staying Alert

VELAP has been made aware of instances where third parties have reached out to laboratories, appearing as if they are doing work on behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia for fee collection or licensing. If you need to confirm anything that appears to come from VELAP and seems suspicious or outside of our normal business or communication practices, please feel free to contact us before clicking or responding in any manner. As the saying goes, it's better to be safe than sorry.

VELAP Email Attachment Changes

VELAP's Information Technology (IT) team has recently updated the maximum size of email attachments, both to and from our agency. The maximum allowable size is now approximately 15 megabytes (mb). The 15 mb limit includes all attachments combined. If the collective attachment size exceeds the limit, the entire email will be blocked. Unfortunately, no notifications to the sender or the recipient are sent from VELAP's email server, therefore both parties are unaware that the email was blocked. If you are sending to VELAP, your own email server might give you an "undeliverable" notification.

To address file transfer issues caused by email limitations, VELAP has set up a site for file transfers outside of the email system. The site uses a verification process based on recognizing the email address of the laboratory's submitter. After the verification process is completed, the submitter can drag and drop files to our site and receive immediate email confirmation of the files transferred. This process is easy to use, ensures a safe transfer of files, and avoids the need for multiple emails. Please email our team to request the link any time you need to send files to VELAP.

Refer to VELAP's Toolbox Webpage or contact the VELAP office for more information on using this file transfer portal.

Communication Confirmations

VELAP's business practice is for the assigned contact person for each laboratory to acknowledge receipt within 1-3 business days of all emails from laboratories requesting a service or containing attachments, e.g., a change-in-scope request, corrective action submission, or certificate from another accrediting body. We also have a business practice of using out-of-office replies to help you estimate when your email will be received by your assigned contact person in the VELAP office. Please note that if your email to VELAP contains questions needing review or research, our response time may be longer.

Communication Confirmations, cont'd

If you don't receive a timely acknowledgment to your email to VELAP, feel free to contact your assigned VELAP representative for confirmation of receipt.

Your involvement in assuring communications were received by VELAP will help us avoid unpredictable delays caused by communication failures such as blocked emails or other unexpected issues.

Spotlight on Proficiency Testing

PT Data Management

PT Data Automations

The VELAP team is piloting automated uploads of Proficiency Testing (PT) data into our laboratory database. This process is code driven, using data in a format that includes the laboratory's EPA ID number along with TNI-based codes for the analyte, method, and matrix provided by the PT provider, based on the selections made by laboratories during the reporting process.

- BE SURE TO REPORT YOUR LABORATORY'S EPA ID NUMBER when you submit PT results to your PT provider.
- PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION WHEN SELECTING THE METHOD AND ASSOCIATED REVISION DETAIL FOR EACH PT RESULT, ensuring a match to what is reflected on your VELAP certificate.

During this pilot period, VELAP is working to ensure our coding is synchronized with TNI codes used by the PT providers. We may need to reach out to laboratories if we encounter discrepancies so that we can work to ensure accurate and efficient data transfer through this automated process. We look forward to implementing this efficiency to add both quality and cost savings to the certification process.

Questions? Suggestions? Ideas?

If you have recommendations on educational information for future newsletters, please let us know!

Contact Us

Email: Lab_cert@dgs.virginia.gov
Phone: (804)648-4480 & request to speak to a member of the laboratory certification team