

**Virginia Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services
Virginia Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) Certification Program**

**PROFICIENCY TESTING TIMELINE UPDATE ANNOUNCEMENT
and FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**PROFICIENCY TESTING – SDWA PROGRAM
December 15, 2010**

PROFICIENCY TESTING (PT) TIMELINE UPDATE:

In an effort to provide laboratories a more flexibility and greater ease in managing PT studies for compliance with Virginia's Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) certification program, the timelines for WS Proficiency Testing (PT) have been updated **effective January 1, 2011:**

The laboratory is responsible for analyzing and completing PT Studies **on a calendar year (January- December) basis** within acceptance limits established by the approved PT provider for all contaminants by each method for which the laboratory seeks or holds certification.

DCLS requires laboratories to perform PT studies **prior to September 30** of each year.

Laboratories which fail the PT study on this schedule will have time to perform and document corrective action and **participate in a makeup PT study prior to December 31.**

Failure to successfully complete a PT study for each contaminant by each method for which the laboratory seeks or holds certification by December 31 will result in the downgrading of the laboratory's certification status.

WHY HAS THIS UPDATE BEEN IMPLEMENTED?

This expanded timeline allows laboratories more flexibility in the planning and purchase of proficiency test samples.

Laboratories are responsible for completing PTs and assuring that results are provided to DCLS according to the established timelines. Failure to do so will result in the downgrading of the laboratory's certification status. This PT schedule will help the laboratory better manage PTs and avoid loss of certification.

HOW CAN I BE SURE MY LABORATORY HAS MET VIRGINIA'S SDWA PT REQUIREMENTS?

The laboratory is responsible for ordering PTs from an approved provider for every certified analyte/method combination. The laboratory selects a study that closes before September 30. The chemistry and microbiology Water Supply (WS) PT samples used

for certification compliance must be purchased from providers who have been approved by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation utilizing the “National Standards for Water Proficiency Testing Studies”.

IF I FAIL A PT, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

For a failed PT, the laboratory shall perform and document corrective action. The corrective action documentation shall be submitted to DCLS within 30 days of the “not acceptable” PT result.

Note that a corrective action plan is a critical element and may prevent the lab from failing a subsequent PT!

Once the laboratory has completed its corrective action and submitted documentation to DCLS, the laboratory may order and analyze a make-up PT sample.

Remember that the laboratory is responsible for successful PT analysis during the calendar year to assure maintenance of certification. The laboratory should pay careful attention to timelines to assure this responsibility is met. ***Laboratories are encouraged to perform their annual PT well in advance of September 30 in order to avoid problems meeting the annual requirement should a make-up study be necessary.***

WHAT HAPPENS IF I FAIL THE MAKE-UP PT?

When the laboratory fails the initial attempt and the make-up PT, DCLS will downgrade the certification status for that analyte/method combination to “provisionally certified”. A laboratory with this certification status may continue to analyze samples but is required to notify its customer of the provisionally certified status and provide that information, in writing, on any report.

The laboratory must perform and submit documentation of a corrective action for the failed make-up PT to DCLS within 30 days of receipt of the results. Once the laboratory has determined that the cause of the failed study no longer exists, another make-up PT can be performed.

Successful analysis of the 2nd make-up PT will restore the certification status to “certified”. Failure of the 2nd make-up PT will cause the laboratory’s “provisionally certified” status to be fully downgraded to “not certified.”

I HAVE RECENTLY COMPLETED A PT STUDY TO RE-INSTATE CERTIFICATION FOLLOWING FAILED STUDIES LAST YEAR. DOES THIS PT STUDY SATISFY MY ANNUAL PT REQUIREMENT?

No, a PT Study performed to demonstrate successful Corrective Action from a failed PT study in the previous calendar year does not satisfy the requirement for an annual PT study in the current calendar year. Example: A makeup PT study performed in January

2011 for a failed study in November 2010 does not meet the calendar year PT requirement for 2011. Another PT must be performed in 2011.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ON VIRGINIA'S SDWA PROGRAM?

1VAC30-40, accessible by chapter, can be found at <http://leg1.state.va.us>.

Manual for the Certification of Laboratories Analyzing Drinking Water: Criteria and Procedures, Quality Assurance, 5th Edition, EPA 815-R-05-004, January 2005

DCLS' Laboratory Certification Office: e-mail Lab_Cert@dgs.virginia.gov or call (804)648-4480.