



# Department of Environmental Protection

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Governor

MAEVE VALLELY BARTLETT  
Secretary

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Commissioner

October 3, 2014

**RE: Laboratory Certification and Quality Assurance Office Policies on Proficiency Testing:  
Policy on Chemistry Proficiency Testing (Policy # WES-14.001)  
Policy on Microbiology Proficiency Testing (Policy # WES-14.002)**

Dear Laboratory Director or Other Interested Party:

Accompanying this letter are revised Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Laboratory Certification and Quality Assurance Office (LCQAO) policies on proficiency testing (PT):

- The LCQAO Policy on Chemistry Proficiency Testing (Policy # WES-14.001) replaces Policy # WES-08.001.
- The LCQAO Policy on Microbiology Proficiency Testing (Policy # WES-14.002) replaces Policy # WES-08.002.

Summary of Changes in the Policy on Chemistry Proficiency Testing (Policy # WES-14.001)

- Throughout policy – Laboratory Certification Office (LCO) is now renamed as the Laboratory Certification and Quality Assurance Office (LCQAO).
- Section 2.3 – Removes requirement that PT studies be formal studies; effectively allows the use of PT studies with a short turn-around time and thus provides additional flexibility to MassDEP-certified laboratories in meeting this certification requirement.
- Section 3.3 – Editorial changes.
- Section 3.6 – Reduces the amount of time between successive studies from 30 days to 15 days and clarifies how the timeline is defined; provides additional flexibility to MassDEP-certified laboratories.
- Section 3.8 – Clarifies which PT studies must be submitted to the LCQAO before the end of the calendar year.
- Section 4.2 – Reduces the amount of time between successive studies from 30 days to 15 days and clarifies how the timeline is defined; provides additional flexibility to MassDEP-certified laboratories.

- Section 5.1 – Clarifies approval of PT providers and updates web site where accredited PT providers are listed.
- Section 5.2 – Adds language already included in the microbiology PT policy that states MassDEP's right to withdraw approval of a PT provider; broadens definition of inspection by deleting "on-site."

Summary of Changes in the Policy on Microbiology Proficiency Testing (Policy # WES-14.002)

- Throughout policy – Laboratory Certification Office (LCO) is now renamed as the Laboratory Certification and Quality Assurance Office (LCQAO).
- Section 2.1 – Change in examples to reflect methods and media that are still in use.
- Section 2.2 – Removes requirement that PT studies be formal studies; effectively allows the use of PT studies with a short turn-around time and thus provides additional flexibility to MassDEP-certified laboratories in meeting this certification requirement.
- Section 2.3 – Clarifies which PT studies must be submitted to the LCQAO by the end of the calendar year.
- Section 2.6.1 – Accounts for the fact that microbiology certification is available in more than one matrix. Reduces the amount of time required between successive PT studies from 30 days to 15 days, providing additional flexibility to MassDEP-certified laboratories.
- Section 2.6.2 – Accounts for the fact that microbiology certification is available in more than one matrix.
- Section 3.0 – Entire section accounts for the fact that MassDEP no longer uses fecal coliform as a bacterial indicator in finished drinking water and thus eliminates certification for this parameter in finished drinking water (i.e., water treatment and distribution).
- Section 4.1.1 – Accounts for the fact that heterotrophic plate count (HPC) PT sample sets may now consist of a single enumerative sample.
- Section 4.1.3 – Removes state (MA)-specific acceptance limits for enumerative microbiology PT samples and defaults to those used by NELAP-approved PT providers.
- Section 4.2.1 – Takes into account that enumerative fecal coliform PT samples for source waters may now consist of a single enumerative sample, and allows Section 4.2 and former Section 4.3 to be combined.
- Section 4.2.3 – Removes state (MA)-specific acceptance limits for enumerative microbiology PT samples and defaults to those used by NELAP-approved PT providers.
- Section 4.3 – Describes the PT requirements for enterococci certification. These requirements had already been sent to MassDEP-certified laboratories in a previous memorandum.
- Section 5.4 – Removes state (MA)-specific acceptance limits for enumerative microbiology PT samples and defaults to those used by NELAP-approved PT providers.
- Section 6.0 – Removed as not needed and Sections 7.0 and 8.0 are renumbered as 6.0 and 7.0, respectively.

- Section 6.2.2 – Reduces the amount of time required between successive PT studies from 30 days to 15 days when performing a make-up PT, providing additional flexibility to MassDEP-certified laboratories.
- Sections 6.2.2, 6.2.3, 6.2.5, 6.2.6, 6.2.7 – Editorial changes.
- Section 6.2.8 – Last sentence was moved to Section 2.3.
- Section 7.1 – Clarifies approval of PT providers and updates web site where accredited PT providers are listed.
- Section 7.2 – Broadens definition of inspection by deleting “on-site”.

These revisions to the LCQAO PT policies were presented to the MassDEP Laboratory Advisory Committee at an earlier meeting and were received very favorably.

If you have any questions concerning these policies, please contact Ann Marie Allen, WES Deputy Director and LCQAO Director at 978-242-1333.

Sincerely,



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Division and Station Director  
Division of Environmental Analysis  
Senator William X. Wall Experiment Station

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