

Bulletin #13



Welcome to *EWQA Bulletin*, an e-update to keep our drinking water microbiology testing public health partners informed about EWQA activities. Bulletins and updates to the PHO Approved Laboratory List are also published on our new [website](#), so please be sure to check it regularly.

HPTA Legislation Update: *What role will stakeholders have in the development of the program and regulatory framework under the Act?*

Now that the registration phase of the federal Human Pathogens and Toxins Act (HPTA) is behind us, the development of a regulatory framework consisting of national guidelines, and presumably, penalties for non-compliance is starting to take shape. It is time to engage in the formal consultations to ensure the program meets the needs of drinking water testing environmental microbiology laboratories.

Are drinking water testing laboratories experiencing implementation issues? We may be a small piece of the puzzle, but your voices need to be heard. If the consultations are announced similar to the initial roll-out, some of you will be on the invitation list to contribute to the discussion. Alternately, EWQA can forward your issues and concerns on your behalf. Dr. Judy Isaac-Renton, Chair of our Steering Committee, has been asked to work with the BC government to develop a consultation process for the regulations.

EWQA HIGHLIGHTS

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“Registering stock cultures is not worth the hassle” says Judy Smith of Metro Vancouver, deciding against a small testing site at the newly built water filtration plant. “It would have been convenient, but the HPTA adds a layer of complexity that we don’t need right now.” Samples of the finished water will be transported daily to the approved laboratory in Burnaby.

Does the legislation interfere with best practice? Forward your issues and concerns to EWQA and we will make sure drinking water testing laboratories are not left behind. Shelley.tiffin@bccdc.ca

EWQA Audit Cycle Turn-Around-Times (TATs)



The 2009/2010 EWQA audit cycle was monitored to determine typical TATs, and to reduce the numbers of extension certificates required to complete our audits. Based on the findings, laboratories can reasonably expect their certificate within 4 to 8 weeks after an onsite audit.

Our average TAT targets were all met. While we did well in reducing the number of extensions overall, we were not as successful in reaching our ambitious goal of 0 (zero) laboratory extension certificates. We look forward to the challenge of improving this number in the next audit cycle.

Monitoring our indicators resulted in several opportunities for improvement, many were implemented immediately. Beginning in the next audit cycle:

- New EWQA process to request audit deferrals (e.g., laboratory disasters)
- Back-up EWQA auditors scheduled on stand-by as needed
- Audits scheduled much earlier in cycle
- Missed deadlines escalated to Laboratory Directors
- Completing post-audit corrective action under the existing certificate encouraged

Goal:

Establish and maintain reasonable audit timeframe, minimizing the need for extensions

Indicator			Target	Actual or Mean	Min	Max
1	EWQA sent <u>Notice to Renew</u>	# months	≥6 mo	7	4	9
2	<u>Application deadline</u> missed	# labs	0 lab	2*		
3	<u>Target audit date</u> missed	# labs	0 lab	5*		
4	TAT: Auditor submit <u>Audit Report</u>	# days M-F	≤10 d	8	4	12
5	TAT: EWQA review <u>Audit Report</u>	# days M-F	≤5 d	3	1	10
6	TAT: <u>Certificate</u> return from PHO	# days M-F	≤10 d	8	4	17
7	TAT: Audit-to- <u>Certificate</u> distribution	# weeks	≤8 wk	4	2	17
8	Extension certificate required	# labs	0 lab	3*		

News from EWQA Auditors:



Providing a laboratory reference is an important component in the onsite audit report. During the onsite audit, the laboratory gives the names of 2 (two) references to contact, preferably an MHO and EHO with recent experience with the laboratory and, as such, able to comment on their service. An MHO (and/or EHO) recommendation, along with the EWQA Audit Report, contributes to the recommendation for laboratory certification.

Recent Audit Reports were delayed when references are difficult to reach, and on more than one such occasion, the reference had no recollection of ever working with the laboratory. The laboratories may only rarely have reason to contact their local EHO, and clearly they cannot be expected to recall individual contacts with every laboratory.

Suggestion for laboratories: Choose references with whom you have recent experience, and contact them in advance to determine their willingness to provide a suitable reference within the week immediately after the onsite audit. If an MHO and/or EHO cannot provide a reference, choose a client who can provide a credible reference.

Approved Laboratory Certificate Expiry Dates Spread Over Three Years

Many of you have suggested the redistribution of EWQA audit dates as a change that benefits us all, and we agree! When the unexpected occurs, such as the loss of auditors during the peak audit period, there is little we can do to recover and sometimes a laboratory experiences lengthy delays.

While in the current transition period to the new three-year audit cycle, we are actively implementing these and other changes to rectify this reoccurring problem and ultimately improving our service.

Requirement to Notify EWQA of Significant Changes Relevant to Certification

Several past bulletins included reminders of this EWQA policy and it seems to have worked! In the past few months we reviewed certification impacts of facility moves, personnel changes, etc. Please continue forwarding your notices to us as quality partners in drinking water microbiology testing.

EWQA welcomes your comments, questions and suggestions by email shelley.tiffin@bccdc.ca or send a letter to:

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