

Accurate News

"Accurate News" is a publication of Accurate Labs & Training Center
Stillwater, OK 74074

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Labs & Training Center

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January-March 2000

Check Out Accurate Labs & Training Center's Web Page

www accuratelabs.com

Accurate Labs & Training Center is adding to and improving our web page every month.

Our new class calendar and tuition for the year 2000 is now loaded for your viewing and enrollment pleasures. Check it out!

100% Guarantee on Training Classes

That's Right! Accurate Training Center is giving a 100% Guarantee on their Class "C" and "D" Operator Certification Classes.

The students coming to our training classes have been so successful in passing the state exams, we will guarantee they will pass the test on their first attempt. If they do not pass the exam on their first attempt, they are more than welcome to come back to the next available scheduled training class they previously took for **FREE**. Accurate Training Center is doing this for a reason. We are here to provide quality training and to assist all water treatment operators and personnel to be educated and knowledgeable to their fullest extent so that they can operate their facilities in the safest manner and produce clean and safe drinking water.

Accurate Training Center Offers Renewal Hours

It is never too late, or early, to think about quality renewal training hours. Operators and Lab Technicians can receive their quality renewal training hours at Accurate Training Center. They can utilize the first and/or the second day of any of our operator or lab classes to meet their renewal hour credentials. For further information or to enroll, contact Clarke Hodson at 1-800-516-5227.

Remember, renewal hours serve several purposes. First, these hours provide the operator or lab technician the opportunity to refresh their knowledge or skills in their field. Second, they provide the operator and lab technician an opportunity to prepare for the next level of certification. When you look for renewal hours, try to find the renewal hours that you will benefit the most from when it comes time to pass your exams.

A Promise for the Future

Welcome to the first year of the new millennium...or the last year of the old millennium, depending on your point of view. Either way it is an event that catches our attention and makes us think about the passage of time. It is also a special time for us here at Accurate. This is the start of the tenth year of our success and there has been much to be thankful for along the way.

The most important factor in our rise from the smallest environmental laboratory in Oklahoma to the second largest has been our people. We are grateful for the

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many employees who have made contributions during the past nine years. Some of them have moved on to other careers while many are still with us today. The second, and equally important factor, is our customer. Without those customers who have made us a partner in their efforts to protect the environment, we would not have been able to survive. Without those customers who were willing to pay a little extra to receive more service and better quality we would be hard pressed to have continued the struggle for constant improvement.

As we move into another year, and we hope, another decade, there are few things that can be predicted with certainty. Here are a few that I think can be. First, the environment will continue to need our help. We pledge to do our part and I know you will too. Second, the requirements for quality will continue to tighten and become more demanding. We intend to constantly improve in this area and be among the leaders, not just in Oklahoma, but nationally. Third, technology will continue to make the world a more impersonal place. At Accurate, we will use technology to its best benefit, but you will always be able to have a relationship with us. A real person will always answer the phone and real people will take care of you. I promise.

George Drye
Laboratory Manager

QC Report Continues Improvement

In the last edition I mentioned that our QA/QC system was undergoing improvements. All of these changes are to help us better control the accuracy and precision of our data and to ensure defensible data. Most of our systems are invisible to you and I hope that means the system is performing well. However, some of the changes we are making will be noticeable on our report. Here are some of the things you might notice.

Our metals QC format is changing to match the format we have been using in organics for some time. Wetchem will soon be changing as well. The main change is in the reporting of duplicates. Rather than a simple percent recovery, we will now be using Relative Percent Difference (RPD). This is a measure of agreement between the two duplicate values. It is a way to express precision. The closer the RPD is to zero the better the agreement.

Also, we will be using several terms that may be familiar to you by now. They are Matrix Spike (MS), Matrix Spike Duplicate (MSD) and Laboratory Fortified Blank. We will use these values to help us determine if the results of an analytical batch are acceptable. I will discuss these more fully in a future newsletter. Until then, don't hesitate to call if you have any questions.

Ken Crawford
QA/QC Manager

Why is there Atrazine in my water?

When we do a complete water analysis for a system using surface water we sometimes report trace levels of atrazine. We usually get a call from a concerned customer asking "What is atrazine and why is it in my water?" The answer is relatively straightforward.

Atrazine is a selective herbicide that is applied by farmers for weed control. Literally billions of pounds are applied every year in this country alone. If not applied carefully it often finds its way into nearby streams and lakes, which are also the source water for many of our drinking water plants. It is diluted to very low levels, perhaps only parts per billion or trillion. However, at this level, it is not removed effectively by most treatment methods, meaning it will be found in finished water at levels similar to what was present in the source water.

In most cases, we are not seeing the atrazine at levels exceeding the regulatory limit of 3.0 ppb. We are starting to see it more often though, at levels just over or just under our PQL, which is only 0.1 ppb. Whether there is cause for concern when the atrazine is present at these low levels is a matter for debate. What is not debatable is that we will probably continue to find this herbicide in more and more system's water because of its tremendous use by the agricultural community.

David Kidd
Organics Manager



Public Water Supply Wells Need Testing

It is a little known fact that many of the public water supply systems in this area of the country use well water rather than surface water. Occasionally one of these wells goes dry or is contaminated, requiring the addition of new wells. When these new wells are drilled, testing is necessary to determine if the water is of good quality and contains no harmful impurities.

There are really two stages to this testing. First, the water needs to be tested while the well is being completed to see if it is fresh, potable water. This testing is very basic and can include parameters such as chloride, total dissolved salts, alkalinity, or perhaps a few metals such as iron or manganese. Second, once it has been established that the well is of usable quality and will flow a sufficient quantity of water, there are other tests that should be done. These are the primary and secondary drinking water standards as determined by the USEPA.

Before a well is actually brought on line and begins serving the system, these tests should be performed. Although it is unusual for a well to contain a contaminant that could cause it to be unusable, it is possible. Also, even if the water is pure, the analysis serves as a "background" for future comparisons and assures the consumer the water is not harmful. These tests are quite extensive, encompassing minerals, metals, volatile and semi-volatile organics, pesticides and herbicides, bacteria, and even asbestos and radioactives. They can also be expensive. The price for testing can range up to several thousand dollars per well.

Accurate has the capabilities and the certification to run most of these tests and has found a source for the few tests we cannot do in house. We can also provide the containers (a single sample requires about a dozen different specialized bottles) and a shipping container. Please call us if you need this kind of testing. We will be glad to prepare a quotation and sample containers for you.

John Russell
Field Service Manager

Ya Got Me Wrapped up in Chains

Recently, I was asked to speak to the Oklahoma pretreatment coordinators at their quarterly meeting. I chose as my topic chain-of-custody forms. This is a very important topic which affects most of us, both the laboratory and the sampler or end-user of the data. I think the assembled group was surprised to see how many different chain forms we receive from our customers and how hard it was to find some of the information we need to correctly log in and analyze a sample.

Of course, we all know things such as dates, times, signatures, sample descriptions, etc. should be on the chain. However, there are some other things we as a laboratory would like to see. Here, in no particular order, are some of them.

Clear writing. If possible, type it in before you go to the field. If not, try to print legibly. We may do the wrong test or incorrectly report data if we can't read what is written on the chain.

Indicate on the chain who the report goes to and who the invoice goes to if it is not the same person. If you assume the lab knows, you're taking your chances. Also, make sure there is a name and phone number in case of questions.

Be as clear and descriptive as possible when requesting analysis. Don't use terms like "complete analysis" or "trace metals" because we really don't know what those things mean. Use standard method names, or even better, use method numbers. These are much harder to misunderstand. If there are so many parameters to be tested you can't fit them in the allotted space, use a second sheet and just make a note on the chain, such as "see addendum."

Try to be consistent. If you write things on the chain in one spot most of the time your lab will probably get used to looking there. If you suddenly switch, they may miss your instructions.

Finally, feel free to use the comments section (all good chains should have one.) This is the perfect place to convey unusual instructions or warn the lab about things like short holding times or hazardous sample conditions.

George Drye
Laboratory Manager

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Accurate Training Center's 2000 Calendar is Ready

We have completed our year 2000 training class schedule and the calendars are being printed and mailed out as you read this.

If you have not received your calendar, please call Clarke Hodson, Training Administrator at 1-800-516-5227.

Pretreatment Class Surveys

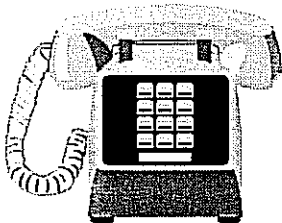
Accurate Training Center is investigating the needs for Training Classes in Pretreatment. We have sent out surveys to both city and industrial representatives to survey their needs for pretreatment training. The surveys are beginning to filter back in and are showing a strong desire for training in several aspects of pretreatment. If you have not received a survey yet, please call Clarke Hodson to request one. He would like to have your input.

ATC's First \$50 Savings Bond Recipient

Tracy Hood was our first recipient of our \$50 Savings Bond Promotion. Tracy received a \$50 Savings Bond from Accurate Training Center for referring Darrell Walker to Accurate Training Center's Classes.

Congratulations Tracy!

Accurate Labs will pick up your samples along seven statewide routes. Please call.



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