

Accurate News

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

Main Office: 505 S. Lowry ■ Stillwater, OK 74074
405-372-5300 ■ FAX: 405-372-5396
Toll Free-Stillwater 1-800-516-LABS



Oklahoma City: 405-236-5333 ■ Tulsa: 918-307-1115
Enid: 405-237-5353 ■ Wichita: 316-683-1123
Toll Free-Tulsa 1-877-907-LABS

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Accurate Pursues NELAP Certification

During the month of June 2002, Accurate Labs' Stillwater facility underwent an audit for certification by the State of Louisiana. This certification will carry with it the approval of not only that state, but the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) as well. We expect to have this certification before the end of summer.

Why is Accurate going to all the trouble to achieve this certification? There are several reasons. First, the State of Oklahoma has not chosen to participate in NELAP as a certifying body. This means our certification by the ODEQ is not recognized any longer by states that require NELAP. This includes the State of Kansas, which is now a NELAP member. So, in order to be certified in Kansas we must pass a NELAP audit by another state (you see, Kansas will only provide audits to in-state labs) and then forward the results of the audit to Kansas for their approval. All in all, a pretty complicated and expensive proposition.

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The second reason is that we want to be the best lab we can be and have a high level QA program in place. Right now, for environmental labs, NELAP is the most complete quality program available. It was specifically developed for environmental labs, unlike some of the other programs available, which were created for other types of labs and then "modified" to try to include environmental labs. Even though going through this process is very expensive and is causing a lot of extra work and even hurting our productivity, we think it

Don't Get Caught Napping on UCMR

For those water systems serving over 10,000 people, time is running out to start UCMR testing. We are now 18 months into the three-year program and many systems have yet to begin sampling and testing. Although in theory you could start as late as the first quarter of 2003, you may be pushing your luck. If you start that late and anything goes wrong, you won't have time to start over. So don't wait and don't hesitate! And if you are waiting on the state to tell you when to start...they won't. It is not their program. The EPA is directly responsible for this program and the state is not participating. Please call us if you have *any* questions about the UCMR.

will be worth it in the long run to know we are performing at a high level and generating legally valid data.

Right now, there are very few NELAP approved labs in this part of the country. Since Louisiana is the only NELAP state in EPA Region VI, labs in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and New Mexico are not able to achieve NELAP status through their own states. Due to the difficulty and expense of having to apply through an alternate state, as well as perform the upgrades necessary to pass the audit, most labs have not been willing to go after a NELAP certification unless required by their state. Only labs that do work in multiple states have found it worth the effort. Even though Accurate does not do a tremendous amount of work in states other than Kansas and Oklahoma we still want to pursue this higher level of certification because we think it will be good for us, and in turn, our customers.

Dr. Ali Fazel, Director



Class Attendance Records And Renewal Hours

Every year about this time we get many phone calls from our clients asking questions about their class attendance records and their renewal hours. Many times it is "Clarke, I lost my class attendance records, what do I do?" Or, "Clarke, do I need to take a renewal class?" Let me explain how your class attendance records and renewal hours work.

Once an operator takes the appropriate training hours (class) and passes the appropriate exams, the operator receives his certification and license to operator at a certain level in a certain facility, water or wastewater. Every time an operator takes an ODEQ approved training or renewal class, the operator receives a class attendance record. This record comes in triplicate – a white, pink and yellow copy. The class *instructor sends the white copy to ODEQ*. The *operator retains the pink and yellow copies* for his records.

These records are good for life, so every operator SHOULD RETAIN THESE COPIES IN A SAFE PLACE. To maintain their certification and license, the operator is required to participate in AT LEAST FOUR HOURS of classes per fiscal year – between July 1 and June 30. This means the operator can take any four-hour renewal class or any certification class that is four or more hours. Many operators schedule their training so they take at least one certification class, an "A," "B," "C" or "D" level, water or wastewater, lab or operator, class every year. These certification classes count towards your four hours of renewal. So, why not kill two birds with the same stone and take a certification class.

Every June, the ODEQ goes through their records and compiles the "White Copies" of the class attendance records and sends each operator the results. The operator then has the option of renewal each license they currently hold. They do this by filling out the form correctly and sending their yellow copies of each attendance record they obtained for that fiscal year, between July 1 and June 30, with the appropriate fees. The *operator's yellow copies should match up* with the ODEQ records.

Sometimes the operator may take a certification or renewal class after the ODEQ has compiled their records and sent their forms out. That is okay, as long as the operator takes a class before June 30 of that year. All the operator has to do is send their yellow copy in with their renewal form and write the class in the appropriate place on the renewal form.

It is as easy as that. Go to a four hour renewal or certification class each year between July 1 and June 30, the class attendance record's white copy goes to ODEQ at the time of the class, the yellow copy is sent in with the renewal form in June and the pink copy is saved in your sock drawer for life. DO NOT LOSE THESE FORMS. YOU ARE THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM. If your

employer requires a copy of them to maintain for his records, either give him a copy of them, or make sure you get them back when you leave his employment.

If you lose your class attendance records, you will not have any records to show ODEQ that you went to a class. Even ODEQ and you employer may have "bad days" and lose things. So, please hang on to your class attendance records. If you have any questions, Clarke will be glad to answer any of them at 1-800-516-LABS.

DEQ Makes Changes for the New Year

Water changes on a daily basis and I am sure all will agree that no two waters are the same or treated the same. Just as water changes though, so does technology around us. Technology allows us to learn more, generally makes things simpler (sometimes), allows us to do different tasks, and overall improves the quality of living. However the price for improving technology, is that it requires more from us and from our environment but allows us to better ourselves.

With new technology and increased knowledge, we as operators should be capable of improving the quality of water, both drinking and waste. This allows us to ensure the survival of future generations in the environment including humans. This also reduces medical and dental costs of current generations. Normally, we are referred to as Public Health Professionals, but we should think of ourselves more as an Environmental Health Professional.

One way to better ourselves is to expect more from ourselves and others, to always try to improve through knowledge and understanding, and to do the very best with what we are given. The Department of Environmental Quality is one that is always trying to help us better ourselves by pushing us to do more, to be better and to know that we are capable of it. As of January 1, 2002, Chapter 631 has made a lot of new changes for treatment plants regarding MCLs, turbidity readings on filters, and on disinfectants. Some of these changes don't affect smaller municipalities until January 1, 2004. However, why wait? Why not go ahead and start putting these changes into affect now? Take charge, read Chapter 631, make the changes necessary, and improve our water—improve our lives. Thank you for caring!

Sean Swafford
Training Instructor/Chemist

New Requirements May Impact Lab Customers

In other issues of this newsletter as well as this issue, we have discussed the impact of new requirements on laboratories. One facet of this we haven't talked much about is the impact these things will have on you as a laboratory customer. Many of the new requirements and regulations will ripple through the laboratory and eventually cause waves for the end user of the data.

More than a few of these new requirements are things that may not be important to you right now. In fact, you might just as soon we not put them into action. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. When a lab implements the kind of changes we are discussing, they cannot do so for only "some" of their customers. Changes usually have to be implemented in an all or nothing manner. Auditors particularly don't like to see a lab have a lot of exceptions to their systems. They want to see every sample treated the exact same way.

As we implement many of these new requirements you may start to see new statements on your report, or a copy of a new document. Some of these may refer to things like QC failure, corrective action, or sample transport failures. In some cases, it will be an indication that the lab may have done something wrong, but in others it may indicate that the customer (sampler) used incorrect containers, preservatives, transportation temperature, etc. It does not in all cases mean that the laboratory data is unusable, but it may. This is where it will impact you, our customer. It will throw some of the responsibility and decision-making back on your shoulders as well as create some gray areas where judgement must be used.

There is a tendency, at first, for lab customers to think the lab must be really messing up a lot. Of course, the lab may not be making any more mistakes than they ever have. They are just doing a better job of documenting them and informing the customer. Something that would have been brushed off by the lab as insignificant yesterday may be documented as requiring a "corrective action" today. And, of course, some of these corrective actions may actually be required of the customer versus the laboratory. For instance, if a sample container is received by the lab with the wrong preservative, whose responsibility is it? Does the lab ignore the problem and run the sample anyway, or reject the sample and inform the customer they must resample? Many labs would take the first course of action. However, under the new guidelines this would not be acceptable. So, lab customers may see many issues they have never heard of and the laboratory may have a less accommodating attitude for fear of the repercussions if they ignore the guidelines.

Ken Crawford
QA/QC Coordinator

New ICP Arrives to Help Metals

We are all excited here about the arrival of our new ICP. It is a Thermo Jarrell Ash Iris Intrepid, with both axial and radial plasma viewing and high-resolution optics. It is an updated version of the ICPs we already had in the lab. We traded one of our older ICPs and we are keeping the other and will upgrade it to new specifications with changes to both hardware and software. This should allow it to operate just like the new one.

The decision to purchase a new ICP was not an easy one. The ICP we were operating was only about 6 years old, which is relatively young in instrument terms. However, due to heavy use and some electronic problems that could not be isolated, it was spending more and more of its time in the "down" mode, waiting for repair. This was really slowing our productivity and throwing our whole workload on our backup ICP. It too began to experience more down time as the result of this, and productivity became even more of an issue. At this point, we decided to completely replace the unit rather than waste time on more repairs.

Hopefully, by the time you read this we will have our new ICP running and in full production as well as our backup upgraded and ready. Unfortunately, there is a lot more to this than just turning these instruments on. We have to enter a lot of method information into the computer, calibrate for all elements and perform MDL studies first. Only then are we ready to run samples. Once all this is accomplished we should return to a very high production level in our metals department. We know that turn around time is critical to all our customers and we are making every effort to address any issue that affects the time it takes us to put data in their hands.

George Drye
Laboratory Manager

Enroll On-Line with Accurate Training Center

You can now enroll in Accurate Training Center's classes on-line. Check out the registration form on our web site: www.accuratelabs.com. Go to "The 2002 Training Schedule" page and click on "Enroll On-Line." Then fill in the information boxes and submit. Easy as that. Be the first one in your facility to enroll on-line.

You can still mail or fax your registration sheet in or call Clarke Hodson at 1-900-516-LABS (5227) to enroll in our classes. Clarke is real excited about this and is looking forward to receiving your enrollment through our web site.



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Stillwater, OK 74074

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Accurate Labs & Training Center in Tulsa Has Moved

Accurate Labs & Training Center has moved to a larger facility with new phone and FAX numbers. We are now located at 6558 East 40th Street, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This is located "about" one block east of 40th and Sheridan. We are located on the south side of 40th street.

Our new telephone number is 918-663-5400 and our FAX number is 918-663-6300.

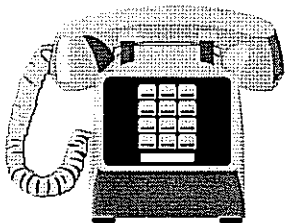
Our new building allows us more room for expansion and to provide more services to better meet your constantly changing needs. The new building also allows the Training

Center to hold more students with more comfort, 15-18 students.

Accurate Labs & Training Center appreciates the business and support we have received from all of our loyal clients. Without your help, this change would not have been possible. As always, we will continue to provide the best services available anywhere and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Please give us a call if you have any questions concerning our new location. We look forward to you stopping by and say "Hello" and let us give you a tour of our new facility.

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



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