

DATE:	15 November 2024
TO:	All Drinking Water System Operators/Managers/Contractors:
FROM:	Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) – Public Health Laboratory (ProvLab)
RE:	Use of ProvLab for Drinking Water Bacteriological Samples Related to New Water Main Projects

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message

- Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (EPA) and Alberta Health Services (AHS) have reviewed water quality samples submitted to the Public Health Lab (ProvLab)
- Water samples associated with repair or maintenance of existing pipes, e.g. during a main break repair, need to be submitted to ProvLab with the regulated water works system's own access number and name.
- Water quality sampling for commissioning of water mains, water transmission lines, water main replacement projects and worksites not accessible to the public can be submitted to any ISO/IEC 17025 accredited lab or can continue to be submitted to ProvLab through a fee for service process by contacting APL.Clients@albertaprecisionlabs.ca before December 2, 2024.
- Out of scope testing is defined as the use of any ISO/IEC 17025 accredited laboratory including ProvLab, for a fee-based service.

Background

- Environment and Protected Areas (EPA), ProvLab, and Alberta Health Services (AHS) Safe Healthy Environments, have conducted a review of all water quality samples submitted to ProvLab for bacteriological testing. It has come to our attention that numerous contractors and operators are submitting drinking water samples related to new water main projects to the ProvLab for bacteriological analysis. AHS provides the test results to the contractors/operators and ProvLab does not currently charge a fee for the analytical testing.
- New water main samples specifically refer to the water samples collected from the water main under construction where the water main is isolated from the active distribution system and the disinfection procedure follows the new main sections of the ANSI/AWWA Standard: C651 Disinfecting Water Mains. These include samples collected for quality control purposes by the contractors during the commissioning of the water mains, water transmission lines and water main replacement/renewal projects.
- In reference to Section 1.9.1 Disinfection of Mains and Reservoirs in the EPA Standards and Guidelines for Municipal, Waterworks and Storm Drainage Systems Part 1 (2021), EPA does not require that these new water main water quality samples be submitted exclusively to ProvLab for bacteriological analysis and is therefore out of scope for the ProvLab. These samples can be analysed in any lab accredited to ISO/IEC 17025, which would include the ProvLab. New water main water quality samples do not include samples that are collected following repair or maintenance work on existing pipes that are in service, such as those collected during a water main break repair. These samples need to be tested at ProvLab.
- ProvLab and AHS have reviewed their costing and reporting procedures for new water main samples. This involved a review of the previous reporting pathway which included the delivery to and management of reports by AHS. Effective December 2, 2024, ProvLab will no longer provide testing service for new water main samples without charging a fee, and AHS will no longer provide new water main sample reports to contractors or operators.



- If your community or your contractor wants to continue submitting new water main water quality samples to the ProvLab through a cost recovery process, please contact ProvLab at the following e-mail address to begin a discussion of the next steps: APL.Clients@albertaprecisionlabs.ca
- EPA regulated drinking water systems must continue to submit their routine bacteriological drinking water samples (random locations in water distribution system) to the ProvLab as required by their approval or registration including samples collected for repairs of the active distribution system. Please note, water samples collected during the repair or maintenance of an in-service distribution system must be submitted to the ProvLab for bacteriological analysis under the regulated waterworks system's own access number and name and not a construction/contractor company's access number and name.
- You can also reach out to your Drinking Water Operations Specialist (DWOS) if you want to discuss further.

Why This Is Important?

- **Out of scope samples submitted AFTER Dec 2nd WILL BE REJECTED** without prior contact and initiation of account set-up with ProvLab at APL.Clients@albertaprecisionlabs.ca

Action(s) Required

- On receipt of this notification contact APL.Clients@albertaprecisionlabs.ca **IMMEDIATELY** to facilitate continuation in support of testing.
- Taking this step is crucial to avoiding any disruption in testing support
- Standard new client fee (\$250) will be waived for clients contacting APL Client Services prior to December 2, 2024.

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to

- APL contracts APL.Clients@albertaprecisionlabs.ca
- ProvLab, Public Health Laboratory, Alberta Precision Laboratories
 - Melodie.barnett2@albertaprecisionlabs.ca, ProvLab North
 - Raymond.ma@albertaprecisionlabs.ca, ProvLab South

This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by

- Dr Graham Tipples, Medical and Scientific Director, Public Health Laboratory, Alberta Precision Laboratories
- Maria Falsetti, Operational Director, Public Health Laboratory, Alberta Precision Laboratories

References

- [AWWA C651-23 Disinfecting Water Mains](#)
- [Standards and guidelines for municipal waterworks, wastewater and storm drainage systems \[2012\] - Open Government \(alberta.ca\)](#)
- [Public health guidelines for non-municipal drinking water July 2021 \(alberta.ca\)](#)