
Date: June 2, 2014

To: Environmental Public Health: Director, Managers, Environmental Public Health Officers, Public Health Inspectors, Medical Officers of Health

From: Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (ProvLab)

Re: Discontinuation of Faxing Routine Laboratory Results

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Key Message:

The Environmental Microbiology Program of the Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (ProvLab) works closely with various provincial and federal government agencies to deliver water quality testing services to the highest standards. In the event of a perceived public health threat there is a requirement for expeditious reporting of test results to health agencies. Within this framework, a defined set of protocols and conditions exists for which expedited communication of test results is required (i.e., either by phone or fax), as in the case of a failed bacteriological water quality test result.

Why this is important:

The laboratory is currently experiencing increasing requests from various clients to have routine test results communicated in an expeditious manner (i.e., phoned or faxed), regardless of the established conditions that typically require rapid reporting. This includes requests by certain groups (i.e., engineering contractors) to have the ProvLab expedite water quality test results. In most cases, results are transmitted by electronic download to the health agencies the day following analysis of the sample.

While it has been the practice to accommodate these client requests, the laboratory is no longer able to adhere to this practice due to the increasing demand for immediate notification of results. While the laboratory wants to ensure that services meet the needs of their health partners, it must also maintain efficient service for both the ProvLab and its partners. As such, the laboratory will only expedite the reporting of results for which a public health threat exists, thereby prioritizing resources towards health outcomes. This change will come into effect **July 1, 2014**.

Action Required:

In the event that expedited reporting is required, the ProvLab will provide this service to environmental public health officers or medical officers of health that request it. All other requests must be cleared through the Program Leader (Dr. Norman Neumann)

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:

Edmonton: Dr. Norman Neumann (780) 492 8502 or (780) 901 5991 (C)

This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:

Dr. Graham Tipples, Medical-Scientific Director, ProvLab