



Date: October 26, 2020 [Update to September 29, 2020 Lab Bulletin]
To: All AHS Zone Emergency Operations Centers (ZEOC) – for distribution to all teams responsible for collection of COVID-19 swabs including community and assessment center collections
From: Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL)
Re: Updated Visualization Process for Specimen Identification of COVID-19 Swabs

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message:

Effective October 20, 2020, the Chief Medical Officer of Health readjusted the COVID-19 testing strategy such that only symptomatic individuals and contacts of cases (contact tracing and outbreak investigations) are eligible for testing. Asymptomatic individuals without known COVID-19 exposure are no longer included in the test strategy.

All specimens are processed within the laboratory as quickly as possible but, in order to improve testing efficiency, the following samples should be visually marked with an “X”:

- Outbreak Investigations by Public Health
- Close Contacts identified through Public Health Contact Tracing
- Healthcare workers (symptomatic or outbreak/close contact investigation through Public Health)

Note: There are no changes to the process below for how to visually mark the ‘X’ on samples prior to transport. The update in this Bulletin is with regards to which samples will be visually marked.


Why this is Important:

This process will ensure that the lab can quickly and efficiently identify and process specimens for testing. This will improve the lab’s ability to meet the required turnaround time for COVID-19 test results.

Background

- APL continues to experience an increasing demand for COVID-19 testing and therefore a process to improve testing efficiency has been established. Due to the massive volumes, swabs/requisitions not appropriately marked cannot be flagged retroactively if they were not identified using this process.
- Please refer to the Alberta Health website for details: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-testing-in-alberta.aspx>

Action Required:

Step	Action	Details
1	Perform COVID-19 swab collection	Perform swab and secondary patient identification as per existing process.
2	Apply a black Sharpie “X” on both specimen and requisition for swabs meeting criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outbreak Investigations by Public Health • Close Contacts identified through Public Health Contact Tracing • Healthcare workers (symptomatic or outbreak/close contact investigation through Public Health) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For specimens meeting the above criteria, apply a black Sharpie “X” on both the top of the cap of the specimen and the top right hand corner of the Requisition. 



Step	Action	Details
3	Package and transport swabs and requisitions	Assessment Centers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Package and transport tubes as per the Racking Process for COVID-19 Samples at Assessment Centers Lab Bulletin All Other Sites: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Place specimen vial in the specimen bagPlace folded requisition in the sleeve of the bag, ensuring the black Sharpie "X" is visibleTransport swabs to designated lab as per established process

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:

Christine Yamniuk, APL Director, Co-Chair APL COVID-19 Incident Command Center 780-952-2066,
christine.yamniuk@aplabs.ca

This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:

Tammy Hofer, Chief Operating Officer, APL
Carolyn O'Hara, Interim Chief Medical Laboratory Officer, APL