

PROCEDURES FOR THE CERTIFICATION OF DRINKING WATER LABORATORIES IN GEORGIA

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INTRODUCTION

This document contains the standard operating procedures for the Laboratory Certification Program of the Watershed Compliance Program in the Watershed Protection Branch of the Environmental Protection Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Georgia's Environmental Protection Division (EPD) has implemented a certification program for drinking water laboratories based on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) "Manual for the Certification of Laboratories Analyzing Drinking Water". In accordance with EPA's guidance manual, laboratories must be certified by EPA or the State to analyze drinking water samples for compliance monitoring. In order to achieve or maintain certification, drinking water laboratories must successfully analyze proficiency testing samples, use approved methods, and successfully pass periodic on-site audits.

Georgia's Laboratory Certification Program certifies laboratories that analyze drinking water for compliance with the Georgia Safe Drinking Water Act and the Georgia Rules for Safe Drinking Water. In-state microbiology laboratories are certified directly, while all out of state chemistry and microbiology laboratories are certified by reciprocity. Reciprocity is recognition by the State of Georgia of the validity of a laboratory's drinking water certification granted by an approved accrediting agency.

Per the Rules, States must designate "laboratory officer or officers, certified by the Administrator or designee as the official(s) responsible for the certification program." (40 CFR §142.10(b)(3)(i)).

This manual describes the procedures for certifications of new and existing drinking water laboratories.

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Laboratory Certification Program General Guidelines - Reciprocity

1. Laboratories seeking reciprocity must have certification or accreditation from one of the following authorities:
 - a. U.S. EPA
 - b. Primacy State
 - c. National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP)
 - d. American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA)
 - e. NSF International Inc.
 - f. Canadian Association for Laboratory Accreditation (CALA)
 - g. Perry Johnson Laboratory Accreditation (PJLA)
2. Provisionally certified/accredited laboratories will not be eligible for certification in Georgia.
3. Certification/Reciprocity may be downgraded or revoked per the “Manual for the Certification of Laboratories Analyzing Drinking Water, Criteria and Procedures Quality Assurance”.
4. A laboratory’s certification will be denied or suspended for falsification of data provided on the application or on any document associated with certification, including laboratory results.
5. Certification/Reciprocity will be valid for a maximum of three (3) years.
6. In the case of denial of certification/reciprocity, the laboratory can appeal the decision by written request to the State’s Drinking Water Laboratory Certification Authorities (Program Managers I, II, and the Laboratory Certification Officer of the Watershed Compliance Program, Drinking Water Compliance Unit).
7. The laboratory and accrediting agency shall allow authorized representatives of the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) access to all records, files and documentation relating to certification.

8. In the event of major equipment/instrument failure or loss of key personnel (instrument operator) which may affect test results for compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), a certified laboratory may temporarily contract with another EPD certified laboratory. EPD must be notified in writing of this arrangement.
9. When there are changes in laboratory personnel, laboratory location, or equipment/instrumentation, the certified laboratory must notify EPD within thirty (30) days.
10. Laboratories must successfully participate in a Water Supply Proficiency Test (PT) twice per year for all analytes/methods for which reciprocity is sought. If an analyte is failed on a PT, then the laboratory must participate in another PT for all analytes that were failed within 60 days. Proficiency Test providers must be accredited by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) or the American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-American Society for Quality (ASQ) National Accreditation Board/ACLASS.
11. Analytical test results for compliance with the SDWA shall be reported using a format designed by EPD.
12. EPD assumes no responsibility associated with the payment of fees to third party Accreditors. There will be no charge for the certification/reciprocity process by the EPD.

Reciprocity for New Laboratories

1. Application must be received from the laboratory.
2. Scope, certificate, and most recent on-site audit with approved corrective actions must be sent for the laboratory by the primary accrediting agency. On-site audits should be conducted by the primary accrediting agency at a minimum of once every three years; therefore, the last on-site audit should not be more than three years old.
3. The four most recent Proficiency Tests (PTs) must be sent by the approved PT provider. Georgia requires that all labs pass semiannual PTs on all analytes and methods for which reciprocity is sought.
4. Reciprocity can be granted for each analyte and method pairing that has had acceptable results on the two most recent consecutive PTs. If an analyte/method pairing has a failed result, as long as there is an acceptable make-up PT, reciprocity can still be granted.
5. All laboratories located within the State of Georgia will be issued a “Certificate of Certification”, as Georgia is the Primacy State, as well as a list of all certified analytes and methods (scope).
6. All out-of-state laboratories will be issued a certification by reciprocity letter and a list of all certified analytes and methods (scope). The letter will specify the name(s) of the Primacy State or accreditor that issued the certification/accreditation and the time period for which each certification is valid.
7. All laboratories must successfully participate in Water Supply Proficiency Tests twice per year for all analytes/methods for which reciprocity is sought. If an analyte is failed on a PT, then the laboratory must participate in another Proficiency Test for all analytes that were failed within 60 days. The results of the PTs must be sent directly from the PT provider.

Renewal of Existing Reciprocities

1. A letter of intent to renew must be received from the certified laboratory. This indication of intent can be in the form of an e-mail or hard copy letter.
2. The new scope and certificate must be sent directly from the primary accrediting agency.
3. The most recent onsite audit and approved corrective actions must be sent directly from the primary accrediting agency. If it has been more than three years since the primary accrediting agency has performed an onsite audit, a letter from the primary accrediting agency that details why one has not been completed and approximately when one is expected to be done.
4. All laboratories must successfully participate in Water Supply Proficiency Tests twice per year for all analytes/methods for which reciprocity is sought. If an analyte is failed on a PT, then the laboratory must participate in another Proficiency Test for all analytes that were failed within 60 days. The results of the PTs must be sent directly from the PT provider.
5. Reciprocity will be reissued for all regulated analytes that are on the scope and that have had consistent acceptable PT results.

Laboratory Certification Program General Guidelines – Microbiology

1. New laboratories within the State of Georgia seeking certification for microbiology must submit an application. After the application is received, a Laboratory Certification Officer will visit the facility and perform a pre-certification audit.
2. New laboratories within the State of Georgia must successfully participate in at least one Proficiency Test (PT) study prior to certification being issued.
3. All in-state analyses for compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act must be performed by a certified Water Laboratory Analyst, or a Class I or Class II Water Operator.
4. Certification may be downgraded or revoked per the “Manual for the Certification of Laboratories Analyzing Drinking Water, Criteria and Procedures Quality Assurance”.
5. A laboratory’s certification will be revoked for falsification of data provided on the application or on any document associated with certification, including quality control documents and laboratory results.
6. Certification will be valid for a maximum of three (3) years. An onsite audit will be performed at least every three years. Onsite audit criteria will be based on Chapters I, II, III, and V of the “Manual for the Certification of Laboratories Analyzing Drinking Water, Criteria and Procedures Quality Assurance”. The checklist used is based on the requirements in the Manual.
7. The laboratory shall allow authorized representatives of the Environmental Protection Division access to all records, files and documentation relating to certification.
8. In the event of major equipment failure (incubator, water bath, autoclave) or loss of key personnel (laboratory analyst) which may affect test results for compliance with the SDWA, a certified laboratory may temporarily contract

with another EPD certified laboratory. EPD must be notified in writing of this arrangement.

9. When there are changes in laboratory personnel, laboratory location, or equipment/instrumentation, the certified laboratory must notify EPD within thirty (30) days.
10. Laboratories must successfully participate in Water Supply Proficiency Tests twice per year for all analytes/methods for which reciprocity is sought. If an analyte is failed on a PT, then the laboratory must participate in another Proficiency Test for all analytes that were failed within 60 days. Proficiency Test providers must be accredited by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) or the American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-American Society for Quality (ASQ) National Accreditation Board/ACLASS.
11. Each in-state analyst responsible for analyzing water samples for compliance with the Total Coliform and Ground Water Rules must successfully participate in one PT per year for each method the laboratory is certified. This can be an in-house PT or from an accredited provider.
12. Analytical test results for compliance with the SDWA shall be reported using a format designed by EPD.