



STATE OF IDAHO  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

1410 North Hilton • Boise, ID 83706 • (208) 373-0502  
www.deq.idaho.gov

Brad Little, Governor  
John Tippetts, Director

March 26, 2020

Dear Idaho drinking water certified laboratory personnel,

You are receiving this message because you are listed as a responsible official or point of contact for an Idaho drinking water certified laboratory.

As we respond to COVID-19, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) remains committed to helping you maintain a safe and healthy workplace so you can continue to provide vital services to your communities. You may have questions regarding how to handle various situations, and we will try to address as many of those as we can. As you are aware, the situation is changing rapidly, so we will do our best to adjust and keep you informed. We are also committed to using whatever discretion and flexibility we have to appropriately deal with situations as they arise. These are the key topics we want to convey at this time:

1. **Lab Services:** Regarding Idaho's statewide stay-home order, DEQ interprets that environmental laboratories fall under "other essential services" since laboratories provide both professional services as necessary to assist in compliance with legally mandated activities and support water and wastewater facilities as essential infrastructure. A copy of "What are essential services and businesses" is located at: <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/>.
2. **Establishing Communications:** DEQ is establishing communication lines with Idaho drinking water certified laboratories to ensure continuity and backup options are in place for public water systems. If you are limited in capacity, please provide DEQ as much detail as to what samples you can and cannot continue to process. *If your lab is planning to close or experiences reduced capacity for any reason, please contact:*

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Or

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Drinking Water Bureau Chief  
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3. **Notifying DEQ or a Health District of Maximum Contaminant Level Exceedances and Positive Microbial Results:**

Public water systems are still required to submit samples. Continue to contact regional DEQ or Health District staff by phone for positive microbiological results or when there are exceedances of a maximum contaminant level (MCL) as required by IDAPA 16.02.13.130. Drinking water staff are available and will continue to respond to contamination events. Please use the following "[Idaho Drinking Water Staff Call Down List for Labs](#)" to assist with this process.

4. **Drinking Water Sampling Flexibility Due to COVID-19:**

DEQ has provided drinking water operators *temporary flexibility* to obtain distribution samples for total coliform and disinfection residual and tap samples for lead and copper from alternative sampling locations if necessary. Please see the attached letter for more information on the temporary sampling flexibility. This flexibility is meant to ensure representative samples can still be obtained if routine sample locations are unavailable due to COVID-19. Operators have been instructed to identify the alternative location by noting "Alternative" next to the location information on the sample form. *If your lab is collecting routine samples on behalf of a water system, you will need to notify and coordinate with the water system if you need to identify an alternate sampling location.* This sampling flexibility is for a limited duration; DEQ will notify you when this flexibility is no longer available.

We appreciate your commitment to being an important part of providing safe and reliable drinking water to the citizens of Idaho and protecting public health. Please contact us if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Tyler Fortunati  
Drinking Water Bureau Chief