



DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington

Rule Implementation Plan
Accreditation of Environmental
Laboratories
Chapter 173-50 WAC

August 2010
Publication no. 10-03-049

Publication and Contact Information

This report is available on the Department of Ecology's website at www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/1003049.html.

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Ecology publishes this document to meet the requirements of the Washington State Administrative Procedure Act (RCW 34.05.325)

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Purpose

Ecology provides the information in this implementation plan to meet agency and Administrative Procedure Act (RCW 34.05.328) requirements related to rule adoptions.

Introduction

The purpose of this Rule Implementation Plan is to inform those who must comply with Chapter 173-50 WAC, Accreditation of Environmental Laboratories, about how the Department of Ecology (Ecology) intends to:

- Implement and enforce the rule.
- Inform and educate persons affected by the rule.
- Promote and assist voluntary compliance for the rule.
- Evaluate the rule.
- Train and inform Ecology staff about the new or amended rule.

Also included in this plan is information about:

- Supporting documents that may need to be written or revised because of the new rule or amended rule.
- Other resources for more information about the rule.
- Contact information for Ecology employees who can answer questions about the rule implementation.

Implementation and Enforcement

This is a revision of the existing Chapter 173-50 WAC. Ecology's Laboratory Accreditation Unit (LAU) has administered the Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP) since its inception in 1989. The LAU is staffed at 5.8 FTEs and will be responsible for implementing and enforcing the amended rules after they become effective.

The accreditation period for laboratories is one year. The revised fee schedule in WAC 173-50-190 will be implemented on the effective date of this rule.

The LAU evaluates participation of environmental laboratories in proficiency testing studies and will apply the changes to WAC 173-50-070 in evaluations starting on the effective date of this rule.

Several Ecology rules and policies require the use of accredited laboratories for data submitted to the agency. The Department of Health administers the drinking water program in Washington which requires certification of laboratories reporting compliance monitoring data.

Ecology will update its *Procedural Manual for the Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program* by the effective date of the revised rule. This document describes in detail how Chapter 173-50 WAC is implemented by LAU staff.

Informing and Educating Persons Affected by the Rule

Ecology will issue a press release when the rule is adopted and will send an email notice to accredited labs.

Letters sent to environmental laboratories with their application materials state the basic requirements for requesting and maintaining accreditation.

The LAU prepares a detailed procedural manual describing and explaining current requirements for accreditation. This manual is available in hard copy and at Ecology's web site, www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/labs/lab-accreditation.html.

Promoting and Assisting Voluntary Compliance

Ecology sends applications and requirements for initial accreditation to environmental laboratories on request. Ecology sends applications and requirements for renewal of accreditation to accredited laboratories approximately two months before current accreditation expires. Laboratories may request changes to their scopes of accreditation at any time to ensure that they remain in compliance. The LAU also offers technical assistance to laboratories to the extent allowed by staffing resources.

Evaluating the Rule

Ecology tracks the percentage of renewals completed on time, the number of on-site audits completed, and the time required to issue the written reports of those audits.

Ecology tracks the performance of a select number of accredited laboratories in proficiency testing studies as an indicator of the effectiveness of the program. Results are compared to the performance of those same laboratories before the state ELAP was implemented.

Training and Informing Ecology Staff

The changes to Chapter 173-50 WAC affect only environmental laboratories and will be transparent to Ecology staff receiving data from those laboratories. Ecology has published information about the rule changes in its internal staff newsletter, *Inside Ecology*.

List of Supporting Documents that May Need to be Written or Revised

Procedural Manual for the Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program, Ecology Publication No. 02-03-055 will be updated to conform to the revised Chapter 173-50 WAC by the rule effective date.

More Information

More information on accreditation of environmental laboratories is at our website, www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/labs/lab-accreditation.html.

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