

Follow-up to an unsatisfactory routine coliform sample

April 2016

DOH 331-187

Revised

A drinking water sample is unsatisfactory whenever coliform bacteria are present. If your water system receives unsatisfactory sample results, you must collect a set of repeat samples. If your water system uses groundwater, you must also collect triggered source samples from every groundwater source that was in use when you collected the unsatisfactory routine sample. You must collect triggered source samples before treatment. If your water system has an approved triggered monitoring plan, follow your plan.

Repeat samples confirm the presence or absence of coliform bacteria in the system. If present, sample results can help you find the possible cause of contamination.

Triggered source samples indicate whether the groundwater source is contaminated with the fecal indicator *E. coli* bacteria.

You must collect repeat and triggered source samples within 24 hours after you learn about the unsatisfactory routine sample result. **Do not** shock-chlorinate the system or source before collecting any samples unless you have prior approval from us.

Review your sampling procedure

Review your sampling procedure to make sure you collect your samples correctly. For help, see *Coliform Sampling Procedure* (331-225).

Collect repeat samples

You *must* collect **THREE REPEAT** samples for every unsatisfactory ROUTINE sample. Three must come from the following locations:

1. The same tap as the original unsatisfactory routine sample.
2. An active service within 5 active connections upstream from the original unsatisfactory sample location.*
3. An active service within 5 active connections downstream from the original unsatisfactory sample location.*

You must also collect a raw water sample at each groundwater source that was in use when you collected the unsatisfactory routine sample and test it for *E. coli*.

* You may deviate from these locations if your state-approved Coliform Monitoring Plan includes one of the following:

- A standard operating procedure (SOP) for selecting alternate repeat sites.
- Defined alternate repeat site locations.

Thoroughly inspect your water system

Try to identify potential sources of contamination, such as “openings” in the system or treatment equipment failure. If you find obvious sources of contamination, call us (see below).

The month after an unsatisfactory sample

The month after an unsatisfactory routine sample, you must collect your usual number of ROUTINE samples from the distribution system.

Very small noncommunity groundwater systems not required to sample every month must collect ONE ROUTINE sample the month following an unsatisfactory sample even if they normally would not be required to collect a sample that month.

Call us if:

- You cannot sample as outlined above.
- You would like to discuss the triggered source sample requirement.
- Any repeat samples or triggered source samples are unsatisfactory.

Northwest Region: Kent
253-395-6750

Southwest Region: Tumwater
360-236-3030

Eastern Region: Spokane Valley
509-329-2100

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