

A circular graphic containing a stylized water drop with wavy lines inside, set against a background of smaller wavy lines.

Fact Sheet

Follow-up to an Unsatisfactory Coliform Sample

November 2007

DOH PUB. #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 within 24 hours.

The purpose of repeat samples is to confirm the presence of coliform bacteria in the system and determine possible causes of contamination. **Do not** shock-chlorinate the system before collecting repeat samples without prior approval from the Department of Health Office of Drinking Water (ODW).

Thoroughly inspect the water system

Try to identify potential sources of contamination, such as “openings” in the system and/or treatment equipment failure. Make needed repairs to your system. For help see *Troubleshooting Checklist for Coliform Contamination* (DOH Pub. #331-180).* If obvious sources of contamination are found, contact your ODW regional office at the number listed on back of this Fact Sheet.

Review your sampling procedure

Review your sampling procedure to make sure samples are taken correctly. For help see *Coliform Sampling Procedure* (DOH Pub. #331-225).*

Collect repeat samples

The number of required repeat samples is based on the number of routine samples your system collects monthly.

If your system collects ONE routine sample per month, a total of **FOUR REPEAT** samples are required from the following locations:

1. The same tap as the original unsatisfactory routine sample.
2. An active service within five active connections upstream from where the original unsatisfactory sample was taken.
3. An active service within five active connections downstream from where the original unsatisfactory sample was taken.



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4. Another location – such as the source or right after the storage tank – that will provide useful information for determining a source of contamination. If you do not have a tap at the source or storage tank, choose another active service.

If a system collects TWO OR MORE routine samples per month, a total of THREE REPEAT samples are required from the following locations:

1. The same tap as the original unsatisfactory routine sample.
2. An active service within five active connections upstream from where the original unsatisfactory sample was taken.
3. An active service within five active connections downstream from where the original unsatisfactory sample was taken.

If you cannot sample as outlined above, or **if any repeat samples are unsatisfactory**, call your ODW regional office at the number listed below.

The month after an unsatisfactory sample

In the month following an unsatisfactory sample, a minimum of FIVE ROUTINE samples are required. These samples must be marked as “Routine” on the lab slips submitted with the samples.

If you usually take five or more samples each month, follow your regular schedule.

If any of these samples are unsatisfactory, further investigation and more repeat samples are required. Contact ODW for assistance.

For more information

Northwest Region – Kent

Coliform Program: 253-395-6775

Main Office: 253-395-6750

Southwest Region – Olympia

Coliform Program: 360-236-3044

Main Office: 360-236-3030

Eastern Region – Spokane

Coliform Program: 509-456-2788

Main Office: 509-456-3115

* ODW publications are online at <http://www4.doh.wa.gov/dw/publications/publications.cfm>

