

## Georgia's Commercial Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Guidance Document

### New Commercial Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Rules

Starting July 1 2001, if you have analyses performed by a commercial analytical laboratory and the data are used for Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) regulatory purposes, that laboratory should be accredited. New rules that will be effective later this year may affect air quality permittees, hazardous waste facilities, and water or wastewater treatment providers -- anyone who provides analytical data to EPD.

#### Law, Rule and Definitions

Georgia state law (O.C.G.A. § 12-2-9) requires all commercial environmental laboratories submitting data to the Environmental Protection Division for regulatory purposes to be approved or accredited as specified in EPD's rules and regulations. Under EPD's rules (Chapter 391-3-26) additionally, any person submitting data prepared by a commercial analytical laboratory to the Division for regulatory purposes shall stipulate that the laboratory is approved or accredited.

The responsibility for submitting acceptable analytical data lies with the person subject to regulation under Georgia's environmental statutes, permits and rules.

#### **Commercial Environmental Laboratory** means:

Any laboratory which provides analyses of environmental samples on a fee or contract basis. A laboratory operated by the State, a city, county, local authority, or an industrial facility is typically not considered a commercial environmental laboratory.

#### **Approved** means:

The acceptance of a commercial laboratory by accreditation or certification. The approval is valid for the time period and tests included in the scope of accreditation.

#### **Data submitted for regulatory purposes** means:

Any data which is to be submitted to the Environmental Protection Division, or required to be retained on site for review by EPD, except for:

- a.) Initial Hazardous Site Response Act (HSRA) data;
- b.) Data obtained from *in-situ* analysis;
- c.) Turbidity data submitted for construction stormwater permits;
- d.) Tests for which accreditation or certification are unavailable.

**Effective Date**: July 01 2001 (® New date)

#### Benefits

- Improve credibility and acceptability of data to customers and regulators.
- Replace redundant and often contradictory inspections with comprehensive standardized inspections.
- Enhance the laboratory's ability to compete in Georgia, nationally, and internationally.

## Accrediting Authorities

Commercial environmental laboratories may obtain accreditation from the any of the following authorities:

**i National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference / Program (NELAC or NELAP)**

Those state agencies are primary accrediting authorities under this USEPA sponsored program.

At present those states are CA, FL, IL, KS, LA, NH, NJ, NY, OR, PA, UT.

Internet: [www.epa.gov/ttnnela1/](http://www.epa.gov/ttnnela1/)

**i American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA)**

Telephone: (301) 644-3248                      Internet: [www.a2la.org](http://www.a2la.org)

**i American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA)**

Telephone: (703) 849-8888                      Internet: [www.aiha.org](http://www.aiha.org)

**i Canadian Association for Environmental Analytical Laboratories (CAEAL)**

Telephone: (613) 233-5300                      Internet: [www.caeal.ca](http://www.caeal.ca)

**i NSF International Inc (formerly known as the National Sanitation Foundation)**

Telephone: (800) NSF-MARK                      Internet: [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org)

**i Quality Associates International LLC (QAI)**

Telephone: (618) 443-1900                      Internet: [www.qai-online.com](http://www.qai-online.com)

ISO Standard 17025 is the basis for accrediting laboratories.

### Stipulations

Any person submitting data to EPD prepared by a commercial analytical laboratory shall stipulate that the laboratory is approved (Chapter 391-3-26-.05). The stipulation shall include:

- U Name of the accrediting agency
- U Scope of accreditation relevant to the data submitted (e.g., air, drinking water, non-potable water, solid/hazardous waste)
- U Accreditation number or identifier issued by the accreditation agency
- U Effective (or issued) date of accreditation
- U Expiration date of accreditation

Example Stipulation	
<u>Laboratory:</u>	<i>Georgia Testing Lab, Inc.</i>
<u>Accreditor:</u> or	<i>A2LA, AIHA, CAEAL, NSF, QAI NELAP Approved State agency</i>
<u>Accreditation ID:</u>	<i>GA123.01</i>
<u>Scope:</u>	<i>Non-potable water</i>
<u>Effective:</u>	<i>Apr 06 2000</i>
<u>Expires:</u>	<i>Apr 30 2002</i>

This stipulation shall be on each report or may be submitted in a separate document with the first report of the calendar year.

### For More Information

Your EPD permitting or compliance contact is a good place to start if you have questions about reporting requirements. For additional information on this rule and how laboratory accreditation may impact you, please contact the following Georgia Environmental Protection Division staff:

Ernest U. Earn, (404) 675-1619  
Ted V. Jackson, (404) 656-3204

## Guidance through Questions and Answers

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**Situation:** A laboratory is not listed on EPD's website as an accredited laboratory. Will EPD accept data analyzed from this laboratory?

**Examples:** Sable Laboratories in Houston, Texas does not appear on the NELAC list of accredited labs.

**Guidance:** A laboratory may not appear on the NELAC list of accredited labs for many reasons: (1) the laboratory may not primarily be an environmental lab; (2) the laboratory may not use NELAC accrediting authorities to obtain accreditation; (3) the NELAC accrediting authority has not re-evaluated the laboratory under the NELAC requirements; (4) the list may not be current.

**Recommendation:** The laboratory should be contacted to find out their accreditor and the scope of work they are accredited to perform. Alternatively, one may contact the other accrediting organizations (A2LA, AIHA, CAEAL, or NSF) to obtain their list of accredited laboratories. EPD will accept data analyzed from a commercial laboratory if they are accredited through a recognized accrediting organization and the analysis is within the scope of tests accredited.

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**Situation:** My laboratory is part of a company that is ISO 9001/9002 certified. Would that be an acceptable accreditation? What if I obtain ISO 17025 certification from the same registrar?

**Examples:** Core Laboratories N.V. is certified under ISO 9002 and sold most of their environmental testing services to Severn Trent Labs. Core Labs still analyzes petroleum products for sulfur content on behalf of their Georgia clients.

**Guidance:** Laboratories with ISO 9001/2 certification would need to obtain ISO 17025 ("General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories"). ISO 17025 shares much in common with the ISO 9000 series standards. However, there are unique quality issues found in a laboratory that are not in a manufacturing or service industry. The registrar (that is, the accrediting body) would have to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with EPD for laboratories to be recognized by EPD.

**Recommendation:** The laboratory should seek ISO 17025 certification and the registrar should seek recognition by EPD through a Memorandum of Understanding.

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Situation: My laboratory is not currently accredited. How does my lab become accredited? How long will it take? How much will it cost? Do I have to send EPD anything stating we are accredited?

Examples: TexPar Laboratories is not accredited through a NELAC accrediting authority or 3rd party accreditor that EPD recognizes.

Guidance: Laboratories should contact the accrediting authorities (found above or on EPD's website) to determine: (1) which scopes of work and methods can be accredited; (2) the application procedures; and (3) initial and ongoing costs of accreditation. Some NELAC accrediting states can accredit a wide-range of methods and the 3rd party accreditors may have more selective range of accreditation capabilities. In general, an application package is sent to the laboratory for completion. The laboratory will complete the application and include a copy of their Quality Systems manual along with an application fee. When the laboratory's documentation is reviewed, questions may arise with the auditor that will need to be satisfied. Once satisfied, an on-site audit is conducted. This on-site audit may be as short as one day with one auditor to several days with several auditors. Deficiencies found through the on-site audit will have to be corrected and verified by the auditing team. Once satisfied with meeting the conditions of the accrediting authority, a certificate is issued to the laboratory. The entire accreditation process may take months, depending on how well the laboratory has documented their operations and the capacity of the accrediting authority. Costs associated with the accreditation application may range from hundreds to thousands of dollars, depending on the complexity of the laboratory. The laboratory does not have to send EPD any notification of their accreditation. Rather, the laboratory should send their clients the accreditation information.

Recommendation: The laboratory should contact the accreditors directly to find out the requirements and costs of seeking accreditation. The laboratory should consider printing the stipulation information on lab reports sent to their Georgia clients.

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Situation: A governmental organization contracts to have a private entity operate parts of their infrastructure. Included is a laboratory that analyzes water or wastewater. Is the private entity operating the laboratory considered to be a commercial laboratory?

Examples: United Water operates City of Atlanta water treatment facilities. OMI Inc operates Hinesville, Houston Co., Perry, Vidalia, and other facilities. An individual is contracted to operate a one-person city lab at the city lab.

Guidance: These laboratories are NOT considered commercial if the governmental organization exerts control of the quality of information leaving the laboratory. If an individual is contracted to work at a governmental laboratory, but does not

control other personnel, all (or a majority of) operations at the lab, and physical plant, then the governmental organization is considered to be in control of the quality of the data leaving the lab. If a company (OMI, United Water, etc.) contracts to operate a water system and a laboratory is part of the water system, they are simply working for the water system. The exception to this guidance would be if a contracted person or company also analyzes samples for other entities (not associated with the original contractual arrangement). In this instance, an evaluation would be made on a case-by-case basis.

Recommendation: The laboratory is still a city, county, authority, or industrial laboratory. When the definition of “commercial analytical laboratory” was discussed, contracted operations was considered exempt from regulations.

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Situation: A sample is collected and analyzed. *In-situ* analysis for process control is exempt from commercial laboratory accreditation. What is the criteria for determining *in-situ* versus collection and analysis.

Examples: Residual chlorine analysis in a water treatment facility is done within the plant and outside the plant in the distribution system. A hand-held device measures residual chlorine at the tap.

Guidance: Once a sample is transported to a designated facility performing environmental analyses in a controlled and scientific manner, then if that laboratory meets the commercial test, the laboratory would need accreditation. This could mean a mobile or fixed testing facility. An instrument taken to the sampling location or is within the environmental media, then the analysis is considered to be *in-situ*. In general, if an instrument is taken to the site and a sample collected and analyzed basically in one "motion", then it is *in-situ*. If the sample is collected and taken 100 feet to a vehicle containing the instrument, then it becomes a mobile lab and must meet the requirements of the rule.

Recommendation: Once a sample is moved away from the environment from which it was taken and then analyzed, the analysis is no longer considered *in-situ*. If the laboratory meets the other definitions of a “commercial analytical laboratory”, then that laboratory will need to be accredited.

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Situation: A laboratory is not accredited by July, 2001. Will EPD allow for an interim (provisional) accreditation status while the laboratory obtains accreditation.

Example: Microbac Laboratories (South Carolina Division) has South Carolina certification currently. Will apply to A2LA or State of Florida for accreditation based on the Georgia rules. This will take months to complete. South Carolina is not a NELAC accrediting authority.

Guidance: A laboratory is currently certified by a NELAC state accreditation program will be granted an interim period until the NELAC state re-evaluates the laboratory under the NELAC requirements. A laboratory that is currently certified by a non-NELAC state and has applied for approved third-party or NELAC state accreditation will not be allowed an interim period to obtain third-party or NELAC state accreditation. A laboratory that is not certified by anyone will not be allowed an interim period to obtain third-party or NELAC state accreditation. The rationale behind this is that laboratories with a history of accreditation are more likely to become accredited with another party (i.e., been through the process, understand the quality systems needed to operate a laboratory). The laboratory who has not been accredited or is not current in their accreditation may have problems becoming accredited quickly.

Recommendation: The rule does not allow for an interm or grace period. We will accept any NELAC state accreditation (within their scope of work).

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Situation: Drinking water certified laboratories in other states submit data to Georgia's Drinking Water Program. Will the data be accepted?

Examples: Texidyne Laboratory, certified by South Carolina's Department of Health and Environmental Control, sends drinking water analytical results for microbiological testing on a Georgia Public Water System.

Guidance: If the laboratory is certified by a non-NELAC State program that the EPD's Drinking Water Program recognizes for **drinking water analysis only**, that laboratory's information will be acceptable to EPD. The certification will need to meet federal requirements outlined in 40 CFR Part 141.28. However, if the laboratory submits data outside their scope of accreditation (e.g., wastewater, hazardous waste), the data provided will not be accepted by EPD. The laboratory would need to seek accreditation through a NELAC state or a third-party accreditor.

Recommendation: For drinking water analysis only, NELAC and non-NELAC Drinking Water certifications are acceptable to EPD.

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