

Collecting and Shipping SWQM Bacteriological Samples

(Change applies to TCEQ SWQM Staff)

E. coli

All TCEQ regions may now ship their samples to the Houston Lab. There is an EPA approved extension of the holding time of 48 hours **for ambient samples only**. This holding time applies only when transport conditions necessitate delays longer than 6 hours. Samples should not be held beyond 6 hours for convenience.

Procedures:

1. Always collect samples in IDEXX bottles, not Whirlpak bags.
2. To facilitate tracking quality assurance information, SWQM staff must begin using sample bottles acquired only from Central Supply. Central Supply now provides both 120 mL and 290 mL (for duplicates) bottles with sodium thiosulfate.
3. Fill containers to the top (not the 100 or 250 mL line), leaving sufficient headspace for air and shaking. This is to provide ample volume for the lab to process the sample according to their procedures.
4. Include your routine bacteria samples on the same RFA as the routine water samples if they are being shipped to the same lab.
5. Label samples the same as you do your routine water samples noting time of collection on the container.
6. On the RFA, document the recommended dilution as a sample volume for laboratory use. Examples: 1 mL, 10mL, 25mL, 50mL, or 100mL. Avoid using ratios or percentages.
7. Always include field conductivity on the RFA.
8. *E. coli* samples shipped to Houston Lab on Wednesday must arrive no later than Thursday. Only ship samples Monday through Wednesday. If necessary, ship to LCRA on Thursday or Friday and only by prearrangement.
9. For lab duplicates, provide one 290 mL container at the same time you submit field splits for other parameters. This will serve as your sample AND the lab duplicate. These are used for lab purposes only and splits or field blanks are not required for bacteria. Preferably collect duplicates where bacteria hits have occurred in the past.

Enterococci

There is no extension of holding times for Enterococci. Therefore, regions needing this analysis must contract with local labs that are NELAC accredited.

Procedures:

1. Always use the appropriate IDEXX bottle, not Whirlpaks.
2. To facilitate tracking quality assurance information, SWQM staff must begin using sample bottles (both 100 and 290 mL) acquired only from Central Supply.
3. Fill containers to the top (not the 100 or 250 mL line), leaving sufficient headspace for air and shaking. This is to provide ample volume for the lab to process the sample. They will decant to the appropriate volume prior to adding reagent.
4. Label samples the same as you do your routine water samples noting time of collection.
5. Submit to contract lab within six hours of sampling.
6. Enter data in SWQMIS as “Accredited” once reported from contract lab.
7. Splits or field blanks are not required for bacteria and duplicates are not necessary unless the lab requests them.
8. If you are collecting and analyzing samples in your region for screening purposes, continue to maintain your bacteria logs and enter the data in SWQMIS as “Non- Accredited”.