

CITY OF HOUSTON
Department of Health & Human Services
Bureau of Laboratory Services

North Environmental Laboratory
1828 Rankin Road
Houston, Texas 77073
281.233.2563

Water & Dairy Laboratory
1115 S. Braeswood
Houston, TX 77030
713.558.3474

www.houstonhealth.org

**COLLECTION OF DRINKING WATER SAMPLES
AND TREATMENT OF WELLS**

Water Samples

The North Environmental Lab and the Water & Dairy Lab accept and test samples of well water intended for human consumption. These samples must be submitted in sterile treated bottles supplied by the City of Houston Health Department, Harris County Health Department, the Texas Department of Health, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), or your local health authority.

Water samples are accepted from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday.

Water samples are not accepted on Saturdays, Sundays, or holidays. Samples received on these days, and samples more than **30 hours** old when received will not be tested. We do not recommend that samples be mailed to the lab. Samples that are submitted by mail may not arrive within the **30 hour** time limit or during the Monday - Friday work week. Mailed samples are also likely to break or leak in transit.

Water is tested for the presence of coliform bacteria only. The fee for water testing is \$8.00 per bottle. Payment by **check or money order only** must accompany the sample. No cash will be accepted.

Collecting the Water Sample

Select a cold water faucet. Remove any screen or other attachment to the faucet, and let the water run for 3 to 5 minutes. Remove the cap from the sample bottle without touching the inside of the cap or the bottle. Fill the bottle above the 100 ml mark within 1/4 inch of the top. Samples with less than 100 mls of water will not be tested. Do not rinse out or overflow the bottle; it contains a chemical used to neutralize chlorine. Replace the cap carefully and tighten. If the sample has excessive chlorine, it is not suitable for analysis. Another sample and an additional \$8.00 will have to be submitted.

Deliver the sample and form to the laboratory the same day it is collected or refrigerate and deliver it the next day, within **30 hours** of the time of collection.

Fill out the laboratory form, giving complete return address, phone number, county, date, time of collection, and other information requested; print this information using **black** waterproof ink. A separate form must be filled out for **each** sample bottle.

Public systems required to submit water sample(s) monthly must indicate their TCEQ issued **water system identification number** and sample type (distribution, raw, etc.) in the proper place in the form. This ensures the system will be credited with the sample by the TCEQ.

Laboratory Reports

We cannot telephone all test results to you; however we will attempt to contact you if your sample is unsatisfactory or was found to have coliform organisms. You may call the laboratory where you submitted your sample for your results.

Reports are mailed to the address you write on the form. You should receive your report within 5 to 7 days. If your report does not arrive within 2 weeks, please contact the laboratory where you submitted your sample.

To locate a report we must have:

- (1) The sample number that was given to you when the sample was submitted.
- or
- (2) The date the sample was submitted AND
- (3) The name of the return addressee exactly the way it was written on the form.

North Lab (Rankin Rd) 281.233.2563 Water & Dairy Lab (Braeswood) 713.558.3474

Interpretation of Results

If coliform organisms are **not found**, the water is bacteriologically safe to use at the time of sampling. If "total" coliforms organisms are **found**, the sample contains bacteria commonly found in runoff or surface water. If E. coli organisms are found, the sample contains bacteria commonly found in sewage, which could include other disease producing bacteria. Any water well found to have coliform organisms should be disinfected according to the directions below or treated by a well service company. Water in which either total coliforms or E. coli is found should not be used for drinking, bathing, brushing teeth, cleaning wounds, or washing food which is to be eaten raw. It is advisable to use bottled water until the water supply is reported to be safe to use. However, contaminated water may be boiled for a minimum of 5 minutes before use.

For questions concerning "Repeat" sampling for public systems receiving a coliform positive report, please contact the TCEQ @ 512.239.4691

For further information, call the **TCEQ @ 512.239.4691** or Harris **County Public Health and Environmental Services @ 713.439.6260**.

For inquiries about water supplied by the City of Houston, call **Public Works & Engineering, Water Quality @ 713.842.4000**.