TO: Environmental Health Services Personnel, County Health Officers and Sanitarians
FROM: David K. Heydinger, M.D.,
       Director of Health
DATE: March 1, 1988
SUBJECT: GUIDELINES FOR CHEMICAL ASSAYS OF WATER AND OTHER SAMPLES SUBMITTED TO THE OFFICE OF LABORATORY SERVICES (DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY SERVICES)

The increased analytical workload placed upon the Office of Laboratory Services by the amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1986, necessitates careful screening of all requests for chemical assays or other laboratory analyses which are non-regulatory in nature.

Please be reminded that the main function of the Division of Environmental Laboratory Services is to analyze samples from public water supplies for primary (health related) contaminants which are currently regulated.

Effective immediately the following guidelines apply:

1. Water samples taken from individual (homeowner) water systems will no longer be analyzed unless a potential or actual public health concern exists. Authorized samples must be submitted by or through a county or state health department official. Such sample submissions must be accompanied by a written investigative report from the official which includes a description of the suspected or actual problem and the specific contaminant(s) (if known) to be assayed.

2. Asbestos samples (other than water for public supplies), formaldehyde samples from the indoor air program, paint chips for lead assays, primarily from county health departments, and food and beverage samples from county sanitarians, will no longer be accepted by the laboratory unless they are highly suspect of a potential public health concern or illness has been determined relating to the contaminant.

3. Many private laboratories, in and out of state, are available for environmental assays of complex samples. For example, water conditioning companies have analytical services in connection with their treatment for home type water installations. Citizens' requests for that
type of sampling and analysis should be referred to these companies. The Office of Laboratory Services will assist you in supplying information and referral on certified laboratories that may be contacted for environmental assay work.

4. Quality assurance, quality control, proper sampling and preservation of specimens, chain of custody, collection, and container to be used, are all essential requirements if an analytical report is to have scientific value. Therefore, sampling must follow criteria established by the laboratory. Samples not meeting the preceeding requirements will be rejected for analysis.

Since rigid screening practices of non-regulatory samples must prevail, to give all possible assistance and to provide answers to your questions, before submitting samples, contact Mr. James E. Rosencrance, Director, Division of Environmental Laboratory Services, 151 11th Avenue, South Charleston, WV 25303 or call him at telephone numbers 348-0197/348-2782.

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