



## N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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### **State: new computer application will help small labs report drinking water data quicker, cheaper**

**RALEIGH** – A new computer application developed by state officials will enable small laboratories in North Carolina to report federally-required data on drinking water faster and cheaper.

To protect public health, laboratories are required by the federal Safe Drinking Water Act to report to state officials data gathered about bacteriological samples taken from public water supplies. Until now, many small laboratories had to report their data in writing and submit it to the state because computer data management systems were too expensive.

To help these small labs, the state departments of Environment and Natural Resources and Health and Human Services developed the Lab Data Submittal software. The web-based system enables small labs to enter their sampling data electronically and manage that data themselves. The result is improved speed, accuracy and reduced costs for the state and the small private laboratories, said Jessica Godreau, chief of the public water supply section in the N.C. Division of Water Resources.

“We believe this will be a useful tool for labs, and indeed several labs participated in user testing and recommended enhancements to make it more useful,” Godreau said.

All labs will be required to report the results from bacteriological samples using the new, web-based software for samples collected starting Oct. 1. Reporting in October for samples taken in September can still be on paper. Staff with the state Division of Water Resources will work with labs that can demonstrate why they need more time to comply on a case-by-case basis.

Many large laboratories already use database management systems, but the systems were too expensive for most smaller labs. Creating one database system to handle all the results from laboratories statewide seemed the best way to help all labs simultaneously, Godreau said.

The N.C. Division of Water Resources managed the software design and development while the State Laboratory of Public Health Environmental Sciences Certification Office at the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services provided review and feedback and assisted with training efforts. The software involves no added programming costs and is provided by the state public water supply section for free.

As the regulating entity, the state lab sent out the notification letters to inform customers of the change.

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