



New Mexico Environment Department

SCIENCE | INNOVATION | COLLABORATION | COMPLIANCE

Compliance sample collection and COVID-19: What Public Water Systems Need to Know

April 15, 2020

To ensure that all Public Water Systems (PWS) provide safe drinking water to their customers, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) advises all PWSs continue the collection of all compliance samples.

PWSs have a heightened responsibility to protect public health because unsafe drinking water can lead to serious illnesses and access to clean water for drinking and handwashing is critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has heightened expectations for public water systems. The EPA and NMED expect operators of such systems to continue normal operations and maintenance, including required sampling, to ensure the safety of our drinking water supplies. The EPA and NMED expect laboratories performing analysis for water systems to continue to provide timely analysis of samples and results.

In the event of worker shortages, the EPA and NMED will consider continued operation of drinking water systems to be the highest priority. In anticipation of possible worker shortages and laboratory capacity problems, the EPA considers the following tiers of compliance monitoring to assure the safety of our drinking water supplies and prioritize prevention of acute risks. Of highest priority is monitoring required under National Primary Drinking Water Regulations to protect against microbial pathogens. Additional priorities include nitrate/nitrite and Lead and Copper Rule monitoring, followed by contaminants for which the system has been non-compliant.

If you are a public water system regulated by NMED Drinking Water Bureau (DWB), you should:

- Continue to collect all drinking water compliance samples while adhering to Department of Health recommendations for social distancing, hand-washing and other measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect your staff.
- If your PWS experiences a worker shortage, notify the DWB and prioritize sampling for total coliform, lead and copper, nitrate/nitrite, and any contaminants for your water system that may have had issues of non-compliance.
- Continue to allow DWB samplers to access water system sample points, while also encouraging social distancing and limiting direct contact as much as possible.
- Verify that access to sample sites listed in the water system Distribution Sample Siting Plan (DSSP) are not impacted by the COVID-19 public health order restrictions.
- Specifically, regarding Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) samples:
 - If you are unable to collect a sample from a current sample site due to accessibility resulting from COVID-19, move on to another available sample site listed in your DSSP.
 - If available sample sites are not representative of your distribution system, temporarily update your sampling sites as necessary. Identify the sampling sites currently unavailable and identify possible alternative sampling sites. Submit sample site updates to your NMED compliance officer.

If you have any comments, questions, or concerns, please contact us:

NMED DWB

drinking.water@state.nm.us

RTCR Rule Administrator

NMENV-rtcr@state.nm.us

Additional resources:

[Centers for Disease Control & Prevention](#)

New Mexico Department of Health:

<http://cv.nmhealth.org/>

Additional information may be found online at https://www.env.nm.gov/drinking_water/.

New Mexico Environment Department 1190 St. Francis Drive, Santa Fe, NM 87505

800-219-6157 <https://www.env.nm.gov/>