

**South Coast Air Quality Management District**

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**Laboratory Approval Program**

**Application Guidelines**

**November 2015**

**Direct Inquiries to:**

**Laboratory Approval Program Coordinator  
Monitoring and Analysis (M&A)  
South Coast Air Quality Management District  
21865 Copley Drive  
Diamond Bar, CA 91765-4182  
Phone: (909) 396-2271**

## Laboratory Approval Program

### INTRODUCTION

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) has established and administers a method-based Laboratory Approval Program for firms that perform source compliance services. The program functions to approve laboratories based on evaluation of their technical qualifications and competence to conduct tests in accordance with District-approved methods and requirements. Test firms that perform ambient monitoring-, emission measurement, laboratory analysis, product certification, or other tests that determine source compliance with District rules and regulations, are subject to the requirements of this program.

A test firm approved by the District under this program will have been judged to have the necessary personnel, equipment, and experience to conduct specific tests/analyses. The firm is reviewed annually and is subject to periodic District audits. The District reserves the right to review the data or results derived by these firms to produce a specific test report and to approve or deny approval based on this review. Laboratory approval does not guarantee certification of laboratory performance or product test data; it is a finding of laboratory competence.

The District has prepared method-specific laboratory/test firm approved guidelines for the most frequently used test methods. Under this program, the District intends to approve firms on a method-by-method basis. As the District's need for independent testing expands, guidelines for additional testing methods will be prepared. For methods without existing approval guidelines, the test firm will be required to comply with requirements outlined in the "Description of Process" section of this information package. General performance levels as a laboratory/test firm, at a minimum equivalent to that available in public sector laboratories, may also be required. A detailed description of administrative, operational, and technical requirements is found in the separate document, entitled *Laboratory Approval Program: Administrative, Operational, and Technical Requirements*, which accompanies these guidelines. It should be made readily accessible to laboratory personnel.

### OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the Laboratory Approval Program is to ensure that source operators use capable independent laboratory/test firms to fulfill the District's testing/analysis requirements.

The purpose of the program is to identify and expand a large pool of sources for testing and analysis services which can perform high quality and consistent analyses and/or testing that will satisfy District rules and permit needs.

By privatizing the testing/analysis function, this program provides an alternative to public sector testing and allows regulated emission sources to choose private firms to perform compliance functions required by applicable rules, regulations and permits. These functions, however, remain subject to District oversight.

## **WHAT APPROVAL MEANS**

Approval will be granted only after a thorough evaluation of the application has determined that all criteria have been met. When approval is granted, the District will issue a letter of approval which contains the scope of the approval.

Approval recognizes a testing laboratory's competence to perform specific test methods required by District rules. It means that the laboratory's staff, firms and equipment, calibration procedures, test methods and procedures, records, and test reports, have been evaluated and found to meet District criteria. These firms are encouraged to announce their approved status in reports, on stationary and in trade journals. However, they must not imply product certification or District endorsement.

Approval is given to a specific laboratory/testing firm based on all factors listed in Section 2.0 of the Appendix, and especially these three criteria: (1) the firm's prior experience/performance; (2) the specific instrument(s) available; and (3) the responsible chemists/testing personnel conducting the analyses and tests. The AQMD does not guarantee that an approved test firm will perform every test properly or that the data derived by the approved firm will be automatically accepted by the District without review/audit. The laboratory/testing firm's approved signatory is required to approve and sign all analytical testing compliance reports and submit a copy to the District.

The District will establish and maintain a list of approved firms, by method, and update it continuously. Source operators are encouraged to inquire into the current District approval status of specific testing firms. The District will provide the most up-to-date list of approved laboratory/testing firms upon request to the program administrator.

## **FEES**

The Laboratory Approval Program is self-funding. All costs incurred by the District will be recovered at the labor rate based on the fees specified in District Rules 304 and/or 304.1. Depending on the degree of review required, additional work, including firm inspection, may be required at an additional cost per method. Travel costs for inspection of out-of-basin sites will also be recovered. These costs will conform to standards of travel by government employees and will be prorated among several applicants whenever possible. Applicants may be required to perform audit testing, for which there is an additional fee.

All laboratory/testing firm approvals will be reviewed annually by the District which will impose an annual renewal fee per method to support the continued operations of this program and to conduct audits. Please refer to LAP current fee schedule form.

## DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS

The test firm is required to submit the specified applications to the District along with a payment to cover the basic fee per test method, payable to SCAQMD Laboratory Approval Program. The applicant may, and is encouraged to, apply for more than one method at a time, using separate forms. Currently approved District methods and protocols will be provided with the method-specific application forms.

After receiving the application, the District will send out an acknowledgment letter with processing identification numbers assigned for future correspondence. The District will then process the request for approval as follows:

1. Review the application for minimum requirements for approval; if approved, the District will issue an approval letter.
2. If additional information is needed, the District will send a letter requesting specific information and, when received, proceed with the review.
3. If the firm application is not approved, a denial letter will be issued.
4. If a firm inspection is deemed necessary, a letter will be sent informing the applicant of the cost, which will not exceed an amount per LAP fee schedule per method. If the applicant wishes to proceed, a time for a site visit will be arranged. No payment is due at that time because the final cost cannot be determined until after the inspection. An on-site firm inspection may reveal one or more correctable deficiencies. The firm will be notified in writing and given reasonable time to correct the deficiencies. If the firm meets minimal acceptance criteria, an approval letter will be issued.
5. If the firm is not acceptable, a denial letter will be sent.
6. If an audit sample is deemed essential, then the applicant will be informed of the costs per method. Specific approval criteria and conditions for disapproval will be sent. These criteria will apply to all personnel that the test firm uses in the performance and supervision of a specific test method/analysis in the future. The test firm may request additional performance audits for new personnel at an additional fee. If results are found to be acceptable, an approval letter will be issued.

7. If satisfactory performance has not been demonstrated, the District may:
  - a) report correctable deficiencies. If the applicant chooses to proceed, it is given reasonable time to correct those deficiencies and undergo a second audit; OR
  - b) send a denial letter if applicant chooses not to proceed.
8. After approval has been given, the District, at its discretion, may require additional audit sample analyses. No additional costs will be charged to the applicant for sample preparation by the District. Failure to perform acceptably on these analyses may result in suspension or revocation of approval.

The District may approve or deny an application at the end of any of these steps, depending upon whether or not the applicant has clearly demonstrated the ability to perform tests according to the requirements of a specific method. At any point in this process, the applicant may withdraw the application and not proceed further without prejudice. However, this will constitute an official denial of the application and the applicant will be responsible for payment of fees incurred before application withdrawal.

In all cases, test firms that have been approved must immediately notify the LAP Coordinator in writing of any changes in procedures, personnel, equipment, policies, etc., which may change the conditions of the original approval. Approved firms may be re-inspected or re-audited at no additional cost to the laboratory/testing firm if the visit or test is initiated by the District. The District reserves the right to suspend or revoke approved status if any audit results prove to be unacceptable, or if the firm uses unqualified personnel to perform source tests or analyses.

If an approval is suspended, denied, or revoked, the laboratory/test firm may appeal this decision within 30 days to the District's Laboratory/Test Firm Approval Appeals Committee, specifying in writing the reason(s) for the appeal. The SCAQMD Director of Monitoring & Analysis will respond in writing within 30 days from receipt of the appeal. The appeals committee consists of the Director of Monitoring & Analysis, the Public Advisor, and a member of the SCAQMD Legal Counsel staff.

Prior to the annual review/re-approval process, the District will send a questionnaire to the approved firm to determine if there have been any changes to the original conditions or staffing.

## **HOW TO APPLY**

If you wish to participate in the Laboratory Approval Program, please complete the application form contained within this information package.

When the application and attachments are complete, send the entire package to the District as follows:

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