



LQAP

NEWS

AIHA

July 2006 Issue

A Waking Giant

By Frank Renshaw, PhD, CIH, CSP
AIHA President

AIHA originally became involved with laboratory accreditation in 1974, with the launch of the Industrial Hygiene Laboratory Accreditation Program. More than 30 years later, our association remains committed to providing all industrial hygienists access to science-based information and services, and that includes laboratories whose practices ensure quality data—in short, laboratories that conform with the quality assurance policies of AIHA's accreditation process.

AIHA has a great deal to offer as an association—networking among our volunteers, the excellence of our educational events, the cutting-edge information in our publications. But our Laboratory Quality Assurance Programs (LQAP) really differentiate us from other occupational and environmental health and safety organizations. None of our sister associations have invested to this extent in ensuring that sound data are available to back up our members' exposure assessments and professional judgments, which are critical to worker health and safety.

In many ways, LQAP is a waking giant, a constant source and reminder to business leaders and the public of how truly important laboratory quality assurance is. We at AIHA are committed to validating and supporting laboratories that are providing key analytical services to the OEHS community. Without your efforts, AIHA's members could not do their jobs. And we hope our accreditation programs are equally valuable in providing a competitive advantage to you, our customers.

Expansion and Improvement

In the past three years, AIHA has reorganized the laboratory quality assurance department and added three new positions, to ensure that we had the right people in the right positions to expedite accreditation applications. We have upgraded our data management system and are continuing to enhance our capability in this aspect of our operations. We entered into a Mutual Recognition Arrangement with the National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation (NACLA) and have worked to fulfill all the requirements that came with it. And now we will be seeking international recognition through the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC), which will enhance our customers' access to international markets.

You will see AIHA's continued commitment to LQAP as we move forward. The new data management system will launch this year, streamlining and simplifying all of the accreditation and proficiency testing procedures undertaken by LQAP staff and volunteers. We will continue to strengthen relationships with regulatory agencies whose decisions impact our customers, such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy. And with the leadership of the AAB, we will strategically expand LQAP's services to maintain a thriving and sustainable program.

Getting It Right

The laboratories involved with LQAP know something that AIHA's members also know: When you're dealing with human health and the environment, it has to be right. Thank you for your dedication to laboratory quality assurance. With your continued support we will get the right results for you as customers, for our members and for all who benefit from the practice of industrial hygiene and the related OEHS professions.

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CareerAdvantage Now Accepting Internship Postings

CareerAdvantage, AIHA's employment portal, now includes internship postings. The cost is \$75, a significant discount over normal employment posting rates. If your laboratory actively seeks interns for work during the summer or the school year, this resource may help you broaden your search.

CareerAdvantage offers a number of resources for employers seeking interns and more experienced professionals:

- **Résumé Database** — Employers can search a listing of qualified job seekers.
- **Auto Notification** — Job and employee seekers receive employment matches via e-mail.
- **Job Activity Tracking** — Reports are provided to employers and recruiters detailing the number of individuals that have viewed a job listing or applied online and how many times a job was sent out through the "job agent" or "e-mail to a friend" features.

CareerAdvantage is open to AIHA members and nonmembers. For more information, visit www.aiha.org and click on "Employment Services" or contact Wanda Barbour, AIHA's manager of career and employment services, at (703) 846-0782 or wbarbour@aiha.org.

LQAP Participation at AIHce

This year's AIHce in Chicago presented LQAP staff and volunteers with numerous opportunities to discuss important issues, learn about accreditation programs, and celebrate LQAP achievements:

AAB Meeting. The Analytical Accreditation Board (AAB) met on May 13 to discuss critical issues, including plans for international recognition and work under way by the newly-established task forces (see related article on p. 3). Representatives from the Beryllium Health and Safety Committee also attended the meeting to give a presentation on their planned efforts to produce a beryllium oxide sample for proficiency testing and their interest in an accreditation program for field sampling and analysis of beryllium.

Exhibit Booths. An updated LQAP exhibit booth was on display in the AIHce Expo on May 15–17. LQAP staff were available to answer questions about accreditation and PAT programs. More than 30 AIHA-accredited laboratories also had information booths on display; each was visited by LQAP staff, who solicited feedback on AIHA programs. Staff also distributed applications for the AAB and Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to all interested parties.

Accreditation Course. AIHA's Chief Site Assessor Ronald Peters conducted a one-day Laboratory Accreditation Course on May 15 that focused on the process for receiving AIHA accreditation and the requirements of the new ISO 17025:2005 standard. Fifteen people attended the course, which received high marks from participants.

LQAP Reception. LQAP hosted a reception on May 15 for LQAP volunteers, site assessors, and others from the laboratory community. AAB Chair David Kahane recognized the achievements of past AAB Chairs Larry Pierce and Kim Ruthe and presented an award to AAB Board Coordinator Don Hart. Kahane also presented the Evan Campbell Award for LQAP Site Assessor of the Year to Ronald Peters.

AIHA Volunteer Reception. LQAP volunteers also participated in AIHA's Volunteer Recognition Reception on May 16. AIHA President Roy Buchan presented two LQAP volunteers with special recognition awards:

- Harriotte A. Hurley Award for LQAP AAB Member of the Year: Christine J. Powell
- Newton Whitman Award for Laboratory Quality Assurance Programs Reviewer of the Year: Derek J. Popp

Congratulations to this year's award winners!

Additional Site Assessors Sought

AIHA employs the services of expert site assessors to visit laboratories and conduct site assessments for LQAP.

AIHA is seeking applications from those persons with laboratory backgrounds and expertise in industrial hygiene, environmental lead, or environmental microbiology that may be interested in serving as site assessors. All qualified candidates, who ideally should also be experienced or trained in ISO/IEC 17025:1999 (and 17025:2005) and/or quality management systems, will be interviewed by the AIHA executive director and LQAP director.

If selected, all new site assessors will be required to attend a two-day orientation session in February 2007. New assessors will also be required to observe at least two AIHA site assessments. A stipend is paid to each site assessor per lab visited.

For more information, please contact LQAP Director Cheryl O. Morton at (703) 846-0789 or cmorton@aiha.org.

AIHA Comments on EPA's Proposed Lead Rules

AIHA submitted comments on a proposed rule on EPA's Lead Renovation, Repair, and Painting Program on May 25, 2006. AIHA expressed its goal of maintaining the competency and quality that AIHA-accredited lead labs now bring to the National Lead Laboratory Accreditation Program (NLLAP). AIHA also identified those provisions of the proposed rule that are in conflict with these goals.

AIHA commented that the performance standards proposed when using lead-based paint chemical test kits are not and may never be achievable with the spot testing chemistries under consideration. AIHA recommended that paint testing should only be performed by entities recognized by EPA as having demonstrated conformance with documents such as the NLLAP Laboratory Quality System Requirements (LQSR). In addition, AIHA stated that any sampling and the interpretation of paint testing results should be performed by persons not associated with conducting the renovation who have been trained and certified to do such interpretations.

For more information about AIHA's comments, contact Cheryl O. Morton at (703) 846-0789 or cmorton@aiha.org.

AAB Task Forces, Committees Move Ahead

In recent months, the Analytical Accreditation Board (AAB) has established three task forces to focus on areas of importance to the future of LQAP. These task forces reported on their progress during the AAB meeting at AIHce in Chicago.

A brief summary of each task force's activities to date is provided below.

Proficiency Testing Task Force. This group has met several times over the last several months. They have started looking at the findings of the internal audit of proficiency testing programs conducted by LQAP in November 2005 using ILAC Guide 13 requirements. (See the January/February 2006 issue of *LQAP News* for more information.) The task force is looking at deficiencies uncovered by the audit as well as potential policy revision suggestions to forward to the Policy Task Force.

Policy Task Force. The Policy Task Force has been meeting since February to revise LQAP policies where necessary to meet the NACLA requirement to fully implement ISO 17025:2005 by April 2007.

The task force is also working to revise the LQAP advertising policy, and to make other basic revisions to all LQAP policy documents to clarify language and simplify where necessary to enhance understanding.

Field and Mobile Operations Task Force. This task force is in the process of developing procedures for accreditation of mobile and field laboratories.

In addition to these task forces, the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) Appointment Committee and the AAB Nominating Committee are in the midst of reviewing applications for TAP and AAB, respectively. Nominations to TAP will be made this fall, as will an announcement of new AAB members.

For more information on any of these task forces or committees, contact LQAP Director Cheryl O. Morton at (703) 846-0789 or cmorton@aiha.org.

Implementing the ISO 17025:2005 Standard

Over the past year, several articles have appeared in *LQAP News* about the revised ISO/IEC 17025 standard that was published May 15, 2005. As Steve Lerman explained in the March 2006 edition, new language was added to the standard that deals with effective communication and continual improvement of laboratories' management systems.

The National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation (NACLA), the organization that recognizes AIHA as an accreditation body, has established a two-year transition period for the implementation to ISO/IEC 17025:2005 to be consistent with its international counterparts. As such, AIHA has taken or will be taking the following actions to implement the new standard by May 2007:

- In May 2006, AIHA purchased and distributed copies of the new standard to all LQAP site assessors and volunteers. We strongly encouraged all AIHA accredited laboratories to also obtain a copy of ISO/IEC 17025:2005 as soon as possible.
- By January 15, 2007, AIHA will post the revised Accreditation Policy modules (that will include changes required by the new standard) that will become effective April 1, 2007.
- In February 2007, AIHA site assessors will receive additional training on the new standard with a focus on conducting site assessments against the new requirements.
- Effective April 1, 2007, AIHA site assessors will begin performing site assessments using ISO/IEC 17025:2005. All laboratories seeking AIHA accreditation and re-accreditation will have to be prepared to demonstrate compliance with the new standard and provide documentation as such during site assessments. Between April 1, 2007, and October 1, 2007, AIHA will institute a six-month transition period during which deficiencies against the new requirements would be considered a gap to be addressed immediately and corrected no later than October 1, 2007. After October 1, 2007, any noncompliance with the new requirements will be considered a deficiency that could impact a laboratory's ability to receive or renew accreditation.

Until April 1, 2007, all laboratories seeking accreditation and re-accreditation will be assessed using to the 1999 version.

For more information, please contact LQAP Quality Systems Manager Pete Dragasakis at (703) 846-0799 or pdragasakis@aiha.org.

Recent NACLA Developments and AIHA's Position

AIHA has received numerous calls from laboratory customers about the withdrawal of the National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) from the National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation (NACLA). On March 9, 2006, NVLAP informed NACLA of their plans to withdraw from the NACLA Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA), citing redundancy in its participation in NACLA and international recognition bodies and a lack of interest in NACLA by its accredited laboratories.

NACLA officials believe that NVLAP's action creates confusion in the laboratory community, particularly since NVLAP will no longer accept calibration data from accreditation bodies that are not recognized internationally.

Currently, NACLA is not an internationally-recognized organization but its strategic goal is to be a "one-stop shop for national and global recognition for all U.S. accreditation bodies and their laboratories." Since AIHA does not accredit labs for calibration, AIHA-accredited laboratories are not expected to be significantly impacted by NVLAP's actions. As a member of NACLA and one of the six accreditation bodies currently recognized under the NACLA MRA, AIHA supports NACLA's strategic goals and its current efforts to get NVLAP to reverse their decision.

Over the next year, AIHA will be pursuing an AIHA board directive to achieve international recognition on its own through the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC). For more information, please go to www.nacla.net or contact LQAP Director Cheryl O. Morton at (703) 846-0789 or cmorton@aiha.org.

Attention All PT Participants: Change to IHPAT and ELPAT Retest Procedures

AIHA will be changing its procedures for the ordering and processing of Industrial Hygiene Proficiency Analytical Testing (IHPAT) and Environmental Lead Proficiency Analytical Testing (ELPAT) Program retest samples beginning with IHPAT 166 Retest and ELPAT 56 Retest. To more efficiently process these retests, AIHA will be instituting an enrollment period for IHPAT and ELPAT retests similar to what is currently done in the Environmental Microbiology Proficiency Analytical Testing (EMPAT) and Asbestos Analysts Testing (AAT) Programs. This change will ensure that all labs have an equal chance to order retests and that all labs are given the same period of time to analyze them and report the results.

This new procedure requires labs to check their PT results in a timely manner and promptly order retests. In addition, accredited labs should note that failure to order retests by the retest order deadline will result in immediate suspension for nonproficient status. Accredited labs ordering the retest will not be suspended until the results of the retest round are determined (and then only if the retest does not re-establish their proficient status).

The revised retest procedure is as follows:

1. Results will post to the PAT Portal for IHPAT and ELPAT 10 business days after the close of the round.
2. Enrollment for the retest will open the day that the results post and remain open for 10 business days.
3. Five business days following the close of the enrollment period, retest samples will be sent via U.S. postal mail to all enrolled laboratories.
4. Results for the retest must be submitted to AIHA within 20 business days of the date the sample was sent.
5. Retest results will be sent to the laboratory within 10 business days of their submission of results.

The schedule list of deadline dates, including the ordering deadline and retest round close dates, will be kept online at the AIHA website on the IHPAT and ELPAT pages.

Helpful Accreditation Hints

Save yourself some money. Submitting applications can be a challenge. Save yourself both money and frustration with one simple hint: Forget the fancy professional binders! Instead, neatly stack and keep separate each application and QA Manual, then secure them with a simple black binder clip or rubber band. It saves you time and money and helps us to process your application faster.

Prepare for your site visit before the site visit. Would you like to know what the site assessor is checking for during your on-site audit? By submitting a receipt of purchase or signed affidavit proving the legal acquisition of the ISO/IEC 17025 standard, laboratories can request a copy of the Site Assessor Checklist. This checklist is the same document the AIHA site assessor will use during their visit to your laboratory.

Know your technical manager and QAC. For an accredited laboratory, these two positions are instrumental and can affect how quickly a lab moves through the accreditation process. Familiarize yourself with AIHA Policy Module 2A.5 and ensure that your technical manager and quality assurance coordinator possess the qualifications outlined therein. If your lab staff experienced turnover since the last assessment, let us know with a Personnel Change request. You'll be glad you did. Contact an LQAP accreditation specialist for assistance.

Who are you, and where are you? LQAP staff occasionally receive mail marked "Return to Sender." This occurs if a lab has moved, changed owners, or even just shifted to a different suite in the same building. If your lab is not receiving its PT samples, the newsletter, or general correspondence, please contact us to verify your address and contact personnel.

Mark Your Calendars

Keep the following deadlines in mind, and in your calendar, for 2006:

Industrial Hygiene Proficiency Analytical Testing Program Enrollment Deadlines

September 1, 2006 (Round 167)
December 1, 2006 (Round 168)

Bulk Asbestos Proficiency Analytical Testing Program Enrollment Deadlines

July 25, 2006 (Round 68)
October 15, 2006 (Round 69)

Beryllium Proficiency Analytical Testing Program Enrollment Deadlines

October 1, 2006 (Round 12)

Environmental Lead Proficiency Analytical Testing Program Enrollment Deadlines

July 15, 2006 (Round 56)
October 15, 2006 (Round 57)

Environmental Lead-Air Proficiency Analytical Testing Program Enrollment Deadlines

September 1, 2006 (Round 57)
December 1, 2006 (Round 58)

Environmental Microbiology-Culturable Proficiency Analytical Testing Program Enrollment Deadlines

September 15, 2006 (Round 31)
January 15, 2007 (Round 32)

Environmental Microbiology-Direct Exam Proficiency Analytical Testing Program Enrollment Deadlines

September 15, 2006 (Round 8)
December 15, 2006 (Round 9)

Environmental Microbiology-Culturable and Direct Exam Combinations Proficiency Analytical Testing Program Enrollment Deadlines

September 15, 2006 (Rounds 31 and 8)
December 15, 2006 (Rounds 32 and 9)

Asbestos Analysts Registry Enrollment Deadlines

August 18, 2006 (Round 79)
November 17, 2006 (Round 80)