Memo

To: Customers of the NC State Laboratory of Public Health

From: Scott Shone, PhD, HCLD (ABB), Director, State Laboratory of Public Health

Date: April 9, 2020

Re: State courier reduced operational schedule and sample/specimen storage guidelines

Please be advised that due to COVID-19, the State Courier has reduced their operational schedule and will only pick up items at remote locations, such as County Health Departments, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The State Courier will not pick up any specimens from County Health Departments on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This new schedule will begin Monday, April 13, 2020.

Please ensure that specimens and samples are stored using the proper conditions until State Courier or other transportation service is able to pick up. As a reminder, the State Courier should not be used to transport COVID-19 specimens.

The following storage guidelines should be used for specimens awaiting transport:

Bacteriological Well Water Samples
Bacteriological well water samples should be kept at room temperature and received by the laboratory within 30 hours of collection. If samples cannot be delivered within 30 hours of collection, please discard the sample and recollect.

Nitrate/Nitrite Well Water Samples
Nitrate/Nitrite well water samples should be refrigerated (2°C to 8°C) and received within 48 hours of collection.
Reference Microbiology Specimens

- *Neisseria gonorrhoea* (GC) cultures must remain incubated in CO₂ until pickup and require subculture every 48 hours. As a reminder, please do not send GC cultures on Fridays.
- *Streptococcus pneumoniae* should remain incubated in CO₂; all other *Streptococcus* specimens can be stored at room temperature. All specimens should be transported as soon as possible.
- *Bordetella* cultures on transport medium (Reagan-Lowe) and *Bordetella* PCR swabs must remain refrigerated until pickup and shipped on ice packs. Specimens must be received within 5 days of collection.
- Stool preserved in Cary Blair/enteric transport media can be kept refrigerated until pickup. If refrigeration is not available, room temperature storage is acceptable. Specimens should be transported as soon as possible.
- Sputum samples for TB testing must be refrigerated until pickup, and transported as soon as possible.
- *Legionella* culture samples must remain refrigerated until pickup, shipped on ice packs, and transported as soon as possible.
- All other clinical submissions for microbiological testing can be stored at room temperature and should be transported as soon as possible.

Virology/Serology Specimens

- Serum specimens (HIV, HAV, HBV, HCV, Rubella, syphilis, Arbovirus, *Rickettsia*) that have been separated and aliquoted must be stored refrigerated (4-7°C) and shipped on ice packs. All specimens must be received within 2 days of collection.
- CTGC swabs and urine specimens should be stored at room temperature and received within 30 days of collection.
- Rabies specimens should be refrigerated (4-7°C) and received within 3 days of collection. Alternatively, rabies specimens can be frozen (<-20°C) if shipping will be delayed >3 days from collection.
- Viral Culture (swabs, urine, aspirates) specimens should be stored refrigerated (4-7°C) and received within in 5 days of collection.

Note: swabs collected for HSV/VZV molecular testing will not be tested if received >7 days from collection. However, these specimens will be tested by culture methods.

Blood Lead Specimens

- Blood lead specimens should be kept refrigerated (4-7°C), until pickup. If refrigeration is not available, room temperature storage is acceptable. All specimens should be delivered within 28 days of collection.

*Please note, the North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health reserves the right to request recollection of specimens if needed for testing.*

We will provide additional updates as needed regarding the State Courier.

If you have **questions regarding specimen/sample storage**, please contact the NCSLPH Customer Service Line at 919-733-3937 or the NCSLPH Emergency Duty Phone at 919-807-8600.