

# Important Information about your Drinking Water

## Port of the Islands Drinking Water Plant

### SITUATION

Port of the Islands annual public drinking water sample pulled for Nitrate, and Nitrite during the 2022 calendar year was not analyzed by the lab, as required. Rule 62-550.512, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) requires *Community* water systems which utilize a ground water source, to perform Annual (once per year) monitoring for both Nitrate, and Nitrite. The lab stated "Benchmark did receive the email below requesting sample bottle kits including bottles for nitrate. The nitrate sample was not analyzed. In that period of time (June through October 2022), it is quite possible the sample was lost due to many new employees at Benchmark and too few qualified employees in the marketplace. Benchmark's operational situation at that time is described in detail in the attachment."

### HEALTH EFFECTS

*We are required to monitor your drinking water for specific contaminants on a regular basis. Results of regular monitoring are an indicator of whether or not your drinking water meets health standards. During the 2022 calendar year, we did not receive results for the annual monitoring of the contaminants of Nitrate, or Nitrite, and therefore cannot be sure of the quality of your drinking water (with respect to Nitrate, and Nitrite) during that time.*

### WHAT IS BEING DONE ?

Although the water system failed to receive results for the annual monitoring of Nitrate, and Nitrite during the 2022 calendar year, we did collect samples for these contaminants on October 28, 2021. We also collected samples on February 9, 2023. These results indicated that both concentrations were either well below the Maximum Contaminant Level or below the Laboratory's Detection Limit (i.e. not detected). The water system is also required to collect a second set of samples for Nitrate and Nitrite during the 2023 calendar year at least 90 days after the first set was collected.

### WHAT SHOULD CUSTOMERS DO?

Since the laboratory analyses results for the Nitrate, and Nitrite samples collected on both October 28, 2021 and Feb. 9, 2023, indicated that both concentrations were either well below the Maximum Contaminant Level or below the Laboratory's Detection Limit (i.e. not detected),

**CUSTOMERS/CONSUMERS OF WATER FROM THIS WATER SYSTEM NEED NOT TAKE ANY ACTION AT THIS TIME**

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

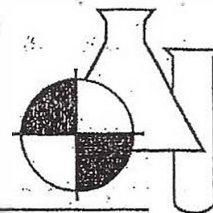
For more information please contact Mitch Gilbert at (239) 435-0951.

or contact Patty Baron from the Department of Environmental Protection at

[Patty.Baron@FloridaDEP.gov](mailto:Patty.Baron@FloridaDEP.gov).

# BENCHMARK

EnviroAnalytical, Inc.



- The following information is relative to Benchmark's current inability to meet past performance levels. Over the past 12 months Benchmark has not been able to meet expected operation levels of delivering reliable analytical results the first time, on time. The reasons for this change in operational quality are a combination of events outlined below:
1. One contributing factor is the rapid inflationary period from July 2020 to July 2022 where the mid-Florida general inflation rate went from 1.5% to 11.2% as shown in accompanying attachment #2.
  2. It is not the general inflation rate that is causing management of laboratory operations to be extremely difficult. Managing difficulty is very specifically related to a severe shortage of qualified personnel available in the marketplace. Based on my recent experience, this scarcity of available qualified lab tech personnel is driven by availability of many unfilled lab positions in clinical, biotech, and pharmaceutical areas. A significant contributing factor is a large increase in rental lease prices which prevent new potential entry level candidates from residing in the Sarasota – Bradenton area.
  3. Benchmark's 10.9% payroll increase over the past year does not begin to compare with operational costs incurred by constant lab tech turnover that has occurred in the past several months. Employee turnover that cannot be readily replaced has far reaching consequences for a state certified laboratory operation. A certified lab is expected to meet certification requirements, including mistake free operations such as logging in of samples, interchange of samples between analysts, analysis of samples withing regulated hold times, operation of automated equipment, data entry of analysis results, analytical reports, QC reports, meeting of permit deadlines. About three months are required to develop a trained analyst while departing employees usually give 2 weeks of notice. Listed operations, plus many others not listed, are opportunities for failure when there are several open lab positions along with several recent hires. Keep in mind that most laboratory reports cover many analyses and a final report is not useful for client permits until every analysis is completed.
  4. The impact of a lab being unable to report useful data within permit compliance limits causes complications for both client and laboratory owner. A client faces potential fines and a history of permit violations that are not helpful. For the owner, a chain reaction of events take place when sufficient manpower is not available to properly operate the lab according to certification requirements. The most obvious penalty is potential loss of clients, but penalties run far deeper when the required work force can't be replenished from the labor market. First, errors increase, a backlog of samples for analysis continues to build while the search for qualified job candidates continues without abatement, incoming cash flow falls for lack of finished report billing, and overdue bills are not collected in a timely fashion since available personnel are all focused entirely on front line requirements. Eventually everything struggles, including cash flow.
  5. A solution to a problem is usually constructed by identifying the root cause of the problem, which in this case is insufficient supply of qualified labor for open lab technician positions nationwide. A "Google Check" of clinical lab technician shortage provides insight to the depth of the existing problem. The only solution that I can see for maintaining a current work force requires paying compensation high enough to slow down employee turnover. I have used this approach with limited success since the main limitation is availability of technically qualified labor living within logical commuting distance.

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