

Choosing An Analytical Laboratory

Any business that generates waste must determine if it is dangerous waste through a process called designation. Your waste may need analytical testing by a laboratory (lab) to complete designation. To ensure your analytical data is useful, choose the correct analysis, sampling method, and lab. Careful planning can help avoid unnecessary costs.

For more information about designating your waste, see [Identify and Designate Dangerous Waste](#).¹

Determine the testing method(s) before choosing a lab or collecting your sample

Every lab has a list of methods they can perform. Choose a lab that conducts the method(s) you need. See [WAC 173-303-110](#) for specific testing methods. These publications may help you determine which testing methods are needed to properly designate your waste:

- [Chemical Test Methods for Designating Dangerous Waste](#)
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/summarypages/97407.html>
- [Biological Test Methods for the Designation of Dangerous Waste](#)
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/summarypages/8012.html>

Explain your purpose to the laboratory

Tell the lab the purpose of the testing is to make a Washington State dangerous waste determination. This is very important. The lab may also need information about the material being tested to make sure they can meet your analytical needs.

Ask your lab about sample collection and handling procedures. They may also provide proper containers and labels for your sample. The way you collect and store a sample before it gets to the lab affects the accuracy of the test results. The requirements vary by test method.



¹ www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/manage_waste/identify_waste.html

Questions you should ask a laboratory

Choosing the right lab is important to make sure the results you get are useable. A thorough conversation in advance will help you get what you need. It will also reduce the likelihood of extra costs for retesting or charges for services the lab did not include in the original cost estimate. Ask the following questions before selecting a lab.

■ Is the lab accredited for the test methods you need?

Accreditation is not required for dangerous waste designation testing. However, it is a good indicator the lab is capable of providing accurate, representative, comparable, complete, and defensible data. When a lab is accredited, a third party audits their procedures and determines they meet particular industry standards. Accreditation is not proof of the quality of any data.

You can use the [Lab Search database](#)² to find an accredited lab. The [All Accredited Labs by Name](#)³ list is a PDF document, updated periodically.

■ Will the lab test your samples themselves?

Sometimes labs send samples off-site for analysis. If this is the case, you will want to ask questions about the lab actually doing the analysis.

■ How long will it take to get my results?

Quoted prices are based on the lab's standard turn-around time. This is not the same for all laboratories. If you need your results more quickly, you will usually pay an added cost.

■ What information will the lab include in the report?

Sampling results must include enough information to show the data is accurate and complete. Accredited laboratories usually include the necessary information. Below is a list of what is needed.

- Description of the sample condition when received by the lab.
- Dates of sample collection, receipt, extraction, and analysis.
- Test method(s) for each set of analytical results.
- Method detection and reporting limits.
- Explanation of any data qualifiers.
- Quality assurance and quality control data.
- Copy of the completed Chain of Custody (COC).

² <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/laboratorysearch/>

³ <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/labs/documents/AllAccreditedLabListInternet.pdf>

■ **What will the lab do with the sample(s) after testing?**

You want to find out how long the lab keeps your samples after testing. If you need them kept longer, there may be an additional charge.

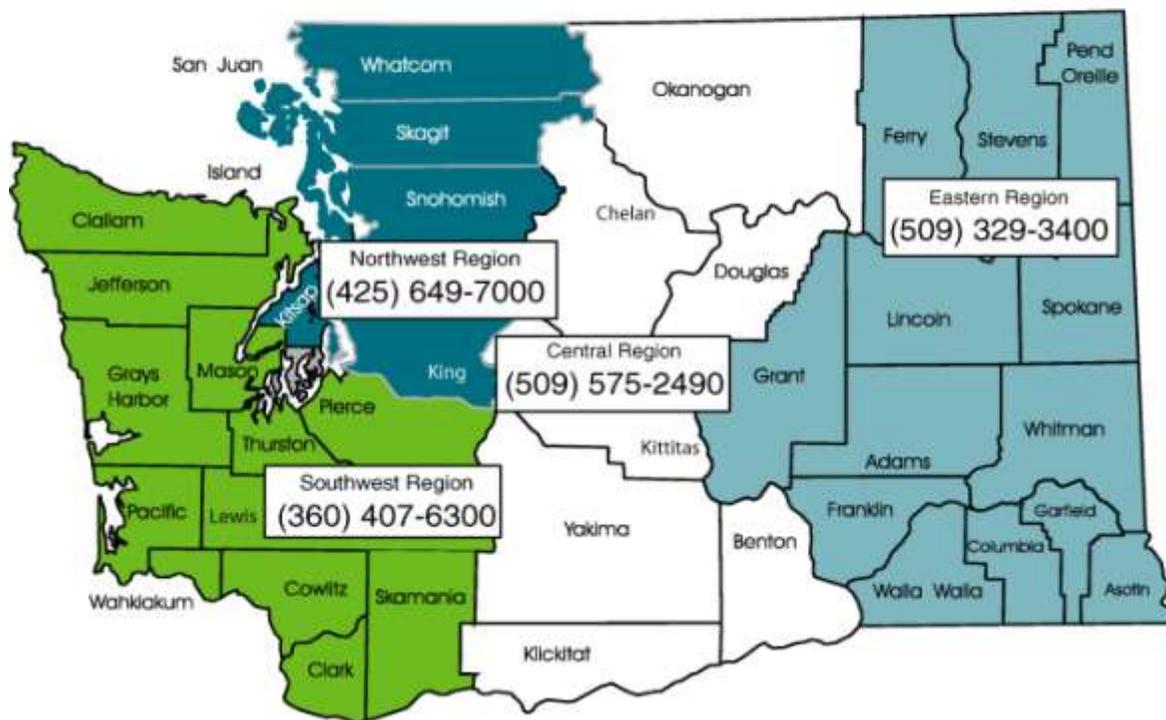
You want to ensure the lab will properly dispose of your sample. As the original generator of the waste (the sample), you can be held responsible for proper waste management.

Contact Information

If you have questions about choosing a laboratory or designating waste, please contact a dangerous waste specialist at any of Ecology’s regional offices.

Department of Ecology Regions

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr>



Accommodation Requests:

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-6700. Persons with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. Persons with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.