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DEP fines Microbac in Erie for various violations

May 1, 2014

The state Department of Environmental Protection has signed a consent order and agreement with Microbac Laboratories Inc., Erie Division, which requires the lab to pay a civil penalty of \$220,000 for various violations. The lab is also required to take actions to correct the violations.

Microbac has had a presence in Bradford over the years.

“Accredited, independent laboratories are the centerpiece upon which all environmental protection programs depend,” DEP Bureau of Laboratories director Martina McGarvey said. “Ensuring that labs are of the highest quality and integrity is crucial to the decisions we make to protect public health and the environment.”

During an on-site assessment in June 2013, DEP discovered that Microbac Erie failed to meet several standards. The lab, which was accredited under DEP’s National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program to test and analyze drinking water, non-potable water, and a variety of soils, chemicals and liquids, was found to be conducting improper sample analysis and reporting.

DEP found that the improper analysis may have led to false-negative bacteriological results for drinking water samples. DEP also found several instances of the failure to properly report positive bacteriological results in drinking water. As a result of DEP’s findings, in August 2013, Microbac Erie voluntarily relinquished its accreditations for drinking water bacteriological parameters.

DEP promptly provided notice of the violations to the laboratory’s public water system clients. The department requested that the water suppliers re-sample and analyze at least one drinking water sample as soon as possible to ensure public health would not be impacted. DEP is not aware of any waterborne illnesses reported during this time frame.

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According to the Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Act, an environmental laboratory must be accredited by DEP in order to generate data or perform analyses to be used to comply with an environmental statute.

Microbac provides testing and analytical support for a variety of clients who seek DEP permits and authorizations. The company operates other environmental divisional laboratories which the department accredits, that are not subject to this consent order and agreement.



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