

## Houston Laboratory

The Houston Laboratory is the Environmental Services Branch of US EPA, Region 6, Management Division. Its operations are supervised by a Branch Chief and a Deputy Branch Chief. The Deputy Branch Chief is also the Laboratory Manager. Other Region 6 organizational functions are collocated at the Laboratory: (1) a surveillance team (Enforcement and Compliance Assurance Division); (2) an air monitoring coordinator (Multi-media Permitting & Planning Division); and (3) on scene coordinators (Superfund Division).



The **Environmental Services Branch (ESB) Laboratory**, under the direction of the Branch Chief, provides scientific and laboratory analytical support to Region 6 programs. It provides quality assured analytical support using state-of-the-art techniques and methodology for organic, inorganic, and biological analyses. The Branch also performs technical audits of environmental monitoring laboratories and public water supply laboratories. Responsibility for overseeing accreditation of Region 6 state authorities under the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) and the Region 6 representative to the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) rests with the Branch.

Management of the Regional Contract Laboratory Program (CLP), including sample scheduling, sample routing, data verification, data validation and data usability, are responsibilities of this branch. Technical expertise is provided to the Region, as well as other Federal, State, Tribal and Local entities. Technical assistance, regarding analytical methods, is coordinated for the region through the Branch. Expert witness support is provided for both civil and criminal enforcement cases.

The Branch is comprised of four teams -- Organic Chemical Analysis (Organic Team), Inorganic Chemical Analysis (Inorganic Team), Sample Management Team and External Laboratory Oversight Team -- and a laboratory support staff. The Organic, Inorganic, and Sample Management teams are supervised by the Laboratory Manager; the External Laboratory Oversight team, the Laboratory Support staff, and the Quality Assurance Coordinator are supervised by the Branch Chief.

### **Organic Team**

The Organic Team is responsible for the analyses of volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds, pesticides, PCBs, and herbicides on a variety of matrices in support of Regional program needs. It provides technical assistance regarding organic chemical analysis and methodology. Administration of the **Regional Laboratory Information Management System (RLIMS)**, and report automation support is a responsibility of this team.

### **Inorganic Team**

The Inorganic Team provides analyses for inorganic compounds and trace metals in environmental media. Technical oversight and validation of wet chemistry data provided by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) laboratory. Technical expertise and analysis provided to programs for monitoring activities as well as for civil and criminal enforcement.

### **Sample Management Team**

The Sample Management Team is responsible for scheduling, receiving, and tracking all samples through the laboratory. **The Region 6 Sample Control Center (R6SCC)** is part of this team. Aquatic toxicology and microbiological analyses, and coordination of all sample preparatory work are a function of this team. Air Toxics analysis, the Mobile Laboratory operations, and the Special Analysis Methods Laboratory coordinated through the Sample Management team.

### **External Laboratory Oversight Team**

The External Laboratory Oversight Team performs technical oversight of the **Regional Environmental Services Assistance Team (ESAT)** and the Contract Laboratory Program (CLP) contracts. The team oversees contractor data verification and validation activities, as well as performing CLP sample scheduling and determining contractor generated data usability for client programs. The team is responsible for the CLP Regional Sample Control Center (RSCC) activities. The Regional ESAT Project Officer and the CLP Technical Project Officer are members of this team. The Team is also responsible for coordinating external laboratory technical audits, including those under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The Team serves as the Region 6 focal point for all requests for technical assistance regarding EPA analytical methods. Duties also include representing Region 6 in the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) and oversight for the Region's NELAP activities.

### **Laboratory Support Staff**

The Laboratory Support Staff tracks laboratory budgets and activities; supports computer and Local Area Network (LAN) operations and software training; and monitors facility management. Health and safety oversight and environmental compliance are part of the staff's responsibility.

The Quality Assurance Coordinator is responsible for the quality systems of the laboratory, including development and oversight of standard operating procedures, and the laboratory quality management plan.