

INCIDENT: Bacteria Found in Stafford Water
LOCATION: West Linn, Oregon
SOURCE: West Linn Tidings
DATE OF INCIDENT: 3/1/2008

"Leaders of the West Linn-Wilsonville School District were surprised twice last week. And both surprises were bad news. Just a few days after receiving word from Coffey Laboratories that water at Stafford Primary School contained coliform bacteria, the district was informed Monday that the Northeast Portland lab had its certification suspended by the state Division of Public Health. According to Mike Skeels, interim Public Health Division administrator, Coffey's certification was suspended because of alleged inaccurate test results and ineffective quality assurance measures for Coffey's testing procedures. ...Besides turning the water off at Stafford, School District Facilities Manager Pat McGough said the district already had protected itself – without knowing about Coffey's problems – because the school's current water problem is significant. Instead of having the quarterly test conducted only by Coffey, as it has done for at least the past decade, water also was sent to another lab for the proverbial "second opinion." ...Alexin Analytical Laboratories of Tigard performed the same tests and reported the same results: that coliform bacteria was found in Stafford's drinking water. The water faucets and drinking fountains at Stafford were immediately shut off, and all of the students and staff began drinking bottled water and cleaning with hand sanitizer – a scenario that started March 3 and will continue until after the spring break, McGough said Monday. ...Currently, the district can't do much about finding and fixing the source of the problem. In order to fix the source of contamination, the well water system would have to be shut down. The school would therefore not have the use of restrooms, a situation that no one could tolerate. ...This week, the district will gain approval and begin installation of the chlorination system. The rest of the work begins Saturday, he said, including installation of a new pressure tank and well pump. The Backflow devices on the irrigation system and fire pump have either been repaired or replaced.