

Choosing a Testing Laboratory

*An unknown contaminant is found in a pharmaceutical.
A patent infringement is suspected in a coatings formulation.
Product failure is causing a medical device to malfunction.*

More and more, attorneys need scientific expertise and independent laboratory testing to resolve issues involving product liability, intellectual property or personal injury. For the legal professional, choosing a lab among the thousands available today in the United States can be a daunting task.

Here are six key questions to ask before hiring a testing laboratory.

- **Does the lab have a quality system?** Today's laboratories have several options if they want to assure clients they will receive correctly performed and reproducible analysis. To meet these goals, a quality system is essential. The system should also be documented in a quality assurance/ quality control program. Outside certifications, such as ISO 9001, ensures the integrity and reliability of laboratory practices. For projects involving pharmaceuticals, ask if the lab follows cGMP/GLP, current good manufacturing and laboratory practices.
- **How experienced is the lab?** You may assess the lab's experience by the number of years in business, and also the education level of the lab's scientists. Ask how many Ph.D. level scientists are on staff, if they will directly supervise your project and if they will be accessible for questions and discussion. Legal projects are often outside the capabilities of routine labs, so you may want to inquire about the number of litigation support projects performed.
- **How does the lab handle samples?** Incoming samples should be tracked with a unique identification code and a documented chain of custody. Proper storage environments should be available, along with an option for long term sample storage.
- **How are the test results presented?** The report should contain all data from the project, including spectra and chromatograms. In addition, explanations of the data should be provided, along with conclusions. Your lab should also have the capability to store data and reports for an extended period of time.
- **Finally, is the lab willing to stand behind their work in a court of law?** Request key personnel's expert witness capabilities and experience. There are often advantages to utilizing an independent laboratory scientist as opposed to a university professor or professional consultant as an expert witness.

At Chemir Analytical Services, Ph.D. chemists supervise projects and are available and experienced as expert witnesses. We provide solutions to industrial problems in pharmaceuticals, medical devices, plastics, coatings, inks, paints, chemicals, rubbers, adhesives and consumer products. Our laboratory facility is equipped to handle cGMP and GLP projects, and we are ISO 9001 Certified. Chemir's legal experience includes providing detailed reports,

findings and opinions. Deposition and courtroom testimony are also available. With the acquisition of Industrial Testing Laboratories, we expanded our testing capabilities to include product testing, environmental analysis, metallurgical analysis and mechanical testing.

When choosing a testing lab, carefully assess the facility and personnel. Quality, experience and proper sample handling procedures are essential. The final lab report should contain not only project data, but also be clear and understandable. If necessary, laboratory personnel should be available for deposition and courtroom testimony.

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