

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



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EHS Circular Letter # 2015-27

DATE: June 22, 2015

TO: Connecticut In-State Environmental Laboratories

FROM: Dermot Jones, Environmental Laboratory Consultant
Environmental Laboratory Certification Program

RE: Policy Concerning Trip Blanks for Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)

This letter serves notice of the new policy of the Environmental Laboratory Certification Program (ELCP) with respect to the use of trip blanks when collecting VOCs samples for environmental analysis or other compliance issues. This policy is the result of discussions with the Connecticut Environmental Laboratory Advisory Committee (ELAC). The ELAC, which was established in accordance with the provisions of Section 19a-36-A63 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, has the primary function of advising the ELCP on technical issues.

Trip blanks are an important component in evaluating the exposure of samples to potential volatile organic contamination, from the time of sample collection, during transport, and until the time of receipt of samples at the laboratory. Therefore, the integrity of the trip blanks must be verified and documented to be of a known quality. Laboratories can choose one of the two procedural options described below for using trip blanks in VOCs sample collection.

Trip blanks must be prepared by the laboratory at the time that the sample containers and other sampling supplies are organized and sent out to the client or to the project site in order to ensure their integrity. Additionally, the prepared trip blanks must be treated with reducing agent and/or acidified in the same manner as for the samples that they will be used in evaluating.

If it is not practical to prepare the trip blanks as needed, then trip blanks can be prepared ahead of time and stored in a refrigerator at $4^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 2^{\circ}\text{C}$ to maintain their integrity. The refrigerator used for storage of prepared trip blanks must not be used to store samples, standards, or reagents. To verify that the refrigerated trip blank samples have not been contaminated during storage and are still of a known quality, one trip blank per batch of trip blanks stored must be quality control tested for VOCs with the results recorded. If contamination is detected, the contaminated sample batch must be replaced with a new supply. Trip blanks that have been stored in this manner and analyzed as described above on a regular basis (weekly or when sent out to clients) can be stored for a period of one month (i.e. **storage holding time**). A separate log (electronic or hard copy) needs to be kept to document the date of preparation, the date of expiration, and the results of quality control tests.



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The **sample collection holding time** for a trip blank (either prepared as needed or taken from storage) begins when the trip blank and sample containers are sent out to the client or the project site. If both the trip blank and sample containers are pre-preserved with acid and reducing agent, or just with acid, the maximum sample collection holding time is fourteen (14) days for drinking water analysis, and seven (7) days for non-potable water/wastewater analysis, from the time they are sent out. If the trip blanks and sample containers are sent out unpreserved, then the maximum sample collection time is twenty-four (24) hours from the time when they are sent out for both drinking water and non-potable wastewater analysis.

Please contact the ELCP at (860) 509-7389 if there are any questions regarding this revised policy determination.

cc Suzanne Blancaflor, MS, MPH, Section Chief, Environmental Health
Ellen Blaschinski, RS, MBA, Branch Chief, Regulatory Services