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Region 4
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Science and Ecosystem Support Division
Athens, Georgia

OPERATING PROCEDURE

Title: **Potable Water Supply Sampling**

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Revision History

The top row of this table shows the most recent changes to this controlled document. For previous revision history information, archived versions of this document are maintained by the SESD Document Control Coordinator on the SESD local area network (LAN).

History	Effective Date
SESDPROC-305-R3, *Potable Water Sampling*, replaces SESDPROC-305-R2 **General:** Corrected any typographical, grammatical and/or editorial errors. **Title Page:** Changed author from Maria Labrador to Mike Neill. **Revision History:** Changes were made to reflect the current practice of only including the most recent changes in the revision history. Section 1.4: Omitted references that were no longer applicable. **Section 2.3**: Reorganized section by adding four subsections: Sample Handling, Sample Preservation, Sample Dechlorination and Other Sample Preservation/Stabilization. Section 2.3.1: Omitted "procedures" and "used" and added "used" in the first sentence. Omitted "labeled" from first sentence of Item 3. Item 4 was added to address samples requiring reduced temperature storage. Section 2.3.2: This section was revised to reflect current preservation practices. Section 2.3.3: The following language was added to create Section 2.3.3: "Potable water samples that have been treated with chlorine require the addition of sodium thiosulfate to dechlorinate the sample." Section 2.3.4: The following language was added to create Section 2.3.4: "If other preservation or stabilization requirements are needed, refer to the USEPA Region 4 Analytical Support Branch Laboratory Operations and Quality Assurance Manual (ASBLOQAM), Most Recent Version." Section 3.1: The requirements for obtaining the resident's information were moved to the top of this section. In the first sentence of the next to last paragraph the following language was added: "or the container is pre-preserved." Section 4: Section was renamed from "Potable Water Supply Sampling Methods – Purging" to "Potable Water Supply Purging." Section 4.1 and Section 4.1.1: Section 4.1.1 was moved to Section 4.1. Section was renamed from "Purging and Purge Adequacy" to "Potable Wells – Purging and Purge Adequacy." Language from former Section 4.2 concerning potable water purging from residential wells was relocated to the	May 30, 2013

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first and last paragraph of this section. Section 4.2: Previous language was omitted and replaced with language concerning water supply plants and large industrial supplies. Section was renamed to reflect the new subject. Section 4.2: Section was omitted. Section 5.2: Section was renamed from "Collecting Samples from Wells with In Place Plumbing" to "Collecting Samples from Residential Wells." Section 5.3: Section was renamed from "Sample Preservation" to "Collecting Samples from Water Supply Plants." The entire section was revised to reflect current practices. Section 5.4: Content from Section 5.4.1 was incorporated into Section 5.4. Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 were omitted. Section 5.5: This section was omitted. Section 5.6: This section was omitted.	
SESDPROC-305-R2, *Potable Water Sampling*, replaces SESDPROC-305-R1	January 29, 2013
SESDPROC-305-R1, *Potable Water Sampling*, replaces SESDPROC-305-R0	November 1, 2007
SESDPROC-305-R0, Potable Water Supply Sampling, Original Issue	February 05, 2007

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1 General Information

1.1 Purpose

This document describes general and specific procedures, methods and considerations to be used and observed when collecting potable water supply samples for field screening or laboratory analysis.

1.2 Scope/Application

The procedures contained in this document are to be used by field personnel when collecting and handling potable water supply samples in the field. On the occasion that SESD field personnel determine that any of the procedures described in this section are inappropriate, inadequate or impractical and that another procedure must be used to obtain a potable water supply sample, the variant procedure will be documented in the field logbook, along with a description of the circumstances requiring its use. Mention of trade names or commercial products in this operating procedure does not constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.

1.3 Documentation/Verification

This procedure was prepared by persons deemed technically competent by SESD management, based on their knowledge, skills and abilities and has been tested in practice and reviewed in print by a subject matter expert. The official copy of this procedure resides on the SESD local area network (LAN). The Document Control Coordinator (DCC) is responsible for ensuring the most recent version of the procedure is placed on the LAN and for maintaining records of review conducted prior to its issuance.

1.4 References

International Air Transport Authority (IATA). Dangerous Goods Regulations, Most Recent Version

Puls, Robert W., and Michael J. Barcelona. Filtration of Ground Water Samples for Metals Analysis. *Hazardous Waste and Hazardous Materials* 6(4): 385-393 (1989).

Puls, Robert W., Don A. Clark, and Bert Bledsoe. Metals in Ground Water: Sampling Artifacts and Reproducibility. *Hazardous Waste and Hazardous Materials* 9(2): 149-162 (1992).

SESD Operating Procedure for Control of Records, SESDPROC-002, Most Recent Version

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SESD Operating Procedure for Equipment Inventory and Management, SESDPROC-108, Most Recent Version

SESD Operating Procedure for Field Equipment Cleaning and Decontamination, SESDPROC-205, Most Recent Version

SESD Operating Procedure for Field Equipment Cleaning and Decontamination at the FEC, SESDPROC-206, Most Recent Version

SESD Operating Procedure for Field pH Measurement, SESDPROC-100, Most Recent Version

SESD Operating Procedure for Field Sampling Quality Control, SESDPROC-011, Most Recent Version

SESD Operating Procedure for Field Specific Conductance Measurement, SESDPROC-101, Most Recent Version

SESD Operating Procedure for Field Temperature Measurement, SESDPROC-102, Most Recent Version

SESD Operating Procedure for Field Turbidity Measurement, SESDPROC-103, Most Recent Version

SESD Operating Procedure for Logbooks, SESDPROC-010, Most Recent Version

SESD Operating Procedure for Management of Investigation Derived Waste, SESDPROC-202, Most Recent Version

SESD Operating Procedure for Packaging, Marking, Labeling and Shipping of Environmental and Waste Samples, SESDPROC-209, Most Recent Version

SESD Operating Procedure for Sample and Evidence Management, SESDPROC-005, Most Recent Version

Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations, Pts. 171 to 179, Most Recent Version.

US EPA. April 13, 1981. Final Regulation Package for Compliance with DOT Regulations in the Shipment of Environmental Laboratory Samples. Memo from David Weitzman, Work Group Chairman, Office of Occupational Health and Safety (PM-273)

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US EPA. 1995. Ground Water Sampling - A Workshop Summary. Proceedings from the Dallas, Texas November 30 - December 2, 1993 Workshop. Office of Research and Development Robert S. Kerr Environmental Research Laboratory. EPA/600/R-94/205.

US EPA. 2001. Environmental Investigations Standard Operating Procedures and Quality Assurance Manual. Region 4 Science and Ecosystem Support Division (SESD), Athens, GA

US EPA. Analytical Support Branch Laboratory Operations and Quality Assurance Manual. Region 4 SESD, Athens, GA, Most Recent Version

US EPA. Safety, Health and Environmental Management Program Procedures and Policy Manual. Region 4, SESD, Athens, GA, Most Recent Version

1.5 General Precautions

1.5.1 Safety

Proper safety precautions must be observed when collecting potable water supply samples. Refer to the SESD Safety, Health and Environmental Management Program (SHEMP) Procedures and Policy Manual and any pertinent site-specific Health and Safety Plans (HASP) for guidelines on safety precautions. These guidelines should be used to complement the judgment of an experienced professional. Address chemicals that pose specific toxicity or safety concerns and follow any other relevant requirements, as appropriate.

1.5.2 Procedural Precautions

The following precautions should be considered when collecting potable water supply samples.

- Special care must be taken not to contaminate samples. This includes storing samples in a secure location to preclude conditions which could alter the properties of the sample. Samples shall be custody sealed during long-term storage or shipment.
- Always sample from the anticipated cleanest, i.e., least contaminated location, to the most contaminated location. This minimizes the opportunity for cross-contamination to occur during sampling.
- Collected samples must remain in the custody of the sampler or sample custodian until the samples are relinquished to another party.
- If samples are transported by the sampler, they will remain under his/her custody or be secured until they are relinquished.
- Shipped samples shall conform to all U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) rules of shipment found in Title 49 of the Code of Federal

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Regulations (49 CFR Parts 171 to 179), and/or International Air Transportation Association (IATA) hazardous materials shipping requirements found in the current edition of IATA's Dangerous Goods Regulations.

- Documentation of field sampling is done in a bound logbook.
- Chain-of-custody documents shall be filled out and remain with the samples until custody is relinquished.
- All shipping documents, such as air bills, bills of lading, etc., shall be retained by the project leader and stored in a secure place.

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2 Special Sampling Considerations

2.1 Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) Analysis

Potable water supply samples for VOC analysis must be collected in 40 ml glass vials with Teflon® septa. The vials may be either preserved with concentrated hydrochloric acid or they may be unpreserved. Preserved samples have a two-week holding time, whereas unpreserved samples have only a seven-day holding time. In the great majority of cases, the preserved vials are used to take advantage of the extended holding time. In some situations, however, it may be necessary to use the unpreserved vials. For example, if the potable water supply has a high amount of dissolved limestone, i.e., is highly calcareous, there will most likely be an effervescent reaction between the hydrochloric acid and the water, producing large numbers of fine bubbles. This will render the sample unacceptable. In this case, unpreserved vials should be used and arrangements must be confirmed with the laboratory to ensure that they can accept the unpreserved vials and meet the shorter sample holding times.

The samples should be collected with as little agitation or disturbance as possible. The vial should be filled so that there is a meniscus at the top of the vial and absolutely no bubbles or headspace should be present in the vial after it is capped. After the cap is securely tightened, the vial should be inverted and tapped on the palm of one hand to see if any undetected bubbles are dislodged. If a bubble or bubbles are present, the vial should be topped off using a minimal amount of sample to re-establish the meniscus. Care should be taken not to flush any preservative out of the vial during topping off. If, after topping off and capping the vial, bubbles are still present, a new vial should be obtained and the sample re-collected.

2.2 Special Precautions for Potable Water Supply Sampling

- A clean pair of new, non-powdered, disposable gloves will be worn each time a different location is sampled and the gloves should be donned immediately prior to sampling. The gloves should not come in contact with the media being sampled and should be changed any time during sample collection when their cleanliness is compromised.
- Sample containers for samples suspected of containing high concentrations of contaminants shall be stored separately.
- Sample collection activities shall proceed progressively from the least suspected contaminated area to the most suspected contaminated area if sampling devices are to be reused. Samples of waste or highly contaminated media must not be placed in the same ice chest as environmental (i.e., containing low contaminant levels) or background samples.
- If possible, one member of the field sampling team should take all the notes and photographs, etc., while the other members collect the samples.

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- Samplers must use new, verified and certified-clean disposable or non-disposable equipment cleaned according to procedures contained in the SESD Operating Procedure for Field Equipment Cleaning and Decontamination (SESDPROC-205), or the SESD Operating Procedure for Field Cleaning and Decontamination at the FEC (SESDPROC-206) for collection of samples for trace metals or organic compound analyses.

2.3 Sample Handling and Preservation Requirements

2.3.1 Sample Handling

The following should be used when collecting samples from potable water supplies:

- Potable water supply samples will typically be collected from a tap or spigot located at or near the well head or pump house and before the water supply is introduced into any storage tanks or treatment units. Efforts should be made to reduce the flow from either the tap or spigot during sample collection to minimize sample agitation.
- During sample collection, make sure that the tap or spigot does not contact the sample container.
- Place the sample into appropriate containers. Samples collected for VOC analysis must not have any headspace (see Section 2.1, Volatile Organic Compounds Analysis). All other sample containers must be filled with an allowance for ullage.
- Samples requiring reduced temperature storage should be placed on ice immediately.

2.3.2 Sample Preservation

All samples requiring preservation must be preserved as soon as practically possible, ideally immediately at the time of sample collection. If preserved VOC vials are used, these will be preserved with concentrated hydrochloric acid by Analytical Support Branch (ASB) personnel prior to departure for the field investigation. ASB personnel will also provide sodium hydroxide tablets to preserve water samples that are being analyzed for cyanide. For all other chemical preservatives, SESD will use the appropriate chemical preservative generally stored in an individual single-use vial as described in the SESD Operating Procedure for Field Sampling Quality Control (SESDPROC-011). The adequacy of sample preservation will be checked after the addition of the preservative for

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all samples except for the samples collected for VOC analysis. Additional preservative should be added to achieve adequate preservation.

2.3.3 Sample Dechlorination

Potable water samples that have been treated with chlorine require the addition of sodium thiosulfate to dechlorinate the sample.

2.3.4 Other Sample Preservation/Stabilization

If other preservation or stabilization requirements are needed, refer to the USEPA Region 4 Analytical Support Branch Laboratory Operations and Quality Assurance Manual (ASBLOQAM), Most Recent Version.

2.4 Quality Control

Equipment rinsate blanks should be collected if equipment is field cleaned and re-used on-site or if necessary to document that low-level contaminants were not introduced by any sampling equipment.

2.5 Records

Information generated or obtained by SESD personnel will be organized and accounted for in accordance with SESD records management procedures found in the SESD Operating Procedure for Control of Records (SESDPROC-002). Field notes, recorded in a bound field logbook, will be generated, as well as chain-of-custody documentation in accordance with the SESD Operating Procedure for Sample and Evidence Management (SESDPROC-005) and the SESD Operating Procedure for Logbooks (SESDPROC-010).

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3 Potable Water Supply Sampling – Sample Site Selection

3.1 General

Obtain or confirm the following information:

- the name(s) of the resident(s) or water supply owner/operator
- the exact physical address
- the exact mailing address (if different from the physical address)
- the resident's/operator's home, work and mobile telephone numbers (when available)

The information is required so that the residents or water supply owner/operators can be informed of the results of the sampling program.

The following should be considered when choosing the location to collect a potable water sample:

- Taps selected for sample collection should be supplied with water from a service pipe connected directly to a water main in the segment of interest.

- Whenever possible, choose the tap closest to the water source, and prior to the water lines entering the residence, office, building, etc., and also prior to any holding or pressurization tanks.

- The sampling tap must be protected from exterior contamination associated with being too close to a sink bottom or to the ground. Contaminated water or soil from the faucet exterior may enter the bottle during the collection procedure since it is difficult to place a bottle under a low tap without grazing the neck interior against the outside faucet surface. If the tap is too close to the ground for direct collection into the appropriate container, it is acceptable to use a smaller container to transfer sample to a larger container. The smaller container should be made of glass or stainless steel, and should be decontaminated to the same standards as the larger container.

- Leaking taps that allow water to discharge from around the valve stem handle and down the outside of the faucet, or taps in which water tends to run up on the outside of the lip, are to be avoided as sampling locations.

- Disconnect any hoses, filters, or aerators attached to the tap before sampling. These devices can harbor a bacterial population if they are not routinely cleaned or replaced when worn or cracked.

- Taps where the water flow is not constant should be avoided because temporary fluctuation in line pressure may cause clumps of microbial growth that are lodged

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in a pipe section or faucet connection to break loose. A smooth flowing water stream at moderate pressure without splashing should be used. The sample should be collected without changing the water flow. It may be appropriate to reduce the flow for the volatile organic compounds aliquot to minimize sample agitation.

Occasionally, samples are collected to determine the contribution of system-related variables (e.g., transmission pipes, water coolers, water heaters, holding tanks, pressurization tanks, etc.) to the quality of potable water supplies. In these cases, it may be necessary to ensure that the water source has not been used for a specific time interval (e.g., over a weekend or a three- or four-day holiday period). Sample collection may consist of collecting a sample of the initial flush, collecting a sample after several minutes, and collecting another sample after the system being investigated has been completely purged.

When sampling for bacterial content or the container is pre-preserved, the sample container should not be rinsed before use due to possible contamination of the sample container or removal of the thiosulfate dechlorinating agent (if used). When filling any sample container, care should be taken that splashing drops of water from the ground or sink do not enter into either the bottle or cap.

When sampling at a water treatment plant, samples are often collected from the raw water supply and the treated water after chlorination.

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4 Potable Water Supply– Purging

4.1 Potable Wells - Purging and Purge Adequacy

Wells with in-place plumbing are commonly found at residences. The objective of purging wells with in-place pumps is the same as with monitoring wells without in-place pumps, i.e., to ultimately collect a water sample representative of aquifer conditions.

Purging is the process of removing stagnant water immediately prior to sampling. In order to determine when an adequate purge has occurred, field investigators should monitor the pH, specific conductance and turbidity of the water removed during purging. For potable water supply sampling, it is recommended to purge the system for at least 15 minutes when possible.

An adequate purge is achieved when the pH and specific conductance of the potable water have stabilized and the turbidity has either stabilized or is below 10 Nephelometric Turbidity Units (NTUs). Although 10 NTUs is normally considered the minimum goal for most water sampling objectives, lower turbidity has been shown to be easily achievable in most situations and reasonable attempts should be made to achieve these lower levels. Stabilization occurs when, for at least three consecutive measurements, the pH remains constant within 0.1 Standard Unit (SU) and the specific conductance varies no more than approximately 10 percent. There are no set criteria establishing how many total sets of measurements are adequate to document stability of parameters.

If, after 15 minutes, the in situ chemical parameters have not stabilized according to the above criteria, additional water can be removed. If the parameters have not stabilized after 15 minutes, it is at the discretion of the project leader whether or not to collect a sample or to continue purging.

A well with an intermittently run pump should, in all respects, be treated like a well without a pump. In these cases, parameters are measured and the well is sampled from the pump discharge after parameter conditions have been met. Generally, under these conditions, 15 to 30 minutes will be adequate.

4.2 Water Supply Plants

Municipality water supply plants and large industrial supplies that operate continuously, require no purge other than opening a valve and allowing it to flush for a few minutes. If a storage tank is present, a spigot, valve or other sampling point should be located between the pump and the storage tank. If not, locate the valve closest to the tank. Measurements of pH, specific conductance and turbidity are recorded at the time of sampling when water quality parameters are required.

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4.3 Investigation Derived Waste

Purging generates quantities of purge water or investigation derived waste (IDW), the disposition of which must be considered. See the SESD Operating Procedure for Management of Investigation Derived Waste (SESDPROC-202) for guidance on management or disposal of this waste.

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5 Potable Water Supply Sampling Methods – Sampling

5.1 General

Sampling is the process of obtaining, containerizing, and preserving (if required) a potable water supply water sample after the purging process is complete. It is recognized that there are situations, such as industrial or municipal supply wells or private residential wells, where a well may be equipped with a dedicated pump from which a sample would not normally be collected. Discretion should always be used in obtaining a sample.

5.2 Collecting Samples from Residential Wells

Samples should be collected following purging from a valve or cold water tap as near to the well as possible, preferably prior to any storage/pressure tanks or physical/chemical treatment system that might be present. Remove any hose that may be present before sample collection and reduce the flow to a low level to minimize sample disturbance, particularly with respect to volatile organic constituents. Samples should be collected directly into the appropriate containers (see the ASBLOQAM for a list of containers). It may be necessary to use a secondary container, such as a clean 8 oz. or similar size sample jar or a stainless steel scoop, to obtain and transfer samples from spigots with low ground clearance. All measurements for pH, specific conductance and turbidity should be recorded at the time of sample collection.

1. Ideally, the sample should be collected from a tap or spigot located at or near the well head or pump house and before the water supply is introduced into any storage tanks or treatment units. If the sample must be collected at a point in the water line beyond pressurization or holding tank, a sufficient volume of water should be purged to provide a complete exchange of fresh water into the tank and at the location where the sample is collected. If the sample is collected from a tap or spigot located just before a storage tank, spigots located inside the building or structure should be turned on to prevent any backflow from the storage tank to the sample tap or spigot. It is generally advisable to open several taps during the purge to ensure a rapid and complete exchange of water in the tanks.

2. Purge the system for at least 15 minutes when possible. During the purge period, obtain at least three sets of readings as follows: after purging for several minutes, measure the pH, specific conductivity and turbidity of the water. Continue to measure these parameters to assess for stabilization.

3. After three sets of readings have been obtained, samples may be collected. If stabilization has not occurred after the 15-minute purge period, it is at the discretion of the project leader to collect the sample or continue purging and

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monitoring the parameters. This would depend on the condition of the system and the specific objectives of the investigation.

5.3 Collecting Samples from Water Supply Plants

Municipality water supply plants and wells that continuously operate, require no purge other than opening a valve and allowing it to flush for a few minutes. If a storage tank is present, a spigot, valve or other sampling point should be located between the pump and the storage tank. If not, locate the valve closest to the tank. Measurements of pH, specific conductance and turbidity are recorded at the time of sampling when water quality parameters are required.

5.4 Special Sample Collection Procedures

Special sample handling procedures should be instituted when trace contaminant samples are being collected. All sampling equipment which comes into contact with the water must be cleaned in accordance with the cleaning procedures described in the SESD Operating Procedure for Field Equipment Cleaning and Decontamination, (SESDPROC-205) or the SESD Operating Procedure for Field Cleaning and Decontamination at the FEC (SESDPROC-206), as applicable.