

7. QUALITY ASSURANCE

7.1 SUMMARY

Quality assurance and quality control are essential components of DOE environmental monitoring programs at PORTS. Quality is integrated into sample preservation, field data and sample collection, sample transportation, and sample analysis. Numerous program assessment activities in the field and within the facilities are conducted at regular intervals to demonstrate that quality is built into and maintained in all DOE programs. Analytical laboratories used by DOE contractors during 2017 participated in the DOE Consolidated Audit Program and Mixed-Analyte Performance Evaluation Program.

7.2 QUALITY ASSURANCE INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance, an integral part of environmental monitoring, requires systematic control of the processes involved in sampling the environment and in analyzing the samples. To demonstrate accurate results, DOE uses the following planned and systematic controls:

- implementation of standard operating procedures for sample collection and analysis;
- training and qualification of surveyors and analysts;
- implementation of sample tracking and chain-of-custody procedures to demonstrate traceability and integrity of samples and data;
- participation in external quality control programs;
- frequent calibration and routine maintenance of measuring and test equipment;
- maintenance of internal quality control programs;
- implementation of good measurement techniques and good laboratory practices; and
- frequent assessments of field sampling, measurement activities, and laboratory processes.

Environmental sampling is conducted by DOE contractors at PORTS in accordance with state and federal regulations and DOE Orders. Sampling plans and procedures are prepared, and appropriate sampling instruments or devices are selected in accordance with practices recommended by U.S. EPA, the American Society for Testing and Materials, or other authorities. Chain-of-custody forms document sample custody from sample collection through receipt by the analytical laboratory. The samples remain in the custody of the sampling group until the samples are received at the laboratory. Samples shipped to an off-site laboratory are sealed within the shipping container to prevent tampering until they are received by the sample custodian at the off-site laboratory.

The analytical data are reviewed to determine compliance with applicable regulations and permits. The data are used to identify locations and concentrations of contaminants of concern, to evaluate the rate and extent of contamination at the site, and to help determine the need for remedial action. Adequate and complete documentation generated as a result of these efforts supports the quality standards established by DOE. Quality Assurance Project Plans were used by FBP and MCS during 2017 to ensure a consistent system for collecting, assessing, and documenting environmental data of known and documented quality.

7.3 FIELD SAMPLING AND MONITORING

Personnel involved in field sampling and monitoring are properly trained through a combination of classroom, on-line, and/or on-the-job training as required by environmental, health, and safety regulations and DOE contract requirements. Procedures are developed from guidelines and regulations created by DOE or other regulatory agencies that have authority over PORTS activities. These procedures specify sampling protocol, sampling devices, containers, and preservatives to be used. Chain-of-custody procedures (used with all samples) are documented, and samples are controlled and protected from the point of collection to the generation of analytical results.

Data generated from field sampling can be greatly influenced by the methods used to collect and transport the samples. A quality assurance program provides the procedures for proper sample collection so that the samples represent the conditions that exist in the environment at the time of sampling. The DOE quality assurance program at PORTS mandates compliance with written sampling procedures, use of clean sampling devices and containers, use of approved sample preservation techniques, and collection of field blanks, trip blanks, and duplicate samples. Chain-of-custody procedures are strictly followed to maintain sample integrity. In order to maintain sample integrity, samples are delivered to the laboratory as soon as practicable after collection.

7.4 ANALYTICAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

DOE contractors at PORTS only use analytical laboratories that demonstrate compliance in the following areas through participation in independent audits and surveillance programs:

- compliance with federal waste disposal regulations,
- data quality,
- materials management,
- sample control,
- data management,
- electronic data management,
- implementation of a laboratory quality assurance plan, and
- review of external and internal performance evaluation program.

After analytical laboratory data are received by DOE contractors, they are independently evaluated using a systematic process that compares the data to established quality assurance/quality control criteria. An independent data validator checks documentation produced by the analytical laboratory to verify that the laboratory has provided data that meet established criteria.

In 2017, samples collected for DOE environmental monitoring programs at PORTS such as NPDES monitoring, groundwater monitoring required by the *Integrated Groundwater Monitoring Plan* (DOE 2017d), and environmental monitoring required by the *Environmental Monitoring Plan for the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant* (DOE 2017b), were sent to analytical laboratories that participated in DOE programs to ensure data quality. The DOE Consolidated Audit Program implements annual performance qualification audits of environmental laboratories. The DOE Mixed-Analyte Performance Evaluation Program provides semiannual performance testing and evaluation of analytical laboratories.