

Minnesota Department of Health Environmental Laboratory

Sample Acceptance Policy

The Operations Unit of the MDH Environmental Laboratory is responsible for the use and updating of this policy. In general, the staff attempts to resolve issues before the laboratory must reject a sample.

When we note a sample does not meet the conditions for acceptance for accurate testing, we will contact the responsible party for instructions. We define our minimum level of acceptability by the terms required in federal law, state laws and regulations, or agreements established for particular projects.

When we are not certain of the category for acceptance (CWA, SDWA, RCRA, etc.) for a particular sample (i.e. the collector did not provide the project identification or indicate specific tests), we will use the most stringent criteria to assure that the data are usable. For missing items not affecting the outcome of the analysis (e.g. collector name, collection year), we will leave the information blank or, in the case of the collection year, we will document the sample was collected within the past twelve months, a reasonable assumption. We will retain records of these discrepancies but will not contact you so please be sure you maintain your sampling logbook should questions arise.

The following items will prevent us from analyzing your samples and supplying valid results:

- The sample containers were broken in shipment or the containers are leaking.
- The samples were preserved, but they require no preservation for accurate testing.
- The samples submitted for volatile organics analysis have headspace (i.e. air bubbles larger than pea size).
- We did not receive enough sample volume to perform the tests you requested.
- The sample container cap is loose and allows extraneous water or materials to seep into the samples.

We consider the following items crucial to valid testing. We may be able to test the samples after we obtain more information from you. The samples will be placed on hold in our sample receiving area until our staff receives the necessary information and authorization from you to proceed.

- The paperwork submitted with the samples does not match the information on the sample container.
- The laboratory receives the samples after the method specified holding time.
- A sample submission form or chain-of-custody was not provided, or the form supplied is incomplete.
- The labels on the bottles do not have a unique identifier that matches a corresponding item on the form.
- We cannot read the sample labels.
- The collector did not use the correct sample containers for the tests requested.
- The samples were not maintained at the proper temperature to prevent deterioration.
- Legal chain-of-custody samples received with evidence of tampering (e.g., the custody seals are broken).

If you have questions or comments about this policy or about samples you have submitted to our laboratory, please contact our Operations Unit at 651-201-5300.