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Standard Guide for Quality Assurance Protocols for Chemical Analysis of Atmospheric Wet Deposition[1]

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1. Scope

1.1 This guide describes quality assurance (QA) protocols for the determination of the anions and cations in Atmospheric Wet Deposition (AWD) shown in Table 1.

1.2 Included in this guide are minimum recommended requirements for the preparation of calibration standards and suggested procedures for validating laboratory measurement results.

1.3 This guide describes minimum requirements for the frequency of analysis of quality assurance samples and recommends procedures for the evaluation of quality assurance data.

1.4 The guide's recommendations are based upon expected anion and cation concentrations in AWD **(1)**[2] and Appendix ~~X2~~X1.

1.5 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard.

1.6 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*[3]

D596 Guide for Reporting Results of Analysis of Water
D1193 Specification for Reagent Water
D1356 Terminology Relating to Sampling and Analysis of Atmospheres
D3856 Guide for Management Systems in Laboratories Engaged in Analysis of Water
D5012 Guide for Preparation of Materials Used for the Collection and Preservation of Atmospheric Wet Deposition
D5015 Test Method for pH of Atmospheric Wet Deposition Samples by Electrometric Determination
D5085 Test Method for Determination of Chloride, Nitrate, and Sulfate in Atmospheric Wet Deposition by Chemically Suppressed Ion Chromatography
D5086 Test Method for Determination of Calcium, Magnesium, Potassium, and Sodium in Atmospheric Wet Deposition by Flame Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometry
D5111 Guide for Choosing Locations and Sampling Methods to Monitor Atmospheric Deposition at Non-Urban Locations
E200 Practice for Preparation, Standardization, and Storage of Standard and Reagent Solutions for Chemical Analysis

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of terms used in this guide refer to Terminology D1356 or the ASTM Dictionary of Engineering Science and Technology.[4]

4. Summary of Guide

4.1 This guide describes QA procedures to be used in conjunction with standard test methods.

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[2] The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to the list of references at the end of this guide.

[3] For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

[4] ASTM Dictionary of Engineering Science and Technology, Tenth Edition, 2005. Stock# DEF05.

TABLE 1 Common Techniques of Analysis for Atmospheric Wet Deposition Samples

Automated Colorimetry	Ion Chromatography
NH_4^+	Cl^-, NO_3^-, SO_4^{2-}, NH_4^+, Ca^{2+}, Mg^{2+}, Na^+, K^+
Flame Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometry	Electrometric
Na^+, K^+, Ca^{2+} , Mg^{2+}	pH, specific conductance
Inductively Coupled Plasma Spectrometry	
Na^+, K^+, Ca^{2+}, Mg^{2+}	

4.2 This guide does not include all components of a complete QA program for AWD measurement systems but provides minimum protocols to assist in the development of such a program. The procedures for the preparation of materials used for the collection and preservation of AWD are included in Guide D5012. The procedures for choosing locations and sampling atmospheric deposition are included in Guide D5111.

5. Reagents

5.1 *Purity of Reagents*—Reagent grade chemicals shall be used in all tests. Unless otherwise indicated, it is intended that all reagents shall conform to the specifications of the committee on Analytical Reagents of the American Chemical Society (ACS), where such specifications are available.[5] Other reagents may be used provided it can be demonstrated that they are of sufficiently high purity to permit their use without decreasing the accuracy of the determination.

5.2 *Purity of Water*—Unless otherwise indicated, reference to water shall be understood to mean reagent water conforming to Specification D1193, Type I.

5.3 *Standard Solutions*—Unless otherwise indicated, reference to standard solutions shall be understood to mean solutions conforming to Practice E200. Standard Solutions are prepared from primary standards or ACS reagent grade salts or may be purchased as secondary standards from commercial laboratory suppliers.

6. Storage of Standard Solutions

6.1 TFE-fluorocarbon, polyethylene, and polypropylene containers are recommended for the storage of standard solutions. Glass containers are not suitable for storage of most standard solutions needed to analyze AWD due to the potential for sodium contamination.

7. Verification of Standard Solutions

7.1 Use two or more of the following procedures to ensure that the standard solutions are correctly formulated.

7.1.1 Confirmation of standard solution analyte concentration by an independent laboratory determination;

7.1.2 Confirmation of standard solution analyte concentration by an independent analytical procedure within the laboratory.

7.1.3 Comparison of the standard solution analyte concentrations of the same standard solution prepared by different analysts from the same laboratory or comparison of the analyte concentration of the new standard solution with the analyte concentration of a prior standard solution; or

7.1.4 Comparison of the analyte concentration from the standard solution with the concentration of a certified reference material (CRM) **(2)**.

7.2 If the confidence intervals of the two measurements (at a 95 % confidence level) intersect, the two solutions are statistically the same. New standard solution(s) must be prepared if the results are not in statistical agreement.

8. Reference Materials

8.1 The reference materials (RM) should be a commercially available CRM.

8.2 Immediately following calibration (Test Methods D5015, D5085, D5086), at least one RM is to be analyzed to ensure that the system is functioning properly and that standards were correctly prepared and that no degradation or contamination of the standards has occurred. The frequency of RM analysis is specified in the test method but must be at least one per analytical run.

8.3 *Evaluation of RM Data*—Compare the measured RM concentration to the certified value immediately after measurement. The analyst must ensure that the concentration value falls within the limits previously established from the repeated analysis of solutions at that concentration level. The measurement of samples must be suspended whenever the RM measurement system is out of control.

[5] *Reagent Chemicals, American Chemical Society Specifications*, American Chemical Society, Washington, DC. For suggestions on the testing of reagents not listed by the American Chemical Society, see *Analar Standards for Laboratory Chemicals*, BDH Ltd., Poole, Dorset, U.K., and the *United States Pharmacopeia and National Formulary*, U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.

NOTE 1—If the confidence interval (at a 95 % confidence level) of the measurement intersects the confidence or tolerance interval of the RM, there is agreement. If not, then a discrepancy exists that needs to be investigated (2).

8.3.1 When the concentration of the RM differs from the certified value by greater than the established acceptance limits, reanalyze the RM immediately to determine if the current measurement is reproducible. If this second measurement also differs from the acceptance limits about the certified value, cease analyzing samples.

8.3.2 Whenever RM values indicate that the system is out of control, determine the reason and correct the condition. Reanalyze all samples measured after the last RM value that was in control.

9. Blanks

9.1 *Preparation and Frequency of Analysis:*

9.1.1 Prepare reagent blanks according to the procedures recommended in the appropriate test method. Use water conforming to Specification D1193, Type I.

9.1.2 Measure reagent blanks each day determinations are performed or whenever new reagents are used to check for contamination in sample preparation or analysis.

9.1.3 Use field blanks for analytes whose expected concentrations are less than 1 mg/L. Field blanks are Type I water samples subjected to all aspects of sample collection, field processing, preservation, transportation, and laboratory handling as an environmental sample.

9.1.4 Other types of blanks may be necessary to determine the cleanliness of collection vessels, sample storage bottles, and membrane filters. Refer to Guide D5012 for specific procedures.

9.2 *Evaluation of Blank Data:*

9.2.1 Reagent blank contamination can be highly variable depending on the source of contamination. When variable concentrations of analytes are found in reagent blanks, the source(s) of contamination should be determined and minimized.

9.2.2 Subtract the concentration of the analyte in the reagent blank from the concentration of the analyte in the sample only when the analyte concentration in the blank is low, for example <1 %, in relation to the samples being measured and its value is constant. When the analyte concentration in the blank is highly variable, reanalyze samples suspected of contamination.

9.2.3 Field blank contamination is often more variable than reagent blanks. The field blank concentrations should be used to determine if the AWD sample analyte concentrations are real or artifacts. Field blank concentrations of analytes are not to be routinely subtracted from AWD sample analyte concentrations.

10. ~~Method~~ Detection Limit Definition

10.1 To improve the comparability of AWD data, it is strongly recommended that the following definition of method detection limit be adopted and implemented.

10.1.1 *Method Detection Limit (MDL)*—The minimum concentration of an analyte that can be reported with 99 % confidence to have a value that is above zero. The MDL is operationally defined as:

$$MDL = St_{(n-1,\ 1-a=0.99)} \tag{1}$$

where:

S = the standard deviation of a minimum of seven measurements of a solution containing the analyte at a concentration near the lowest calibration standard recommended in the test method, and

$t_{(n\text{-}1,\ 1\text{-}a\ =\ 0.99)}$ = the student's t value for a one-tailed test at the 99 % confidence level and n-1 degrees of freedom.

Obtain the data used to calculate the standard deviation (S) during seven separate analyses by measuring a freshly prepared standard solution in a matrix that matches the calibration solutions; that is, a new solution is prepared and measured on each of seven different days. Use a solution concentration not greater than five times the estimated MDL (3).

10.2 *Method Reporting Limits (MRL)*—The MRL is defined as 2–10 times the MDL. The MRL should remain constant for the study period design of the project. The MDL may vary throughout the study period but should always remain less than the MRL.

10.3 Every laboratory must determine its own MDL values for each analyte.

10.4 Annotate data reported for samples that contain analyte concentrations lower than the MDL to indicate that concentrations lower than the detection limit have been measured.

10.5 MDL values must be recalculated at least yearly or whenever instrumental operating conditions are modified.

11. Precision and Bias

NOTE 2—Blind samples are samples submitted for analysis whose composition is known to the submitter but unknown to the analyst. A double blind sample is one of known composition that is submitted to the analyst in such a manner that neither its composition nor its identification are known to the analyst.

11.1 Blind samples are a recommended subset of the normal sample flow to determine the precision and bias of the analytical methods. Prepare control charts or a statistical tabulation of the blind sample data as soon as analysis results are available. The submission of blind samples must be performed by someone other than the analyst, typically the laboratory manager, director, or QA officer.

11.1.1 Samples used to assess intra-day repeatability (precision) may include duplicate, split, blind and double blind samples, and calibration check standards. Samples used to assess inter-day repeatability may include delayed reanalysis, split, blind and double blind samples, and calibration check standards. The precision characteristics of the intra-day and inter-day samples ~~are expected to~~ may differ. Data from the two sample sets, therefore, should not be presented on a single control chart or in a combined statistical summary.

11.1.2 Samples used to determine bias include CRM, blind and double blind, and laboratory spike samples.

11.2 Perform analytical precision and bias determinations on a scheduled basis following the procedure listed in the test method. Evaluate each precision and bias determination by plotting the data in a control-chart format.[6]

11.2.1 Compare the current precision and bias results with the previous two sets of results. If a downward or upward concentration trend appears to exist, evaluation of RM data should be considered to look for assignable causes.

12. External Quality Assessment

12.1 *Laboratory Intercomparisons:*

12.1.1 Chemistry laboratories involved in the analysis of AWD samples are encouraged to participate in intercomparisons conducted by external agencies at least twice per year. Refer to Appendix ~~X1~~X2 for a list of these agencies and their addresses.

12.1.2 Use data from these intercomparisons to assess analytical measurement bias, reproducibility, and laboratory comparability.

13. Criteria for Reanalysis of Samples

13.1 Use data obtained from the evaluation of control charts and the calculation of ion and conductivity percent differences when selecting samples for reanalysis. When data indicate the analyses are out of control, samples analyzed during the out of control period must be reanalyzed.

13.2 *Evaluation of Control Charts:*

13.2.1 Examine control charts each day determinations are performed for out of control or bias conditions by the person responsible for QA activities and the analyst. For additional information on the application of control charts refer to Guide D3856.

13.2.1.1 There is less than a 1 % chance for two successive measurements to exceed the upper or lower two standard deviation warning limits due to chance alone. Whenever two successive measurements exceed the warning limits, the measurement system is out of control.

13.2.1.2 The measurement system is out of control whenever quality assessment data exceed the upper or lower three standard deviation control limits.

13.2.1.3 Data points should be randomly distributed about the central line. There is a 99 % chance that bias in the data exists if seven successive data points fall on one side of the central line. If the magnitude of the bias exceeds specified data quality objectives, corrective action is necessary.

13.2.2 Suspend sample analyses whenever quality assessment data indicate that the system is out of control or that an intolerable bias condition exists. The reason(s) causing the out of control or bias condition(s) must be determined, corrected, and documented before analyses are resumed. Reanalyze all samples analyzed after the last quality assessment value that was in control.

13.3 *Ion Percent Difference:*

13.3.1 Use ion-percent difference calculations to detect analytical errors or to identify analytes that have not been measured. If all the major ions in AWD samples have been measured, the equivalent concentration of the anions will equal the equivalent concentration of the cations.

13.3.2 The ion-percent difference calculations for each sample is calculated using the equation specified in Practice D596.

$$\text{Ion \% Difference} = \frac{\sum\text{Cations} - \sum\text{Anions}}{\sum\text{Cations} + \sum\text{Anions}} \times 100 \quad (2)$$

13.3.2.1 Measured values, in microequivalents L^{-1} (µequiv L^{-1}), for the following ions should be included in Eq 2: Cl^-, NO_3^-, SO_4^{2-}, PO_4^{3-}, H^+, Na^+, K^+, Ca^{2+}, Mg^{2+} , and NH_4^+. Appendix X3 contains conversion factors for the calculation of µequiv L^{-1} for these ions. The concentration of HCO_3^- should also be included in Eq 2 and is calculated using Eq 3 **(4)**:

$$[HCO_3^-] = \frac{K_H K_1 P_{CO2}}{[H^+]} \times 10^{12} \quad (3)$$

[6] *Manual on Presentation of Data and Control Chart Analysis*, ASTM Manual Series: MNL7, Special Technical Publication, *ASTM STP 15D*, 1989.