
FACT SHEET - ANALYTICAL METHODS, FINAL RULE

Purpose

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) revises or replaces compliance methods for measurement of contaminants in drinking water based on user suggestions, changing regulatory needs and improvement in technology. In this action, EPA is promulgating the use of updated and/or new methods and withdrawal of older methods. The rule is expected to eliminate unnecessary duplication by withdrawing older versions of the same method, and satisfy drinking water industry's request for approval of new technologies in drinking water analyses.

The action will contribute to the Agency's efforts not only towards cost reduction but also towards pollution prevention, personnel safety, and waste minimization.

Statutory Authority

EPA's promulgation of specific analytical techniques for compliance measurements is authorized under the Safe Drinking Water Act, Sections 1412 and 1401(1)(D). Periodically, the Agency withdraws approval of outdated methods, updates older methods, and approves new methods.

Summary of the Notice:

In this regulatory effort, the Agency is approving 12 new methods, withdrawing approval of 45 methods, and updating 79 older methods.

EPA is approving twelve new methods whose performance is at least as good as already approved methods. Forty of the forty-five methods being withdrawn are redundant or obsolete. Most of these methods are for inorganic contaminants, and are published by EPA. These methods are

identical or nearly identical to methods published by the Standards Methods Committee or the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). The EPA methods are now obsolete, unacceptable or unnecessary, because they have not been updated as frequently as ASTM and Standard Methods. One method is being withdrawn because it has been withdrawn by the Standard Methods Committee. Four methods are being withdrawn because they use equipment, procedures or reagents that are no longer available or that have been found to be more hazardous or cumbersome than EPA originally predicted. Reduction of solvent volumes and removal of potentially hazardous reagents and procedures from the methods conform with the pollution prevention, personnel safety, and waste minimization goals of the Agency.

Seventy-nine of the methods affected by this rule will be replaced with slightly modified and improved versions of the same methods. The modifications and improvements are based on public and Agency experiences with older versions of the methods. In several cases, methods have been modified to eliminate or sharply reduce the amount of organic solvent used in the analysis.

This rule would not change any of the acceptance limits for performance evaluation samples, and would not change required monitoring frequencies. Since this rule would allow laboratories to use fewer method versions for a greater number of contaminants, laboratory and State transactional costs should be reduced. The drinking water industry is expected to favor approval of these changes. The analytical laboratories will particularly welcome withdrawal of cumbersome or hazardous methods, and approval of new technology methods.