

Standard Operating Procedure 620

Chain of Custody Procedures

Purpose

The purpose of following chain of custody procedures is to maintain the quality of all samples during collection, transportation, and storage prior to analysis. Chain of custody documentation serves three main purposes:

1. Communication of analytical instructions from Peer to the analytical laboratory.
2. Permanent record of samples provided to the laboratory.
3. Documentation that samples were handled only by authorized personnel and were not available for tampering prior to analysis.

Procedure

Field personnel will complete sample labels and chain of custody forms to be used for tracking samples.

Sample Container Labels

1. Each sample will be assigned a unique identification number that will be affixed to a label on the sample container.
2. Additional information such as sampling location, date and time of collection, and person who collected the sample will also be included on the sample labels.
3. Labeled sample containers, a temperature blank bottle, and ice will be included in each cooler to be shipped to the laboratory.

Chain of Custody Form(s)

If multiple coolers are required to contain all samples from one sampling location, a separate chain of custody form will be prepared for each cooler. At a minimum, the chain of custody form will include the following information:

- Client or project name, or unique identifier, if confidential
- Sample collector's name and signature
- Peer's mailing address and phone number
- Name of project manager or person who will receive data
- Analytical laboratory's name and city

- Description of each sample including
 - Unique identifier and matrix (solid, aqueous, etc.)
 - Date and time of collection
 - Type of analysis required
- Temperature blank listed as a sample
- Dated and timed signatures of persons involved in chain of possession
- Date and method of shipment

Completion of Field Personnel Responsibility

Record all pertinent information about the samples on the field sampling forms or in the field logbook. Upon completion of the chain of custody forms, field personnel will sign the chain of custody forms along with the date and time.

If the field personnel will transfer the custody of the samples to someone other than the laboratory, affix a custody tape to the cooler to prevent the lid from opening. Write the time, date, and initials on the custody tape.

Sample Custody

Each time the custody of a sample or group of samples is transferred, a signature, date, and time will be entered onto the chain of custody form. A sample will be considered to be in custody if it is in any one of the following states:

1. In actual physical possession
2. In view, after being in physical possession
3. In physical possession and locked up so that no one can tamper with it
4. In a secured area such as a locked storage shed or locked vehicle, restricted to authorized personnel

NOTE: While samples are in an individual's custody, they are to ensure that the cooler containing the samples has ice or a frozen cold pack.