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Standard Guide for Spiking Organics into Aqueous Samples¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D5788; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This guide covers the general technique of “spiking” aqueous samples with organic analytes or components. It is intended to be applicable to a broad range of organic materials in aqueous media. Although the specific details and handling procedures required for all types of compounds are not described, this general approach is given to serve as a guideline to the analyst in accurately preparing spiked samples for subsequent analysis or comparison. Guidance is also provided to aid the analyst in calculating recoveries and interpreting results. It is the responsibility of the analyst to determine whether the methods and materials cited here are compatible with the analytes of interest.

1.2 The procedures in this guide are focused on “matrix spike” preparation, analysis, results, and interpretation. The applicability of these procedures to the preparation of calibration standards, calibration check standards, laboratory control standards, reference materials, and other quality control materials by spiking is incidental. A sample (the matrix) is fortified (spiked) with the analyte of interest for a variety of analytical and quality control purposes. While the spiking of multiple sample test portions is discussed, the method of standard additions is not covered.

1.3 This guide is intended for use in conjunction with the individual analytical test method that provides procedures for analysis of the analyte or component of interest. The test method is used to determine an analyte or component’s background level and, again after spiking, its now elevated level. Each test method typically provides procedures not only for samples, but also for calibration standards or analytical control solutions, or both. These procedures include preparation, handling, storage, preservation, and analysis techniques. These procedures are applicable by extension, using the analyst’s judgement on a case-by-case basis, to spiking solutions, and are not reiterated in this guide. See also Practice [E200](#) for preparation and storage information.

1.4 These procedures apply only to analytes that are soluble in water at the concentration of the spike plus any background material, or to analytes soluble in a solvent that is itself water-soluble. The system used in the later case must result in a homogeneous solution of analyte and sample. Meaningful recovery data cannot be obtained if an aqueous solution or homogeneous suspension of the analyte of interest in the sample cannot be attained.

1.5 Matrix spiking may be performed in the field or in the laboratory, depending on which part of the analytical process is to be tested. Field spiking tests the recovery of the overall process, including preservation and shipping of the sample. Laboratory spiking tests the laboratory process only. Spiking of sample extracts, concentrates, or dilutions will test only that portion of the process subsequent to the addition of the spike.

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

1.7 *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, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

1.8 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

[D1129 Terminology Relating to Water](#)

[D1193 Specification for Reagent Water](#)

[D3694 Practices for Preparation of Sample Containers and for Preservation of Organic Constituents](#)

[D3856 Guide for Management Systems in Laboratories](#)

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D19](#) on Water and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D19.06](#) on Methods for Analysis for Organic Substances in Water.

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² 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.

Engaged in Analysis of Water (Withdrawn 2024)³
D4375 Practice for Basic Statistics in Committee D19 on Water (Withdrawn 2018)³
E200 Practice for Preparation, Standardization, and Storage of Standard and Reagent Solutions for Chemical Analysis

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 For definitions of terms used in this standard, refer to Terminology **D1129**.

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 *matrix spike, n*—the quantity (mass) of a component (analyte) of interest which is added to a sample (matrix) in order to test bias as measured by recovery (of that component under specific analytical conditions) and reported as percent recovery (*P*).

3.2.2 *spike, v*—the addition of a known amount of an analyte of known identity to a measured volume of a sample (from a specific matrix) to determine the efficiency with which the added analyte can be “recovered” from (measured in) that matrix by the analytical system after exposure to a specific portion of an analytical process; matrix spiking is a process for accomplishing this; the precision and bias estimates from several trials under specific analytical conditions represent the measurement efficiency with which the analyte may be determined under these conditions.

3.2.3 *spiking solution, n*—the solution in which one or more spikes are dissolved (along with any necessary preservatives); this solution acts as a carrier to provide ease of measurement and more rapid and thorough mixing of the spike into the sample, as compared to adding the spike as a pure compound.

4. Summary of Guide

4.1 This guide describes a technique for the addition of a known amount of an organic analyte to an aqueous sample. Instructions are given to help prevent loss of volatile analytes in the sample headspace and to provide a homogeneous solution for subsequent analysis. Appropriate concentrations of the spike relative to the original concentration in the sample are discussed. Applications of the technique and aids in the interpretation of results obtained are described.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Matrix spiking of samples is commonly used to determine the bias under specific analytical conditions, or the applicability of a test method to a particular sample matrix, by determining the extent to which the added spike is recovered from the sample matrix under these conditions. Reactions or interactions of the analyte or component of interest with the sample matrix may cause a significant positive or negative effect on recovery and may render the chosen analytical, or monitoring, process ineffectual for that sample matrix.

5.2 Matrix spiking of samples can also be used to monitor the performance of a laboratory, individual instrument, or

analyst as part of a regular quality assurance program. Changes in spike recoveries from the same or similar matrices over time may indicate variations in the quality of analyses and analytical results.

5.3 Spiking of samples may be performed in the field or in the laboratory, depending on what part of the analytical process is to be tested. Field spiking tests the recovery of the overall process, including preservation and shipping of the sample and may be considered a measure of the stability of the analytes in the matrix. Laboratory spiking tests the laboratory process only. Spiking of sample extracts, concentrates, or dilutions will be reflective of only that portion of the process subsequent to the addition of the spike.

5.4 Special precautions shall be observed when nonlaboratory personnel perform spiking in the field. It is recommended that all spike preparation work be performed in a laboratory by experienced analysts so that the field operation consists solely of adding a prepared spiking solution to the sample matrix. Training of field personnel and validation of their spiking techniques are necessary to ensure that spikes are added accurately and reproducibly. Consistent and acceptable recoveries from duplicate field spikes can be used to document the reproducibility of sampling and the spiking technique. When environmentally labile compounds are used as spikes, the spiking solution shall be protected up to the time of use by appropriate means such as chilling, protection from sunlight and oxygen, or chemical preservation.

NOTE 1—Any field spiked sample, if known to the laboratory, should be labeled as a field spike in the final results report. Also, whenever possible, field spiking of volatile compounds should be avoided.

5.5 It is often tacitly assumed that the analyte component is recovered from the sample to approximately the same extent that a spike of the same analyte is recovered from a spiked sample. One reason that this assumption may be incorrect is that the spike may not be bound up in the sample (for example, with suspended matter) in the same way that the naturally occurring analyte is bound in the sample. The spike may therefore be recovered from the sample differently than the background level of the analyte. For this reason, as well as the fact that bias corrections can add variability, it is not good practice to correct analytical data using spike recoveries. Spike recovery information should, however, be reported along with the related sample analysis results.

5.6 This guide is also applicable to the preparation and use of spikes for quantification by the method of standard additions and to the addition of surrogates and internal standards.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Stirring Apparatus*—Borosilicate glass beads, 4 mm to 6 mm in diameter, or small TFE-coated magnetic stirring bars. A small non-heating variable-speed magnetic stirrer is recommended for use with the stirring bar.

6.2 *Microsyringes*—Standard gas chromatographic microsyringes of borosilicate glass with stainless steel needles, suitable for injection of spiking solutions through a TFE-coated silicone septum. The TFE-tipped plungers may be contaminated by certain analytes. If this is determined to be likely, a

³ The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.