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CHAIN OF CUSTODY

I. Introduction

Chain-of-custody procedures are necessary if there is a possibility that analytical, toxicological, or other information (data) generated from these samples will be used in litigation. The procedures ensure the integrity of the sample from collection to data reporting. It also expedites sample status reports and provides rapid traceability of samples. This SOP does not address safety considerations or shipping restrictions of potentially hazardous or hazardous materials.

II. Chain-of-custody

- A. All samples collected (evidence) must be maintained under secure conditions and documented through chain-of-custody procedures. In general, as few people as possible should be part of the chain-of-custody. A sample is under custody if (1) it is in your possession (2) if it is in your view, after being in your possession (3) you have secured the sample in an appropriate container and make arrangements to transport it to the laboratory, (4) you transferred the sample to an authorized person or (5) it is held in a secure area. The sample(s) must be in your possession or under your control to prevent tampering or alterations of the collected evidence.
- B. All samples must be accompanied by a Chain-of-custody Record (Form 4, SOP 7.1). When transferring the possession of samples, the individuals relinquishing and receiving will sign, date and note the time on the Record. The Record documents sample custody transfer. Samples are to be packaged properly for shipment and sent to the appropriate facility for analysis and/or testing with a separate Chain-of-Custody Record accompanying each shipment. Shipping containers must be secured and sealed for shipment.

The original record must accompany the shipment and a copy will be retained by the person taking and shipping the samples. Any paperwork generated in taking and shipping samples (freight bills, post office receipts, etc) must be retained as part of the permanent documentation. It may be necessary to make certified copies of those documents where the original is required by administrative regulations.

III. Prepared by: _____
Linda C. Sappington
Quality Assurance Officer

Approved by: _____
David Galat
Project Coordinator

IV. References:

EPA, NEIC policies and procedures. EPA - 330/9-78-001-R (revised August 1991). National Enforcement Investigation Center, Denver, CO.

ASTM Standard Practice for Sampling; Chain-of-Custody Procedures D 4840-88 Annual Book of ASTM Standards 1992. Set 11 Volume 11.01 Water