

USEPA REGION 4
 Science and Ecosystems Support Division
 Management & Technical Support Branch
 Quality Assurance Section
 980 College Station Road
 Athens, Georgia 30605-2720

Data Validation Standard Operating Procedures

For

CONTRACT LABORATORY PROGRAM MERCURY DATA BY

COLD VAPOR ATOMIC ABSORPTION

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Periodic Review

Reviewer:				
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Table of Contents

1.0 Purpose5
2.0 Applicability5
3.0 Personnel Qualifications6
4.0 Procedural Steps – Data Processing6
 4.1 Contract Compliance Screening6
 4.1.1 Electronic Data Review6
 4.1.2 Manual Data Review7
 4.2 Procedural Steps – Review / Validation of Mercury Data.....7
 4.2.1 Holding Times / Preservation7
 4.2.2 Initial and Continuing Calibrations.....10
 4.2.3 Blanks13
 4.2.4 Duplicate Samples17
 4.2.5 Matrix Spike / Matrix Spike Duplicates18
 4.2.6 Performance Evaluation Samples19
 4.2.7 Data Qualifier Definitions.....21
5.0 Data Review Documentation – Computer Aided Review21
 5.1 Document Contents.....22
 5.1.1 Inorganic Data Review Summary Narrative.....22
 5.1.2 Time tracker22
 5.1.3 PE Score (SPS-Web)22
 5.1.4 Excel® Spreadsheet.....22
5.2 Recording and Reporting Data.....23
5.3 Data Package Archives23
6.0 References.....23

Tables

1 Holding Time and Preservation9
2 Initial and Continuing Calibrations.....13
3 Blank Action16
4 Duplicate Samples18
5 Matrix Spike Samples19
6 Performance Evaluation Samples20

Attachments

- A Data Review Summary Narrative
- B Data Review-Time Tracker
- C Data Review Summary Narrative (Manual Review)
- D Data Review Assessment Report (Manual Review)
- E Data Package/Archive Box Inventory Form

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HISTORY OF REVISIONS

Revision Number	Issue Date	Action	Description
2.0	08/24/2011	Original	Original SOP for the Quality Assurance Section applicable to Data Review / Validation for Externally Generated Analytical Data Generated for Region 4

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1.0 Purpose

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), Contract Laboratory Program (CLP) is a key provider of analytical services to the Superfund Program. The Quality Assurance Section of the Science and Ecosystems Support Division (SESD), in conjunction with the Environmental Services Assistance Team (ESAT) contractor, is responsible for providing data review and validation services in support of Superfund data collection activities performed within Region 4.

2.0 Applicability

This Standard Operating Procedure is applicable to the review of water, soils and sediment mercury data by cold vapor atomic absorption analysis at trace and low to medium concentrations. It is further based on the quality assurance / quality control (QA / QC) and technical requirements specified in Exhibit D of SOW ISM01.2, and revisions.

This document provides the criteria for performing technical and quality assurance reviews of the mercury data generated by contract laboratories under the CLP Statement of Work (SOW) - ISM01.2, Inorganic Superfund Methods, Multi-Media, Multi-Concentration, January 2010, and revisions. This SOP incorporates the content of the National Functional Guidelines for Inorganic Superfund Data Review (NFG) January 2010, and revisions. However, this SOP provides additional guidance to limit the use of professional judgment by taking into account region-specific data review and validation requirements and reporting formats, etc. This SOP does not contain the procedures for entering qualified data into the Region 4 LIMS system – this information is contained in a separate SOP. Contract compliance or data usability issues pertinent to risk assessment activities, are not addressed in this document.

This SOP shall be followed without deviation to ensure that a consistent data review product is provided to the Region 4 - CLP Inorganic Task Order/Project Officer (TO / PO). If the data reviewer(s), using professional judgment, decide to take exception to any of the criteria or actions specified in this SOP, he/she must consult the TO / PO prior to making any changes. No deviations from the specified criteria or actions stipulated in this SOP will be undertaken by the data reviewer(s) unless those changes are authorized, in writing, by the TO / PO.

Authorized deviations will be documented in the data review memorandum.

3.0 Personnel Qualifications

For EPA personnel a minimum of a four year degree from an accredited college or university in a scientific field is required. Experience in analyzing environmental samples, and in performing data review / validation is also recommended.

4.0 Procedural Steps – Data Processing

Samples are collected by EPA, contractor, or state personnel and then are submitted to an assigned contract laboratory for analysis. The laboratory analyzes the samples according to specified analytical protocols, assembles a data package and an electronic data file in accordance with specifications in the contract. The original data package is submitted to the Science and Ecosystem Support Division (SESD), Athens, Georgia, and a copy, along with the electronic data deliverable (EDD), are delivered to the Sample Management Office (SMO) / Data Assessment Support Services (DASS) contractor. At SMO/DASS, the data package and the EDD are checked for compliance with the contract. A Contract Compliance Screening (CCS) report is issued to the region and is posted on the

4.1 Contact Compliance Screening

At SMO/DASS, the data package and the EDD are checked for compliance with the contract. A Contract Compliance Screening (CCS) report is issued to the region and is posted on the WebDat web site. The EDD is then processed electronically to evaluate QC performance against the NFG and Region 4 data quality guidelines by the Electronic data eXchange and Evaluation System (EXES). Currently, for the routine inorganic contracts, a SEDD Stage 2a EDD is submitted by the laboratories.

4.1.1 Electronic Data Review - National Functional Guideline Report

A report of this electronic review (the NFG report) is submitted to the region, along with a text file containing the results, qualified in accordance with the Region 4 data qualifier hierarchy. The data package delivered to SESD is audited for evidentiary completeness. The report(s) of the electronic review (if available for all samples in the case) is examined to identify any issues that warrant further investigation. The results of Performance Evaluation Samples (PES) are scored and the data are appropriately qualified.

4.1.2 Manual Data Review

In the event that no electronic review was performed or the report(s) is not available, the data are manually reviewed for technical quality and for compliance with Region 4 data quality requirements, beginning with the case or SDG (Sample Delivery Group) narrative, the original unprocessed or raw data, the QC summary forms, and the sample tracking and processing information included in the package. Region 4 data qualifiers, intended to provide the customer with a more complete understanding of the factors affecting data quality, are added to the results. A report of this review is prepared to complete the documentation of data quality, and the data are electronically entered into the Region 4 laboratory information management system, *Element*. Review reports and project documents are maintained by the SESD Quality Assurance Section (QAS), and the data package is archived. Completed data validation reports should contain the following statement: A Stage 4 validation consisting of electronic and manual review was performed on the inorganic samples submitted as part of this case.

4.2 Procedural Steps: Review / Validation of Mercury Data by Cold Vapor Atomic Absorption

4.2.1 Holding Times/Preservation (Forms IA-IN, IB-IN, XII-IN, XIII-IN, etc.)

Holding times are evaluated from the perspective of technical or actual holding times. These are determined as the age of the sample from date and time of sample collection to the date and time of sample preparation/digestion, and analysis. The contractual holding times are determined from the Validated Time of Sample Receipt (VTSR) and are used for contract compliance but will not be addressed in this SOP.

The following guidance is based on past practice in Region 4 and on the best available information on matrix holding times from 40CFR Part 136 requirements, as well as other USEPA guidance: The technical holding time is calculated from the time and date of sample collection to the date of analysis. The time and date of collection is located on the Traffic Report/Chain-of-Custody (TR/COC) form included in the analytical data package. The dates of sample preparation and analysis are located on the Form XIII-IN and the raw data. If holding times are exceeded or proper preservation has not occurred, describe this in the data review summary case narrative and take the appropriate actions.

Criteria:

- The technical holding time criteria for aqueous/water mercury samples is 28 days; preserved (**with nitric acid**) to $\text{pH} \leq 2$. The addition of nitric acid to adjust the pH is only required for aqueous/water samples.
- The technical holding time criteria for soil/sediment mercury samples is 28 days, based on the technical holding time criteria for aqueous/water samples.
- Mercury samples (water and soil / sediment) shall be maintained at $4\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($\pm 2\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$) until preparation and analysis to allow for re-preparation.

NOTE:

- **When shipping or storage temperatures grossly exceed the requirements, the loss of volatile mercury compounds or metallic mercury is possible. The expected bias would be low. Use professional judgment when this occurs.**
- **Concentrations of mercury detected between the MDL and the CRQL, shall be qualified as J, Q-2.**

Table 1 Holding Time & Preservation for Mercury

Holding Time	Preservation	Action for Samples
Samples prep/analyzed within 28 days of collection	Aqueous/water samples preserved in field with acid to pH < 2	No action required.
Samples prep/analyzed within 28 days of collection	Aqueous/water samples were not preserved in the field with acid to pH < 2. Lab did not preserve upon receipt.	Non-Detects are unusable: R, P-4 Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): J, P-4, Q-2 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, P-4
Samples prep/analyzed within 28 days of collection	Aqueous/water samples were not preserved in the field with acid to pH < 2. But Lab staff preserved sample with nitric upon receipt	Lab Allowed sample to sit for at least 24 hour prior to prep/analysis. Non-Detects: No Qualification Detects: No Flag
Samples prep/analyzed within 28 days of collection	Aqueous/water samples were not preserved in the field with acid to pH < 2. But Lab staff preserved sample with nitric upon receipt	Lab Did not allow the sample to sit for at least 24 hours prior to prep/analysis. Non-Detects: R, P-6 Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): J, Q-2, P-6 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, P-6
Samples prep/analyzed After 28 days of collection	Aqueous/water samples preserved in field with acid to pH < 2.	Non-Detects: R, H-1 Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): J, Q-2, H-1 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, H-1
Samples prep/analyzed after 28 days of collection	Aqueous/water samples were not preserved in field or at laboratory with acid to pH < 2.	All Results: R, H-1, P-4
Samples prep/analyzed within 28 days of collection.	Samples not received at or stored at 4 °C (± 2 °C) Aqueous / water, soil / sediment	Do Not Qualify Data. Document in Case Narrative
Samples prep/analyzed after 28 days from collection	Soil/sediment	Non-Detects: R, H-1 Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): J, Q-2, H-1 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, H-1

4.2.2. Initial and Continuing Calibrations (Form XVI-IN)

Method requirements for satisfactory instrument calibration are established to ensure that the instrument is capable of producing acceptable quantitative data for mercury. Initial Calibration Verification (ICV) demonstrates that the instrument is capable of acceptable performance at the beginning of the analytical run. Continuing Calibration Verification (CCV) demonstrates that the initial calibration is still valid by checking the performance of the instrument on a continuing basis.

The instruments shall be successfully calibrated daily (or once every 24 hours), and each time the instrument is set up. The calibration date and time shall be included in the raw data. The calibration curve shall be prepared by the same method used to prepare the samples for analysis. The curve shall be prepared with the samples that will be analyzed using this calibration curve.

For mercury analysis by CVAA, a blank and at least five calibration standards shall be employed to establish the analytical curve. At least one of the calibration standards shall be at or below the Contract Required Quantitation Limit (CRQL). The calibration curve shall be fitted using linear regression or weighted linear regression. The curve may be forced through zero. The calibration curves for mercury shall possess a correlation coefficient of ≥ 0.995 to ensure the linearity over the calibrated range. The calculated residuals for all of the non-zero standards must fall within 70-130% of the true value of the standard. The y-intercept of the curve must be less than the CRQL.

All sample results shall be reported from an analysis within the calibrated range.

4.2.2.1 Initial and Continuing Calibration Verification (ICV and CCV) - Acceptance Criteria

The acceptance criteria for the Mercury, ICVs and CCVs are:

Analytical Method	Inorganic Analyte	ICV/CCV Low Limit (% of True Value)	ICV/CCV High Limit (% of True Value)
CVAA	Mercury	85	115

4.2.2.2 Initial Calibration Verification (Forms II-IN (Parts A & B), XI-IN, XIII-IN, and XVI-IN, etc.)

Criteria:

- Immediately after each Atomic Absorption (AA) system has been calibrated, the accuracy of the initial calibration must be verified and documented for mercury by the analysis of an ICV solution(s). If the ICV%R falls outside of the control limits, the analysis should be terminated, the problem corrected, the instrument recalibrated, and all affected samples reanalyzed.
- If the ICV is not available from USEPA, or where a certified solution of the analyte is not available from any source, analyses shall be conducted on an independent standard at a concentration level other than that used for instrument calibration, but within the calibrated range.

4.2.2.3 Continuing Calibration Verification

Criteria:

- To ensure accuracy during the course of each analytical run, the CCV shall be analyzed and reported.
- The CCV standard shall be analyzed at a frequency of every hour during an analytical run. The CCV standard shall also be analyzed at the beginning of the run, and again after the last analytical sample.
- The analyte concentration in the CCV standard shall be different than the concentration used for the ICV, and shall be at the mid level of the calibration curve.
- The same CCV standard solution shall be used throughout the analysis runs for a Sample Delivery Group (SDG).
- The CCV shall be analyzed in the same fashion as an actual sample. If the %R of the CCV was outside of the control limits, the analysis should be terminated, the problem corrected, the instrument recalibrated, and all analytical samples analyzed since the last compliant CCV reanalyzed.

4.2.2.4 Preliminaries: ICV & CCV for CVAA

Criteria:

- For initial calibrations or ICVs that do not meet the technical criteria; apply the action to all samples reported from the analytical run.
- For CCVs that do not meet the technical criteria, apply the action to all samples analyzed between a previous technically acceptable analysis of the QC sample and a subsequent technically acceptable analysis of the QC sample.
- If the instrument was not calibrated each time the instrument was set up, qualify the data as unusable (R). If the instrument was not calibrated with at least the minimum number of standards, or if the calibration curve does not include standards at required concentrations (e.g., a blank and at least one at or below CRQL), use professional judgment to qualify results that are \geq MDL as estimated (J) or unusable (R), and non-detects as estimated (UJ) or unusable (R). Refer to Table 2 below.
- If the correlation coefficient is < 0.995 , residuals are outside the 70-130% limit, or the y-intercept is $> \text{CRQL}$, qualify sample results that are \geq MDL as estimated (J), and non-detects as rejected (R). Depending on the degree of the deviation from linearity, further qualification of the data may be required depending on the professional judgment of the reviewer [e.g., unusable data (R)].

Table 2 Calibration - Mercury by CVAA – ICV/CCV

Calibration Result	Action for Samples
Calibration not performed	All Results: R, Custom Flag
Calibration incomplete	Non-Detects: R, Custom Flag Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): R, Custom Flag Detects (≥ CRQL): J, Custom Flag
Correlation coefficient <0.995; residuals outside 70-130%; y intercept ≥ CRQL	Non-Detects: R, CLP16 Detects (> MDL): J, CLP16
ICV/CCV %R < 70%	Non-Detects: R, QC-5 Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): J, QC-5, Q-2 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, QC-5
ICV/CCV %R 70-84%	Non-Detects: J, QC-5 Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): J, QC-5, Q-2 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, QC-5
ICV/CCV %R 116-130%	Non-Detects: No Qualification Required Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): J, Q-2, QC-6 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, QC-6
ICV/CCV %R > 130%	Non-Detects: No Qualification Required Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): R, QC-6 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, QC-6
ICV/CCV %R > 160%	Non-Detects: No Qualification Required Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): R, QC-6 Detects (≥ CRQL): R, QC-6

4.2.3 Blanks (Forms I-IN, III-IN, XII-IN and XIII-IN, etc.)

The objective of evaluating blank analyses is to determine the existence and magnitude of contamination resulting from laboratory (or field) activities. The criteria for evaluation of blanks apply to any blank associated with the samples (e.g., method blanks, calibration blanks, and CLP metals blank). However, it has been Region 4 data validation policy to exclude field blanks (equipment blanks, rinsates, and CLP blind blank, etc.) as part of this evaluation. The case narrative will address field blank contamination if data quality is compromised. Contact the Region 4 CLP Inorganic TO/PO for further direction regarding the treatment of blank contamination.

If problems with any blank exist, all associated data must be carefully evaluated to determine whether or not there is an inherent variability in the data, or if the problem is an isolated occurrence not affecting other data. Contact the Region 4 CLP Inorganic TO/PO for further direction regarding the treatment of blank contamination.

Note: For non-CLP analyses (such as methyl-mercury), consult the CLP Inorganic TO/PO prior to data review to discuss how blank contamination will be treated. In some instances, the analytical method may require or allow the concentrations of blank contaminants to be subtracted from the analytical sample.

Criteria:

- No contaminants should be found in the blank(s).
- The Initial Calibration Blank (ICB) shall be analyzed after the analytical standards, but not before analysis of the Initial Calibration Verification (ICV) during the initial calibration of the instrument.
- A Continuing Calibration Blank (CCB) shall be analyzed immediately after every ICV and Continuing Calibration Verification (CCV). The CCB shall be analyzed at the beginning of the run, and again after the last CCV that was analyzed after the last analytical sample of the run. The CCB result (absolute value) shall not exceed the Contract Required Quantitation Limit (CRQL) for mercury.
- At least one Preparation Blank shall be prepared and analyzed for each matrix, with every Sample Delivery Group (SDG), or with each batch of samples digested, whichever is more frequent. The Preparation Blank consists of reagent water processed through the appropriate sample preparation and analysis procedure.

- If the mercury concentration in the Preparation Blank is $> \text{CRQL}$, the lowest concentration of mercury in the associated samples must be 10 times (10x) the Preparation Blank concentration. Otherwise, all samples associated with that Preparation Blank with a mercury concentration $< 10x$ the Preparation Blank concentration, and $> \text{CRQL}$, should be re-digested and reanalyzed (except for an identified field blank). The laboratory is not to correct the sample concentration for the blank value.
- If the concentration of the Preparation Blank for mercury is $< (-\text{CRQL})$, all samples reported $< 10x$ the CRQL (associated with that analyte in that blank), should be re-digested and reanalyzed.

Note: To avoid confusion, use the blank containing the highest concentration of analyte(s) as the basis for qualifying all the sample(s) in the analytical sequence.

- For ICBs that do not meet the technical criteria, apply the action to all samples reported from the analytical run.
- For CCBs that do not meet the technical criteria, apply the action to all samples in the analytical sequence.
- For Preparation Blanks that do not meet the technical criteria, apply the action to all samples prepared in the same preparation batch.
- The frequency and sequence of analysis for all of the required blanks should be consistent with requirements specified in ISM01.2. Exhibit D, Part C, Section 12.3.

Table 3 Blanks for Mercury by CVAA

Blank Type	Blank Result	Sample Result	Action for Samples
Preparation Blank ICB/CCB (No Field Blanks) ¹	Detects	Non-Detects	No Qualification Required
	< CRQL	< CRQL	Report CRQL value with a U.
	Detects	≥ CRQL and < 10 x Blank	Report result with a U, B-4
	Detects	≥ CRQL and > 10 x Blank	No Qualification
Preparation Blank ICB/CCB (No Field Blanks)	≤ - MDL but ≥ - CRQL	Non-Detect: absolute value	Report CRQL value with a U.
		Detects: Use absolute value and ≥ CRQL and > 10 x Blank	Non-detects: Raise to CRQL and qualify U, B-4. Detects (> MDL but < CRQL & < 10x blank): Raise to CRQL and qualify U, B-4 Detects (≥ CRQL but < 10x blank): Qualify result U, B-4 Detects (≤ CRQL and ≥ 10x blank result): No Qualification Detects (≥ CRQL and ≥ 10x blank result): No Qualification
		Detects: absolute value at ≥ CRQL and > 10 x Blank	No Qualification

¹If significant contamination of field blanks, CLP metals blind blank, and/or equipment/rinsate blanks occurs, the data user will be informed of this via the data validation memorandum. Do not qualify the data based on these blanks.

NOTE:

- **From the various blanks analyzed for a given SDG, select the blank containing the highest concentration of a detected analyte and use this blank to evaluate/qualify the associated samples/data.**
- **For non-CLP analysis, consult the analytical method used to determine how blank contamination should be treated.**

4.2.4 Duplicates (Forms VI-IN and XII-IN)

The objective of duplicate sample analysis is to demonstrate acceptable method precision by the laboratory at the time of analysis. Duplicate analyses are also performed to generate data that determines the long-term precision of the analytical method on various matrices.

Criteria:

- Samples identified as field blanks or Performance Evaluation (PE) samples cannot be used for duplicate sample analysis.
- At least one duplicate sample shall be prepared and analyzed from each group of samples of a similar matrix type (e.g., water or soil) or for each Sample Delivery Group (SDG). Duplicates cannot be averaged for reporting on Form VI-IN. Additional duplicate sample analyses may be required by USEPA Regional request. Alternately, the Region may require that a specific sample be used for the duplicate sample analysis.
- A control limit of 20% for the Relative Percent Difference (RPD) shall be used for original and duplicate sample values \geq five times (5x) the Contract Required Quantitation Limit (CRQL).
- A control limit of the CRQL shall be used if either the sample or duplicate value is $<$ 5x the CRQL. The absolute value of the control limit (CRQL) shall be entered in the "Control Limit" column on Form VI-IN. If both samples are non-detects, the RPD is not calculated for Form VI-IN. Only the sample associated with the duplicate sample is qualified.

Table 4 Duplicate Samples

Duplicate Sample Results	Action for Samples
Both original water sample and water duplicate sample > 5x the CRQL and RPD > 20%.	Non-Detects: No qualification required Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): J, Q-2, QM-4 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, QM-4
Both original soil/sediment sample and soil/sediment duplicate sample > 5x the CRQL and RPD > 35%.	Non-Detects: No qualification required Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): J, Q-2, QM-4 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, QM-4
Original samples or duplicate samples ≤ 5x the CRQL (including non-detects) and absolute difference between sample and duplicate > CRQL.	Non-Detects: J, QM-4 Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): J, Q-2 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, QM-4

4.2.5 Matrix Spike/Matrix Spike Duplicates [Forms V-IN (Part A & B) and XII-IN]

The spiked sample analysis is designed to provide information about the effect of each sample matrix on the sample preparation procedures and the measurement methodology. Non-homogenous samples can impact the apparent method recovery. However, aqueous/water samples are generally homogenous and most soil/sediment samples are homogenous within a factor of two or three. If the spike is added to the sample before the digestion (e.g., prior to the addition of other reagents), it is referred to as a spiked sample, pre-digestion spike, or Matrix Spike.

Criteria:

- Samples identified as field blanks or Performance Evaluation (PE) samples cannot be used for spiked sample analysis.
- At least one spiked sample (pre-digestion) shall be prepared and analyzed from each group of samples with a similar matrix type (e.g., water or soil), or for each Sample Delivery Group (SDG).
- The spike Percent Recovery (%R) shall be within the established acceptance limits. However, spike recovery limits do not apply when the sample concentration is ≥ four times (4x) the spike added. In such an event, the data shall be reported un-flagged, even if the %R does not meet the acceptance criteria.

- If the spiked sample analysis was performed on the same sample that was chosen for the duplicate sample analysis, spike calculations shall be performed using the results of the sample designated as the “original sample”. The average of the duplicate results cannot be used for the purpose of determining %R.

NOTES:

- Acceptance limits for mercury spiked samples are 75 – 125%.
- Only the field sample associated with the non-performing MS/MSD should be qualified unless instructed otherwise by the EPA Inorganic TO/PO.

Table 5 Spike Samples for Mercury by CVAA

Spike Sample Results	Action for Samples
Matrix Spike %R ≤ 10%	<u>Reject non-detects analytes</u> in the field sample associated with the MS/MSD. R, QM-6 Detects (>MDL but < CRQL): R, Q-2, QM-6 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, QM-6
Matrix Spike %R is 10% - 75%	Non-Detects: J, QM-1 Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): J, Q-2, QM-1 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, QM-1
Matrix Spike %R > 125% but < 150%	Non-Detects: No qualification required. Detects: (> MDL but < CRQL): J, Q-2, QM-2 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, QM-2
Matrix Spike %R > 150%	Non-Detects: No qualification required. Detects (> MDL but ≥ CRQL): R, Q-2, QM-2 Detect (≥ CRQL): R, QM-2

4.2.6 Performance Evaluation Samples

A Performance Evaluation Sample (PES) or a set of PE samples are included as part of each project sample delivery group (SDG) submitted to the CLP Program for analysis. For larger projects, including sampling efforts extending for more than one week, multiple sets of PES may be used. The laboratories are required to prepare and analyze the PES with the field samples of the associated case/SDG. If the PES is not prepared, digested and/or analyzed concurrently with field samples for a particular project/SDG/case, the data reviewer shall contact the EPA Inorganic TO/PO for further instructions. The TO/PO may decide that it is not appropriate to use the PES for data qualification.

The table below summarizes data qualification required based on the PES scoring results. Under certain circumstances, the spiked analyte(s) are not evaluated by scoring software. This may occur when either lower limits do not exist for a particular analyte or the analyte was not evaluated.

The reviewer may describe instances in the narrative when the laboratory failed to identify a spiked analyte for which lower limits did not exist but PES database statistics suggest that the analyte should still have been identified by the laboratory. Additionally, all analytes which are scored as PES contaminants, either less than or greater than the CRQL, are treated as method blank contaminants, applying standard blank rules described in Section 4.2.3 above.

If only one set of PES is included in a case, all samples will be qualified based on the PES scoring. If multiple sets of PES are included, all data for the associated sampling week will be qualified based on the PES scoring.

Table 6 Performance Evaluation Samples - Mercury

PES Score	Actions for Samples
Within Limits	Non-Detects & Detects: No qualification required
Warning Low	Non-Detects: J, CLP25 Detects (> MDL but < CRQL): J, Q-2, CLP25 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, CLP25
Action Low	Reject non-detects: R, CLP27 Detect (> MDL): J, Q-2, CLP27 Detect (≥ CRQL): J, CLP27
Warning High	Non-Detects: No qualification required Detect (> MDL but < CRQL): J, Q-2, CLP26 Detects (≥ CRQL): J, CLP26
Action High	Non-detects: No Qualification Reject all detects: R, CLP28

4.2.7 Data Qualifier Definitions

Region 4 applies qualifiers to the mercury data as defined in the SOWs referenced above, and in the National Functional Guidelines with the exception of the qualifiers, B, E, and P, which are not used in Region 4 data reporting.

The following definitions provide brief explanations of the qualifiers assigned to results during the electronic data validation process. An additional set of data qualifier / definition flags is applied as needed to provide further information to the data user about data quality.

Data Qualifier	Data Qualifier Definition ²
J	The analyte was positively identified in the sample, but the associated numerical value is an estimated concentration based on the associated quality control data/technical criteria.
R	The sample results are rejected due to serious deficiencies in the ability to analyze the sample and meet quality control criteria. The presence or absence of the analyte cannot be verified.
U	The analyte was included in the analysis, but was not detected above the method detection limit as defined in ISM01.2.

5.0 Data Review Documentation – Computer Aided Review

Use of the Electronic EXchange and Evaluation System (EXES) allows electronic validation of the CLP mercury data.

The results of electronic data review are utilized to assist the data review process. If examination of the electronic review results and/or PES scoring results reveals discrepancies and/or serious data quality issues, the reviewer may investigate by going back to the hard copy data package.

Each EXES - NFG report is downloaded as a self expanding executable file and distributed to the data review team. The EXES - NFG report is organized by SDG.

² Current list of qualifier-definition flags are located at: <http://www.epa.gov/region4/sesd/oqa/rassop.html>

Two (2) copies of the EXES reports should be printed for each SDG for the data reviewer. A copy should be included in the data validation documentation to submit to the Quality Assurance Section (QAS) to be retained in the project file. The second copy should be archived with the actual data package.

A Data Review Document shall be prepared to document the inorganic data package validation. The document includes the Review Summary Narrative, Time Tracker, Performance Evaluation Sample (PES) Scores from the secure SPS-Web site, a copy of the spreadsheet used for data import into the *Element* data system, and the EXES - NFG. These reporting elements are described in greater detail below, and examples are included as attachments to this SOP.

5.1 Document Contents:

5.1.1 Inorganic Data Review Summary Narrative - This narrative is in a letter format to summarize the information pertinent to the samples, analytical methods, highlights of findings, and a brief assessment of the overall data quality. Descriptions of major data quality issues and their impact on overall data quality should be presented.

5.1.2 Time tracker - This document is for recording the time line and efforts at different stages of the data review process. This form must be utilized and included in the data review documents for CLP data. Any unusual issues or factors affecting the level of effort required to complete the review in a timely manner, are discussed here and in the corresponding data validation memorandum. The time tracker should include the peer review information as part of the validation package requirements.

5.1.3 PE Score (SPS-Web) - This form is generated by the SPS-Web program to report the evaluation of the results of the performance evaluation samples (PES) associated with the data package. The "EPA" versions of this form should be included as attachments to the data validation memorandum whereas the "laboratory" version should be emailed to the EPA inorganic TO/PO.

5.1.4 Excel® Spreadsheet - The reviewed data with final assigned qualifiers attached, (if any) as they appear in *Element*, are included in the data review report as an Excel® spreadsheet.

5.2 Recording and Reporting of Data

Please refer to SOP "Data Processing and Final Production for Contract Laboratory Data in Element[®] .

5.3. Data Package Archives

The CLP data packages must be properly archived for future reference. For each data package, the form "Record Transfer Inventory" must be utilized to record the proper information pertinent to the content. All of the raw data, EXES reports, and any communication records must be included. Multiple data packages from different projects may be stored in one single box if sufficient space is available.

Data packages for one Case that are stored in multiple boxes must be clearly identified on the Record Transfer Inventory forms. An appropriate numbering system must be maintained to ensure that each box containing the data review supporting documentation has a unique archive number.

A copy of the inventory form should be kept within the box and an additional copy filed in a centralized system. The data package boxes shall be maintained under the custody of SESD as described in the Data Package Audit and Data Entry/Validation SOP. The Data Package Inventory Form is provided in Attachment E.

6.0. References

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Statement of Work for Inorganic Superfund Methods, Multi-Media, Multi-Concentration, ISM01.2, January 2010.

U.S. Environment Protection Agency, Contract Laboratory Program, National Functional Guidelines for Inorganic Superfund Data Review, January 2010.