

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONS TO ASSIST WITH LABORATORY SELECTION

The following information is provided to assist you in selecting a laboratory to conduct your sludge sample analyses. This list includes only some of the potential questions that could be asked. Site-specific concerns may alter the direction of your questions. While it may seem obvious, we nonetheless wish to emphasize that if your questions are not answered to your satisfaction, you should seek the services of a different laboratory.

Source: EPA Region 8 Biosolids Management Handbook (1999) Available at:

<http://www.epa.gov/region8/water/biosolids/biosolidsdown/handbook/index.html>

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LAB SELECTION QUESTIONS

General Feasibility

- Does the lab routinely perform the required/requested analyses? Are individuals qualified and do they have written qualifications available?
- Is the lab's turn-around time compatible with your schedule?
- Will the geographical location of the lab cause additional expense (telephone and shipping) and potential difficulty in communication?

Concerns Prior to Sample Collection and Shipment

- Will the lab provide coolers and sample containers?
- What type of sample chain-of-custody is commonly used and will the lab provide chain-of-custody forms prior to shipment?
- What form of shipment is commonly used (Federal Express, UPS, other)? Will the lab pay the shipment cost?
- On what days will someone be available to receive sample shipments (Saturday)?
- What type of sample container should be used and does the lab have any specific packaging requirements?

Costs

- How will I be billed (invoice, pre-pay, other) – NEVER PRE-PAY FOR ANALYSES.
- Are sample containers provided for free or are there additional costs involved?
- What are the sample preparation costs and when and how are they incurred (per sample, per analysis, other)?
- Are there any additional costs involved, which I may not be aware of at this time?
- Can a written estimate be provided and what factors might cause the actual price to differ from the estimate?
- Will QA/QC of my samples involve additional cost?

QA/QC Procedures

- Does the lab have and use any of the following protocols:
 - QA Manual
 - Standard Operating Procedures
 - Sample Custody
 - Traceability to Reference Material
 - QC Checks
 - Data Validation
 - Quality Assessments (Spikes, Duplicates, etc.)
 - Control Charts
 - Other Documentation
 - Periodic QA Audits
- If the lab does not have and/or use the above protocols you should inquire as to the reason. Keep in mind that some of these protocols may be contained within other laboratory procedures or protocols.

Data Processing

After the analyses have been conducted, the lab will provide you with a data package summarizing the analyses. The data package can differ greatly from lab to lab, so the following questions should be asked prior to sample shipment. If any of the information below is not included in the data package, ask the lab to provide it.

- What type of report will I receive? Will narrative descriptions be provided for help in evaluating the data package?
- Will the data be presented on a dry weight basis? IF NOT, REQUIRE IT.
- Will I receive a QA/QC report along with the data package?
- If data qualifiers are present, will a key be provided?
- Will the detection limits for each analysis be provided?
- Will the dates and times of all analyses be reported?
- Will the analytical methods used be included?