

Drinking Water Laboratory

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) Drinking Water Laboratory, was established under Michigan's Safe Water Drinking Act and offers services for the analysis of drinking water quality. The following are questions commonly asked about the Drinking Water Laboratory use of Trip Blanks.

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1. **Why do I now have to submit a Trip Blank?**

A Trip Blank is a requirement of EPA Method 524.2 for Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) (includes Methane, Ethane, Ethylene, and 1,4 Dioxane analyses) and EPA Method 504 for EDB/DBCP when regulated compounds are detected in compliance samples at or above the Reporting Limit (RL). Trip Blanks are now included in all kits as necessary per the recommendation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Trip Blanks are not required when Total Trihalomethanes (TTHM) only are requested. If there is more than one sample collected, enough Trip Blanks are provided for each sampling event.

2. **What is the purpose of a Trip Blank?**

The purpose of a Trip Blank is to ensure that any compounds detected in the sample were not the result of contamination during the handling/sampling process used for the samples prior to analysis. If there is a detection of a regulated compound in the sample (except TTHM) at or above the RL, then the Trip Blank is analyzed. If the compound is not detected in the Trip Blank, then the results are valid for compliance purposes. If the Trip Blank has a detection for the same compound that was detected in the sample, there may be a handling/sampling problem and the results may not be used for compliance.

3. **Why are there two vials included with my Trip Blank?**

In the rare case one of the vials is broken, the second Trip Blank vial remains intact to be analyzed. This way sampling does not have to be repeated.

4. What is the hold time for a Trip Blank?

The hold time for a Trip Blank is 14 days and starts with the collection date and time of the oldest sample in the sample set. For instance, 5 samples are collected starting with location 1 at 8:30am on Jan 10th, with locations 2-5 collected consecutively at 10:30am, 12:30pm, 2:30pm and 4:30pm. The hold time for the Trip Blank would start on Jan 10th at 8:30am with the first sample collected.

5. How do I store a Trip Blank?

Trip Blanks are stored in the same manner as the samples and should never be separated from the sample vials or opened.

6. Can I have my samples analyzed without a Trip Blank?

No. Unless special circumstances have been discussed and approved by the laboratory, all samples must be received with a Trip Blank.

7. What if my Trip Blank has an air bubble?

Trip Blanks may develop air bubbles as they age. All Trip Blanks will be logged in regardless of the size of an air bubble and will be analyzed if necessary. If the sample that coincides with the trip blank is not tested, then the Trip Blank will not be tested.

8. What if there is a detected compound in my Trip Blank?

If a Trip Blank is analyzed and found to contain a positive result at or above the reporting RL for any compound that was found in the sample at or above the RL, a result will be entered as "POSITIVE" and the analysis comment below will be added.

The Trip Blank associated with this sample contains (compound) at (concentration) mg/L.

9. How can I help prevent my Trip Blank from becoming contaminated?

Only use sample containers and Trip Blanks provided by the laboratory, in a timely manner, while ensuring that they are handled and stored in the same manner. Follow all sample collection instructions provided with your sample containers, and do not open Trip Blank vials.

For additional information, contact the EGLE Drinking Water Lab at 517-335-8184.

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