

Final Clean Water Act Methods Update Rule for the Analysis of Effluent

Summary

EPA is promulgating specific changes to analytical test procedures that are used by industries and municipalities to analyze the chemical, physical, and biological components of wastewater and other environmental samples that are required by regulations under the Clean Water Act. The changes include revised EPA methods and revised methods published by voluntary consensus standard bodies, such as ASTM International and the Standard Methods Committee. EPA is adding certain methods reviewed under the Alternate Test Procedures (ATP) program to 40 CFR part 136 and clarifying the procedures for EPA approval of nationwide and limited use ATPs. Further, EPA is revising the procedure for determination of the method detection limit.

Background

EPA approves analytical methods for measuring regulated pollutants in wastewater, as contained in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 40 Part 136. The regulated community and laboratories use these approved methods for determining compliance with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits or other monitoring requirements. Often, these entities have a choice in deciding which approved method they will use to measure a pollutant because more than one approved method is available.

To promote method innovation, the EPA also maintains a program whereby method developers may apply for an EPA review and potentially for approval of ATPs. This ATP program is described for Clean Water Act applications at 40 CFR parts 136.4 and 136.5.

Periodically, EPA updates the approved test procedures in 40 CFR part 136.

What will EPA's updates change?

These method updates will provide increased flexibility to the regulated community, improve data quality, and update Clean Water Act methods to keep current with technology advances.

This rule will provide clarification of the process for requesting limited or nationwide review of ATPs.

Finally, the revision to the procedure for determination of the method detection limits will address laboratory contamination and better account for intra-laboratory variability.

Where can I find more information?

You can view the Federal Register notice at www.regulations.gov under Docket ID: EPA-HQ-OW-2014-0797. The notice is also available on the Clean Water Act Analytical Methods website at: www.epa.gov/cwa-methods/methods-update-rule-2016.

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