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PRISM LABS

September 22, 2003

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Mr. James Meyer
Director of Laboratory Certification
DWQ/Laboratory Section
NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources
1623 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1623

Dear Mr. Meyer:

This letter is in response to your recent e-mail request on the clarification of holding times and preservation for mercury samples which are to be analyzed using EPA Method 1631. Revision E of EPA Method 1631 for low level mercury was promulgated in the Federal Register on October 29, 2002. There were a number of significant changes in this revision including holding times and options for preservation. Samples must be collected in glass or fluoropolymer bottles that are tightly capped. Samples must be preserved at the laboratory within forty eight (48) hours of collection with hydrochloric acid (HCl) or bromine chloride (BrCl) with one exception. If the samples are oxidized (digested) with bromine chloride in the same bottle that they are collected, then the preservation of the sample may be delayed up to twenty-eight days after the time of sample collection. The total holding time with proper preservation for this method is ninety after collection. These details can be found in Section 8.5 of the 1631 Revision E and Note 17 of the October 29, 2002 Federal Register notice.

EPA encourages that samples to be preserved and analyzed as quickly as possible after collection to minimize any potential loss of analyte due to sample matrix. If you need additional information or clarification, please call me at 706-355-8551 or Wayne Turnbull of my staff at 706/355-8554.

Sincerely,

Gary Bennett, Chief
Office of Quality Assurance
and Data Integration

cc: Wayne Turnbull