

Accurate News

"Accurate News" is a publication of Accurate Labs & Training Center
Stillwater, OK 74074

Main Office: 505 S. Lowry ■ Stillwater, OK 74074
405-372-5300 ■ FAX: 405-372-5396
Volume: 1 Issue: 24



Oklahoma City: 405-236-5333 ■ Tulsa: 918-587-5300
Enid: 405-237-5353 ■ Wichita: 316-683-1123
October-December 1999

How Quick is Quick?

Turn around time, or TAT, as many refer to it, is an important subject to our customers and us. In this hurry up world we all want things to be done as quickly as possible. In the environmental laboratory, however, there are limits as to how quickly some things can be accomplished. Often methods specify how long a sample is to be extracted, dried, incubated, etc. With some methods one timed event follows another, meaning the test cannot be completed in a shorter time no matter how critical the need for data.

There are several factors that affect how quickly we can generate a report. First, the sample must be logged in and the tests assigned to the analysts. The analysts must then schedule the sample into their upcoming work requirements. Once the analyst has generated analytical data it must be reviewed for QA/QC validity. The data must then be incorporated into a written report document for transmission to the customer. The final report must be reviewed again before it can be released. Each one of these steps does take a certain amount of time...and we are hesitant to skip any of these steps even when our customer is in a hurry because past experience has taught us that this causes mistakes. These mistakes can sometimes be embarrassing for our customer and us and can lead to legal and regulatory problems as well.

Even the analysis of the sample itself can be a laborious and time-consuming affair. If the analyst does not have prior knowledge of the sample he may waste precious time making dilutions and rerunning tests trying to get a sample within calibration range or trying to get matrix spikes and duplicates to pass. More than once

we have promised quick TAT on a sample only to find out after we received it that the matrix of the sample prevents us from analyzing it in the time promised.

These are some of the factors that cause our standard TAT to be about seven to ten days (rather than the two or three our customers would like). These are also some of the reasons that requesting rush analysis costs more. Rather than putting the sample in the normal "assembly line" for analysis it must be treated differently... sometimes even being run in a batch of one, meaning the batch QC and analysis costs cannot be spread out over 10 samples but must be absorbed by that sample alone.

While we are on the subject of TAT, there is one issue that causes a lot of misunderstanding in our lab. The use of the term ASAP does not put samples into a RUSH mode. Only a specific request for rush analysis with a firm due date will trigger this special procedure.

Ken Crawford
QA/QC Manger

ATC Seeks Instructors

Accurate Training Center is looking for instructors to help provide training to the operators and lab technicians of this area. Position may be full or part time. Applicants must have an A or B license from Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality and a teachers certificate (or be capable of obtaining one) and teaching experience. Send resumes to ATC at 505 S. Lowry, Stillwater, OK 74074, c/o Dr. Ali Fazel. Call 405-372-5300 for more information.



Price vs. Performance

Each one of us faces the difficult choice between price and performance in both our business and our personal lives everyday. Do I take my car to the dealer and pay a little more or do I take a chance on my local mechanic who is cheaper but might not know much about the latest fuel injection systems?

Should I go with the established roofing company or take a chance on the guy who stopped by yesterday? After all, his price was half of the established company's price.

We all like to save money. However, most of us, as we gain more experience, find that you can't get something for nothing. We begin to understand that there is always a trade off. Particularly where services are being purchased, the trade off for a low price is usually poor quality work or very slow completion. Poor quality work is never acceptable but is also harder to identify where services are concerned. Slow completion is very noticeable and is usually the most irritating aspect of any service.

This is one of the things we observe frequently in the laboratory industry. The larger labs are particularly bad about offering stunningly low prices and promising the moon only to disappoint you by dragging the analysis out for weeks once your samples are in house. Those large labs tend to be focused on the big, high dollar projects they require to stay afloat, rather than on the small occasional customer. Even though they may be sincere at the time they promise to take care of you, they simply cannot afford to offend their large customers by putting your work first!

The next time you find yourself comparing prices on a lab bid please ask yourself if you really think the "low bidder" can perform. If your work is important can you afford to put it in the hands of a lab that might perform?

Or do you want a lab that has a history of performance, even if that lab is not the lowest price lab? At Accurate we don't pretend to be the cheapest lab. We do take pride, however, in our performance. Challenge us.

Dan Labus
Marketing Manager

Accurate Changes Routes

During the last few months we have made several changes to our sample pickup routes. As we mentioned in the last newsletter, we added a new route on Tuesday in the OKC and Ardmore area and enhanced our Thursday route in Shawnee, Tecumseh, Seminole, and Ada, as well as OKC. These routes will continue to be based out of our Stillwater office.

Starting in September we have changed our Tuesday route in Northeastern Oklahoma to Thursday. This route will now be based out of our Tulsa office, so those needing sample pickup can call this office at 918-307-1115 to schedule a stop. If you have any questions about our routes feel free to call Mike at this number or John at 405-372-5300.

UST Lab Forging Ahead

It's full speed ahead for BTEX/TPH analysis in our Tulsa lab. Brand-new HP 6890 gas chromatographs with robotic autosamplers combined with a very experienced chemist are producing high quality as well as rapid turn times. Even though the workload has picked up steadily since the UST lab came online, we still have tremendous capacity left to handle more samples. In fact, we probably are only at about 25% of capacity. We are currently delivering turn times of about 3 working days, which is well less than our stated goal of 5 days. We do not see any reason why we cannot maintain this turn time even if sample load increases dramatically.

In the event of an instrument problem we would still not see any major delays in turn time since the samples could easily be transported to Stillwater for analysis in our lab there. In fact, having nearly identical setups in Tulsa and Stillwater gives Accurate a backup that many labs lack. Please feel free to contact us if we can be of service on your next project that requires BTEX/TPH. We can deliver.

Tom Van Hensbergen
Organics Chemist

Accurate Ready for QA Boost

Although we strive to constantly improve quality in all phases of the laboratory, there are times when the improvements happen more rapidly than others. During the last few months we have decided to make some changes that we hope will produce significant gains in quality assurance over the coming months and years. These changes are the result of our own internal audits, those done by our customers and discussions with many knowledgeable professionals in the environmental field.

Most of the changes will occur in the arena of quality assurance rather than quality control. These changes involve activities that affect such areas as documentation, data validation, recordkeeping, and sample/result tracking.

A few will involve improvements in quality control measures such as spiking, duplication, laboratory control samples, etc. However, Accurate has been concentrating on these areas for years and only minor tweaks are necessary to upgrade QC. The changes to QA are more subtle and yet sometimes more complex, requiring longer periods of time to implement. Thus, these changes will not happen overnight. In fact, some may take months or even longer to fully implement.

We are making these changes for several reasons. First, we have always worked hard to be the best laboratory we can be and that is a driving force for these changes. Second, many of these improvements are necessary to protect not only Accurate, but also our customers, in situations where lab data may be challenged by regulators or in a legal arena. These changes may be "overkill" for some of our customers, but better to be safe than sorry! We will be informing you of these changes in future newsletters as they are implemented. In the meanwhile, we look forward to any suggestions you might have.

Ken Crawford
QA/QC Coordinator

New Cyanide Method Due Soon

A new method for testing available cyanide is under consideration by the EPA. This method, which goes by the ungainly name of "OIA-1677: Available Cyanide by Flow Injection, Ligand Exchange, and Amperometry," is set to become an additional test method for measuring the same cyanide species currently measured by the Cyanide Amenable to Chlorination method (CATC). It will not replace this method or the Total Cyanide Method.

Available cyanide is a rather poorly defined term that generally refers to the easily dissociable cyanide in a sample. Since many cyanide complexes are very stable they are often not included in an analysis by the CATC method. Some are so stable they are not even identified in the Total Cyanide Method.

This new method is claimed to have many advantages, the most important of which is a lack of interference. It has long been known that the CATC method suffers from many interferences, but unfortunately there are no easy fixes for these deficiencies. Method 1677 is virtually free from most of the interferences that plague the CATC method. It is also more sensitive, accurate, and precise as well as safer for the analyst and more environmentally friendly since it uses less sample and less reagent.

Method 1677 will be an asset to the regulated community when approved. However, it will not be an immediate solution to all the cyanide testing problems since most cyanide testing currently performed is for total cyanide, not available cyanide. There will be no way to directly compare the numbers generated by 1677 with those of the Total Cyanide Method. It may also be necessary for some changes to be made to permits before this method can be used, especially if a particular method has been written into the permit.

George Drye
Lab Manager

Accurate



Labs & Training Center

505 S. Lowry St.
Stillwater, OK 74074

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
STILLWATER, OK
PERMIT NO. 189

Accurate



Labs & Training Center

ATC Offers "Bounty"

Accurate Training Center is offering a special incentive for those who will refer students to us. A \$50 savings bond will be awarded to those people whose referral results in a student attending a 3 or 4 day class. There are several stipulations, however. The person referred cannot be employed by the same system as the person giving the recommendation. Also, the student must enroll by December 31, 1999, and attend class by March 31, 2000. The student must also give us the name of the person who referred them at the time of enrollment. If you have any questions about this promotion please feel free to call us.

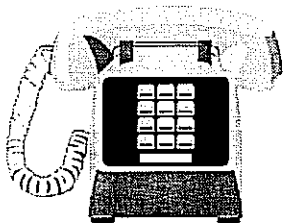
Clarke Hodson
ATC Administrator

Method 300.0 Update

Method 300.00, an ion chromatography method for measuring anions in water, is approved for use by EPA region 6. Although it is not found in the current version of CFR 40, Part 136, Accurate has been approved by region 6 to use this method for NPDES testing. If any pretreatment coordinator needs this in writing we would be glad to forward a copy. Please let me know.

Ken Crawford
QA/QC Manager

Accurate Labs will pick up your samples along seven statewide routes. Please call.



Stillwater
Enid
Oklahoma City
Tulsa
Wichita

405-372-5300
580-237-5353
405-236-5333
918-307-1115
316-683-1123

