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# Department of Environmental Protection

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## Fact Sheet

### Interim Guidance on Sampling and Analysis for PFAS at Disposal Sites Regulated under the Massachusetts Contingency Plan

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#### ***Introduction***

This Fact Sheet, prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup (BWSC), provides guidance regarding when and how to sample and analyze for Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (together, PFAS) at disposal sites regulated under the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (MCP). MassDEP recommends a specific list of target PFAS analytes and discusses appropriate quantitative and qualitative risk characterization approaches. The Fact Sheet also summarizes physical and chemical properties, potential environmental health effects, and current state and federal standards and guidelines for PFAS compounds.

PFAS may be present at MCP sites as a result of current or past releases associated with the manufacturing, use, or disposal of products containing these chemicals. PFAS are considered hazardous materials under MGL Chapter 21E and potential Contaminants of Concern (COCs).

#### ***Background Information***

##### **What are PFAS?**

PFAS are part of a large family of man-made fluorine-containing chemicals which have been used to impart unique properties when applied to materials, including resistance to water, grease and stains. They are also used for thermal stability, foaming control, flow control, leveling and wetting. For the purpose of this Fact Sheet, the substances of primary concern are the longer-chain perfluoroalkyl acids

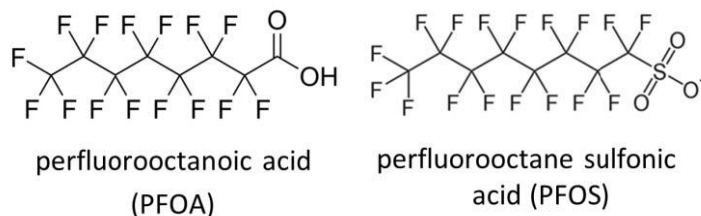
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(C<sub>6</sub> to C<sub>10</sub>)<sup>1</sup>, such as perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), and products that can form these long-chain perfluoroalkyl acids.



As with any large family of structurally-similar compounds, PFAS can exhibit a wide range of physical, chemical and toxicological properties. This Fact Sheet focuses on those compounds and characteristics of greatest environmental concern while acknowledging that unique properties of individual PFAS may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Some PFAS (e.g., PFOA, PFOS) can be very resistant to breakdown, migrate easily, and concentrate in the food chain (i.e., bioaccumulate). As a result, they may be found throughout the environment in groundwater, surface water, soil, and air, as well as in food, breast milk, and human blood serum. PFAS have been used for decades in many common products but their presence in the environment is still poorly understood as they have been subject to very limited testing.

### Human Exposure and Potential Health Effects

Although our knowledge of the health risks posed by PFAS is still incomplete, exposures to these compounds have been associated with a wide range of adverse health effects in studies on laboratory animals and in people. These studies indicate that sufficient exposure to PFAS compounds, in particular PFOA and PFOS, may result in adverse effects on fetal and neonate development such as low birth weight, accelerated puberty, delayed mammary gland development and skeletal variations. Other adverse effects observed in adults include liver damage, effects on the immune system, thyroid, and cholesterol levels. There is also inconclusive evidence that they might cause testicular and kidney cancer in animals and humans. Some studies suggest that these chemicals function as endocrine disruptors and mimic fatty acids in the body. The chemicals are not easily excreted and remain in the human body for years (estimated 4 to 8 years), which can cause them to build up in the body following exposures.

While humans may be exposed to PFAS through a variety of pathways, the most common and significant environmental exposure at disposal sites is through the consumption of drinking water from contaminated public or private water supplies<sup>2</sup>. These chemicals have been found in a number of drinking water systems due to localized contamination from nearby manufacturing facilities that used PFAS or areas where the chemicals were used in firefighting foams. However, some PFAS are capable of traveling long distances through air and groundwater and may be found far from the locations where they were initially released into the environment.

Because these chemicals have been used in an array of consumer products, most people have been

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<sup>1</sup> The discussion in this Fact Sheet applies to both the acid and anion forms of PFAS.

<sup>2</sup> Depending upon the disposal site, other exposure pathways may be of concern, such as inhalation of contaminated air and contact with contaminated soil.

exposed to them. Since 1999, United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC) has measured several types of PFAS in the US population as part of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). In particular, the survey has measured PFOS and PFOA. With the decrease in production and use of some PFAS, the national PFAS levels also have dropped over time. From 1999 to 2014, blood PFOA and PFOS levels declined by more than 60% and 80%, respectively<sup>3</sup>.

### Sources of PFAS in the Environment

PFAS have been used since the 1940s as manufacturer-applied oil and water repellants on products such as clothing, upholstery, paper, and carpets, and were also used in making fluoropolymers for non-stick cookware (Table 1). Thus, these materials may be associated with many industries, including subsets of the aerospace, automotive, manufacturing, electronics, and textiles industries. PFAS surfactant qualities were also utilized in mist suppressants that can be added to metal plating baths to prevent air releases and to firefighting foams used to extinguish or prevent fires associated with flammable liquids.

Aqueous Film Forming Foams (AFFF) that contain PFOS have been used since the 1960s to prevent or extinguish highly flammable or combustible liquid Class B fires, such as fires involving gas tankers and oil refineries, and at military bases, airports, and firefighting training facilities. The foam has also been used by local fire departments in training and to extinguish (or prevent) motor vehicle fires at crash sites. AFFF containing PFOS has not been manufactured in the US since 2002 but stockpiles may remain at Department of Defense (DoD) bases, airports, local fire departments and other facilities.

PFOA has been used primarily as an aqueous dispersion agent in the manufacturing of fluoropolymers, which are substances with special properties that have thousands of manufacturing and industrial applications. While manufacturers are phasing out the use of PFOA in these applications, site investigations should consider the past use and past formulations when investigating possible PFAS releases.

PFOA and PFOS can also be created by the biotransformation of some fluorotelomers and other compounds (i.e., precursor compounds). Fluorotelomers are used in firefighting foams (as a replacement for PFOS) and as surface protection to provide soil, stain, grease, and water resistance in products such as tile, stone, textiles, and paper packaging.

PFOA and PFOS are no longer manufactured in the United States as a result of voluntary phase-outs, with a few exceptions for limited industrial uses. As part of the US Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPA) PFOA Stewardship Program<sup>4</sup>, eight major chemical manufacturers committed to eliminate the use of PFOA and PFOA-related chemicals in their facilities' emissions and product content by 2015. However PFOA and PFOS are still produced in other locations around the world and may continue to be imported into the US in consumer goods such as carpets, leather, apparel, textiles, paper and packaging, coatings, rubber, and plastics.

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<sup>3</sup> National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals, [www.cdc.gov/exposurereport](http://www.cdc.gov/exposurereport)

<sup>4</sup> Fact Sheet: 2010/2015 PFOA Stewardship Program  
[www.epa.gov/assessing-and-managing-chemicals-under-tsca/fact-sheet-20102015-pfoa-stewardship-program](http://www.epa.gov/assessing-and-managing-chemicals-under-tsca/fact-sheet-20102015-pfoa-stewardship-program)

**Table 1: Potential Processes, Uses & Sources of PFAS**

Processes
Application of fluoropolymer coatings in manufacturing
Production of plastics/polymers
Application of oil and water repellent finishes/coatings
Firefighting and fire prevention activities using certain foams
Mist suppression in metal plating operations
Photo microlithography process to produce semiconductors
Photography and film production and processing

Product Uses/Sources
Some grease-resistant paper
Fast food containers/wrappers
Microwave popcorn bags
Pizza boxes
Candy wrappers
Non-stick cookware
Stain and/or water-resistant coatings used on carpets, upholstery, and other fabrics
Water-resistant clothing
Adhesives
Aviation hydraulic fluids
Paints, varnishes and sealants

As a consequence of the widespread use of PFAS in consumer products, the effluent from residential septic systems and wastewater treatments plants can contribute to environmental concentrations at a site. The presence of such sources may be documented and considered as a component of the Conceptual Site Model.

### ***Standards and Guidelines***

#### **Federal Criteria**

No federal drinking water standards have been established for PFOS and PFOA. USEPA is collecting drinking water data to determine if establishing a Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) is warranted under the Safe Drinking Water Act based on PFOS and PFOA occurrence in drinking water, the number of people potentially being exposed, observed exposure levels, and costs for treatment to reduce levels. On June 15, 2022, USEPA released Final Drinking Water Health Advisories (HAs) for GenX and Perfluorobutanesulfonic acid (PFBS) and Interim HAs for PFOA and PFOS.<sup>5</sup> As published by USEPA, the HA level is non-enforceable/non-regulatory guidance intended to describe a concentration in drinking water offering a margin of protection for all Americans from adverse health effects throughout their



<sup>5</sup> Drinking Water Health Advisories for GenX, PFBS, PFOS and PFOA:  
<https://www.epa.gov/sdwa/drinking-water-health-advisories-has>

life resulting from exposure to contaminants<sup>6</sup>.

### **Massachusetts Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL)**

On October 2, 2020 MassDEP promulgated a drinking water standard of 20 ppt for the sum on six PFAS: Perfluorodecanoic acid (PFDA), Perfluoroheptanoic acid (PFHpA), Perfluorohexanesulfonic acid (PFHxS), Perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). The MassDEP Drinking Water Program has published information about the development and implementation of the PFAS MCL, including material specific to consumers and Public Water Suppliers.<sup>7</sup> The Drinking Water Program works closely with public water suppliers if PFAS is detected in a system at concentrations exceeding or approaching the MCL. The DWP can assist with technical support, public notice templates, fact sheets and development of treatment options or alternative sources if necessary.

### ***PFAS CONSIDERATIONS AT MCP SITES***

#### **Hazardous Materials Regulated Under M.G.L. Chapter 21E**

Hazardous Material is defined (310 CMR 40.0006) to be a “material, including, but not limited to, any material in whatever form which, because of its quantity, concentration, chemical, corrosive, flammable, reactive, toxic, infectious or radioactive characteristics, either separately or in combination with any substance or substances, constitutes a present or potential threat to human health, safety, welfare, or to the environment, when improperly stored, treated, transported, disposed of, used, or otherwise managed...” MassDEP has determined, pursuant to 310 CMR 40.0342, that the available toxicity information for PFOS, PFOA and related PFAS compounds indicates that these materials are “hazardous materials” subject to regulations under M.G.L. c.21E and the MCP.

#### **Reportable Conditions for PFAS Compounds**

MassDEP has established Reportable Concentrations (RCs) and Reportable Quantities (RQs) under the MCP in 310 CMR 40.1600 – the Massachusetts Oil and Hazardous Material List (“MOHML”). The RQs and RCs for PFAS are listed in Table 2.

A release indicated by the measurement of PFAS in soil and/or groundwater at a concentration equal to or greater than the applicable Reportable Concentration requires notification to the Department under the provisions of 310 CMR 40.0315. A sudden, continuous or intermittent release to the environment equal to or greater than the Reportable Quantity requires notification to the Department under the provisions of 310 CMR 40.0311.

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<sup>6</sup> In developing the USEPA health advisory levels, the USEPA assumed that drinking water accounts for 20 percent of PFAS exposure.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas>

**Table 2 – Reportable Quantities and Reportable Concentrations for PFAS**

	RQ (pounds)	RCGW-1 mg/L	RCGW-2 mg/L	RCS-1 mg/kg	RCS-2 mg/kg
∑ 6 PFAS (listed below)	-	2E-05 (20 ng/L or ppt)	-	-	-
PERFLUORODECANOIC ACID (PFDA)	1	See ∑6 PFAS	40	3E-04 (300 ng/kg)	0.4
PERFLUOROHEPTANOIC ACID (PFHpA)	1	See ∑6 PFAS	40	5E-04 (500 ng/kg)	0.4
PERFLUOROHEXANESULFONIC ACID (PFHxS)	1	See ∑6 PFAS	0.5	3E-04 (300 ng/kg)	0.4
PERFLUORONONANOIC ACID (PFNA)	1	See ∑6 PFAS	40	3.2E-04 (320 ng/kg)	0.4
PERFLUOROOCETANESULFONIC ACID (PFOS)	1	See ∑6 PFAS	0.5	2E-03 (2,000 ng/kg)	0.4
PERFLUOROOCETANOIC ACID (PFOA)	1	See ∑6 PFAS	40	7.2E-04 (720 ng/kg)	0.4

Other notification requirements applicable to any oil or hazardous material may also apply to PFAS, as described in 310 CMR 40.0300<sup>8</sup>.

**PFAS Compounds as Contaminants of Concern**

In general, MassDEP recommends that the 14 analytes specified in EPA Method 537 Rev. 1.1 and listed in Table 3 should be the focus of MCP site investigations. (See also the following discussion of analytical methods and reporting limits.) However, specific knowledge of site history/operations, the results of past analyses and other relevant information may be considered, consistent with MassDEP sampling and analysis guidance, to expand or narrow the list of target analytes. For example, if past industrial operations at the site indicate the likely presence of other PFAS compounds at toxicologically significant concentrations, then those compounds would also be included in the investigation.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, pursuant to 310 CMR 40.0311(7), “any release of any oil and/or hazardous material, in any quantity or concentration, that poses or could pose an Imminent Hazard, as described in 310 CMR 40.0321 and 40.0950” requires notification within two hours.

## PFAS in MCP Risk Characterizations

The potential risks posed by PFAS contamination at a site may be addressed using MCP Methods 1, 2 or 3, as described in 310 CMR 40.0900.

**Method 1** – MassDEP has published<sup>9</sup> Method 1 groundwater and soil standards for PFAS. As part of a Method 1 Risk Characterization, Exposure Point Concentrations at a site may be compared to the applicable groundwater and soil standards listed in 310 CMR 40.0970.

**Method 2** – As described in 310 CMR 40.0980, the Method 1 standards (not including the GW-1 standards) may be modified under Method 2 to reflect site-specific fate and transport conditions. These modifications may address soil leaching (310 CMR 40.0982(3)(b)), vapor intrusion (310 CMR 40.0982(3)(c)), and/or discharge to surface water (310 CMR 40.0982(3)(d)). For example, a site-specific evaluation of PFAS leaching potential may result in a target cleanup level (Method 2 Standard) that is different than (higher or lower) than the published Method 1 Standard.

**Method 3** – A site-specific risk characterization pursuant to 310 CMR 40.0990 may be used at any site to evaluate current and foreseeable future risk of harm to human health, safety, public welfare and the environment. When conducting a Method 3 human health risk characterization for PFAS, MassDEP requires the use of a specific chronic and subchronic reference dose (RfD) of 5E-06 mg/kg/day<sup>10</sup> pursuant to 310 CMR 40.0993(6)(f). The Massachusetts drinking water MCL for PFAS is considered an applicable or suitably analogous standard pursuant to 310 CMR 40.0993(3)(a).

## Qualitatively Evaluate Other PFAS Compounds

For other PFAS compounds not listed in Table 2, MassDEP has not identified toxicity information sufficient for the purposes of an MCP risk characterization. The concentrations of these PFAS compounds at a disposal site should be discussed as part of the overall site assessment, but – *at this time* - these PFAS need not be quantitatively included in the MCP risk characterization.

## PFAS SAMPLING AND ANALYSIS CONSIDERATIONS

### When/Where to Sample for PFAS

Under the MCP, many factors are considered by the Licensed Site Professional (LSP) to determine the sampling strategy – including likely COCs - at a disposal site. The need to sample for PFAS will depend on the disposal site Conceptual Site Model and case-specific information, including the specific nature of

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<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.mass.gov/doc/final-pfas-related-changes-to-the-mcp-2019-12-13/download>

<sup>10</sup> See “Technical Support Document - Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS): An Updated Subgroup Approach to Groundwater and Drinking Water Values”  
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas-an-updated-subgroup-approach-to-groundwater-and/download>

operations at a site, the time period (relative to PFAS availability) of operations and the proximity to current or future drinking water sources (GW-1 areas).

The need for drinking water samples (i.e., from a public or private drinking water well or tap) would be indicated where plume delineation shows potential for contamination of a drinking water supply well.

For example, sampling for PFAS should be considered at locations in or near GW-1 areas where the following activities may have occurred or where related wastes have come to be located:

**Facilities** where PFAS have been manufactured (i.e., chemical facilities) or applied (see the list of process/product uses/sources in Table 1) and may have resulted in releases to the environment (including air emissions and subsequent air distribution).

**Landfills**<sup>11</sup> where uncontrolled leaching from disposal of waste materials from PFAS manufacturing facilities may have occurred.

**Junkyards** and other locations where auto fluff may have been disposed.

**Former or Current DoD sites** where there has been (or likely has been) historic use of AFFF.

**Airport** hangars, rail yards and other facilities (e.g., petrochemical) where quantities of AFFF may have been applied or stored.

**Firefighting training and equipment test areas** where AFFF has been (or likely has been) used.

**Crash sites**, including aircraft, rail and motor vehicle sites where AFFF may have been used.

**Metal coating and plating facilities.**

## How to Sample for PFAS

Because of the potential presence of PFAS in common consumer products and in equipment typically used to collect soil, groundwater, surface water, sediment, and drinking water samples as well as the need for very low reporting limits, special handling and care must be taken when collecting samples for PFAS analysis to avoid sample contamination. In general, items that are specifically identified as waterproof, water resistant or stain-resistant should be avoided or examined for the potential presence of PFAS. There is extensive guidance available online<sup>12</sup> and

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<sup>11</sup> This guidance is applicable to landfills and other solid waste facilities for which assessments are conducted in whole or in part under the MCP. Facilities regulated under 310 CMR 16.00: Site Assessment for Solid Waste Facilities may also be required to sample for PFAS as a permit requirement.

<sup>12</sup> Sources of sampling information include:

- USEPA's "Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), Methods and guidance for sampling and analyzing water and other environmental media", [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-04/documents/pfas\\_methods\\_tech\\_brief\\_02apr18\\_revison.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-04/documents/pfas_methods_tech_brief_02apr18_revison.pdf)
- ITRC's "Site Characterization Considerations, Sampling Precautions, and Laboratory Analytical Methods for Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)" [https://pfas-1.itrcweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/pfas\\_fact\\_sheet\\_site\\_characterization\\_3\\_15\\_18.pdf](https://pfas-1.itrcweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/pfas_fact_sheet_site_characterization_3_15_18.pdf)



it is not MassDEP's intent to require the use and avoidance of certain products, particularly as formulations may change over time.

*Specific recommendations are less important than the LSP's awareness and consideration of how product formulation or analytical methodologies may affect the results at a site.*

### **Sample collection method/sequence**

- Use new nitrile gloves, collect the sample for PFCs prior to collecting samples for any other analysis to avoid contact with other types of sample containers, bottles or package materials.
- As with all samples, do not place the sample bottle cap on any surface when collecting the sample, and avoid all contact with the inside of the sample bottle or its cap.
- When the sample is collected and capped, place the sample bottle(s) in an individual sealed plastic bag, separate from all other sample parameter bottles, and place in shipping container packed only with ice.
- Groundwater, surface water, or drinking water samples should not be field filtered as the glass fiber on the filter can potentially absorb PFAS, resulting in underestimates of PFAS concentration. No sub-sampling/sample transfer should occur in the field. Water samples should be placed in sealed plastic bags to avoid contamination during transport.

### **Field/Equipment Blanks**

When sampling for PFAS, it is recommended that additional and/or more frequent field/equipment blanks be collected prior to and during sampling to check for residual PFAS on sampling equipment due to the potential for cross-contamination issues and the need for very low reporting limits. Source water for blank samples and decontamination fluids should be certified PFAS-free by the analytical laboratory.

### **Analytical Methods**

Chemical and physical properties of PFAS prevent the use of conventional analysis (e.g., gas chromatography/mass spectrometry [GC/MS]) to measure them in the environment. US EPA has published a Technical Brief<sup>13</sup> that describes methods for analyzing PFAS in various analytical media, including methods specifically *required* for drinking water analyses (Methods 537.1 and 533). Close coordination and advance planning with a qualified laboratory is strongly recommended, particularly if sampling matrices other than water.

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<sup>13</sup> **Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)** - Methods and guidance for sampling and analyzing water and other environmental media  
[https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-12/documents/pfas\\_methods-sampling\\_tech\\_brief\\_23dec19\\_update.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-12/documents/pfas_methods-sampling_tech_brief_23dec19_update.pdf)

See also:

- [www.epa.gov/water-research/epa-drinking-water-research-methods](http://www.epa.gov/water-research/epa-drinking-water-research-methods)
- [www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-09/documents/pfoa-technical-advisory.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-09/documents/pfoa-technical-advisory.pdf)

A “modified” Method 537.1 - *or other analytical method* - may also be considered for an MCP site investigation, particularly for sampling media other than drinking water. Under the MCP, results from the use of an alternative method may be acceptable for site assessment and remedial decisions if the results meet data quality objectives and the supporting QA/QC information is provided. **Note, however, that the use of a method other than Method 537, 537.1 or 533 may not be acceptable for the evaluation of Public Drinking Water Supplies regulated pursuant to 310 CMR 22.00.** It is important to confirm the acceptability of using results from an alternative method before samples are analyzed.

The USEPA, MassDEP and others are currently reviewing the analytical methods available for PFAS. MassDEP is planning to include a PFAS analysis in the Compendium of Analytical Methods (CAM)<sup>14</sup>. At a minimum, the 14 analytes specified in EPA Method 537 Rev. 1.1 and listed below (Table 3) should be the focus of MCP site investigations at this time.

**Table 3 - EPA Method 537 Rev. 1.1 Analyte List**

Analyte	Acronym
N-ethyl perfluorooctanesulfonamidoacetic acid	NEtFOSAA
N-methyl perfluorooctanesulfonamidoacetic acid	NMeFOSAA
Perfluorobutanesulfonic acid	PFBS
Perfluorodecanoic acid	PFDA
Perfluorododecanoic acid	PFDoA
Perfluoroheptanoic acid	PFHpA
Perfluorohexanesulfonic acid	PFHxS
Perfluorohexanoic acid	PFHxA
Perfluorononanoic acid	PFNA
Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid	PFOS
Perfluorooctanoic acid	PFOA
Perfluorotetradecanoic acid	PFTA
Perfluorotridecanoic acid	PFTTrDA
Perfluoroundecanoic acid	PFUnA


Before September 2009, there were no validated test methods or standardized data quality criteria. As a result, most PFAS data generated and used in earlier publications and assessments have limitations and should be used, if necessary, with caution.


<sup>14</sup> [www.mass.gov/guides/compendium-of-analytical-methods-cam](http://www.mass.gov/guides/compendium-of-analytical-methods-cam)

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