

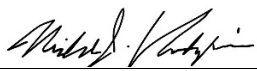
**Cover Sheet
Standard Operating Procedure**

Operation Title: Chain of Custody Protocol

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1.0 Applicability

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) applies to all programs in the Maine Department of Environmental Protection's (MEDEP) Division of Remediation (DR). It may be utilized by other Divisions within MEDEP, as determined by the respective Division Directors or their designees.

This SOP is not a rule and is not intended to have the force of law, nor does it create or affect any legal rights of any individual, all of which are determined by applicable statutes and law. This SOP does not supersede statutes or rules.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe the MEDEP/DR procedure for using and implementing sample chains of custody (COC).

3.0 Key Definitions

Chain of Custody Form: A document detailing who is legally responsible for samples at any point in time from collection until the sample is received by the laboratory.

Custody: A sample is "in custody" when: 1) the sample is in the sampler's possession, 2) the sample was in the sampler's possession and then secured by the sampler to prevent tampering, or 3) the sample is placed in a designated secure area.

Secure Area: An area in which entry is limited by keyed lock to a designated population.

4.0 Responsibilities

All MEDEP/DR Staff must follow this procedure when performing this task. All Managers and Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that their staff are familiar with and adhere to this SOP. MEDEP/DR staff reviewing data by outside parties should ensure that this SOP (or an equivalent) is followed, depending on the specific Data Quality Objectives (DQOs) of the task.

Other MEDEP SOPs may also apply when performing this task, including, but not limited to MEDEP/DR SOP *RWM-DR-014 - Development of a Sampling and Analysis*

Plan (SAP). The SAP should consider quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) samples and measures, the specifics of which will depend on the DQOs for the task. Types of QA/QC samples are discussed in more detail in the DR Quality Assurance Plan (QAP). SAP development includes provisions for creating a Health and Safety Plan (HASP) associated with the activity, including compliance with [Dig Safe](#) notifications when disturbing soil with powered equipment or tools (i.e., not hand tools). Dig Safe notification does not include public utility clearance requests which must be completed separately (e.g., sewer and water lines). These utility marking requests typically do not extend onto marking private property (i.e., they may only mark lines in the public right of way), so hiring a private utility marking company may be necessary, depending on site specifics. Fieldwork and data collection tasks must be properly documented in accordance with applicable MEDEP SOPs and policies.

5.0 Guidelines and Procedures

5.1 Introduction

This SOP establishes the proper methods for implementation of sample chain of custody documentation and procedure. Proper sample chain of custody procedures are essential to collecting valid information which may be used in any legal proceedings. Additionally, all samples must be stored properly until delivery to the laboratory to ensure proper preservation of the samples and to avoid introducing contamination from ambient conditions. Transportation to the laboratory should be arranged as quickly as possible to avoid exceedances of holding times for analysis.

Failure to maintain possession in the ways outlined in this SOP would constitute a break in sample custody and would likely discredit the samples as use of evidence in administrative or court proceedings and the validity of the samples. The sampler must assume that all samples collected will someday be used as evidence and treat the task of sample custody accordingly.

Sample custody begins immediately after a sample is collected. The sampler who collected the sample is responsible for the preservation and integrity of all samples until that responsibility is transferred to someone else and documented with the COC form. This COC form then travels with the samples and is used to document any other transfers of custody.

5.2 Chain of Custody

The COC form will document the information identifying the sample and a record of the relinquishing and receiving individuals. All samples from different locations must be given separate identifiers. Sample identifiers, analyses requested, date and time, type and size of container, and any added preservatives must be indicated on the COC for each sample. Date, time, and name written legibly, with signature, must be included in all entries outlining a change in the possession of the samples. Samples which may have high levels of contamination or may be hazardous to health should be indicated as such in the comments section of the COC. The COC should also indicate who, with contact information, will receive the completed data package and what data deliverables are requested for inclusion in the data package.

MEDEP/DR personnel will use the COC provided by the laboratory that is conducting the analysis of the samples, making sure to fill the form out completely and accurately. Once received by the laboratory, the laboratory will use a separate internal COC for documenting access to the samples during analysis.

5.3 Overnight Storage

Whenever possible, all samples will be taken to the laboratory performing the analyses on the same day the samples are collected or given to a courier service to transport the samples to the laboratory. If it is impossible to check in samples at the laboratory the same day, the samples should be placed in a secure area, following appropriate protocol for sample preservation (such as cooling to 4°C).

During the winter months, the sampler must make sure the samples are kept from freezing while being stored. Samples should not be stored in an area that has ambient conditions that would cross-contaminate the samples, such as a garage with large amounts of gasoline storage.

If samples are not checked into the laboratory the same day as they are collected, the storage location and means of providing security shall be documented.

5.4 Use of Courier Services

If samples are given to a common carrier, such as United Parcel Service or FedEx, the last person who has custody of the samples will sign off on the

COC and state that the samples will be given to a common courier on the COC. The COC is then placed in the shipping container with the samples, and the shipping container is sealed with a tamper proof custody seal and given to the courier. The COC, while in the courier's possession, is the shipping record used by the courier. All samples should be shipped for next day delivery. If shipping samples on a Friday, make sure the laboratory is staffed for a Saturday delivery.

The laboratory receiving the samples must check the integrity of the shipping container seal upon receipt. If the seal is broken, the laboratory staff receiving the container must indicate the broken seal on the COC that belongs with the samples.

5.5 Sample Container Tamper-Proof Seals

The laboratory receiving the samples must check the integrity of the shipping container seal upon receipt. If the seal is broken, the laboratory staff receiving the container must indicate the broken seal on the COC that belongs with the samples.

5.6 Disposition of Completed Chain of Custody

Upon drop-off of the samples at the laboratory, the laboratory should retain the original copy of the COC and provide a copy to the sample transporter. If using a common courier for transport, the laboratory should send a copy of the COC after receiving the samples. A copy of the COC should be included with the trip report, as outlined in MEDEP/DR SOP# RWM-DR-013 – Documentation of Field Activities and Development of a Trip Report.

6.0 Documentation

Make sure that all the pertinent information is accurately transferred to the COC. The exact same identifiers should be copied on both the COC and Trip Report (i.e. the same sample point name, project name, spill number, etc.) to ensure continuity among forms and ease of reporting and uploading data to the appropriate databases.

7.0 References

None