

## PROFICIENCY ANALYTICAL TESTING (PAT) PROGRAM

### Proficiency Analytical Testing (PAT) Program November 29, 1997

Curtis A. Esche and Jensen H. Groff

*Mr. Esche and Mr. Groff are affiliated with the Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Division of Physical Sciences and Engineering, Quality Assurance and Statistics Activity. They can be reached at HHS/PHS/CDC/NIOSH, Robert A. Taft Laboratories, 4676 Columbia Parkway (MS/R8), Cincinnati, OH 45226.*

#### PAT ROUND 131 OCTOBER 1997

A total of 1246 laboratories were enrolled in the PAT Program with 1103 laboratories submitting results on Round 131. Table I lists the reference values, performance limits, and participants for each sample type in the PAT Program. Table II presents the summary of the PAT proficiency ratings for each analytical area.

#### PAT ROUND 132 JANUARY 1998

PAT Round 132 was sent to participating laboratories on December 24, 1997. In the PAT program, the organic solvents were benzene, o-xylene, and toluene. Metals in this round included cadmium, chromium, and lead. Silica had a talc and coal background, and asbestos/fibers were amosite with one man-made fiber sample.

#### BACKGROUND

The Proficiency Analytical Testing (PAT) Program is a collaborative effort of the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) and researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The PAT Program provides quality control reference samples to more than 1200 occupational health and environmental laboratories in 17 countries. Although one objective of the PAT Program is to evaluate the analytical ability

of participating laboratories, the primary objective is to assist these laboratories in improving their laboratory performance.

Each calendar quarter (designated as a round), samples are mailed to participating laboratories, and the data are analyzed to evaluate laboratory performance on a series of analyses. Each mailing and subsequent data analysis is completed in time for participants to obtain repeat samples and to correct analytical problems before the next calendar quarter starts. The PAT Program currently includes four sets of samples as shown in

Table III. A mixture of 3 of the 4 possible metals, and 1 to 3 of the 15 possible organic solvents, are rotated for each round. Fibers alternate between amosite and chrysotile asbestos and man-made fibers; no fiber mixtures are provided. Each set consists of four concentrations and a blank. The metals, silica, and fibers samples are on filters, and the organic solvents are on charcoal, carbon molecular sieve, or silica gel tubes. The organic solvent set also includes five blank charcoal, carbon molecular sieve, or silica gel tubes for desorption efficiency determination.

Laboratories are evaluated for each analysis by comparing their reported results against an acceptable performance limit for each PAT Program sample the laboratory analyzes. Reference laboratories are preselected to provide the performance limits for each sample. These reference laboratories must meet the following criteria: (1) the laboratory was rated proficient in the last PAT evaluation of all the contaminants in the program; and (2) the laboratory, if located in the United States, is AIHA accredited. After the data

TABLE I. Reference Values, Performance Limits, and Participants for Each Sample Type; PAT Round 131 (October 1997)

Contaminant	Sample Number	No. of Reference Labs	Reference Value	RSD (%)	Performance Limits		No. of Labs	No. of Outliers
					Lower	Upper		
Cadmium (mg)	1	54	0.0171	5.0	0.0146	0.0197	317	18
	2	54	0.0058	5.1	0.0049	0.0066	317	23
	3	54	0.0170	4.6	0.0147	0.0194	317	23
	4	54	0.0025	6.5	0.0020	0.0029	317	24
Lead (mg)	1	54	0.0225	4.3	0.0196	0.0254	320	37
	2	54	0.0494	3.7	0.0439	0.0549	320	38
	3	54	0.0524	4.2	0.0459	0.0589	320	31
	4	54	0.0898	4.6	0.0775	0.1021	320	24
Zinc (mg)	1	54	0.0491	4.7	0.0421	0.0561	316	36
	2	54	0.0783	4.0	0.0688	0.0877	316	37
	3	54	0.1464	3.8	0.1295	0.1632	316	42
	4	54	0.1077	4.6	0.0930	0.1224	316	30
Silica (mg)	1	54	0.0502	33.3	0.0001	0.1002	73	2
	2	54	0.0750	21.7	0.0261	0.1240	73	4
	3	54	0.1064	19.5	0.0443	0.1685	73	3
	4	54	0.1106	21.4	0.0396	0.1815	73	2
Asbestos/Fibers (Chrysotile) (f/mm <sup>2</sup> )	1	54	183	29.0	63	367	948	63
	2	54	71	26.4	26	138	948	37
	3	54	132	27.1	45	264	948	79
	4	54	230	29.9	75	469	948	56
Methanol (mg)	1	54	0.2163	5.0	0.1836	0.2490	288	28
	2	54	0.3641	5.4	0.3053	0.4228	288	19
	3	54	0.5478	9.4	0.3931	0.7024	288	22
	4	54	0.1318	7.6	0.1018	0.1619	288	30

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**TABLE II. PAT Proficiency Ratings Based on Rounds 128 to 131 (January 1997–December 1997)**

Contaminant	No. of Labs Rated	No. of Labs Rated Proficient	Percent Labs Rated Proficient
Metals	317	292	92.1
Silica	74	73	98.7
Asbestos/fibers	949	908	95.7
Organic solvents	290	268	92.4

from the reference laboratories are collected and statistically treated, the mean of the collected data is called the reference value and the performance limits equal the mean  $\pm 3$  standard deviations. Data are acceptable if they fall within the performance limits. Data falling outside the performance limits are reported as outliers.

Laboratories are rated based on performance in the PAT Program over the last year (i.e., four calendar quarters), as well as on individual contaminant performance. Individual contaminants are met-

**TABLE III. Current Sets of Samples in the PAT Program**

Metals	cadmium	
	chromium	
	lead	
	zinc	
Silica	quartz	
Asbestos/fibers	amosite	
	chrysotile	
	man-made fibers	
Organic solvents	benzene	methyl ethyl ketone
	n-butyl acetate	methyl isobutyl ketone
		tetrachloroethylene
	chloroform	toluene
	1,2-dichloroethane	1,1,1-trichloroethane
	p-dioxane	trichloroethylene
	ethyl acetate	o-xylene
	isopropanol	
	methanol	

als, silica, asbestos/fibers, and organic solvents. Individual contaminant performance is rated as (1) proficient if all results have been reported and all are classified as acceptable for the last two consecutive rounds; and (2) proficient in all other cases if three-fourths or more of the results reported in the last four consecutive rounds are classified as acceptable.<sup>(1)</sup>

## References

1. Esche, C.A., J.H. Groff, P.C. Schlecht, and S.A. Shulman: *Laboratory Evaluations and Performance Reports for the Proficiency Analytical Testing (PAT) and Environmental Lead Proficiency Analytical Testing (ELPAT) Programs* (DHHS/NIOSH no. 95-104). Cincinnati, OH: National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 1994.



### Purdue University School of Health Sciences Graduate Study in Industrial Hygiene

The Purdue University School of Health Sciences offers M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Industrial Hygiene. The program includes advanced coursework in biostatistics, toxicology, occupational diseases, industrial hygiene sampling, industrial hygiene control technology, physical agents, safety and aerosol science. Students get "hands-on" experience in laboratory exercises, thesis research and internships. Faculty research includes Indoor Air Quality, Bioaerosols, Pulmonary Deposition of Aerosols and Nonionizing Radiation. A graduate Health Physics program provides opportunities for research combining Industrial Hygiene and Health Physics. Ties with other University programs make possible specializations in Air Pollution Control Engineering, Ergonomics, Agricultural Health and Safety, Toxicology and Epidemiology.

The typical length of the M.S. program is two years of full time study. Students may also enroll on a part time basis. Graduate students have access to School and University-wide facilities including extensive computing facilities, libraries, and research support services, as well as cultural and recreational programs.

A NIOSH fellowship and a limited number of teaching assistantships are available for graduate student support. The School is also a participant in the DOE sponsored Industrial Hygiene graduate fellowship program.

Purdue University is a land-grant state-funded institution with an approximate enrollment of 60,000. The School of Health Sciences is located on Purdue's campus at West Lafayette, Indiana, approximately one hour from Indianapolis and two hours from Chicago.

For further information contact Frank S. Rosenthal, Ph.D., CIH or Neil J. Zimmerman, Ph.D., CIH, P.E., School of Health Sciences, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907. Phone 765-494-1419.

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