

Management/Assessment of Fuel Release Sites: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Guidance Letter Addressing Analytical Methods



Walter Wright, Jr.
wwright@mwlaw.com
(501) 688.8839

01/07/2020

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) addressed in a November 25, 2019, guidance letter, an issue involving the management and assessment of fuel release sites (“guidance letter”).

The guidance letter is transmitted from the EPA Waste Characterization Branch Chief, Kim Kirkland of the Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery to Mr. Tom Rinehart, Regulatory Affairs Manager of Chevron Environmental Management and Real Estate Company.

Mr. Rinehart is stated to have indicated that some states interpret EPA guidance (citing *EPA’s Test Methods for Evaluating Solid Waste: Physical/Chemical Methods [SW-846]* under their respective state programs. An example cited involves the analysis of petroleum hydrocarbons in environmental samples using SW-846 Method 8015. It is further noted that:

...Some regulators may be reluctant to approve the use of sample cleanup methods (e.g., silica gel) together with Method 8015, because the cleanup methods are not specifically mentioned in EPA Method 8015.

In addressing the question posed, the guidance letter states that:

...how an environmental sample is prepared and analyzed can depend upon the purpose of a particular measurement (e.g., regulatory requirements, desired target analytes, necessary quantitation limits, etc.)

Further, it acknowledges there are various approaches states may take when requiring the measurement of petroleum hydrocarbons in environmental samples. A survey by the Interstate Technology and Regulatory Council is cited. It found that state agencies were evenly split between allowing and not allowing silica gel cleanups such as Method 3630. The guidance letter also notes that:

...while Method 8015C does not specifically list all appropriate sample preparation and cleanup methods may be combined with it, it clearly states “[i]f an extract cleanup procedure is performed, refer to Method 3600 for the appropriate QC procedures...”

This conclusion is deemed consistent with the EPA’s view that it is acceptable to pair a variety of cleanup methods (depending on the project needs).

The letter concludes that Method 8015C may be used in conjunction with Method 3630C depending upon project goals.

A copy of the letter can be downloaded [here](#).