

Flett Research - Recommended Sample Holding Times

Matrix	Preservation	Total Mercury	Methyl Mercury	Radioisotopes (Pb-210, Cs-137, Ra-226)
Fresh Water	Unpreserved	2 days or 28 days If BrCl will be added directly to original sample bottle ¹ .	48 hr @ 1-6°C in darkness ²	n/a
	Acidified to 0.2-0.4% HCl	90 days ^{1,3} Acid should be added within 2 days.	180 days in dark and cool ²	n/a
	Oxidized • BrCl 5mL/L	90 days ¹ BrCl should be added to the original bottle of unpreserved or acidified sample within 28 days.	n/a	
	Frozen (colder than -15°C) ⁴	Not recommended ⁶	180 days in dark ⁵	n/a
Salt or Sea Water [Cl] ⁻ >500PPM	Acidified to 0.2% • 2 mL/L 9 M H ₂ SO ₄	180 days ²	180 days in dark and cool ²	n/a
Sediments/ Sand/Peat	Wet @ 1-6°C	28 days ⁷	28 days ⁷	Indefinite if hermetically sealed against water loss ¹¹
	Wet and Frozen (colder than -15°C) ⁴	180 days ⁸	180 days ⁸	Indefinite if hermetically sealed against water loss ¹¹
	Dry @ ~20°C	Indefinite in dark ⁹	Indefinite in dark ⁹	Indefinite ¹¹
Fish and other animal tissue	Wet @ 1-6°C	5 days ¹⁰	5 days ¹⁰	n/a
	Wet and Frozen (colder than -15°C) ⁴	180 days ¹⁰	180 days ¹⁰	n/a
	Dry @ ~20°C	Indefinite in dark ⁹	Indefinite in dark ⁹	n/a

¹ United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2002. "Method 1631, Revision E: Mercury in water by oxidation, purge and trap, and cold vapor atomic fluorescence spectrometry," EPA-821-R-02-019.

² United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2001. "Method 1630: Methyl Mercury in Water by Distillation, Aqueous Ethylation, Purge and Trap, and CVAFS," EPA-821-R-01-020.

³ At Flett samples are acidified to (0.2-0.4% instead of 5mL/L which is 0.5%) in order to avoid transportation issues.

⁴ Long term storage at -20°C or colder is recommended, with no average weekly temperature warmer than -15°C.

⁵ Bloom, N.S "Determination of Picogram Levels of Methylmercury by Aqueous Phase Ethylation, Followed by Cryogenic Gas chromatography with Cold Vapour Atomic Fluorescence Detection." *Can. J. FishAq. Sci.* 1989, 46: 1131-1140.

⁶ Freezing total mercury water samples is not recommended, Bloom suggested that there may be some loss of inorganic Hg during freezing. If accidentally frozen: Before thawing, we quickly add BrCl to frozen samples and reseal so as to trap any volatile Hg⁽⁰⁾ that may be present.

⁷ EPA Test Methods for Evaluating Solid Waste: Physical/Chemical Methods Compendium - SW846 Chapter 3, Table 3A (2018).

⁸ Horvat, M, Bloom, N.S, Liang, L. 1993. "Comparison of distillation with other current isolation methods for the determination of methyl mercury compounds in low level environmental samples. Part 1. Sediments." *Analytica Chimica Acta.* 281: 135-152.

⁹ Estimate based on stability of freeze-dried reference materials

¹⁰ Estimate

¹¹ Samples for radioisotope analyses do not require special preservation and storage conditions. Storage conditions are normally based on the clients requirements for future analyses other than radioisotopes. Wet samples in plastic containers have a shelf life of 90 days at room temperature. The concern is reactive iron oxide deposition on the interior walls of the container.

For additional information, contact Dr. Robert Flett at flett@flettresearch.ca

Phone, Fax: (204) 667-2505
Flett Research Ltd.
440 DeSalaberry Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA R2L 0Y7