

## **Fact Sheet**

### **B-2.1 Considerations in Selecting a Commercial Analytical Lab**

Regulatory agencies and disposal facilities require that unusable, unknown, or waste materials be properly identified before they are disposed of. This identification is accomplished through analytical testing conducted by commercial labs. A variety of analytical tests are available. Before a commercial lab is selected, be sure to contact the appropriate regulatory agency and the disposal facility to determine what type(s) of analytical test they require.

After determining what type of test is required, other factors besides cost should be considered. For example, the length of time between submitting the sample and receiving analytical results is often of great importance. Also, the location of the laboratory may be an important factor if samples are delivered by your company.

#### **Be Concerned about Lab Analysis and Testing Methods**

Before contacting a lab, the following questions should be addressed:

- ! What analyses are required? If you are unsure what analyses are required, contact the appropriate regulatory agency or the disposal facility that will be receiving the waste, to determine what analytical testing is required.
- ! What testing methods are required? Many testing methods exist, and requesting the “wrong” testing method could result in additional sampling and analytical costs if a different test is required. This problem can be avoided by contracting with a commercial lab that provides testing evaluation services. If you are unsure about what test methods are required, contact the appropriate regulatory agency or the disposal facility that is requiring the analytical testing.
- ! Is the lab certified to perform the requested tests? If the lab does not meet regulatory agency or disposal facility certification requirements, test results may not be accepted.

#### **Research Unknown Materials to Reduce Testing Costs**

For materials or wastes that are unknown, or have no analytical history, some initial background checking may be necessary. Knowing some information about these materials may reduce analytical testing costs:

- ! What is the origin of the unknown material? (What process or drum did it come from?)
- ! How was the material used or produced?
- ! What is the age of the material?
- ! Is the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) available?

#### **Ask The Tough Questions When Evaluating Potential Labs**

The analytical testing process begins before samples are collected, and ends when analytical results are received and samples are properly disposed. By considering and asking the following questions before contracting with a lab, a business can help ensure its samples are handled properly throughout the analytical process:

- ! Are the lab personnel trained and equipped to perform the requested analyses?
- ! Does the lab provide sampling containers and guidance for collecting, preserving, storing, and transporting samples properly?
- ! Does the lab have field personnel who are trained in proper collection techniques?
- ! When will the analytical results be available?
- ! What is the procedure for sample disposal by the laboratory after analysis is complete?

**Important Note:** All users of commercial lab services are directly responsible for insuring that any company with whom they contract for products or services complies with the requirements of state and federal law.