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# Quality Assurance

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## Introduction

Quality assurance (QA) is a system of activities and processes that are put in place to ensure that monitoring and measurement data meet user requirements and needs. Quality control (QC) consists of procedures that are used to verify that prescribed standards of performance in the monitoring and measurement process are met. U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) orders and guidance mandate QA requirements for environmental monitoring of DOE facilities. DOE Order 5400.1 identifies QA requirements for radiological effluent and surveillance monitoring and specifies that a QA program consistent with the DOE order addressing quality assurance is established. This order sets forth policy, requirements, and responsibilities for the establishment and maintenance of plans and actions that assure quality in DOE programs.

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory conducted QA activities in 1999 at the Livermore site and Site 300 in accordance with the *Environmental Protection Department Quality Assurance Management Plan* (Revision 3), based on DOE Order 5700.6C, which prescribes a risk-based, graded approach to QA. This process promotes the selective application of QA and management controls based on the risk associated with each activity in order to maximize effectiveness and efficiency in resource use.

The DOE *Environmental Regulatory Guide for Radiological Effluent Monitoring and Environmental Surveillance* (U.S. Department of Energy 1991) requires that an environmental monitoring plan be prepared. LLNL environmental monitoring is conducted according to procedures published in Appendix B of the LLNL *Environmental Monitoring Plan* (Tate et al. 1999). LLNL or commercial laboratories analyze environmental monitoring samples using U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standard methods, when available. When EPA standard methods are not available, custom analytical procedures, usually developed at LLNL, are used. The radiochemical methods used by LLNL laboratories are described in procedures unique to the laboratory performing the analyses. LLNL uses only State-of-California-certified laboratories to analyze its environmental monitoring samples. In addition, LLNL requires all analytical laboratories to maintain adequate QA programs and documentation of methods.



## **Quality Assurance Activities**

Nonconformance reporting and tracking is an LLNL QA process for ensuring that Environmental Protection Department (EPD) activities meet the department's QA requirements and that problems are found, identified, resolved, and prevented from recurring. LLNL generated 111 Nonconformance Reports (NCRs) related to environmental monitoring in 1999 compared to 92 in 1998 and 87 in 1997.

Fifty-nine of the 111 NCRs generated in 1999 were due to problems with analytical laboratories. Twenty-one were related to minor problems with sewer monitoring equipment, and another 13 were due to minor problems with air-monitoring equipment. Errors in documentation, training, or procedures accounted for another 12 NCRs; the remaining six were related to other monitoring networks.

LLNL addresses analytical laboratory problems with the appropriate laboratory as they arise. Many of the NCRs that were written in response to problems with the laboratories concerned minor documentation or paperwork errors, which were corrected soon after they were identified. Other problems—such as missed holding times, late analytical results, and typographical errors on data reports—accounted for the remaining NCRs related to the analytical laboratories. The majority of these problems were corrected by reanalysis, resampling, reissued reports, or corrected paperwork, and associated sample results were not affected.

LLNL addresses internal documentation, training, and procedural errors by conducting formal and informal training. These errors generally do not result in lost samples but may require extra work on the part of sampling and data management personnel to resolve or compensate for the errors.

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## **Analytical Laboratories**

LLNL entered into new Blanket Service Agreements (BSAs) with seven analytical laboratories in March 1999; of these seven, four are continuing service, and three are serving the Laboratory for the first time. LLNL is working closely with its analytical laboratories to minimize the occurrence of problems in the future.



### ***Participation in Laboratory Intercomparison Studies***

The LLNL Chemistry and Materials Science Environmental Services (CES) Environmental Monitoring Radiation Laboratory (EMRL) and the Hazards Control Department's Analytical Laboratory (HCAL) participated in the DOE Environmental Monitoring Laboratory (EML) intercomparison studies program. A review of the EML studies indicates that 55 of 58 results reported by CES and 10 of 10 results reported by HCAL fell within the established acceptance control limits.

CES EMRL participated in two DOE Mixed Analyte Performance Evaluation Program (MAPEP) studies in 1999. Sixteen of 16 analytes reported by CES for the first study and 23 of 23 analytes reported by CES for the second study fell within acceptable limits.

CES has implemented changes that are intended to address the root causes of unacceptable intercomparison study results and prevent future results from falling outside the acceptance control limits.

Details of the intercomparison study results, including the follow-up explanation and response for data that fell outside the acceptance control limits, are presented in the Data Supplement. Although contract laboratories are also required to participate in laboratory intercomparison programs, permission to publish their results for comparison purposes was not granted for 1999.

LLNL uses the results of intercomparison program data to identify and monitor trends in performance and to solicit corrective action responses for unacceptable results. If a laboratory has unacceptable performance for a particular test in two consecutive performance evaluation studies, LLNL may choose to select another laboratory to perform the affected analyses until the original laboratory can demonstrate that the problem has been corrected. Continued unacceptable performance or failure to prepare and implement acceptable corrective action responses could result in formal notification of unsatisfactory performance by the LLNL Procurement Department (for off-site contract laboratories). If the problem still cannot be corrected, the BSA with the contract laboratory could be terminated or use of the on-site laboratory could be suspended.

A joint performance evaluation committee composed of members from EPD, CES, and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory is creating a systematic process for evaluating laboratory performance using performance evaluation samples. A method for evaluating the results of intercomparison studies will be developed by that committee.



## Duplicate Analyses

Duplicate or collocated samples are distinct samples of the same matrix collected as closely to the same point in space and time as possible and are intended to be identical in all respects. Collocated samples processed and analyzed *by the same organization* provide intralaboratory information about the precision of the entire measurement system, including sample acquisition, homogeneity, handling, shipping, storage, preparation, and analysis. Collocated samples processed and analyzed *by different organizations* provide interlaboratory information about the precision of the entire measurement system (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 1987). Collocated samples may also be used to identify errors—for example, mislabeled samples or data entry errors.

**Tables 14-1** through **14-3** present statistical data for collocated sample pairs, grouped by sample matrix and analyte. Samples from both the Livermore site and Site 300 are included. **Tables 14-1** and **14-2** are based on data pairs in which both values are detections (see Statistical Methods in this chapter). **Table 14-3** is based on data pairs in which either or both values are nondetections.

Precision is measured by the percent relative standard deviation (%RSD); see the EPA's *Data Quality Objectives for Remedial Response Activities: Development Process*, Section 4.6 (1987). Acceptable values for %RSD vary greatly with matrix, analyte, and analytical method; however, lower values represent better precision. The results for %RSD given in **Table 14-1** are the 75th percentile of the individual precision values.

Regression analysis consists of fitting a straight line to the collocated sample pairs. Good agreement is indicated when the data lie close to a line with slope equal to 1 and intercept equal to 0, as illustrated in **Figure 14-1**. Allowing for normal analytical variation, the slope of the fitted line should be between 0.7 and 1.3, and the absolute value of the intercept should be less than the detection limit. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) should be greater than 0.8. These criteria apply to pairs in which both results are above the detection limit.

When there were more than eight data pairs with both results in each pair considered detections, precision and regression analyses were performed; those results are presented in **Table 14-1**. When there were eight or fewer data pairs with both results above the detection limit, the ratios of the individual duplicate sample pairs were averaged; the average, minimum, and maximum ratios for selected analytes are given in **Table 14-2**. The mean ratio should be between 0.7 and 1.3.



**Table 14-1.** Quality assurance duplicate sampling. Summary statistics for analytes with more than eight pairs in which both results were above the detection limit.

Medium	Analyte	N <sup>(a)</sup>	% RSD <sup>(b)</sup>	Slope	r <sup>2</sup> <sup>(c)</sup>	Intercept	
Air	Gross alpha	24	24.1	1.03	0.88	$4.75 \times 10^{-6}$ (Bq/m <sup>3</sup> )	
	Gross beta	73	13.5	0.878	0.97	$4.94 \times 10^{-5}$ (Bq/m <sup>3</sup> )	
	Beryllium <sup>(d)</sup>	15	22.6	0.935	0.60	-0.73 (pg/m <sup>3</sup> )	
	Uranium-234+233	12	3.57	0.958	0.91	$6.34 \times 10^{-10}$ (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	
	Uranium-235 by mass	12	3.05	0.789	0.94	$5.3 \times 10^{-7}$ (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	
	Uranium-238 by mass	12	3.2	0.792	0.97	$7.43 \times 10^{-5}$ (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	
	Tritium <sup>(e)</sup>	25	16.5	0.675	0.93	0.0593 (Bq/m <sup>3</sup> )	
Ground water	Gross alpha	12	19.2	0.867	0.81	0.0178 (Bq/L)	
	Gross beta	21	12.4	0.744	0.76	0.0459 (Bq/L)	
	pH	9	0.262	1.01	0.99	-0.0686 (units)	
	Arsenic	20	7.01	0.959	0.99	$5.36 \times 10^{-4}$ (mg/L)	
	Barium	15	3.78	0.991	1.00	$-4.86 \times 10^{-4}$ (mg/L)	
	Chromium	9	6.73	1.01	1.00	$3.1 \times 10^{-6}$ (mg/L)	
	Copper <sup>(d)</sup>	9	30	0.630	0.32	0.00835 (mg/L)	
	Nitrate (as NO <sub>3</sub> ) <sup>(d)</sup>	18	18.2	0.848	0.71	12.3 (mg/L)	
	Potassium	31	3.82	0.961	0.99	0.221 (mg/L)	
	Trichloroethene	12	4.71	0.935	1.00	0.0624 (µg/L)	
	Tritium	14	17.5	0.960	1.00	6.31 (Bq/L)	
	Uranium-234+233	24	7.92	0.917	0.98	0.00231 (Bq/L)	
	Uranium-235+236 <sup>(d)</sup>	22	25.3	0.552	0.66	0.00369 (Bq/L)	
	Uranium-238	22	8.87	0.906	0.99	0.00348 (Bq/L)	
	Vanadium	9	1.21	0.99	0.99	$9.60 \times 10^{-4}$ (mg/L)	
	Runoff (from rain)	Bicarbonate alkalinity (as CaCO <sub>3</sub> )	11	18.4	1.04	0.99	-2.98 (mg/L)
		Electrical conductivity	10	11.4	1.07	1.00	-41.3 (µmho/cm)
pH		10	1.61	0.98	0.88	0.0665 (units)	
Aluminum <sup>(e)</sup>		14	36.6	1.40	0.53	0.554 (mg/L)	
Chloride		12	7.44	1.05	1.00	1.79 (mg/L)	
Copper		9	14.4	1.06	0.90	$3.27 \times 10^{-4}$ (mg/L)	
Fluoride		12	12.4	1.04	0.99	-0.0116 (mg/L)	
Iron <sup>(e)</sup>		16	23.4	1.26	0.49	0.73 (mg/L)	
Manganese <sup>(d)</sup>		12	25.4	1.15	0.61	0.0232 (mg/L)	
Orthophosphate		11	19.1	0.831	0.96	0.0296 (mg/L)	
Sulfate		12	7.27	1.03	1.00	0.019 (mg/L)	
Zinc <sup>(d)</sup>		12	31.3	0.432	0.26	0.0402 (mg/L)	



**Table 14-1.** Quality assurance duplicate sampling. Summary statistics for analytes with more than eight pairs in which both results were above the detection limit (concluded).

Medium	Analyte	N <sup>(a)</sup>	% RSD <sup>(b)</sup>	Slope	r <sup>2</sup> <sup>(c)</sup>	Intercept
Sewer	Gross alpha <sup>(d)</sup>	16	29.4	0.854	0.68	4.93 × 10 <sup>-5</sup> (Bq/mL)
	Gross beta	52	10.8	0.992	0.97	4.34 × 10 <sup>-5</sup> (Bq/mL)
	Aluminum <sup>(d)</sup>	11	27.6	0.89	0.41	0.136 (mg/L)
	Copper <sup>(d)</sup>	12	34.5	0.884	0.39	0.0142 (mg/L)
	Iron <sup>(d)</sup>	12	31.3	1.17	0.58	-0.267 (mg/L)
	Lead	11	44.7	1.14	0.91	-0.00184 (mg/L)
	Zinc <sup>(e)</sup>	12	17.4	1.02	0.70	-0.032 (mg/L)

<sup>a</sup> Number of duplicate pairs included in regression analysis.

<sup>b</sup> 75th percentile of percent relative standard deviation (%RSD) where  $\%RSD = \left(\frac{200}{\sqrt{2}}\right) \left(\frac{|x_1 - x_2|}{x_1 + x_2}\right)$  and  $x_1$  and  $x_2$  are the reported concentrations of each routine-duplicate pair.

<sup>c</sup> Coefficient of determination.

<sup>d</sup> Outside acceptable range of slope or  $r^2$  because of variability.

<sup>e</sup> Outside acceptable range of slope or  $r^2$  because of outliers.

When one of the results in a pair is a nondetection, then the other result should be less than two times the detection limit. **Table 14-3** identifies the sample media and analytes for which at least one pair failed this criterion. Analytes with fewer than four pairs are omitted from the table.

Collocated sample comparisons are more variable when the members of the pair are analyzed by different methods or with different criteria for analytical precision. For example, radiological analyses using different counting times or different laboratory aliquot sizes will have different amounts of variability.

These analyses show generally good agreement between routine samples and QA duplicates: 90% of the pairs have a precision better than 27%. Data sets not meeting our precision criteria fall into one of two categories. The first category, outliers, can occur because of data transcription errors, measurement errors, or real but anomalous results. Of 41 data sets reported in **Table 14-1**, four did not meet the criterion for acceptability because of outliers. **Figure 14-2** illustrates a set of collocated pairs with one outlier.



**Table 14-2.** Quality assurance duplicate sampling. Summary statistics for selected analytes with eight or fewer pairs in which both results were above the detection limit.

Medium	Analyte	N	Mean ratio	Minimum ratio	Maximum ratio
<b>Air</b>	Plutonium-239+240	2	1.1	1	1.2
<b>Aqueous</b>	Gross alpha	1	0.64	0.64	0.64
	Gross beta	2	0.75	0.67	0.84
	Uranium-234+233	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Uranium-238	1	1.2	1.2	1.2
	<b>Ground water</b>	Radium-226	4	1.1	0.74
	Radium-228	1	1.1	1.1	1.1
<b>Rain</b>	Tritium	2	1.00	1	1.1
<b>Runoff (from rain)</b>	Gross alpha	1	0.41	0.41	0.41
	Gross beta	5	1.8	0.91	3.3
	Tritium	2	1.3	0.43	2.2
	Uranium-234+233	1	0.99	0.99	0.99
	Uranium-235+236	1	1.7	1.7	1.7
	Uranium-238	1	0.92	0.92	0.92
	<b>Soil</b>	Cesium-137	4	0.92	0.84
	Potassium-40	4	0.97	0.94	1
	Plutonium-238	2	1.3	1	1.5
	Plutonium-239+240	3	0.89	0.71	0.99
	Radium-226	4	1	0.92	1.1
	Radium-228	4	0.98	0.94	1
	Thorium-228	4	0.96	0.93	1
	Uranium-235	4	0.87	0.79	1.1
	Uranium-238	2	1.1	0.61	1.5
<b>Sewer</b>	Tritium	8	1.1	0.5	1.7
<b>Vegetation</b>	Tritium	5	1.1	0.89	1.4



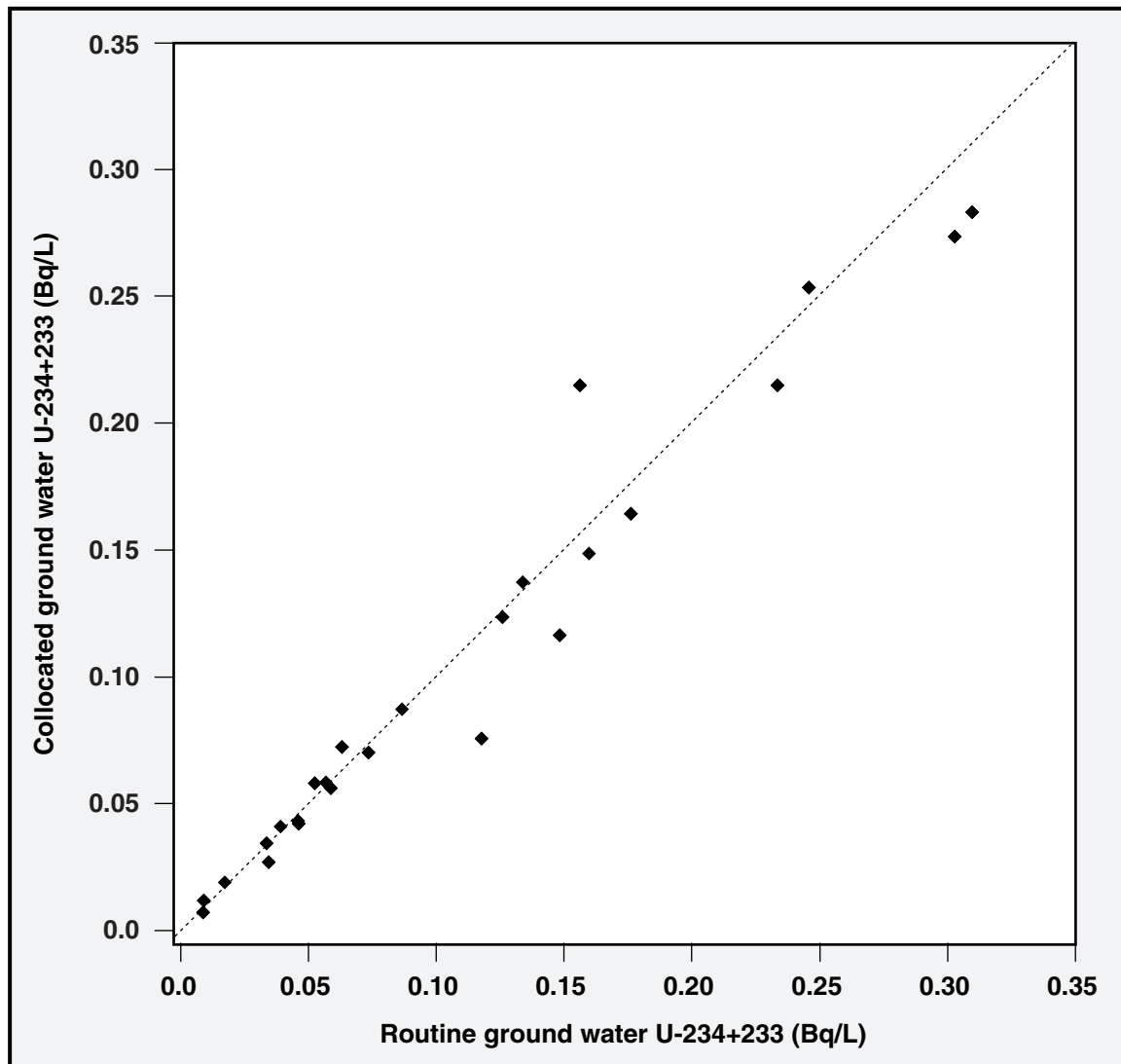
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**Table 14-3.** Quality assurance duplicate sampling. Summary statistics for analytes with at least four pairs in which one or both results were below the detection limit.

Medium	Analyte	Number of inconsistent pairs <sup>(a)</sup>	Number of pairs	Percent of inconsistent pairs
<b>Air</b>	Gross alpha	3	61	4.9
	Tritium	2	20	10
<b>Ground water</b>	Gross alpha	1	17	5.9
	1,2-Dichloroethene (total)	1	20	5
	Arsenic	1	8	12
	cis-1,2-Dichloroethene	1	23	4.3
	Chromium	1	14	7.1
	Nickel	1	26	3.8
	Nitrate (as NO <sub>3</sub> )	1	11	9.1
	<b>Runoff (from rain)</b>	Gross alpha	2	4
	Carbonate alkalinity (as CaCO <sub>3</sub> )	1	9	11
	Beryllium	1	8	12
	Copper	1	7	14
	Nitrate (as NO <sub>3</sub> )	4	6	67
	Nitrate (as N)	3	6	50
<b>Sewer</b>	Gross alpha	1	36	2.8
	Bis(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate	1	4	25
	Benzyl alcohol	2	5	40
	Chromium	3	9	33
	Freon 113	1	7	14
	Tritium	1	44	2.3
	Mercury	1	5	20
	Nickel	1	5	20

<sup>a</sup> An inconsistent pair is one in which one result is a nondetection and the other result is a detection greater than two times the detection limit.





**Figure 14-1.** Ground water uranium-234+233 concentrations from collocated samples. These data lie close to a line with slope equal to 1 and intercept equal to 0.

The other results that do not meet the criterion for acceptability consist of data sets where there is a lot of scatter. This tends to be typical of nondetections and measurements at extremely low concentrations, as illustrated in **Figure 14-3**. Low concentrations of radionuclides on particulates in air highlight this effect even more because one or two radionuclide-containing particles on an air filter can significantly affect results. Other causes of high variability are sampling and analytical methodology. Analyses of total organic carbon and total organic halides in water are particularly difficult to control. Of the 41 data sets in **Table 14-1**, 11 show sufficient variability in results to make them fall outside the acceptable range.



## **Statistical Methods**

Statistical methods used in this report have been implemented in accordance with the *Environmental Monitoring Plan* (Tate et al. 1999). These methods reduce the large volumes of monitoring data to summary estimates suitable for temporal and spatial comparisons. Attention is given to estimating accuracy, bias, and precision of all data.

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## **Radiation Units**

Data for 1999 have been reported in Système Internationale (SI) units to conform with standard scientific practices and federal law. Values in the text are reported in becquerels (Bq) and millisieverts (mSv); equivalent values in picocuries (pCi) and millirems (mrem) are given in parentheses.

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## **Sampling Completeness**

Planned samples and actual samples collected and analyzed in 1999 are summarized in **Table 14-4**.

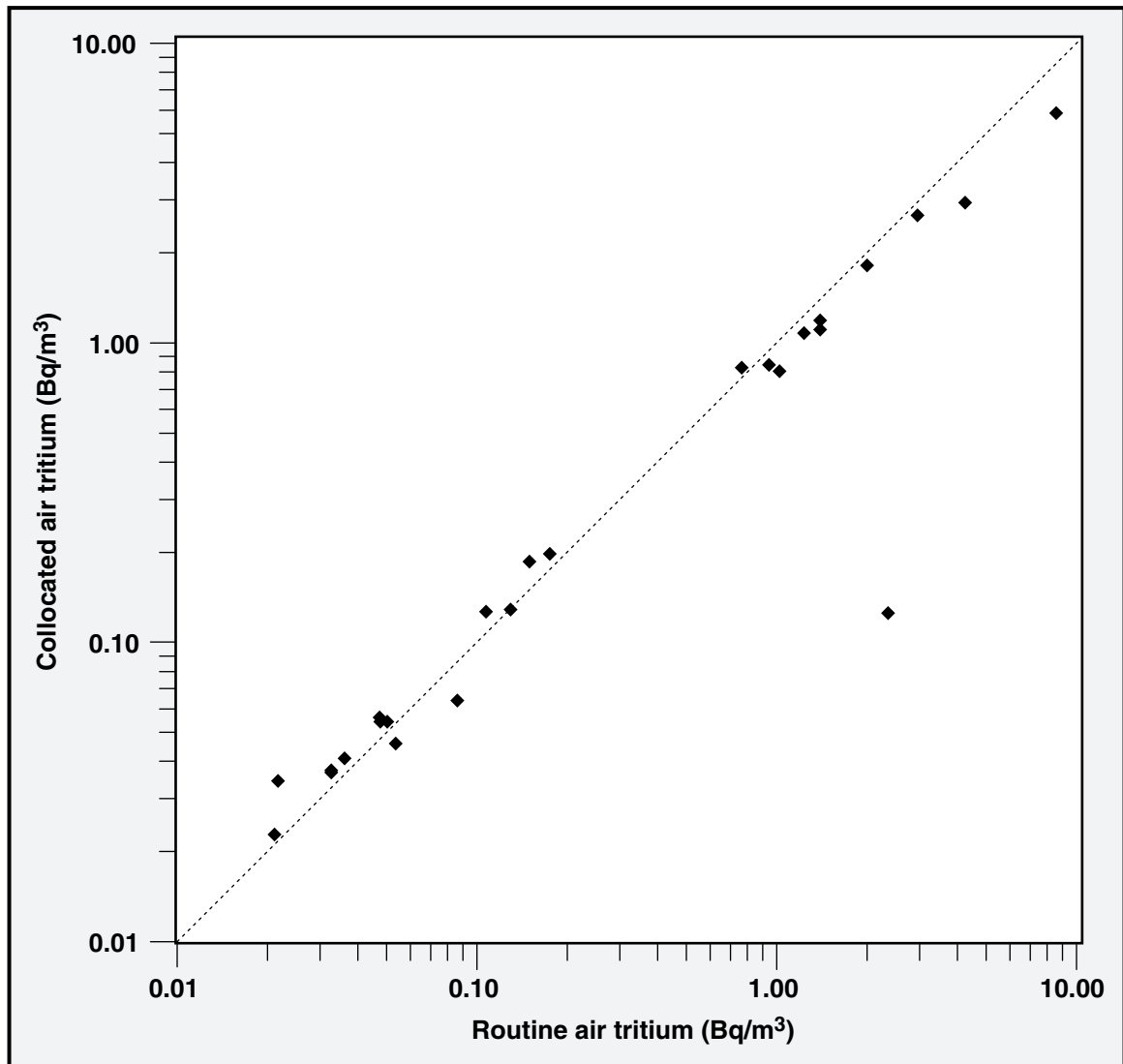
Data review and analysis are conducted in accordance with the *Environmental Monitoring Plan* (Tate et al. 1999) and the data analysis procedure developed by EPD's Operations and Regulatory Affairs Division. These documents contain detailed information regarding the acceptability of data and the procedures that are followed for the identification, notification, and correction of suspect data.

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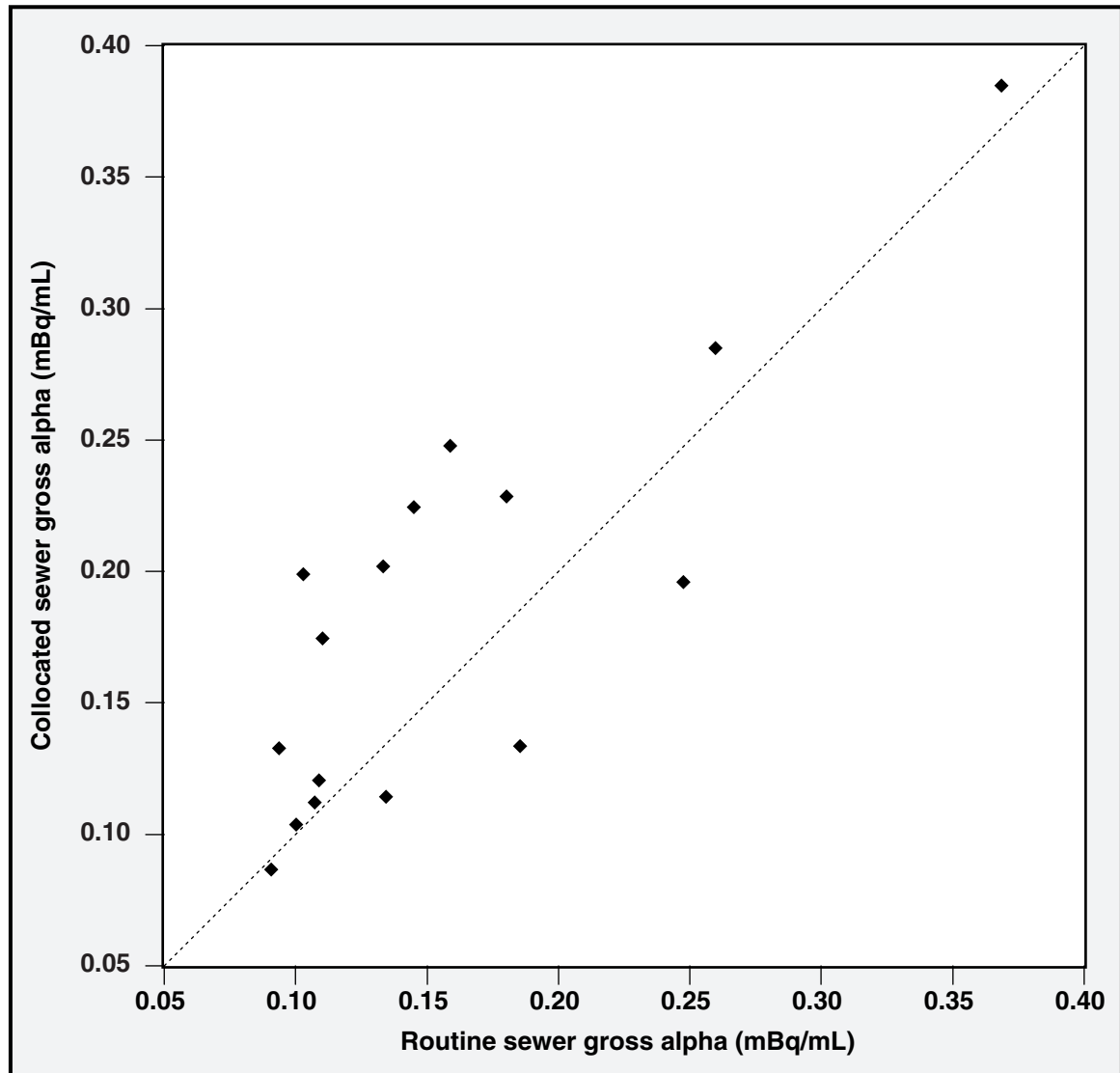
## **Radiological Data**

The precision of radiological analytical results is displayed in the Data Supplement tables as the  $2\sigma$  counting uncertainty. The counting uncertainties are not used in summary statistic calculations. Any radiological result exhibiting a  $2\sigma$  counting uncertainty greater than or equal to 100% is considered to be a nondetection. The reported concentration is derived from the number of sample counts minus the number of background counts. A sample with a low concentration may, therefore, have a negative value; such results are reported in the tables and used in the calculation of summary statistics and statistical comparisons.

Some Data Supplement tables provide radioactivity sensitivity values instead of, or in addition to, a reported value when the radiological result is below the detection criterion. Such results are displayed in the tables with a less-than symbol. These values



**Figure 14-2.** Air tritium concentrations from collocated samples showing an outlier.



**Figure 14-3.** Sewer gross alpha concentrations from collocated samples showing a lot of scatter.

can be described as the smallest concentration of radioactive material that can be detected (distinguished from background) with a large degree of confidence. These radioactivity sensitivity values are referred to as minimum detectable concentrations (MDC) in Chapters 4 and 5, limits of sensitivity (LOS) in Chapter 6, and detection limits (DL) in Chapters 7 and 9. The Chemistry and Materials Science Environmental Services (CES) Laboratory calculates these three values (MDC, LOS, and DL) in the same manner and reports them in the same units as measurements that are considered detections.

**Table 14-4.** Sampling completeness in 1999, Livermore site and Site 300.

Environmental medium	Number of analyses planned	Number of analyses completed	Completeness (%)	Reason(s) for lost samples
Air particulate (Livermore site)				
Radiological parameters	1274	1269	99.6	Access to area denied (1); power failure (2); equipment problem (1); sampler error (1)
Beryllium	96	96	100	
Air particulate (Site 300)				
Radiological parameters	668	655	98	Access to area denied (4); power failure (2); lab error (2); power outage because of electrical work in area (5)
Beryllium	72	71	99	Power outage because of electrical work in area (1)
Air tritium				
Livermore site	494	471	95	Unacceptable flow rate (14); insufficient total flow (1); power failure (3); broken flask (1); equipment problems (1); flask not attached properly (1); no explanation (2)
Site 300	26	25	96	Flask not attached properly (1)
Soil				
Livermore	42	42	100	
Site 300	32	32	100	
Arroyo sediment (Livermore site only)	36	32	89	Location inundated and could not be sampled (4)
Vegetation				
Livermore site and vicinity	68	68	100	
Site 300	32	32	100	
Wine	25	25	100	
Rain				
Livermore site	90	63	70	Insufficient rainfall (26); sampling bucket stolen (1)
Site 300	7	4	57	Insufficient rainfall during sample period (3)
Storm water runoff				
Livermore site	590	578	98	No evidence of flow in area (12)
Site 300	149	119	80	No evidence of flow in area (29); sampler error (1)



**Table 14-4.** Sampling completeness in 1999, Livermore site and Site 300 (concluded).

Environmental medium	Number of analyses planned	Number of analyses completed	Completeness (%)	Reason(s) for lost samples
Drainage Retention Basin				
Field measurements	884	884	100	
Samples	115	115	100	
Releases	56	56	100	
Other surface water (Livermore only)	58	58	100	
Ground water				
Livermore site	504	494	98	Overlooked; sampled in subsequent quarter (10)
Site 300	2505	2346	94	Well dry or insufficient sample (121), well pump inoperable (28), well inaccessible because of construction (7), sampler error (3)
Livermore Valley wells	27	22	81	Samples not provided (5)
Sewage				
B196	912	910	99.8	Sampler error (2)
C196	358	357	99.7	Laboratory results invalid (1)
LWRP <sup>(a)</sup> effluent	130	128	98.5	LWRP did not supply sample (2)
Digester sludge	80	72	90	LWRP did not supply sample (6); digester offline (2)
WDR-96-248				
Surface impoundment wastewater	54	54	100	
Surface impoundment ground water	147	147	100	
Sewage ponds wastewater	54	53	98	Missed duplicate (1)
Sewage ponds ground water	110	107	97	Missed duplicate (2); missed analysis (1)
Thermoluminescent dosimeters (TLDs)				
Livermore site	156	155	99	TLD missing (1)
Livermore Valley	104	99	95	TLD missing (5)
Site 300	76	75	99	TLD missing (1)
Cooling towers (Site 300 only)	24	18	75	Sampler error (6)

a LWRP = Livermore Water Reclamation Plant.



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### **Nonradiological Data**

Nonradiological data that are reported as being below the reporting limit also are displayed in the tables with a less-than symbol. The reporting limit values are used in the calculation of summary statistics as explained below.

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### **Statistical Comparisons**

Standard comparison techniques (such as regression, t-tests, and analysis of variance) have been used where appropriate to determine the statistical significance of trends or differences between means. All such tests of significance have been performed at the 0.05 level. When such a comparison is made, it is explicitly stated in the text as being “statistically significant” or “not statistically significant.” Other uses of the word “significant” in the text do not imply that statistical tests have been performed. Instead, these uses relate to the concept of practical significance and are based on professional judgment.

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### **Summary Statistics**

Determinations of measures of central tendency and associated measures of dispersion are calculated according to the *Environmental Monitoring Plan* (Tate et al. 1999). For data sets that do not contain values below the detection criterion, the measures of central tendency and dispersion are the median and interquartile range (IQR). The IQR is the range that encompasses the middle 50% of the data set. The IQR is calculated by subtracting the 25th percentile of the data set from the 75th percentile of the data set. When necessary, the percentiles are interpolated from the data. Software vendors may use slightly different formulas for calculating percentiles. Radiological data sets that include values less than zero may have an IQR greater than the median.

For data sets with one or more, but fewer than one-half, of the values below the detection criterion, the measure of central tendency is the median. If the values of the detection limits and the number of values below the detection limit permit (determined on a case-by-case basis), dispersion is reported as the IQR. Otherwise, no measure of dispersion is reported. Statistics are calculated using the reported detection limit value for nonradiological data or the reported value for radiological data.

For data sets with one-half or more of the values below the detection criterion, the central tendency is reported as less than the median value. Dispersion is not reported.



## **Quality Assurance Process for the Environmental Report**

Unlike the preceding discussion, which focused on standards of accuracy and precision in data acquisition and reporting, a discussion of QA/QC procedures for a technical publication per se must deal with how to retain content accuracy through the publication process. Because publication of a large, data-rich document like this site annual environmental report involves many operations and many people, the chances of introducing errors are great. At the same time, ensuring quality is more difficult because a publication is less amenable to the statistical processes used in standard quality assurance methods.

The QA procedure we used concentrated on the tables and figures in the report and enlisted 53 authors, contributors, and technicians to check the accuracy of sections other than those they had authored or contributed to. In 1999, the 85 illustrations and 68 tables in the main volume and the 121 tables in the Data Supplement were checked. Checkers were assigned illustrations and tables and given a copy of each item they were to check along with a quality control form to fill out as they checked the item. Items to be checked included figure captions and table titles for clarity and accuracy, data accuracy and completeness, figure labels and table headings, units, significant digits, and consistency with text. When checking numerical data, checkers randomly selected 10% of the data and compared it to values in the master database. If all 10% agreed with the database, further checking was considered unnecessary. If there was disagreement in the data, the checker compared another 10% of the data with the database values. If more errors were found, the checker had then to verify every piece of data in the table or illustration.

A coordinator guided the process to ensure that forms were tracked and the proper approvals were obtained. Completed quality control forms and the corrected illustrations or tables were returned to the report editors, who were responsible for ensuring that changes, with the agreement of the original contributor, were made. This QA check resulted in the correction of data errors and omissions on 9% of the illustrations, 12% of the tables in the main volume, and 7% of the tables in the Data Supplement. Other corrections were made to footnotes, headings, titles in tables, graph axes, callouts, and captions in figures.