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Standard Guide for Conducting Acute Toxicity Tests on Aqueous Ambient Samples and Effluents with Fishes, Macroinvertebrates, and Amphibians¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This guide covers procedures for obtaining laboratory data concerning the adverse effects of an aqueous effluent on certain species of freshwater and saltwater fishes, macroinvertebrates, and amphibians, usually during 2 day to 4 day exposures, depending on the species, using the static, renewal, and flow-through techniques. These procedures will probably be useful for conducting acute toxicity tests on aqueous effluents with many other aquatic species, although modifications might be necessary.

1.2 Other modifications of these procedures might be justified by special needs or circumstances. Although using appropriate procedures is more important than following prescribed procedures, results of tests conducted using unusual procedures are not likely to be comparable to results of many other tests. Comparison of results obtained using modified and unmodified versions of these procedures might provide useful information concerning new concepts and procedures for conducting acute toxicity tests on aqueous effluents.

1.3 This guide is based in large part on Guide E729 where addition details are provided for test elements that may be applicable to the ambient and effluent toxicity testing described in this method. The major differences between the two guides are (1) the maximum test concentration is 100 % effluent or ambient sample, (2) testing is not chemical-specific, and (3) the holding time of effluent and ambient samples is often considerably less than that for chemicals and other test materials. Because the sample is often a complex mixture of chemicals, analytical tests cannot generally be used to confirm exposure concentrations.

1.4 Selection of the technique to be used in a specific situation will depend upon the needs of the investigator and upon available resources. Static tests provide the most easily

obtained measure of acute toxicity but should not last longer than 48 h. Renewal and flow-through tests may last longer than 48 h because the pH and concentrations of dissolved oxygen and effluent are maintained at desired levels and degradation and metabolic products are removed. Static tests might not be applicable to effluents that have a high oxygen demand or contain materials that (1) are highly volatile, (2) are rapidly biologically or chemically transformed in aqueous solutions, or (3) are removed from test solutions in substantial quantities by the test chambers or organisms during the test. Flow-through tests are generally preferable to renewal tests, although in some situations a renewal test might be more cost-effective than a flow-through test.

1.5 In the development of these procedures, an attempt was made to balance scientific and practical considerations and to ensure that the results will be sufficiently accurate and precise for the applications for which they are commonly used. A major consideration was that the common uses of the results of acute tests on effluents do not require or justify stricter requirements than those set forth in this guide. Although the tests may be improved by using more organisms, longer acclimation times, and so forth, the requirements presented in this guide should usually be sufficient.

1.6 Results of acute toxicity tests should usually be reported in terms of a median lethal concentration (LC50) or median effective concentration (EC50). In some situations, it might be necessary only to determine whether a specific concentration is acutely toxic to the test species or whether the LC50 or EC50 is above or below a specific concentration.

1.7 This guide is arranged as follows:

	Section
Referenced Documents	2
Terminology	3
Summary of Guide	4
Significance and Use	5
Hazards	7
Apparatus	6
Facilities	6.1
Special Requirements	6.2
Construction Materials	6.3
Metering System	6.4
Test Chambers	6.5

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Cleaning	6.6
Acceptability	6.7
Dilution Water	8
Requirements	8.1
Source	8.2
Treatment	8.3
Characterization	8.4
Effluent	9
Sampling Point	9.1
Collection	9.2
Preservation	9.3
Treatment	9.4
Test Concentration(s)	9.5
Test Organisms	10
Species	10.1
Age	10.2
Source	10.3
Care and Handling	10.4
Feeding	10.5
Disease Treatment	10.6
Holding	10.7
Acclimation	10.8
Quality	10.9
Procedure	11
Experimental Design	11.1
Dissolved Oxygen	11.2
Temperature	11.3
Loading	11.4
Beginning the Test	11.5
Feeding	11.6
Duration of Test	11.7
Biological Data	11.8
Other Measurements	11.9
Analytical Methodology	12
Acceptability of Test	13
Calculation or Results	14
Report	15

1.8 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.* Specific hazard statements are given in Section 7.

1.9 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

D4447 Guide for Disposal of Laboratory Chemicals and Samples

E724 Guide for Conducting Static Short-Term Chronic Toxicity Tests Starting with Embryos of Four Species of Saltwater Bivalve Molluscs

E729 Guide for Conducting Acute Toxicity Tests on Test Materials with Fishes, Macroinvertebrates, and Amphibians

E943 Terminology Relating to Biological Effects and Environmental Fate (Withdrawn 2023)³

E1203 Practice for Using Brine Shrimp Nauplii as Food for Test Animals in Aquatic Toxicology (Withdrawn 2013)³

E1604 Guide for Behavioral Testing in Aquatic Toxicology

E1706 Test Method for Measuring the Toxicity of Sediment-Associated Contaminants with Freshwater Invertebrates

E1733 Guide for Use of Lighting in Laboratory Testing

IEEE/ASTM SI 10 American National Standard for Use of the International System of Units (SI): The Modern Metric System

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *acute test, n*—a comparative study in which organisms, that are subjected to different treatments, are observed for a relatively short period usually not constituting a substantial portion of their life span.

3.1.2 *dilution water, n*—non-toxic aqueous exposure media (that is, water) used to reduce the concentration of a test substance in aquatic toxicity tests and is used as the control water.

3.1.3 *reconstituted water, n*—a dilution water that is prepared by adding sea salt or appropriate amounts of reagent-grade salts to water, which is usually prepared using deionization, distillation, or reverse osmosis, so that the concentrations and ratios of the major ions in the dilution water are similar to those in comparable natural surface waters.

3.2 The words “must,” “should,” “may,” “can,” and “might” have very specific meanings in this guide. “Must” is used to express an absolute requirement, that is, to state that the test ought to be designed to satisfy the specified condition, unless the purpose of the test requires a different design. “Must” is only used in connection with factors that directly relate to the acceptability of the test (see 13.1). “Should” is used to state that the specified condition is recommended and ought to be met if possible. Although violation of one “should” is rarely a serious matter, violation of several will often render the results questionable. Terms such as “is desirable,” “is often desirable,” and “might be desirable” are used in connection with less important factors. “May” is used to mean “is (are) allowed to,” “can” is used to mean “is (are) able to,” and “might” is used to mean “could possibly.” Thus the classic distinction between “may” and “can” is preserved, and “might” is never used as a synonym for either “may” or “can.”

3.3 The term “effluents” refers to aqueous discharges regulated under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) collected at the sampling point specified in the NPDES permit.

3.4 The term “ambient samples” refers to water samples collected from the environment. Examples include surface waters, storm waters, leachates, and ground water.

² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For Annual Book of ASTM Standards volume information, refer to the standard’s Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

³ The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.