

FAQ

Do I need to include field reagent blanks when we sample for PFAS?

The answer to this is a qualified 'yes.'

At a high level, the use of field reagent blanks is written into the current EPA test methods, so if you intend to follow the method verbatim, you need to include field reagent blanks. But, if you're in a state where PFAS is not regulated, it is really up to you.

For example, the Pace® PFAS team worked with a director of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) to help them develop their Public Water System (PWS) sampling program. To contain costs, they opted to not require PWSs to include a field reagent blanks in their scheduled sampling events. However, if testing shows contamination during scheduled sampling, ADEM will require resampling; this time with a field reagent blank so contamination due to the sampling process can be ruled out.

The sole purpose of the field reagent blank, also called field blank, is to provide evidence that the sampling activity itself did not cause PFAS contamination of the sample(s).

Since many sampling materials usually taken into the field contain PFAS, and we're testing samples to reporting limits of 2 ppt or ng/L, the potential to cause contamination during sampling is an important consideration. Materials such as clothing, boots, field notebooks, personal care products, and paper food packaging are all known sources of PFAS. Current PFAS sampling guidance is full of common-sense safeguards as well as restrictive requirements about materials that contain PFAS. They also document the use of field reagent blanks and other field QC samples as an important way to validate the analytical data.

This is a fundamental way to help remove any doubts about the testing, proving to yourself, your consumers, and regulators that the field sampling activity did not cause contamination.

You can download our [Sampling Guide](#) that talks about field reagent blanks and other sampling best practices in greater depth. And as always, if you have a question, you're welcome to [contact our PFAS team](#) directly.

