

PA-DEP Laboratory Accreditation Program	NPW Microbiology Holding Time FAQ
Laboratory Compliance Assistance	Revision 0
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## NPW Microbiology Holding Time FAQ

REQUIREMENT: 40 CFR 136.3(e) Table II "Required Containers, Preservation Techniques, and Holding Times" lists the maximum holding time for bacterial tests under Table IA (total coliform, fecal coliform, *E. coli*, fecal streptococci, enterococci and salmonella) and Table IH (*E. coli* and enterococci) as 6 hours with a footnote stating "Samples analysis should begin immediately, preferably within 2 hours of collection. The maximum transport time to the laboratory is 6 hours, and samples should be processed within 2 hours of receipt at the laboratory."

**Question 1: What is the maximum hold time for non-potable water matrix (40 CFR 136) bacteria samples?**

Answer 1: The samples must be received by the laboratory within 6 hours of collection. The laboratory should make every effort to begin analysis of samples within 2 hours of receipt by the laboratory. 8 hours is the maximum time that samples may be held from the time of sample collection to the start of analysis and still be considered valid.

**Question 2: If a bacterial sample for testing under 40 CFR 136 arrives at the laboratory 7 hours after collection and analysis begins within 1 hour have the hold time requirements been met?**

Answer 2: No, the maximum transport time to the laboratory is 6 hours.

**Question 3: If a bacterial sample for testing under 40 CFR 136 arrives at the laboratory 1 hour after sample collection and analysis begins within 7 hours have the hold time requirements been met?**

Answer 3: Yes; however, the laboratory should make every effort to analyze the sample within 2 hours of receipt by the laboratory

**Question 4: If a bacterial sample for testing under 40 CFR 136 arrives at the laboratory within 6 hours and analysis begins within 3 hours have the hold time requirements been met?**

Answer 4: No, sample analysis must begin within 8 hours of the time of collection for the sample to be considered valid.

**Question 5: If a bacterial sample for testing under 40 CFR 136 arrives at the laboratory within 6 hours and analysis begins within 2 hours have the hold time requirements been met?**

Answer 5: Yes.