

WAC 173-340-709 Methods for defining background concentrations.

(1) **Purpose.** Sampling of hazardous substances in background areas may be conducted to distinguish site-related concentration from nonsite related concentrations of hazardous substances or to support the development of a Method C cleanup level under the provisions of WAC 173-340-706. For purposes of this chapter, two types of background may be determined, natural background and area background concentrations, as defined in WAC 173-340-200.

(2) **Background concentrations.** For purposes of defining background concentrations, samples shall be collected from areas that have the same basic characteristics as the medium of concern at the site, have not been influenced by releases from the site and, in the case of natural background concentrations, have not been influenced by releases from other localized human activities.

(3) **Statistical analysis.**

(a) The statistical methods used to evaluate data sets shall be appropriate for the distribution of each hazardous substance. More than one statistical method may be required at a site.

(b) Background sampling data shall be assumed to be lognormally distributed unless it can be demonstrated that another distribution is more appropriate.

(c) For lognormally distributed data sets, background shall be defined as the true upper 90th percentile or four times the true 50th percentile, whichever is lower.

(d) For normally distributed data sets, background shall be defined as the true upper 80th percentile or four times the true 50th percentile, whichever is lower.

(e) Other statistical methods may be used if approved by the department.

(4) **Sample size.** When determining natural background concentrations for soil, a sample size of ten or more background soil samples shall be required. When determining area background concentrations for soil, a sample size of twenty or more soil samples shall be required. The number of samples for other media shall be sufficient to provide a representative measure of background concentrations and shall be determined on a case-by-case basis.

(5) **Procedures.** For the purposes of estimating background concentrations, the following procedures shall be used for measurements below the practical quantitation limit:

(a) Measurements below the method detection limit shall be assigned a value equal to one-half of the method detection limit.

(b) Measurements above the method detection limit, but below the practical quantitation limit shall be assigned a value equal to the method detection limit.

(c) The department may approve the use of alternate statistical procedures for handling data below the method detection limit or practical quantitation limit.

[Statutory Authority: Chapter 70.105D RCW. WSR 01-05-024 (Order 97-09A), § 173-340-709, filed 2/12/01, effective 8/15/01.]