

**Minutes of the TNI Proficiency Testing Expert Committee  
August 23, 2007**

The Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee of The NELAC Institute (TNI) met on Thursday, August 23, 2007. This meeting was part of the Forum on Environmental Laboratory Accreditation in Cambridge, MA. The meeting was led by Chairperson Anand Mudambi of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Welcome and Introductions

A. Mudambi introduced himself as chairperson of the committee and welcomed the participants. The committee members then introduced themselves. Committee members gave self-introductions and A. Mudambi reviewed the ground-rules for administration of the meeting.

**PT Expert Committee Members present:**

Anand Mudambi (Chair)  
Curtis Wood  
Kristin McCracken  
Matt Sica  
Dan Tholen  
Jim Pletl

**Absent:**

RaeAnn Haynes  
Tom McAninch

The history of the development of the proficiency testing (PT) modules was reviewed. The documents are currently in the Draft Interim Standard status. The four volumes are in the Environmental Sector and cover the following:

Volume 1, Module 1: PT for Laboratories  
Volume 2, Module 2: PT for Accreditation Bodies  
Volume 3: PT Providers  
Volume 4: PT Oversight Bodies

The most comments were received on Volume 1, Module 1. The most significant comments received on each module will be reviewed during the session.

**Volume 1**

Most of the changes made since the January 2007 Denver Forum were related to making the requirements of Volume 1 consistent with the requirement of Volume 2.

- 4.1.5 Note – Comments raised concern that this statement may be inconsistently applied by accrediting bodies (AB) and is not enforceable as written. It was a statement requested by an AB to allow for additional data collection.
- 4.2.1 – Comments received regarding the number of PT samples required to be analyzed per year. Labs analyzing both potable and non-potable samples must perform four PTs, even when same methods are utilized. Some question whether additional PTs can be definitively linked to improved data quality. Comments suggest the TNI standard should be harmonized with the EPA drinking water lab certification requirements, which requires only one PT per year. Comments also suggest having a two PT per year requirement results in states being reluctant to participate in the accreditation program. It was noted that Florida has large financial pressures on labs right now, and a reduction in PT frequency would be viewed positively. It was noted that the PT committee will consult with the NELAP Board on resolution of these comments.
- 4.2.2 – Comment regarding who determines whether PTs are available less than twice per year. This is most relevant to toxicity testing. Participating in a round-robin may be another approach to consider.
- 5.1.2 – Comment noted that more than two methods may be available, indicating some wording changes should be considered. A lab should not be failed for additional methods for not passing one method. Need to consider that technology is just one part of the process as preparation impacts results too. Need to consider whether this is consistent with the “performance approach”. Taking technology down to the prep level has not historically been the NELAC approach.
- 5.2.2 – Comment regarding whether to report to the PTRL or LOD. It was noted the wording should have been different to indicate PT samples are to be run like other standards.
- 8.2, second sentence – Comment noted that it is not within the NELAP charter to resolve complaints.

## **Volume 2**

- 4.1.1 f) – Comment regarding whether this is an action that is currently happening. Accrediting bodies do not have this information and it is already a lab’s responsibility to notify the AB regarding any changes in its accreditation. Comment regarding whether this should be included in the PT module since it is a broader accreditation issue. It was noted that at present there are only 13 Abs so this may not a big deal at this point.
- 5.1.6 Note – Comment similar to corresponding note in Volume 1, 4.1.5.
- 5.2.2 – Comments questioning the benefits of performing experimental PTs. No action comes out of it and it is a data collection tool only. If they are not performed how would it be handled as an accredited analyte? It won’t get to that status if it’s not required.

### **Volume 3**

- 1.1 – Comments regarding the responsibility and operation of what seems in reference to the PT Board. The PT committee noted it would work with the PT Board on this language. At the time this TNI module was being developed, some lines of authority within TNI had not yet been determined.
- 3.12 and 8.4.4 – Comments regarding usage of terms “opening date” and “shipment date”. The terms are intended to help differentiate dates to satisfy the requirement for separation of the attempts at PT sample analysis. It is too difficult to track analysis dates. PT providers actually ship samples prior to the opening date to allow time for transition before arrival at the lab. It was suggested that the required separation in the PY attempts does not do anything to improve the lab’s performance. This should be addressed by the lab’s quality system and corrective action.
- 10.3.1.2 – Comment noted that a lab could provide one result that would pass everything. This puts a burden on AB to compare reported results and the lab’s detection limits. Some PTs are not appropriate for the analysis being done by the lab as the PT value is not consistent with the lab’s typical reporting ranges. This raises an issue for PT providers as well – how do they deal with < values in statistics. It was noted that ABs are currently not consistent in how this is being treated. It was suggested that an entry of “not scored” might be better than “not acceptable” in these situations.

### **Volume 4**

Editorial comments on this module were received from the Uniformity of Standards Committee.

- Comments were received regarding the authority of the PT Board, which will be reviewed with the PT Board.
- 4.3.2 – Comments noted there are no requirements for the database. It was suggested that examples and units could be provided as to how to comply. There are two issues – what needs to be submitted to A2LA and how is homogeneity is performed? To what requirements are the PT providers being held?

A. Mudambi closed the session with an overview of how the committee will move forward with the comment resolution process. The responses to comments will be posted in advance of the January 2008 Forum.

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**  
**Proficiency Testing Committee Meeting**  
**August 23, 2007**

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