



# STANDARD METHODS

FOR THE  
EXAMINATION OF WATER AND WASTEWATER  
JOINT EDITORIAL BOARD

## MEMORANDUM

TO: *Standard Methods* Users  
Section 2120 Color

FROM: Rodger Baird  
Joint Editorial Board (JEB)

RE: **Clarification of pH Measurement in Color Testing**

DATE: **September 1, 2009**

Questions have continued regarding the need for measuring and reporting pH when performing color testing using Method 2120 B. After discussions with the Coordinator for Part 2000 and the Joint Task Group (JTG) members for Section 2120, the JEB decided that a clarification of intent was in order.

As currently written, the method requires that a sample be within the pH range of 4 to 10 for visual comparison:

### 5. Procedure

*b. Sample preparation:* Check sample pH. If outside the range of 4 to 10, preferably adjust sample to pH 7 and note adjustment.

Therefore, an exact pH measurement is not necessary as long as the pH is well within this range (which would be typical for most water samples). However, the method as written currently specifies the use of a pH meter under 2120 B.2 Apparatus, referring to Section 4500-H<sup>+</sup>. The JEB is in agreement with the JTG members that the pH range for color measurements may be checked with either a pH meter or narrow range pH paper prior to testing without adversely impacting results. Good laboratory practice dictates that the analyst record the results on a bench sheet, as is typically done for other raw data for measurements, along with the technique used in order to demonstrate that the sample was in the necessary pH range.

Nothing in this opinion is intended to preclude a regulatory authority from requiring that pH be determined on any sample by a method deemed appropriate. However, because many laboratories are likely to have pH measurements and color testing done in different areas and at different times of sample processing by different personnel, an analyst performing color analysis may have to perform a separate pH range check if other representative sample pH data are not readily available. In such cases, the checking of appropriate pH range as discussed above will facilitate color testing.

The JEB is in the process of charging a JTG with the task of revising and clarifying several items throughout Section 2120 so that the next edition of the method should reflect these editorial changes. In the interim, the changes are being posted on the *Standard Methods* website for information and use by laboratories and regulatory authorities.

Very Truly Yours

Rodger Baird  
Joint Editorial Board  
*Standard Methods for the Examination of Water and Wastewater*