



February 4, 2004

**Office of Water Quality Water-Quality Information Note 2004.06**

**Subject: Safety—Shipping formalin/formaldehyde-preserved samples**

**Effective immediately, samples preserved with formalin, or formaldehyde in any concentration, are not to be shipped. Please hold these samples in your offices until you receive further guidance.** Department of Transportation (DOT) hazmat shippers regulations require that anyone packing, or even filling out the paperwork for, this type of sample have a certification, signed by their supervisor, in their personnel file, documenting completion of the DOT's "Hazardous Materials Transportation Training" modules. The samples must be packaged and labeled in very specific ways, depending on the manner in which they are being transported. ***Failure to comply with these regulations "may result in a civil penalty of up to \$27,500 for each violation and, in certain cases, criminal penalties of up to \$500,000 and imprisonment of up to 5 years."*** The Hazardous Materials Regulations are found in Title 49 – Transportation, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR 49). Information can be obtained from the DOT Hazmat website at <http://hazmat.dot.gov/>.

The Office of Water Quality is working on a technical memorandum that will outline the training requirements, documentation, and procedures that must be followed when shipping samples preserved with formaldehyde. Regulations regarding all of the preservatives that are used for water-quality samples will be checked to assure that we continue to be in compliance.

If you are facing an impending requirement to ship subject samples or have questions, please contact Steve Moulton ([smoulto@usgs.gov](mailto:smoulto@usgs.gov); 703-648-6874) or Kathy Fitzgerald ([kkfitz@usgs.gov](mailto:kkfitz@usgs.gov); 703-648-6902).

If this Note was forwarded to you and you'd like to have your name placed on the WaQI Notes distribution, please send email to [nlsnow@usgs.gov](mailto:nlsnow@usgs.gov).

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