The Critical Role of the Independent Testing Laboratory in Environmental Compliance

Introduction
A high-quality and efficient program for environmental testing is vital to protecting human health and our environment. To support this need and to ensure compliance with the regulations and standards promulgated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the states, a network of commercial, independent testing laboratories has evolved. The independent testing laboratory community has become the foundation that supports the EPA, the states, and regulated community, all of whom rely on it to perform the vast majority of all compliance testing and other monitoring in our country.

Since the early days of the EPA, independent laboratories have grown and evolved to fulfill the increasing need for scientific data to demonstrate compliance with regulations. There are many reasons for this, including:

- Taxpayers save substantial amounts of money by using independent laboratories, as the federal and state governments are spared the cost of building and staffing laboratories. This also eliminates the need for them to “overbuild” laboratory capacity to handle infrequent emergency situations, such as natural disasters and incidents of massive environmental contamination.
- When commercial laboratory services are used, government staff and scientists are able to focus more on inherently governmental functions such as research and development, national implementation of policy, and enforcement of regulations.
- The regulated community recognizes that compliance monitoring conducted by independent laboratories is generally more credible than testing they have the ability to conduct in-house.

The American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL) is an association representing independent commercial scientific and engineering firms with over 1,000 facilities across the U.S. engaged in testing, product certification, consulting, and research and development to enhance public health and safety.

Testing Performed by Commercial, Independent Laboratories

Compliance Monitoring
- Testing to demonstrate regulatory compliance with U.S. standards (to support commercial customers)
- Enforcement monitoring (to support federal and state governmental agencies)

Emergency Response Testing
- Problem identification and determination of incident severity
- Problem remediation
- “All Clear” determination

Regulatory Evaluation and Development Testing
- Testing to help federal and state governments evaluate existing regulations and develop new ones
- Working together with the innovation community and government agencies to develop new, more efficient and more effective measurement technologies