

LABORATORY RESOURCE

Laboratory sampling collection guide

How to collect, label and dispatch samples so they reach the Sysco laboratory in good condition and produce defensible results. Applies to spore-trap cassettes, tape-lifts, swabs, bulk samples and pumped media for occupational hygiene analysis.

Before you start

- Confirm the analyte and method you need — call the lab if unsure.
- Use only sealed, in-date sampling media supplied by Sysco or an approved supplier.
- Have a chain-of-custody form ready (one per dispatch).

Spore-trap cassettes (Air-O-Cell or equivalent)

- Calibrate pump to 15 L/min before each session.
- Sample 5 minutes per location (75 L) for office/clean environments; 2 minutes (30 L) for visibly dusty environments.
- Always include one outdoor reference sample on the same day, upwind of the building.
- Re-cap the cassette inlet and outlet with the supplied plugs immediately after sampling.

Tape-lifts & swabs

- Use the supplied lift-tape — peel, press firmly to the surface (~25 cm²), lift cleanly, and seal sticky-side down to its slide.
- Swabs: moisten with sterile saline only when sampling dry surfaces; replace cap immediately and store upright.
- Photograph the sampling location before and after collection.

Bulk samples

- Use a sealable polythene bag inside a rigid container.
- Collect ~5 g for general analysis, ~25 g for asbestos screen.
- Double-bag if visible mould or suspected hazardous material.

Pumped media (filters, sorbent tubes)

- Record start and end pump-flow readings — a calibration drift > 5 % invalidates the sample.
- Cap both ends of sorbent tubes immediately after sampling.
- Keep filter cassettes upright; do not disturb the deposit.

Labelling — every sample

- Unique sample ID (matching the chain-of-custody).
- Date, time start, time end, sampler initials.
- Location description (room / area / process).

- Pump flow rate and total volume sampled (where applicable).

Dispatch

- Pack upright in bubble-wrap; do not refrigerate spore traps.
- Refrigerate (do not freeze) viable / culturable samples; dispatch within 24 hours.
- Send by tracked courier to: Sysco Environmental Ltd, Unit 1, Barnsley Road, Hoyland, S74 0QN.
- Email the chain-of-custody PDF to sales@sysco-env.co.uk on the day of dispatch.

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