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**Water quality — Lead-210 — Test  
method using liquid scintillation  
counting**

*Qualité de l'eau — Plomb 210 — Méthode d'essai par comptage des  
scintillations en milieu liquide*



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# Contents

Page

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>1 Scope</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Normative references</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3 Symbols</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4 Principle</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5 Reagents and equipment</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>6 Sampling and storage</b>	<b>5</b>
6.1 Sampling	5
6.2 Sample storage	5
<b>7 Procedure</b>	<b>5</b>
7.1 Sample preparation	6
7.2 Preconcentration	6
7.3 Separation of $^{210}\text{Pb}$	7
7.4 Measurement	8
<b>8 Quality assurance and quality control programme</b>	<b>9</b>
8.1 General	9
8.2 Influencing variables	9
8.3 Instrument verification	10
8.4 Contamination	10
8.5 Method verification	10
8.6 Demonstration of analyst capability	10
<b>9 Expression of results</b>	<b>10</b>
9.1 General	10
9.2 Yield determination	11
9.3 Calculation of activity concentration	12
9.4 Decision threshold	13
9.5 Detection limit	13
9.6 Confidence interval limits	13
<b>10 Test report</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Annex A (informative) Spectra examples</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>17</b>

## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2. [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received. [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 147, *Water quality*, Subcommittee SC 3, *Radioactivity measurements*.

## Introduction

Radioactivity from several naturally occurring and anthropogenic sources is present throughout the environment. Thus, water bodies (e.g. surface water, groundwater, seawater) can contain the following radionuclides of natural or human-made origins:

- natural radionuclides, including potassium-40, and those originating from the thorium and uranium decay series, particularly radium-226, radium-228, uranium-234, uranium-238, and lead-210, can be found in water for natural reasons (e.g. desorption from the soil and wash-off by rain water) or can be released from technological processes involving naturally occurring radioactive materials (e.g. the mining and processing of mineral sands or the production and use of phosphate fertilizer);
- human-made radionuclides, such as transuranium elements (americium, plutonium, neptunium, curium), tritium, carbon-14, strontium-90, and gamma-emitting radionuclides, can also be found in natural waters as a result of authorized routine releases into the environment in small quantities of the effluent discharged from nuclear fuel cycle facilities. They are also released into the environment following their use in unsealed form for medical and industrial applications. They are also found in the water as a result of past fallout contamination resulting from the explosion in the atmosphere of nuclear devices and accidents such as those that occurred in Chernobyl and Fukushima.

Drinking water may thus contain radionuclides at activity concentrations which could present a risk to human health. In order to assess the quality of drinking water (including mineral waters and spring waters) with respect to its radionuclide content and to provide guidance on reducing health risks by taking measures to decrease radionuclide activity concentrations, water resources (groundwater, river, lake, sea, etc.) and drinking water are monitored for their radioactivity content as recommended by the World Health Organization [WHO] and required by some national authorities.

An International Standard on a test method for lead-210 activity concentrations in water samples is justified for test laboratories carrying out these measurements, required sometimes by national authorities, as laboratories may have to obtain a specific accreditation for radionuclide measurement in drinking water samples.

Lead-210 activity concentration can vary according to local geological and climatic characteristics and usually ranges from 2 mBq·l<sup>-1</sup> to 300 mBq·l<sup>-1</sup> (References [12][13]). The guidance level for lead-210 in drinking water, as recommended by WHO, is 100 mBq·l<sup>-1</sup> (Reference [14]).

**NOTE** The guidance level is the activity concentration with an intake of 2 l·day<sup>-1</sup> of drinking water for 1 year that results in an effective dose of 0,1 mSv·year<sup>-1</sup> for members of the public, an effective dose that represents a very low level of risk that is not expected to give rise to any detectable adverse health effect.



# Water quality — Lead-210 — Test method using liquid scintillation counting

**WARNING** — Persons using ISO 13163 should be familiar with normal laboratory practice. ISO 13163 does not purport to address all of the safety problems, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user to establish appropriate safety and health practices and to ensure compliance with any national regulatory conditions.

**IMPORTANT** — It is absolutely essential that tests conducted according to ISO 13163 be carried out by suitably trained staff.

## 1 Scope

ISO 13163 specifies the determination of lead-210 ( $^{210}\text{Pb}$ ) activity concentration in samples of all types of water using liquid scintillation counting (LSC). For raw and drinking water, the sample should be degassed in order to minimize the ingrowth of  $^{210}\text{Pb}$  from radon-222 ( $^{222}\text{Rn}$ ).

Using currently available liquid scintillation counters, this test method can measure the  $^{210}\text{Pb}$  activity concentrations in the range of less than  $20 \text{ mBq}\cdot\text{l}^{-1}$  to  $50 \text{ mBq}\cdot\text{l}^{-1}$ . These values can be achieved with a counting time between 180 min and 720 min for a sample volume from 0,5 l to 1,5 l.

Higher  $^{210}\text{Pb}$  activity concentrations can be measured by either diluting the sample or using smaller sample aliquots or both.

It is the laboratory's responsibility to ensure the suitability of this test method for the water samples tested.

## 2 Normative references

The following documents, in whole or in part, are normatively referenced in this document and are indispensable for its application. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO/IEC Guide 98-3, *Uncertainty of measurement — Part 3: Guide to the expression of uncertainty in measurement (GUM:1995)*

ISO/IEC Guide 99, *International vocabulary of metrology — Basic and general concepts and associated terms (VIM)*

ISO/IEC 17025, *General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories*

ISO 5667-3, *Water quality — Sampling — Part 3: Preservation and handling of water samples*

ISO 11929, *Determination of the characteristic limits (decision threshold, detection limit and limits of the confidence interval) for measurements of ionizing radiation — Fundamentals and application*

ISO 80000-10, *Quantities and units — Part 10: Atomic and nuclear physics*