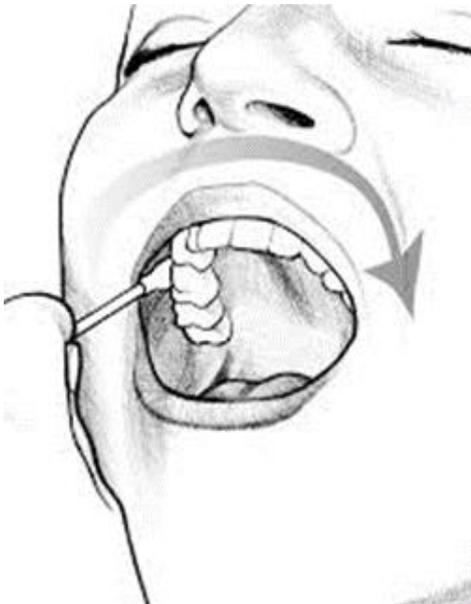


AS/NZS 4760:2019 Oral Fluid Testing



MDMA – Adam
MDME – Eve

Background – Standards Australia and New Zealand agreed to produce a combined Oral Fluid Testing (OFT) standard forming a Standards Review Committee in February 2015. That Committee’s work has resulted in the release of AS/NZS 4760:2019 on 12th March 2019. Onlookers were informed of a ‘hard fought battle’ and subsequently some members of the Standards Committee have described the AS/NZS 4760:2019 as a “compromise to accommodate on-site screening”. Indeed, things seem far from perfect!



Why adhere to Standards?

In *Air New Zealand v Various Trade Unions and Associations* (ARC 42/03) Judge TG Goddard accepted [16] the “... defendant’s assurance that the testing procedures are intended by it to be carried out in accordance with the Australian/New Zealand Standard Procedures for the collection, detection and quantitation of drugs of abuse in urine: AS/NZS 4308:2001 ...”

This was fundamentally important given random testing was [241] “suspicionless” and impacted “... in a substantive way the principles already identified under privacy, common law ... and human rights (legislation).” Clearly, any random testing would need to be completed fairly and appropriately!

Key Criteria to Meet Under AS/NZS 4760:2019

- Testing agents must be trained under NZQA unit standards – these should be developed by June.
- OFT on-site screening devices must be verified (under appendix C) as meeting the AS/NZS 4760:2019. There are currently none that are verified to the standard – anywhere in the world.

FAQ – Urine vs Oral Fluid Testing



Is there a relationship between the two testing methodologies? – We understand that the answer is ‘No’ and therefore it is not appropriate to screen using oral fluid and then collect urine for a confirmation.

What are the main differences between the two testing methodologies? – Oral fluid testing (OFT) has a shorter window of detection, typically hours as compared to urine in which use may be detected after several days. OFT is therefore seen to align more closely with the very recent use of drugs, however, it may also fail to detect drug use during a withdrawal (crashing) when behavioural (safety) risks are significant. OFT may afford sample collection advantages including less invasive collection and no need for special collection facilities.



Is urine testing easy to cheat? – Urine testing has several time-tested safeguards e.g. a urine temperature check and abnormal creatinine levels. The primary method used to cheat is to swap-in a clean sample, however, such cheating needs to be stealthy, given the observation requirements laid upon the testing agent under the standard. Notwithstanding, some have been successful at cheating the urine test.



Is OFT easy to cheat? – Many consider this is one of OFT’s advantages! Nevertheless, it must be noted that oral fluid may be diluted, corrupted or completely neutralised by (1) brushing the mouth thoroughly with a toothbrush, or (2) using an acidic mouthwash, or (3) using a detox kit. In terms of Cannabis use, a person ingesting it e.g. in a cookie will not be detected in an OFT irrespective of when the test is conducted.



Will OFT provide a cost benefit? AS/NZS 4760:2019 requires that a not negative donor sample is followed by a second OFT swab and then both must be sent to the laboratory (as the A and B samples) for confirmation. Currently there are no accredited laboratories here in NZ so the samples must be confirmed in Melbourne. The cost to courier currently is \$AU 600 (not including the cost of analysis). Two NZ laboratories are currently getting ready to provide analysis, however, it seems that the overall costs will be around the same if not a bit more than for urine.

Conclusion: The mood among forestry companies has been “... we can’t wait for OFT to come in!” Most, like PF Olsen, have now experienced one or two presentations by toxicologists and the mood has changed to a watching brief. PF Olsen has not ruled out OFT, but there is more work to be done.