Heavy Metal Contamination in Highway Marking Glass Beads

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Outline

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Background

- Glass Beads
  - Enhance visibility for night driving through *retroreflectivity*.

Roadway with glass beads vs. one without
Motivation

• Recently, As, Pb, and Sb have been observed in glass bead samples.

• Question: What is the environmental risk in using these glass beads?

• To better understand the risk involved, glass bead batches with elevated concentrations of metals and metalloids were procured.
Objectives

• Determine the total concentrations of select metals and metalloids using hydrofluoric acid (HF) digestion followed by inductively coupled plasma mass spectroscopy (ICP-MS) and compare results to field portable X-Ray fluorescence (FP-XRF).

• Conduct batch experiments to determine environmental impact:
  • Abrasion
  • Roadways deicing salts
  • pH
  • Time
  • Ionic strength

• Based on leaching, develop guidance to address potential environmental risk.
Methods

• Total Metal Determination
  • Dissolution
    • Hydrofluoric acid digestion
      • ASTM C169 – hot plate
      • EPA Method 3052 – microwave oven
    • ICP-MS
  • Non-destructive X-Ray fluorescence EPA Method 6200
    • Field portable XRF (FP-XRF)
    • Lab scale XRF
Methods: Environmental Risk

• Assess leachability from one batch to compare results:
  • Toxicity Characteristic Leaching Procedure (TCLP)
    U.S. EPA Method 1311: Simulates leaching at lower pH in a landfill environment.
  • Synthetic Precipitation Leaching Procedure (SPLP)
    U.S. EPA Method 1312: Simulates acid rain and considers infiltration of contaminants into groundwater used as a drinking water source.
  • Environmentally relevant conditions: time, pH, salt, ionic strength, and particle size.
Results

• Select batches of glass beads exhibited elevated concentrations of As, Pb, and Sb.

• Concentrations were observed with significant variability: 50-83% for Pb, 17-22% for As, and 13-16% for Sb.

• pH and time were observed to be the most significant factors affecting leaching of metals and metalloids from glass beads.
Results

• TCLP and SPLP underestimated the leaching potential from glass beads as compared to the batch studies.

• Further analysis of other batches procured for the study revealed leaching.

• Guidance was provided for As at 100 mg kg\(^{-1}\), Pb at 100 mg kg\(^{-1}\), and Sb at 175 mg kg\(^{-1}\).
Conclusions

• The glass beads procured from the NJDOT and glass vendors may not be representative of the glass beads being used on highways.

• Elevated concentrations of metals and metalloids were observed in the select batches of glass beads with significant variability.

• FP-XRF is a viable technique that showed a strong correlation with results from HF digestion followed by ICP-MS.
Conclusions

- Leaching studies demonstrated the potential for release of As, Sb, and Pb.

- Results from the TCLP and SPLP tests were not consistent with the batch studies.

- The leachability thresholds are the following: 100 mg kg\(^{-1}\) for As, 100 mg kg\(^{-1}\) for Pb, and 175 mg kg\(^{-1}\) for Sb.
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