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Application Note

Correlating Total Organic Carbon (TOC) to Biochemical (BOD_5) and Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD)

In all regions of the world, environmental agencies and academia are exploring and supporting measurement of Total Organic Carbon (TOC) and its correlation to oxygen demand.

Background

Biochemical and chemical oxygen demand measurements have been used for over 100 years to qualify and quantify contamination in municipal and industrial wastewater. Biochemical Oxygen Demand, currently a five-day laboratory test labeled BOD_5, is one of the most broadly used parameters for wastewater quality in the world and the standard for municipal sewage treatment. Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD), typically a two-hour test, is more widely used in industrial applications. Often, both of these laboratory methods are measured, recorded and compared over time.[1-3]

TOC analysis is a well-known analytical method used in diverse water and municipal and industrial wastewater quality applications. There are multiple TOC measurement methods and technologies available in laboratory and online configurations, and typical analytical times are 3-10 minutes depending on mode of analysis. The speed of analysis and online operation of TOC instruments provide advantages over oxygen demand measurements, providing near real-time analysis for event detection and integrated process control. Additionally, TOC is a direct measure of the amount of organics in the water, whereas COD and BOD are indirect measurements.

Depending on the wastewater composition and stability, a relationship or correlation can often be established between organic carbon and oxygen demand of the sample.

Regulatory Framework

In the United States, pre-treatment standards are established for all industrial and Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs). Under the authority of the Clean Water Act and subsequent legislation, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) was established under the administration of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). With minimal exceptions, NPDES is the primary program that manages discharge limits or effluent limitations guidelines (ELG) for the release of process effluent or wastewater to public waterways.[4-7]

The U.S. Clean Water Act authorizes considerable civil penalties for all violators, up to $25,000 per

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day per violation.[8] According to the Code of Federal Regulations 403.12, POTWs with flows greater than 5 million gallons per day (MGD) must have their own pretreatment program.[9]

In Asia, Taiwan's EPA has guidelines to qualify river pollution based on concentration of BOD_5. They classify 5 to 15 mg/L as moderately polluted and >15 mg/L as severely polluted.[10]

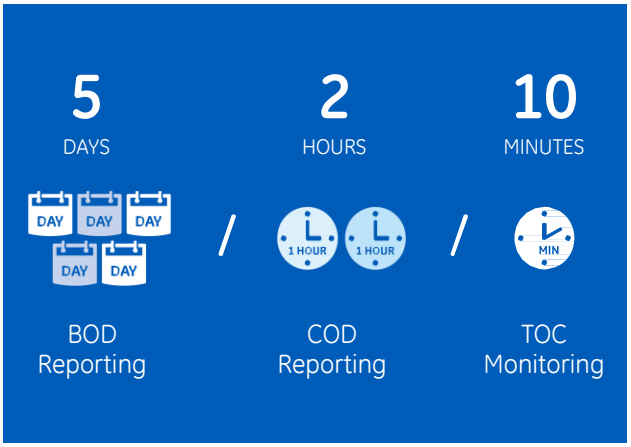
In Europe, France has effluent discharge limitations in open waterways requiring BOD < 100 mg/L and COD < 300 mg/L .[11] Germany allows a maximum COD value based on 4 x TOC – "a chemical oxygen demand (COD) level specified in the water discharge permit shall also be deemed to have been met provided the quadruple amount of total organically bonded carbon (TOC), specified in milligrams per litre, does not exceed this level."[12]

Value of TOC to Oxygen Demand Correlation

TOC analysis is faster and more accurate than either oxygen demand method and is a direct measurement of the organic load. Both forms of oxygen demand are indirect measurements. TOC has an analysis time of 3 to 10 minutes, or 30 minutes for at least three (3) repetitions, compared to two hours for COD or five days for BOD_5.

The NPDES system allows for "authorized alternatives" to oxygen demand, such as TOC measurement, correlating to oxygen demand, as a means for operators to have faster and more accurate monitoring and process control. In this way, industrial facilities, "non-municipal dischargers", with wastewater treatment can often trend oxygen demand and anticipate excursions before exceeding their permit limits.[13]

A pre-treatment facility should work with its state NPDES administrator to execute a long-term, correlation test and replace BOD or COD with TOC as the primary discharge parameter. Regulatory agencies (e.g., USEPA, state DEPs) may have specific requirements on the number of samples and test period. As indicated in a study report by Instrumentation Testing Association of North America, "weekly sample analysis for a minimum of one year to include seasonal variations is recommended for municipal wastewater plant in order to obtain discharge permit".[14]



Around the globe, municipal sewage and industrial wastewater plants can use short-term and long-term studies to determine the correlation between TOC and oxygen demand.

According to the Government of India Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) under the Ministry of Environment & Forests:

"...based on the laboratory validation as regards to the observed ratio of TOC:BOD & TOC:COD a correlation factor is established... In the field TOC is monitored online... Based on repeatable empirical relationship established between TOC, BOD or COD for a specific waste water source accompanying BOD or COD can be estimated from the recorded TOC values".[15]

The CPCB also specifies that the correlation must be established based on the sample matrix and validated periodically.

Since TOC and oxygen demand methods are inherently different, the historical concern with TOC:OD correlation is the stability of the relationship over time due to any changes in the process stream(s). The variability of organics over time could alter the mathematical relationship to oxygen demand. The sample matrix, particulate or solids composition, viscosity and turbidity can influence the correlation factor over time.

By measuring TOC every ten minutes and applying the correlation factor:

- COD can be estimated as many as 12 times more frequently than the traditional test
- BOD_5 can be estimated 288 times per day, compared to the traditional test

How to Determine the Correlation Factor

There are a number of ways to properly determine the correlation factor between TOC and the oxygen demand parameter of choice, BOD_5 or COD. The method detailed in the Instrumentation Testing Association (ITA) Test Report is specific with corresponding statistical analyses; refer to the Implementation Protocol.[14] ITA's suggested protocol specifies four steps with recommendations and references published analytical methods:

1. Long term sampling for TOC and BOD_5 analyses of various points from influent to discharge
    a. Recommends immediate BOD_5 analysis after collection
    b. Recommends immediate TOC analysis after collection OR acidification and refrigeration
    c. Recommends 10% of samples "used for quality assurance and quality control purpose"
2. Statistically analyze data for significant correlation between data sets
3. If correlation is confirmed, set correlation equation and calculate TOC equivalent to BOD_5 limit[14]

Regardless which procedure is followed, current best practices and the scientific method should be implemented to ensure internal and external statistical validity. Some validity considerations for statistical process control and analyses are: minimum number of data points in data set before determining process stability; normality of data; process capability; and criteria for determining inference to data correlation. Regarding Design of Experiments — Consult with quality and engineering personnel, applied statisticians, Six Sigma specialists and/or follow appropriate company processes and procedures.

Table 1 provides examples of the first-order correlation equations determined in the ITA Test Report.[14] The report summarizes all of the correlation findings that the data were tested for statistically.

Location	Correlation Formula	R_2
Oceanside WPCP, San Francisco, CA Primary effluent and final effluent	TOC = 0.2326 (BOD_5) + 14.426	0.8138
Longwood Park Sewage Lagoon Town of Quispamsis, NB, Canada Combined raw sewage and final effluent	TOC = 0.4476 (BOD_5) + 23.787	0.703
City of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada North End Water Pollution Control Centre (NEWPCC) Combined raw sewage and final effluent	TOC = 0.5569 (BOD_5) + 11.38	0.8832

Table 1. First-order correlation equations determined in ITA Test Report[14]

Conclusion

In Asia, Europe, and the Americas, correlating TOC to BOD_5 is well known and becoming a best practice in wastewater quality and treatment. Faster and more accurate TOC measurements can be used to improve process control in addition to near real-time discharge monitoring to decrease excursions. TOC analysis for BOD_5 can reduce operational costs, chemicals and energy, and help avoid fines for exceeding effluent limits. There are established analytical and statistical procedures and methods to properly execute a correlation study, validate data, and determine correlation equations. Universities, research institutions, environmental agencies, and private industry are all learning the advantages of TOC analysis to rapidly monitor and predict oxygen demand, therefore improving wastewater quality while lowering cost and risk.

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