

P O W E R P L A N T

**W A T E R
C H E M I S T R Y**

A P R A C T I C A L G U I D E

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PennWell®

Table of Contents

Figures and Tables	
Acknowledgments	xi
Preface	xii
1 INTRODUCTION TO STEAM GENERATION WATER CHEMISTRY SYSTEMS	1
2 CONDENSATE FEEDWATER CHEMISTRY	5
Introduction	5
Condensate/Feedwater System Construction Materials	6
Condensate Chemistry Dissolved Oxygen	6
Carbonic Acid Corrosion in Industrial Steam Generating Systems	8
Mechanical Removal of Dissolved Oxygen and Other Gases	10
Chemical Control of Dissolved Oxygen	13
Oxygen Scavengers	13
Safe Hydrazine Feed Systems	17
Industrial Oxygen Scavenging	18
Flow-Accelerated Corrosion	19
Copper-Alloy Corrosion and Preventive Measures	19
Additional Corrosion Control Requirements	20
Oxygenated Treatment	21
Feedwater Chemistry Guidelines	31
Chemical Feed Systems	31
Monitoring and Control of Condensate Contaminants	32
Condensate Polishing and Treatment of Condensate Return to	
Industrial Boilers	33
High-Pressure Boiler Condensate Polishing	34
Deep-Bed Condensate Polishing	35
Powdered-Resin Condensate Polishing	37
Industrial Plant Condensate Polishing	38
Conclusion	39

Supplement 2-1: Why Condenser Performance is Important	41
Supplement 2-2: BASIC Program for Monitoring Condenser Performance	42
Case Histories	46
3 BOILER WATER CHEMISTRY	51
Introduction	51
Drum-Type Boiler Design	51
Package Drum Boilers	52
Field-Erected Drum Units	52
Circulating Fluidized Bed Boilers and Heat Recovery	
Steam Generators	53
Once-Through Steam Generation	54
Boiler Water Contamination	55
Iron Oxide Deposition	55
Condenser Inleakage	56
Boiler Water Treatment Programs	60
Early Boiler Water Treatment	61
Coordinated and Congruent Phosphate Treatment	62
Phosphate Hideout	64
Alternative Phosphate and Nonphosphate Programs	66
Equilibrium Phosphate Treatment	66
Phosphate Treatment	67
Chelants and Polymer Treatments	67
Caustic Treatment	69
All-Volatile Treatment	69
Oxygenated Treatment	70
Heat Recovery Steam Generators	70
Sampling	72
Layup and Off-Line Corrosion Protection	72
Conclusion	73
Supplement 3-1: BASIC Program for Calculating Sodium-to-Phosphate Ratios of Boiler Water	75
Case Histories	76
4 STEAM CHEMISTRY	83
Introduction	83
Primary Carryover Products	84
Copper	84
Sodium Hydroxide	85

Chloride and Sulfate	86
Iron Oxides	86
Silica	87
Sodium Phosphates	87
Organics	87
Mechanical Carryover	88
Vaporous Carryover	90
Solids Introduction by Contaminated Attemperator Water	91
Superheater Exfoliation	91
Water Chemistry Limits to Prevent Steam Contamination by Carryover	92
Boiler Water Chemistry Guidelines for Control of Steam Chemistry	92
Prevention of Contamination via the Attemperator System	93
Control of Superheater and Reheater Exfoliation	93
Steam Chemistry Monitoring	94
Steam Chemistry Issues at Industrial Plants without Turbines	94
Conclusion	95
Case Histories	97
5 HIGH-PURITY MAKEUP WATER TREATMENT	101
Introduction	101
Pretreatment	101
Microbiocide Feed	102
Clarification and Softening	103
Filtration	105
Activated Carbon Filtration	106
Additional Pretreatment Methods	106
High-Purity Makeup Treatment Methods	106
Ion Exchange	107
Exchange Groups	108
Strong Acid Cation Resins	109
Weak Acid Cation Resins	109
Strong Base Anion Resins	109
Weak Base Anion Resins	109
Demineralizer Configurations and Mixed-Bed Exchangers	110
Degasifiers	111
Regeneration and Co-Current/Countercurrent Systems	111
Strong Base Anion Regeneration	113
Weak Acid and Weak Base Exchangers	113
Demineralizer Performance Calculations	115
Strong Acid Cation Exchanger Calculations	115

Strong Base Anion Exchanger Calculations	121
Weak Acid and Weak Base Performance	123
System Design Calculations	126
Resin Volume and Vessel Diameter Calculations	128
Backwash Requirements	128
Regeneration Requirements	129
Rinsing	129
Mixed-Bed Polishing	130
Monitoring Performance of Ion Exchanger Vessels	131
Demineralizer Component Fundamentals	132
Distributors	133
Vessels	133
Valves	133
Materials	134
Packed-Bed Demineralizers	135
Other Makeup Technologies	136
Reverse Osmosis	136
RO Membrane Design	137
RO Membrane Material	137
RO Pretreatment	139
RO Design	140
RO Components	142
RO Flow Control and Monitoring	143
RO Alarms	145
Size of a Reverse Osmosis System	145
RO Cleaning	146
Electrodialysis and Electrodialysis Reversal	146
Electrodeionization	147
Conclusion	148
Supplement 5-1: UV Light Disinfection	149
Supplement 5-2: Multimedia Filtration	150
Supplement 5-3: Activated Carbon	151
Supplement 5-4: Sulfuric Acid and Caustic Specifications	151
Supplement 5-5: Silt Density Index	152
6 COOLING WATER CHEMISTRY	155
Introduction	155
Cooling Systems	156
Once-Through Systems	156
Open Recirculating Systems	157
Cooling Towers	157

Cooling Tower Calculations	160
Closed Cooling Systems	165
Cooling Water Corrosion, Scale, and Deposit Mechanisms	166
Corrosion	166
Corrosion Influencing Mechanisms	169
Nonmetallic Corrosion	170
Corrosion Inhibitors	170
Scale	173
Calcium Carbonate	173
Other Scales	177
Scale Control	177
Acid Feed	178
Alkaline Treatment Methods	179
Fouling	181
Nonmicrobiological Fouling Control Methods	182
Microbiological Fouling	183
Control of Microbiological Organisms	184
Chlorine	184
Nonoxidizing Biocides	189
Biocide Discharge Limits—Future Trends	190
Macrofouling	190
Zebra Mussels	191
Conclusion	193
Supplement 6-1: Cooling Tower BASIC Program	195
Supplement 6-2: LSI and RSI BASIC Program	196
Supplement 6-3: Acid Feed Calculations	198
Supplement 6-4: Sizing a Sidestream Filter	199
Supplement 6-5: Specifications for Sodium Hypochlorite	200
Case Histories	200

7 SAMPLING 205

Introduction	205
The Need for Sampling	206
Sample Point Selection	206
Makeup System Effluent	206
Condensate Storage Tank Effluent	211
Condensate Pump Discharge	211
Condensate Polisher Effluent	212
Deaerator Inlet	212
Deaerator Outlet/Boiler Feed Pump Suction	212

Feedwater or Economizer Inlet	212
Boiler Water	213
Saturated Steam	213
Main/Reheat Steam	214
Cogeneration/Combined-Cycle/Industrial Plant Sampling	215
Techniques to Obtain Representative Samples	216
Sample Nozzle Design	217
Sample Nozzle Installation	218
Sample Point Location	218
Primary Sample Conditioning	218
Sample Flow Rate and Line Size	219
Final Sample Conditioning	219
Data Acquisition	222
Conclusion	223
Case Histories	227
Bibliography	229
Index	233

Chapter 2

Condensate/ Feedwater Chemistry



Introduction

The preboiler system of a typical utility steam generating unit (Fig. 2–1) includes a steam surface condenser, several closed tube-in-shell feedwater heaters, a deaerating feedwater heater, and sometimes an economizer. For industrial systems, feedwater heaters, with the exception of the deaerator, are often omitted unless the steam drives a turbine. The preboiler circuit condenses the turbine exhaust steam and prepares the condensate for return to the boiler. The condensation process significantly improves the efficiency of a unit, as is outlined in greater detail in Supplement 2–1 at the end of this chapter.

The potential for contaminant introduction to a steam generating plant is greatest in the preboiler system, especially at the condenser or via condensate return from an industrial process. This makes chemistry control and monitoring of condensate and feedwater extremely important.

601-750 (4.15-5.17)	751-900 (5.18-6.21)	901-1000 (6.22-6.89)	1001-1500 (6.90-10.34)	1501-2000 (10.35-13.79)
<0.007	<0.007	<0.007	<0.007	<0.007
≤0.025	≤0.02	≤0.02	≤0.01	≤0.01
≤0.02	≤0.015	≤0.01	≤0.01	≤0.01
≤0.2	≤0.1	≤0.05	ND	ND
8.3-10.0	8.3-10.0	8.8-9.6	8.8-9.6	8.8-9.6
NS	NS	VAM	VAM	VAM
<0.5	<0.5	<0.2	<0.2	<0.2
<0.5	<0.5	<0.2	<0.2	<0.2
≤30	≤20	≤8	≤2	≤1
<200(3)	<150(3)	<100(3)	NS(4)	NS(4)
NS	NS	NS	ND(4)	ND(4)
1500-300(5)	1200-200(5)	1000-200(5)	≤150	≤80
0.5-0.1	0.5-0.1	0.5-0.1	0.1	0.1

```
160 QCWL=(QFWGPM*NAFW) / (NACW-NAFW)
170 PRINT "THE RATE OF COOLING WATER FLOW INTO THE CONDENSER = ";:PRINT
USING "###.##";QCWL;:PRINT " GPM"
```

Case History 2-1

Conditions: Two-pass condenser
Copper-nickel tubing

I had been performing thrice-weekly cleanliness factor analyses on the condenser. The values remained very steady in the mid-70% range for several months, but suddenly within two days dropped to 45%. Waterside fouling does not occur nearly this rapidly. Such changes are more indicative of air leakage and accumulation of gasses on the steam-side condenser tube surfaces. The maintenance staff was so notified. When the maintenance crew inspected the condenser, they quickly discovered a crack in the condenser shell where a heater drip line entered. Once they welded this crack, the cleanliness factors returned to previous values, where they remained for another two months until suddenly dropping again. The weld had failed. The maintenance crew then welded a collar to the shell, which totally sealed the crack. This cured the problem.

Case History 2-2

Conditions: Two-pass condenser
Admiralty tubing

I had been collecting thrice-weekly cleanliness factor readings on this condenser as well. Rather suddenly, the condenser began performing erratically. At high unit loads, the cleanliness factor ranged between 70% to 75%, but at low unit loads it sometimes dropped as low as 18%. Again, such fluctuations could not have been the result of waterside tube fouling. All evidence pointed to air leakage, but the source could not be located. Utility managers brought in a leak detection firm, whose personnel used helium leak detection to completely check the condenser and turbine. They classified leaks as large, medium, and small, and found well over a dozen leaks including two large ones, one of which was at the expansion joint between the turbine and the condenser. All leaks were repaired by plant maintenance crews, but this did not solve the problem. Finally, an operator discovered that a trap on the condensate return line from the gland steam exhauster was sticking open at low loads. The trap and line were designed to return condensed gland steam from the subcooler to the condenser, but allow



Supplement 3-1

BASIC Program for Calculating Sodium-to-Phosphate Ratios of Boiler Water

Sodium-to-phosphate ratio monitoring is very important for boilers that are treated with coordinated or congruent phosphate. Chemists must maintain the ratios within relatively narrow guidelines to properly control the boiler water chemistry. The BASIC program on page 77 provides a simple and efficient method for determining these ratios. The only inputs needed are pH and phosphate concentrations (ppm), however, ammonia may significantly affect the calculations.

The calculations first appeared in the November 1986 issue of *Power Engineering* magazine, and the computer program then appeared in the May 1992 issue of this magazine. Since the publication of these two articles, utility personnel and researchers have become much more aware of the effect of ammonia on boiler water pH. At the 1996 International Water Conference, George Verib of Ohio Edison presented an excellent paper on boiler water treatment, part of which discussed ammonia and its relation to sodium/phosphate ratios. Ammonia can have a very significant effect on the calculations, especially in higher pressure units where the sodium-phosphate concentrations are low. Ohio

inspection. The edges of the turbine blades exhibit an abraded pattern. This problem can become more acute in cycling units because frequent startups, shut-downs, or load changes impart additional stress to the tubes.

Superheater/reheater exfoliation is mostly a mechanical phenomenon, and a chemical cleaning of the tubes may be necessary to remove the fractured magnetite layers. Superheater chemical cleaning is not simple, and requires temporary piping, well thought out procedures, and the services of a reliable chemical cleaning firm. However, superheater/reheater cleaning may still be cost effective if SPE is a severe problem. For boilers with drainable superheaters, it is possible to remove some of the exfoliated material by water washing.

Steam Chemistry Monitoring

Steam chemistry monitoring and sample analyses are quite important. Prime sample locations include reheat steam (or main steam for boilers without reheaters) and saturated steam. The former sample allows the plant chemist to monitor steam conditions after the attemperator. The appropriate parameters for analysis include those constituents outlined in Table 4-2. On-line analyses are recommended for sodium, cation conductivity, silica, and possibly chloride, with grab sample analyses for sulfate and TOC. Continuous sampling of saturated steam serves as a good backup to the main/reheat sample, and is the primary sample when main or reheat sampling is unavailable.

Steam Chemistry Issues at Industrial Plants without Turbines

Where steam is used for industrial processes without driving turbines, carryover issues are still important, but may be influenced by somewhat different factors than those for utility units. Many of these have been discussed in chapter 2. Boiler water and steam chemistry monitoring are still important, especially for boilers with superheaters. Carryover can easily cause severe deposition in the superheaters with resulting tube failures. The ASME guidelines outlined previously in Tables 2–3 through 2–5 provide good guidelines for feedwater and boiler water chemistry. Monitoring should at least include on-line sodium or degassed cation conductivity. Proper training is also important. I have been to facilities where the operators knew how to perform standard chemical tests, but did not know what the results indicated. Steam chemistry was a mess, but the operators were taking accurate readings! Training must not only include the “how” of water chemistry monitoring, but also the “why.”

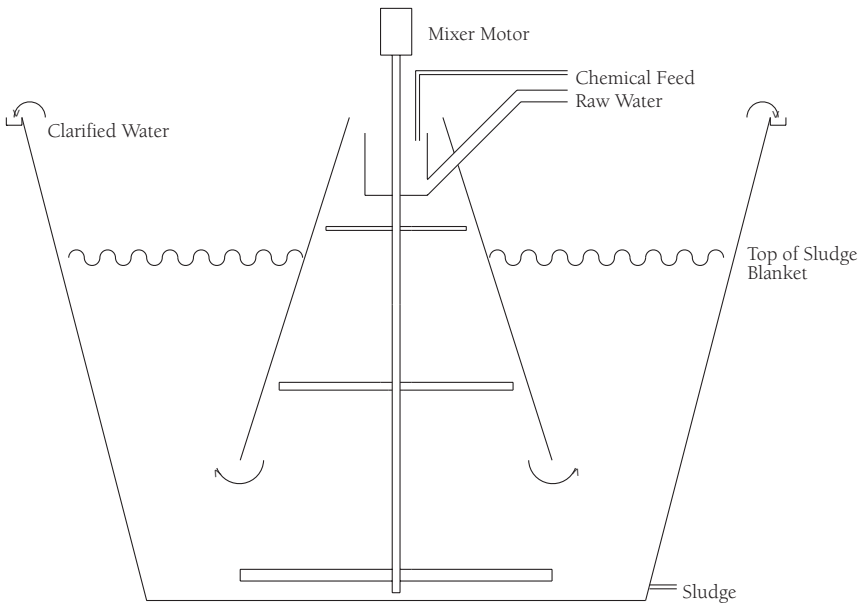
One of the most important issues regarding industrial steam generation is the effect of steam purity on condensate produced later on in the process. Boilers

lent chlorine scavenger, but if the system contains no carbon filters, some other method of oxidant removal is required. Most commonly, a dehalogenating or reducing agent (sodium sulfite or sodium bisulfite) is injected ahead of the demineralizer or reverse osmosis unit to protect the equipment.

Clarification and Softening

Clarification and softening are often carried out in a single process unit, and Figure 5-2 outlines a simplified version of a common clarifier configuration. The water may first be allowed to pass through a grit or settling chamber to allow large particles to settle on their own. Many particles, however, are truly suspended and will stay in the water indefinitely. These particles tend to develop a negative electrical charge, which keeps the solids separated and in suspension. A two-stage process, coagulation-flocculation, is employed in the clarifier to bring the particles together in a settleable solid. In the first step, a coagulant is added for charge neutralization. The coagulant may be an inorganic salt such as aluminum sulfate [$\text{Al}_2(\text{SO}_4)_3 \cdot 18\text{H}_2\text{O}$], sodium aluminate ($\text{Na}_2\text{Al}_2\text{O}_4$), ferrous sulfate [$\text{Fe}_2(\text{SO}_4)_3 \cdot 9\text{H}_2\text{O}$], or ferric chloride (FeCl_3). These salts dissolve in water to produce positively charged cations that neutralize the negative charge on the suspended solids and allow them to draw together. Cationic organic polymers,

Figure 5-2



Simplified Clarifier Design.