

Drinking Water & Wastewater Series

TOTAL ORGANIC CARBON DETERMINATION BY HIGH TEMPERATURE OXIDATION
COMBUSTION FOR STANDARD METHOD 5310B



Introduction

Total organic carbon (TOC) is often used as a non-specific indicator of water quality. In the natural process of our environment and the man-made processes of industry, the ubiquitous nature of carbon provides a screening tool to determine the status of water quality. Customers need a reliable TOC system that can determine contamination from natural occurring compounds, man-made compounds, viruses, bacteria or biological growth.

Total organic carbon analyzers determine the amount of total carbon in a sample aliquot. Total organic carbon is comprised of an inorganic (TIC) and organic fraction. The inorganic fraction consists of the carbonate and bicarbonate compounds. In order to make an accurate determination of the organic fraction, the analyzer must remove, or quantify, the inorganic fraction of the sample aliquot.

Discussion

The determination of either TIC or TOC relies on the conversion of the carbon containing species to carbon dioxide. In the methodology for TOC determination, the sample is first acidified with acid that converts TIC to carbon dioxide (CO₂). If the determination of TIC is desired, the carbon dioxide generated in this step is directed to the

Non-Dispersive Infrared Detector (NDIR); otherwise, it is directed to atmospheric vent. Once TIC is removed, the remaining TOC is oxidized to carbon dioxide and purged through the NDIR. TOC determination is applicable, and necessary, for both drinking water and wastewater.

Procedure

Standard Method 5310B provides guidance on the determination of TOC by High-Temperature Catalytic Oxidation (HTCO) with Non-Dispersive Infrared Detection. The sample is homogenized and diluted, if necessary, and a pre-determined volume is injected into the combustion

tube containing the catalyst. The sample is vaporized and organic compounds are converted to CO₂. The carbon dioxide generated from the oxidation of the TIC and TOC fractions is measured by the NDIR.



TOC in Drinking Water

The USEPA has issued two rules regulating levels of disinfectants and disinfection by-products in drinking water. The Stage 1 Disinfectants and Disinfection By-products Rule (D/DBPR) was promulgated in 1998¹ and took effect on January 1, 2002. This rule lowered permissible levels of trihalomethanes (THMs) to 80 µg/L and regulated levels for five haloacetic acids (HAAs), bromate and chlorite in drinking water for the first time.²

The USEPA Stage 2 D/DBPR was promulgated in 2006.³ Compliance dates for the Stage 2 D/DBPR are phased in over time based upon the number of people served by a water system.

The compliance date for systems serving over 100,000 people was April 1, 2012. Systems serving 10,000-49,000 people and less than 10,000 people had to be in compliance by October 1, 2013.³ TOC analysis is an indicator of NOM and THM levels in source water and finished drinking water.⁴

The rule only applies to systems treating surface water. A system measures the source water and finished water quarterly and calculates the percentage of carbon removal. Table 1 shows the percent TOC removal requirements as a function of TOC and alkalinity concentration.

Table 1. TOC Removal Requirements

Source Water TOC (mg/L)	Source Water Alkalinity (mg/L as CaCO ₃)		
	0-60	60-120	Greater than 120
2.0 - 4.0	35.0%	25.0%	15.0%
4.0 - 8.0	45.0%	35.0%	25.0%
Greater than 8.0	50.0%	40.0%	30.0%



TOC in Wastewater

Wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) use the Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) test to measure oxygen consumed by decomposition of organic matter in secondary wastewater treatment processes. Total organic carbon (TOC) analysis provides a direct quantitative measurement of organic contamination in water and wastewater, whereas, BOD tests provide an indirect, empirical estimation of organic contamination.

In 40 CFR 133.104 the USEPA allows wastewater treatment plants to substitute TOC analysis for BOD monitoring of oxygen-demanding substances. WWTPs seeking to substitute and report TOC values for BOD values must conduct a long-term correlation study and submit results to the regulatory body that issued the NPDES permit to their facility. Study data must be collected using USEPA-approved methods intended for NPDES permit compliance reporting.

Experimental

A 1000 ppm stock solution was prepared by dissolving 2.125g of potassium hydrogen phthalate (KHP) in one liter of water. From this stock solution, a series of standards were prepared at the following concentrations: 1-, 10-, 25-, 50- and 100-ppm. The curve is shown in Figure 1 with a summary in Table 2. Method parameters are shown in Table 3.

Figure 1: Calibration Curve for 5310B Study (Drinking Water and Wastewater)

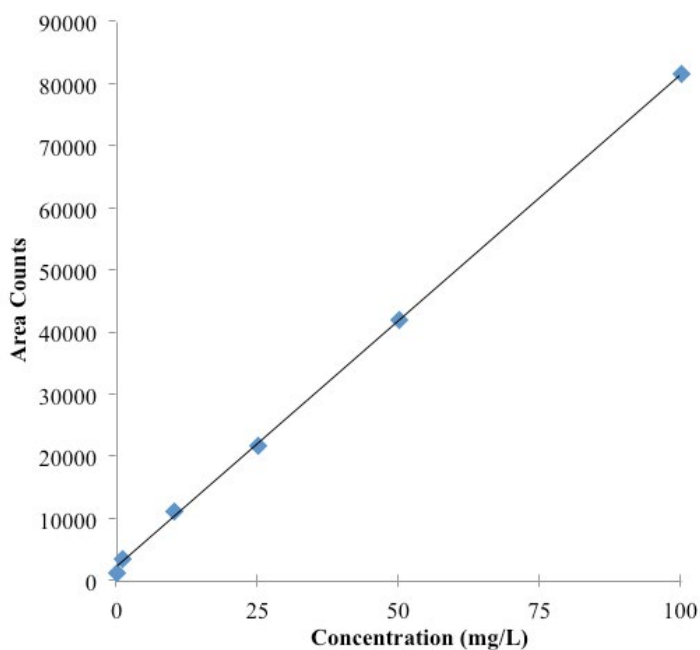


Table 2. Calibration Summary

Calibration Standard	RSD Value
Reagent Water (0 ppm)	3.87
1 ppm	2.07
10 ppm	0.63
25 ppm	0.78
50 ppm	1.03
100 ppm	1.55
R-Squared Value	0.9995

Table 3. Method Parameters

Setting	Value
Analysis Mode	NPOC
Sparging	Internal
Sample Volume	500 μ L
Acid Volume	100 μ L
Furnace Temperature	680 $^{\circ}$ C
Sample Spurge Time	1 minute
Reaction Time	1 minute
Detection Time	3 minutes (max)

**1080 TOC Analyzer**

Conclusions

The OI Analytical Model 1080 Total Organic Carbon Analyzer is ideal for the TOC determination by Standard Method 5310B. The Model 1080 utilizes high temperature combustion on a platinum catalyst in a furnace operated at 680 °C. Moreover, the ability to create, calibrate, and validate one method and one calibration curve for the entire range of expected sample concentrations overcomes the demands of meeting the requirements of SM 5310B.

References

1. Standard Methods for the Examination of Water and Wastewater, 21st Edition (2005), 5310C High-Temperature Combustion Method.
2. Federal Register, Vol. 63, No. 24, December 16, 1998.
3. Federal Register, Vol. 71, No. 2, January 4, 2006.
4. USEPA Method 415.3: Quantifying TOC, DOC, and SUVA, B.B. Potter and J.C. Wimsett, Journal of the AWWA, Vol. 104:6, June 2012.

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