



Designation: D3739 – 19

Standard Practice for Calculation and Adjustment of the Langelier Saturation Index for Reverse Osmosis¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D3739; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers the calculation and adjustment of the Langelier saturation index for the concentrate stream of a reverse osmosis (RO) device. This index is used to determine the need for calcium carbonate (CaCO_3) scale control in the operation and design of RO installations. This practice is applicable for concentrate streams containing 10 to 10 000 mg/L of total dissolved solids. For concentrate containing over 10 000 mg/L, see Practice [D4582](#).

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

1.4 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

[D511 Test Methods for Calcium and Magnesium In Water](#)

[D1067 Test Methods for Acidity or Alkalinity of Water](#)

[D1129 Terminology Relating to Water](#)

[D1293 Test Methods for pH of Water](#)

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D19](#) on Water and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D19.08](#) on Membranes and Ion Exchange Materials.

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

[D1888 Methods Of Test for Particulate and Dissolved Matter in Water](#) (Withdrawn 1989)³

[D4194 Test Methods for Operating Characteristics of Reverse Osmosis and Nanofiltration Devices](#)

[D4195 Guide for Water Analysis for Reverse Osmosis and Nanofiltration Application](#)

[D4582 Practice for Calculation and Adjustment of the Stiff and Davis Stability Index for Reverse Osmosis](#) (Withdrawn 2019)³

[D6161 Terminology Used for Microfiltration, Ultrafiltration, Nanofiltration, and Reverse Osmosis Membrane Processes](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions:*

3.1.1 For definitions of terms used in this standard, refer to Terminologies [D1129](#) and [D6161](#).

3.1.2 For descriptions of terms relating to RO, refer to Test Methods [D4194](#).

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.2.1 *Langelier saturation index, n*—an index calculated from total dissolved solids, calcium concentration, total alkalinity, pH, and solution temperature that shows the tendency of a water solution to precipitate or dissolve calcium carbonate.

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 This practice consists of calculating the Langelier saturation index for a RO concentrate stream from the total dissolved solids, calcium ion content, total alkalinity, pH, and temperature of the feed solution, and the recovery of the RO system.

4.2 This practice also presents techniques to lower the Langelier saturation index by decreasing the recovery, by decreasing the calcium content of the feedwater, or by changing the ratio of total alkalinity to free carbon dioxide (CO_2) in the feedwater.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 In the design and operation of RO installations, it is important to predict the calcium carbonate scaling properties of

³ The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.

the concentrate stream. Because of the increase in total dissolved solids in the concentrate stream and the difference in passages for calcium ion, bicarbonate ion, and free carbon dioxide, the calcium carbonate scaling properties of the concentrate stream will generally be quite different from those of the feed solution. This practice permits the calculation of the Langelier saturation index for the concentrate stream from the feed water analyses and the RO operating parameters.

5.2 A positive Langelier saturation index indicates the tendency to form a calcium carbonate scale, which can be damaging to RO performance. This practice gives various procedures for the adjustment of the Langelier saturation index.

5.3 The tendency to form calcium carbonate scale can be suppressed by the addition of antiscalents or crystal modifiers. Suppliers of antisealents and crystal modifiers can provide information on the scale inhibition performance of these types of chemical. Their use may be appropriate for reducing scale formation in RO systems. The RO system supplier should be consulted prior to the use of antisealents and crystal modifiers to ensure they will not have a negative impact on the RO system.

6. Procedure

6.1 Determine the calcium concentration in the feed solution in accordance with Test Methods **D511** and express as CaCO_3 as demonstrated in **6.6**.

6.2 Determine the total dissolved solids of the feed solution using Methods of Test **D1888**.

6.3 Determine the total alkalinity of the feed solution using Test Methods **D1067**, and express as CaCO_3 .

6.4 Measure the pH of the feed solution using Test Methods **D1293**.

6.5 Measure the temperature of the feed solution.

6.6 Convert feed water alkalinity and calcium as mg/L CaCO_3 :

$$\text{Ca}_f = \text{Ca}_c \times \frac{100 \text{ g CaCO}_3}{\text{mol}} \times \frac{1000 \text{ mg}}{\text{g}} \times \frac{1 \text{ eq CaCO}_3}{1 \text{ eq Ca}^{+2}} \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Alk}_f = \text{Alk}_c \times \frac{100 \text{ g CaCO}_3}{\text{mol}} \times \frac{1000 \text{ mg}}{\text{g}} \times \frac{1 \text{ eq CaCO}_3}{2 \text{ eq HCO}_3^-} \quad (2)$$

where:

Ca_c = calcium concentration in concentrate as CaCO_3 , mg/L,

Ca_f = calcium concentration in feed as CaCO_3 , mg/L,

Alk_c = alkalinity in concentrate as CaCO_3 , mg/L, and

Alk_f = alkalinity in feed as CaCO_3 , mg/L.

6.7 Measure the concentration of all major ions using the methods cited in Guide **D4195**. At a minimum, measure the concentration of magnesium ion (Mg^{+2}), sodium ion (Na^+), potassium ion (K^+), sulfate ion ($\text{SO}_4^{=}$), and chloride ion (Cl^-).

7. Calculation

7.1 Calculate the calcium concentration in the concentrate stream from the calcium concentration in the feed solution, the recovery of the RO system, and the calcium ion passage as follows:

$$\text{Ca}_c = \text{Ca}_f \times \frac{1 - Y(SP_{\text{Ca}})}{1 - Y} \quad (3)$$

where:

Ca_c = calcium concentration in concentrate, as CaCO_3 , mg/L,

Ca_f = calcium concentration in feed, as CaCO_3 , mg/L,

Y = recovery of the RO system, expressed as a decimal, and

SP_{Ca} = calcium ion passage, expressed as a decimal.

NOTE 1— SP_{Ca} can be obtained from the supplier of the specific RO system. For most RO devices, SP_{Ca} can be considered to be zero, in which case the equation simplifies to:

$$\text{Ca}_c = \text{Ca}_f \times (1/1 - Y) \quad (4)$$

This assumption will introduce only a small error.

7.2 Calculate the total dissolved solids (TDS) in the concentrate stream from the total dissolved solids in the feed solution, the recovery of the RO system, and the passage of total dissolved solids as follows:

$$\text{TDS}_c = \text{TDS}_f \times \frac{1 - Y(SP_{\text{TDS}})}{1 - Y} \quad (5)$$

where:

TDS_c = concentration of total dissolved solids in concentrate, mg/L,

TDS_f = concentration of total dissolved solids in the feed, mg/L,

Y = recovery of the RO system, expressed as a decimal, and

SP_{TDS} = passage of total dissolved solids, expressed as a decimal.

NOTE 2— SP_{TDS} can be obtained from the supplier of the specific RO system. For most RO devices, SP_{TDS} can be assumed to be zero, in which case the equation simplifies to:

$$\text{TDS}_c = \text{TDS}_f \times (1/1 - Y) \quad (6)$$

The error introduced will usually be negligible.

7.3 Calculate the alkalinity in the concentrate stream from the alkalinity in the feed solution, the recovery of the RO system, and the passage of alkalinity, by:

$$\text{Alk}_c = \text{Alk}_f \times \frac{1 - Y(SP_{\text{Alk}})}{1 - Y} \quad (7)$$

where:

Alk_c = alkalinity in concentrate, as CaCO_3 , mg/L,

Alk_f = alkalinity in feed, as CaCO_3 , mg/L,

Y = recovery of the RO system, expressed as a decimal, and

SP_{Alk} = alkalinity passage, expressed as a decimal.

NOTE 3— SP_{Alk} is dependent on the pH of the feed solution and its value should be obtained from the supplier of the specific RO system.

7.4 Calculate the free carbon dioxide content (C) in the concentrate stream by assuming that the CO_2 concentration in the concentrate is equal to the CO_2 concentration in the feed: $C_c = C_f$. The concentration of free carbon dioxide in the feed solution is obtained from Fig. 1 as a function of the alkalinity, temperature, and the pH of the feed solution.

$$C_c = 0.03742 \times \ln(\text{TDS}_c) - 0.0209 \times \text{Temp} + 2.5 \quad (8)$$