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**Guidelines for softening and  
desalination of industrial wastewater  
for reuse**

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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html).

This committee responsible for this document is Technical Committee ISO/TC 282, *Water reuse*, Subcommittee SC 4, *Industrial water reuse*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

## Introduction

With the development of society and economy, the contradiction between water shortage and industrial growth is becoming increasingly acute. Industrial wastewater reclamation and reuse could be an effective way to alleviate this contradiction by improving the water utilization efficiency<sup>[4]</sup>. Industrial processes such as oil extraction, chemicals production, printing and dyeing, pharmaceuticals manufacturing and food processing<sup>[5]</sup> produce the wastewater containing total dissolved solids. In order to reuse these wastewater, total dissolved solids need to be removed by using water softening and desalination technologies<sup>[6]</sup>.

Currently, wastewater softening and desalination processes are based on chemical precipitation, ion exchange, nanofiltration (NF), evaporation, reverse osmosis (RO), electrodeionization (EDI), electrodialysis (ED), membrane distillation (MD), and so on, see References [7] to [10]. Each technology has different applicable conditions and operational costs. The absence of an international standard to provide guidance on the selection of wastewater softening and desalination processes makes it difficult to determine the most appropriate softening or desalination technology for industrial enterprises. Therefore, it hinders industrial wastewater reclamation and reuse. Six technologies have been selected for consideration under this document, including chemical precipitation, ion exchange, nanofiltration (NF), reverse osmosis (RO), electrodialysis (ED), electrodeionization (EDI), and there are other technologies that could be similarly considered for future updates. It should be noted that mechanical vapour recompression (MVR) and multi-effect evaporation (MEE) are mainly used for evaporation and crystallization to acquire salts, not for the purpose of water reuse.

Based on the specific inorganic ion species and their concentration in influent, appropriate effluent quality can be obtained using the recommended technologies that meets the requirement for hardness, alkalinity and salinity for potential reuse applications.

This document is an innovative standard in the field of industrial wastewater reclamation and reuse. It can help enterprises, engineers, operators and other stakeholders, who engage in designing or operating in industrial saline wastewater reclamation and reuse, choose the technologies applying in the process, and evaluate the treatment effects. As a result, the reuse of industrial saline wastewater can be promoted and utilization of water can be improved.

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# Guidelines for softening and desalination of industrial wastewater for reuse

## 1 Scope

This document provides guidance on, the evaluation and comparison of wastewater softening and desalination processes for industrial wastewater reclamation and reuse with specific consideration for the following six: 1) chemical precipitation; 2) ion exchange; 3) nanofiltration (NF); 4) reverse osmosis (RO); 5) electrodialysis (ED) and 6) electrodeionization (EDI). This document provides guidance on the characterisation of both influent and effluent quality (e.g. hardness, alkalinity, etc.) and the effects of these processes on those constituents. The purpose of softening and desalination is only for the reuse usages that have requirements for hardness and salinity, such as cooling circulating water, boiler water, production process water, and cleaning water.

This document includes the following sub-processes of wastewater softening and desalination processes:

- a) wastewater softening processes based on chemical precipitation, ion exchange and NF, which aim to remove hardness ions, such as  $Mg^{2+}$  and  $Ca^{2+}$ ;
- b) desalination processes based on ion exchange, RO, ED, EDI and NF, which aim to remove the most of total dissolved solids (TDS).

This document is applicable to:

- a) industrial saline wastewater, which has been pre-treated to remove most of the organic matters if necessary;
- b) the selection or design of wastewater softening and desalination processes for reuse of wastewater from industries.

## 2 Normative references

The following documents, in whole or in part, are normatively referenced in this document and are indispensable for its application. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 20670, *Water reuse — Vocabulary*

## 3 Terms, definitions and abbreviated terms

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 20670 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <http://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

### 3.1 Terms and definitions

#### 3.1.1

##### **regeneration**

process of restoring an ion-exchange resin after use to its operationally effective state

Note 1 to entry: Two types of generation can occur: co-current regeneration and counter-current regeneration. Co-current regeneration is original downflow process where both input water and regeneration chemicals flow in the same direction, while counter-current regeneration is upflow process where input water and regeneration chemicals flow in different directions.

#### 3.1.2

##### **electrodeionization**

method for removing ions by combination of mixed bed ion exchange and electrodialysis in an electrodialyser, where the fresh water chamber is filled with mixed bed ion exchange resin, and the ion exchange resin can be electrochemically regenerated by polarization during the electrodialysis process

Note 1 to entry: Generally, it is a polishing process for production of ultrapure reclaimed water and used after reverse osmosis.

#### 3.1.3

##### **electrodialysis**

process used for the deionization of water in which ions are removed, under the influence of an electric field, from one body of water and transferred to another across an ion-exchange membrane

[SOURCE: ISO 6107-1: 2004, 32]

#### 3.1.4

##### **industrial saline wastewater**

industrial wastewater that contains high concentration of inorganic ions

#### 3.1.5

##### **ion exchange**

process by which certain anions or cations in water are replaced by other ions by passage through a bed of ion-exchange material

[SOURCE: ISO 6107-1: 2004, 46]

#### 3.1.6

##### **mechanical vapour recompression**

use of the heat of the secondary steam as a heat source instead of fresh steam by raising its temperature, with a part of the compressor working to achieve cyclic evaporation

#### 3.1.7

##### **membrane distillation**

separation process where a micro-porous hydrophobic membrane separates two aqueous solutions at different temperatures

#### 3.1.8

##### **microfiltration**

type of physical filtration process by pressure driven where a contaminated liquid is passed through a special pore-sized membrane (0,1-1  $\mu\text{m}$ ) to separate microorganisms and suspended particles from process liquid

#### 3.1.9

##### **multi-effect evaporation**

use of microporous membranes with a filtration accuracy of 0,01-0,1  $\mu\text{m}$  for the separation of microorganisms, large molecules or very finely divided suspended matter from water by filtration, often by means of applied differential pressure



**3.1.10****nanofiltration**

membrane separation technology with a filtration accuracy of 0,001-0,01  $\mu\text{m}$  to separate proteins and low molecular organic compounds

**3.1.11****precipitation**

chemical reaction in solution resulting in the formation of a solid product

[SOURCE: ISO 11074: 2015, 6.4.30]

**3.1.12****pre-treatment**

treatment process or processes carried out before the softening and desalination processes

**3.1.13****reverse osmosis**

flow of water through a membrane with a filtration accuracy of 0,000 1-0,001  $\mu\text{m}$ , from a more concentrated to a less concentrated solution, as a result of applying pressure to the more concentrated solution in excess of the normal osmotic pressure

Note 1 to entry: The filtration accuracy of membrane is added.

[SOURCE: ISO 6107-1: 2004, 61]

**3.1.14****softening**

partial or complete removal from water of calcium and magnesium ions which are responsible for hardness

Note 1 to entry: In this context, not only calcium and magnesium ions are removed, other inorganic ions and cations are also included.

[SOURCE: ISO 6107-1: 2004, 68]

**3.1.15****ultrafiltration**

use of microporous membranes with a filtration accuracy of 0,01-0,1  $\mu\text{m}$  for the separation of large molecules or very finely divided suspended matter from water by filtration, often by means of applied differential pressure

Note 1 to entry: The filtration accuracy of microporous membranes is added.

[SOURCE: ISO 6107-6: 2004, 100]

**3.2 Abbreviated terms**

BOD <sub>5</sub>	biochemical oxygen demand after 5 days
COD	chemical oxygen demand
DO	dissolved oxygen
ED	electrodialysis
EDI	electrodeionization
MF	microfiltration
NF	nanofiltration

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RO	reverse osmosis
TDS	total dissolved solids
TOC	total organic carbon
TSS	total suspended solids
UF	ultrafiltration
MD	membrane distillation
MEE	multi-effect evaporation
MVR	mechanical vapor recompression

### 4 General

Water quality indicators should include TSS, TOC, COD, pH, temperature, TDS, the species and concentrations of ions.

The product water from wastewater softening and desalination processes is recommended to be reused for urban non-potable water, environmental water, and as pure or ultrapure water for cooling water, boiler feed water, process water, rinse water, and so on<sup>[4]</sup>.

The process selection of wastewater softening and desalination processes should be determined after technical and economic comparison based on factors such as influent quality, product quality, quantity requirements, site conditions and environmental protection requirements.

The wastewater needs to be pre-treated if necessary, before being fed into softening and desalination devices.

The selection of pre-treatment process should consider the quality of wastewater, influent quality requirements for softening and desalination processes, water treatment volume and test data. Besides, the operational experience of similar projects should be referred, combined with local conditions. Finally, users can determine which technology to adopt through technical and economic comparison.

Minimizing the discharge quantity of waste acid, waste alkali, waste residue and other harmful substances are important in the selection of softening and desalination processes or device. Measures for treating and disposing these wastes should be taken to meet the relevant environmental protection requirements.

Waste liquid (e.g., regeneration liquid of ion exchange resin process, concentrate of reverse osmosis process, etc.) disposed from the softening and desalination processes should be collected separately according to the characteristics of wastewater quality.

Process flow diagram of industrial saline wastewater treatment for reuse is shown in [Figure 1](#).