

**METHOD 21 - DETERMINATION OF VOLATILE  
ORGANIC COMPOUND LEAKS**

*1.0 Scope and Application.*

1.1 Analytes.

| Analyte                             | CAS No.                |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Volatile Organic Compounds<br>(VOC) | No CAS number assigned |

1.2 Scope. This method is applicable for the determination of VOC leaks from process equipment. These sources include, but are not limited to, valves, flanges and other connections, pumps and compressors, pressure relief devices, process drains, open-ended valves, pump and compressor seal system degassing vents, accumulator vessel vents, agitator seals, and access door seals.

1.3 Data Quality Objectives. Adherence to the requirements of this method will enhance the quality of the data obtained from air pollutant sampling methods.

*2.0 Summary of Method.*

2.1 A portable instrument is used to detect VOC leaks from individual sources. The instrument detector type is not specified, but it must meet the specifications and performance criteria contained in Section 6.0. A leak definition concentration based on a reference compound is specified in each applicable regulation. This method is intended to locate and classify leaks only, and is not to be

used as a direct measure of mass emission rate from individual sources.

### 3.0 *Definitions.*

3.1 *Calibration gas* means the VOC compound used to adjust the instrument meter reading to a known value. The calibration gas is usually the reference compound at a known concentration approximately equal to the leak definition concentration.

3.2 *Calibration precision* means the degree of agreement between measurements of the same known value, expressed as the relative percentage of the average difference between the meter readings and the known concentration to the known concentration.

3.3 *Leak definition concentration* means the local VOC concentration at the surface of a leak source that indicates that a VOC emission (leak) is present. The leak definition is an instrument meter reading based on a reference compound.

3.4 *No detectable emission* means a local VOC concentration at the surface of a leak source, adjusted for local VOC ambient concentration, that is less than 2.5 percent of the specified leak definition concentration. that indicates that a VOC emission (leak) is not present.

3.5 *Reference compound* means the VOC species selected as the instrument calibration basis for specification of the leak definition concentration. (For example, if a leak definition concentration is 10,000 ppm as methane, then any source emission that results in a local concentration that yields a meter reading of 10,000 on an instrument meter calibrated with methane would be classified as a leak. In this example, the leak definition concentration is 10,000 ppm and the reference compound is methane.)

3.6 *Response factor* means the ratio of the known concentration of a VOC compound to the observed meter reading when measured using an instrument calibrated with the reference compound specified in the applicable regulation.

3.7 *Response time* means the time interval from a step change in VOC concentration at the input of the sampling system to the time at which 90 percent of the corresponding final value is reached as displayed on the instrument readout meter.

4.0 *Interferences*. [Reserved]

5.0 *Safety*.

5.1 *Disclaimer*. This method may involve hazardous materials, operations, and equipment. This test method may not address all of the safety problems associated with its

use. It is the responsibility of the user of this test method to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to performing this test method.

5.2 Hazardous Pollutants. Several of the compounds, leaks of which may be determined by this method, may be irritating or corrosive to tissues (e.g., heptane) or may be toxic (e.g., benzene, methyl alcohol). Nearly all are fire hazards. Compounds in emissions should be determined through familiarity with the source. Appropriate precautions can be found in reference documents, such as reference No. 4 in Section 16.0.

#### *6.0 Equipment and Supplies.*

A VOC monitoring instrument meeting the following specifications is required:

6.1 The VOC instrument detector shall respond to the compounds being processed. Detector types that may meet this requirement include, but are not limited to, catalytic oxidation, flame ionization, infrared absorption, and photoionization.

6.2 The instrument shall be capable of measuring the leak definition concentration specified in the regulation.

6.3 The scale of the instrument meter shall be readable to  $\pm 2.5$  percent of the specified leak definition concentration.

6.4 The instrument shall be equipped with an electrically driven pump to ensure that a sample is provided to the detector at a constant flow rate. The nominal sample flow rate, as measured at the sample probe tip, shall be 0.10 to 3.0 l/min (0.004 to 0.1 ft<sup>3</sup>/min) when the probe is fitted with a glass wool plug or filter that may be used to prevent plugging of the instrument.

6.5 The instrument shall be equipped with a probe or probe extension for sampling not to exceed 6.4 mm (1/4 in) in outside diameter, with a single end opening for admission of sample.

6.6 The instrument shall be intrinsically safe for operation in explosive atmospheres as defined by the National Electrical Code by the National Fire Prevention Association or other applicable regulatory code for operation in any explosive atmospheres that may be encountered in its use. The instrument shall, at a minimum, be intrinsically safe for Class 1, Division 1 conditions, and/or Class 2, Division 1 conditions, as appropriate, as defined by the example code. The instrument shall not be operated with any safety device, such as an exhaust flame arrestor, removed.

## 7.0 *Reagents and Standards.*

7.1 Two gas mixtures are required for instrument calibration and performance evaluation:

7.1.1 Zero Gas. Air, less than 10 parts per million by volume (ppmv) VOC.

7.1.2 Calibration Gas. For each organic species that is to be measured during individual source surveys, obtain or prepare a known standard in air at a concentration approximately equal to the applicable leak definition specified in the regulation.

7.2 Cylinder Gases. If cylinder calibration gas mixtures are used, they must be analyzed and certified by the manufacturer to be within 2 percent accuracy, and a shelf life must be specified. Cylinder standards must be either reanalyzed or replaced at the end of the specified shelf life.

7.3 Prepared Gases. Calibration gases may be prepared by the user according to any accepted gaseous preparation procedure that will yield a mixture accurate to within 2 percent. Prepared standards must be replaced each day of use unless it is demonstrated that degradation does not occur during storage.

7.4 Mixtures with non-Reference Compound Gases. Calibrations may be performed using a compound other than

the reference compound. In this case, a conversion factor must be determined for the alternative compound such that the resulting meter readings during source surveys can be converted to reference compound results.

#### *8.0 Sample Collection, Preservation, Storage, and Transport.*

8.1 Instrument Performance Evaluation. Assemble and start up the instrument according to the manufacturer's instructions for recommended warmup period and preliminary adjustments.

8.1.1 Response Factor. A response factor must be determined for each compound that is to be measured, either by testing or from reference sources. The response factor tests are required before placing the analyzer into service, but do not have to be repeated at subsequent intervals.

8.1.1.1 Calibrate the instrument with the reference compound as specified in the applicable regulation. Introduce the calibration gas mixture to the analyzer and record the observed meter reading. Introduce zero gas until a stable reading is obtained. Make a total of three measurements by alternating between the calibration gas and zero gas. Calculate the response factor for each repetition and the average response factor.

8.1.1.2 The instrument response factors for each of the individual VOC to be measured shall be less than 10 unless otherwise specified in the applicable regulation. When no instrument is available that meets this specification when calibrated with the reference VOC specified in the applicable regulation, the available instrument may be calibrated with one of the VOC to be measured, or any other VOC, so long as the instrument then has a response factor of less than 10 for each of the individual VOC to be measured.

8.1.1.3 Alternatively, if response factors have been published for the compounds of interest for the instrument or detector type, the response factor determination is not required, and existing results may be referenced. Examples of published response factors for flame ionization and catalytic oxidation detectors are included in References 1-3 of Section 17.0.

8.1.2 Calibration Precision. The calibration precision test must be completed prior to placing the analyzer into service and at subsequent 3-month intervals or at the next use, whichever is later.

8.1.2.1 Make a total of three measurements by alternately using zero gas and the specified calibration gas. Record the meter readings. Calculate the average algebraic difference between the meter readings and the



known value. Divide this average difference by the known calibration value and multiply by 100 to express the resulting calibration precision as a percentage.

8.1.2.2 The calibration precision shall be equal to or less than 10 percent of the calibration gas value.

8.1.3 Response Time. The response time test is required before placing the instrument into service. If a modification to the sample pumping system or flow configuration is made that would change the response time, a new test is required before further use.

8.1.3.1 Introduce zero gas into the instrument sample probe. When the meter reading has stabilized, switch quickly to the specified calibration gas. After switching, measure the time required to attain 90 percent of the final stable reading. Perform this test sequence three times and record the results. Calculate the average response time.

8.1.3.2 The instrument response time shall be equal to or less than 30 seconds. The instrument pump, dilution probe (if any), sample probe, and probe filter that will be used during testing shall all be in place during the response time determination.

8.2 Instrument Calibration. Calibrate the VOC monitoring instrument according to Section 10.0.

8.3 Individual Source Surveys.

8.3.1 Type I - Leak Definition Based on Concentration. Place the probe inlet at the surface of the component interface where leakage could occur. Move the probe along the interface periphery while observing the instrument readout. If an increased meter reading is observed, slowly sample the interface where leakage is indicated until the maximum meter reading is obtained. Leave the probe inlet at this maximum reading location for approximately two times the instrument response time. If the maximum observed meter reading is greater than the leak definition in the applicable regulation, record and report the results as specified in the regulation reporting requirements. Examples of the application of this general technique to specific equipment types are:

8.3.1.1 Valves. The most common source of leaks from valves is the seal between the stem and housing. Place the probe at the interface where the stem exits the packing gland and sample the stem circumference. Also, place the probe at the interface of the packing gland take-up flange seat and sample the periphery. In addition, survey valve housings of multipart assembly at the surface of all interfaces where a leak could occur.

8.3.1.2 Flanges and Other Connections. For welded flanges, place the probe at the outer edge of the flange-gasket interface and sample the circumference of the flange.

Sample other types of nonpermanent joints (such as threaded connections) with a similar traverse.

8.3.1.3 Pumps and Compressors. Conduct a circumferential traverse at the outer surface of the pump or compressor shaft and seal interface. If the source is a rotating shaft, position the probe inlet within 1 cm of the shaft-seal interface for the survey. If the housing configuration prevents a complete traverse of the shaft periphery, sample all accessible portions. Sample all other joints on the pump or compressor housing where leakage could occur.

8.3.1.4 Pressure Relief Devices. The configuration of most pressure relief devices prevents sampling at the sealing seat interface. For those devices equipped with an enclosed extension, or horn, place the probe inlet at approximately the center of the exhaust area to the atmosphere.

8.3.1.5 Process Drains. For open drains, place the probe inlet at approximately the center of the area open to the atmosphere. For covered drains, place the probe at the surface of the cover interface and conduct a peripheral traverse.

8.3.1.6 Open-ended Lines or Valves. Place the probe inlet at approximately the center of the opening to the atmosphere.

8.3.1.7 Seal System Degassing Vents and Accumulator Vents. Place the probe inlet at approximately the center of the opening to the atmosphere.

8.3.1.8 Access door seals. Place the probe inlet at the surface of the door seal interface and conduct a peripheral traverse.

8.3.2 Type II - "No Detectable Emission". Determine the local ambient VOC concentration around the source by moving the probe randomly upwind and downwind at a distance of one to two meters from the source. If an interference exists with this determination due to a nearby emission or leak, the local ambient concentration may be determined at distances closer to the source, but in no case shall the distance be less than 25 centimeters. Then move the probe inlet to the surface of the source and determine the concentration as outlined in Section 8.3.1. The difference between these concentrations determines whether there are no detectable emissions. Record and report the results as specified by the regulation. For those cases where the regulation requires a specific device installation, or that specified vents be ducted or piped to a control device, the existence of these conditions shall be visually confirmed. When the regulation also requires that no detectable emissions exist, visual observations and sampling surveys are required. Examples of this technique are:

8.3.2.1 Pump or Compressor Seals. If applicable, determine the type of shaft seal. Perform a survey of the local area ambient VOC concentration and determine if detectable emissions exist as described in Section 8.3.2.

8.3.2.2 Seal System Degassing Vents, Accumulator Vessel Vents, Pressure Relief Devices. If applicable, observe whether or not the applicable ducting or piping exists. Also, determine if any sources exist in the ducting or piping where emissions could occur upstream of the control device. If the required ducting or piping exists and there are no sources where the emissions could be vented to the atmosphere upstream of the control device, then it is presumed that no detectable emissions are present. If there are sources in the ducting or piping where emissions could be vented or sources where leaks could occur, the sampling surveys described in Section 8.3.2 shall be used to determine if detectable emissions exist.

### 8.3.3 Alternative Screening Procedure.

8.3.3.1 A screening procedure based on the formation of bubbles in a soap solution that is sprayed on a potential leak source may be used for those sources that do not have continuously moving parts, that do not have surface temperatures greater than the boiling point or less than the freezing point of the soap solution, that do not have open areas to the atmosphere that the soap solution cannot

bridge, or that do not exhibit evidence of liquid leakage. Sources that have these conditions present must be surveyed using the instrument technique of Section 8.3.1 or 8.3.2.

8.3.3.2 Spray a soap solution over all potential leak sources. The soap solution may be a commercially available leak detection solution or may be prepared using concentrated detergent and water. A pressure sprayer or squeeze bottle may be used to dispense the solution. Observe the potential leak sites to determine if any bubbles are formed. If no bubbles are observed, the source is presumed to have no detectable emissions or leaks as applicable. If any bubbles are observed, the instrument techniques of Section 8.3.1 or 8.3.2 shall be used to determine if a leak exists, or if the source has detectable emissions, as applicable.

#### *9.0 Quality Control.*

| Section | Quality Control Measure                | Effect  |
|---------|--|---|
| 8.1.2   | Instrument calibration precision check | Ensure precision and accuracy, respectively, of instrument response to standard |
| 10.0    | Instrument calibration                 | standard  |

#### *10.0 Calibration and Standardization.*

10.1 Calibrate the VOC monitoring instrument as follows. After the appropriate warmup period and zero

internal calibration procedure, introduce the calibration gas into the instrument sample probe. Adjust the instrument meter readout to correspond to the calibration gas value.

**NOTE:** If the meter readout cannot be adjusted to the proper value, a malfunction of the analyzer is indicated and corrective actions are necessary before use.

11.0 *Analytical Procedures.* [Reserved]

12.0 *Data Analyses and Calculations.* [Reserved]

13.0 *Method Performance.* [Reserved]

14.0 *Pollution Prevention.* [Reserved]

15.0 *Waste Management.* [Reserved]

16.0 *References.*

1. Dubose, D.A., and G.E. Harris. Response Factors of VOC Analyzers at a Meter Reading of 10,000 ppmv for Selected Organic Compounds. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Research Triangle Park, NC. Publication No. EPA 600/2-81051. September 1981.

2. Brown, G.E., *et al.* Response Factors of VOC Analyzers Calibrated with Methane for Selected Organic Compounds. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Research Triangle Park, NC. Publication No. EPA 600/2-81-022. May 1981.

3. DuBose, D.A. *et al.* Response of Portable VOC Analyzers to Chemical Mixtures. U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency, Research Triangle Park, NC. Publication  
No. EPA 600/2-81-110. September 1981.

4. Handbook of Hazardous Materials: Fire, Safety,  
Health. Alliance of American Insurers. Schaumburg, IL.  
1983.

*17.0 Tables, Diagrams, Flowcharts, and Validation Data.*

[Reserved]