



TOC/TN_b Determination in Refinery Effluents

Introduction

The petrochemical industry generates large volumes of wastewater or effluents that need to be treated before they can be reused or released into natural waterways. Total organic carbon (TOC) and the total nitrogen bound (TN_b) content is routinely determined, as these contaminants lead to eutrophication of surface water courses, endangering aquatic life and groundwater supplies.

According to the European Industrial Emissions Directive (IED)¹, Best Available Techniques (BAT)² have to be implemented within the EU for direct wastewater discharges from the refining of mineral oil and gas. The BAT reference document (BREF) indicates that, among other parameters, TOC and TN_b are of growing importance. They need to be monitored on a daily basis. Furthermore, a preference for the parameter TOC instead of COD is given, as TOC does not require the use of highly toxic compounds, such as dichromate (Cr VI) and mercury.

In many cases, the COD and TN contents are still measured using separate methods. This is a labor- and time-consuming process and is often associated with the formation of chromium-VI-contaminated waste. Through correlation studies, an empirical conversion factor for TOC to COD conversion can be established. Hence, a fully automated analytical process for TOC/TN_b determination according to DIN EN 1484³ and DIN EN 12260⁴ (or the DIN EN ISO 20236⁵ for both parameters) can be applied to save resources and time.

Challenge

Reproducible and reliable determination of TOC and TN_b contents in demanding wastewater samples.

Solution

Fully automated and simultaneous TOC/TN_b measurement using catalytic high-temperature combustion and direct injection technology providing optimum particle handling and minimized carry-over.

Effluent waters from refining processes usually represent demanding samples for TOC/TN_b analyzers, since tubing and valve technique feeding the sample into the combustion process are prone to carry-over. Direct injection as applied in the multi N/C 2300 using a septum-free injection port and a wide-bore needle for optimum particle handling can overcome this problem. Direct injection ensures a sample transfer without particle losses and prevents blockages, hence increasing system uptime and reducing wear and tear on sensitive Teflon parts inside the dosing system. In addition, the injection needle is fully thermally cleaned before injecting the next sample, since it stays in the hot furnace inlet zone during analysis time, thus reliably avoiding carry-over. The multi N/C 2300 thus offers a robust solution for simultaneous TOC/TN_b analysis of particulate or oily samples.

Materials and Methods

Samples and reagents

Samples from different process streams and clean-up stages have been collected and measured alongside with a reference standard. 2 M HCl was used for automatic sample acidification to a pH < 2.

Sample preparation and measurement

The samples were stored in a refrigerator at 4 °C until analysis. For measurement, the samples were transferred into suitable autosampler vials. The wastewater samples were analyzed in direct mode using an NPOC/TN method.

Using 2 M HCl the samples were automatically acidified in the autosampler run and then automatically purged for 5 minutes for complete TIC removal. An injection volume of 250 µL was used for these measurement sequences. The samples were catalytically oxidized at a temperature of 800 °C in an oxygen-rich atmosphere. A combustion tube filled with platinum catalyst was used for complete sample oxidation. The formed nitrogen oxides were detected by means of a chemiluminescence detector (alternatively ChD detector can be utilized), CO₂ detection was done by focus radiation non-dispersive infrared detection (FR-NDIR).

Calibration

The multi N/C analyzer was calibrated between 1 and 500 mg/L with a potassium hydrogen phthalate standard solution for TOC determination. A multi-point calibration was used to evaluate the results of NPOC measurement. For total bound nitrogen a calibration was carried out from 1 to 50 mg/L using an ammonium sulfate and a potassium nitrate (50:50 mix) solution according to the standard DIN EN 12260.

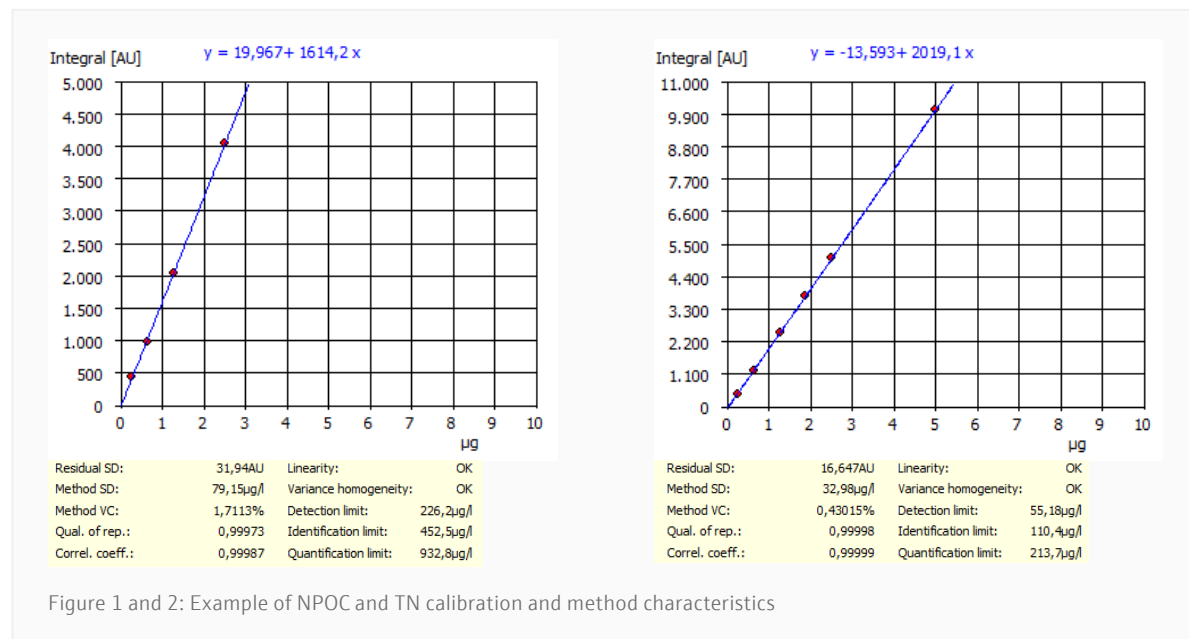


Figure 1 and 2: Example of NPOC and TN calibration and method characteristics

Within the method up to three calibration ranges can be linked to each parameter in order to cover an overall working range of up to three magnitudes. Detection limits and limits of quantification are depending on the selected working range and can be derived from the method characteristics given above.

Method parameters

The following method settings were used to determine the NPOC and TN_b contents:

Table 1: Method parameters

Parameter	multi N/C 2300
Measurement parameter	NPOC / TN _b
Digestion	High temperature digestion at 800° C with platinum catalyst
Number of repetitions	min. 3, max. 4
Rinse with sample before injection	3 times
Sample purge time	300 sec.
Injection volume	250 µl

Results and Discussion

The table below shows the mean values of three replicate injections with relative standard deviations for different real samples (anonymized) and recoveries of nicotinic acid used as TOC and TN_b reference solution. According to the Best Available Techniques (BAT) reference document issued under the Industrial emission directive 2010 / 75 / EU², the associated average emission levels (BAT-AEL) for direct waste water discharges from refining processes can be expected as in the following ranges:

COD: 30–125 mg/L equals to: TOC: 7–32 mg/L

TN_b: 1–25 mg/L

Table 2: Results

Sample ID	NPOC Average [mg/L]	TOC RSD [%]	TN _b [mg/L]	TN _b RSD [%]
Sample 1	26.2	2.1	19.5	1.4
Sample 2	161	0.9	41.3	1.1
Sample 3	12.9	1.2	5.38	0.8
Check Standard Nicotinic Acid (TOC 20.0 / TN _b 3.88)	19.8	0.6	4.06	0.7

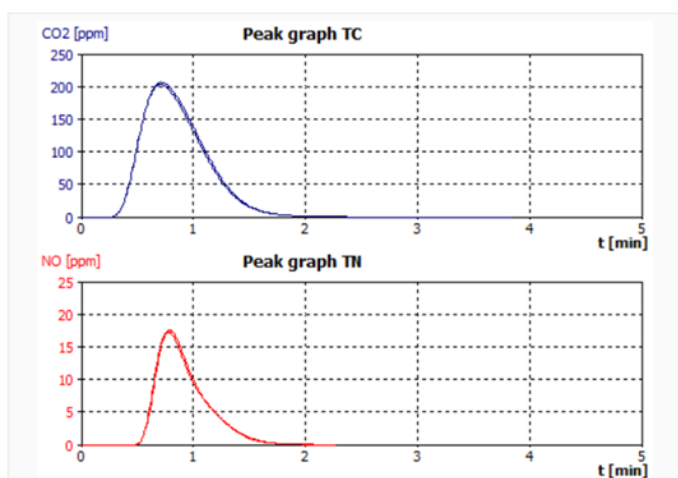


Figure 3: Example for a TOC and TN_b measurement curve of sample 3

Conclusion

The measurements covered undiluted wastewater samples from different sampling points in the wastewater treatment process and with varying TOC and TN_b concentrations. All samples were measured with outstanding accuracy and precision. Nicotinic acid was used as an analytical quality-assurance standard (AOA) to simultaneously check for TOC and TN_b recoveries. Very good recoveries were achieved for the reference material for organically bound nitrogen.

This outstanding performance of multi N/C analyzers for such demanding wastewater matrices is based on the optimized combustion process with freely selectable combustion temperatures up to 950 °C. The direct injection with a septum-free pneumatic injection head in combination with a wide-bore needle of 0.7 mm inner diameter, as well as proper sample homogenization on the auto sampler rack and the valve- and tubing-free sample transfer into the combustion system, contribute to this performance. An operation mode keeping the stainless-steel injection needle in the oven head at elevated temperatures during peak integration time to assure complete evaporation of TOC components and a clean needle for further sample processing in combination with an effective rinsing of the microliter injection syringe minimize carry-over effects.

The high degree of automation due to the applied AS 60 autosampler combined with the well-proven Self Check System for trouble-free unattended system operation make light work of TOC/TN_b analyses, even in challenging samples. In addition, the patented VITA flow-management system compensates flow fluctuations inside the system caused by sample evaporation, providing TOC calibration stability for up to one year and saving valuable measurement time.

References

- 1) DIRECTIVE 2010/75/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 24 November 2010 on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control)
- 2) Official Journal of the European Union, L 307/38, 28.10.2014, Commission Implementing Decision of October 9, 2014 "Establishing best available techniques (BAT) conclusions, under Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on industrial emissions, for the refining of mineral oil and gas"
- 3) DIN EN 1484 Water analysis – Guidelines for the determination of total organic carbon (TOC) and dissolved organic carbon (DOC)
- 4) DIN EN 12260 Water quality – Determination of nitrogen Determination of bound nitrogen (TN_b) following oxidation to nitrogen oxides
- 5) DIN EN ISO 20236: Water quality – Determination of total organic carbon (TOC), dissolved organic carbon (DOC) total bound nitrogen (TN_b) and dissolved bound nitrogen (DN_b) after high temperature catalytic oxidative combustion

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