

MANUFACTURING CON-SERV MFG Reverse Osmosis Membrane Trouble-shooting guide

RO MEMBRANE TROUBLE SHOOTING GUIDE						
SYMPTOMS			Location	Possible Causes	Verification	Corrective Action
Salt Passage	Permeate Flow	Pressure Drop				
Normal to increased	Decreased	Normal to increased	Predominantly first stage	Metal oxide	Analysis of metal ions in cleaning solution.	Improved pretreatment to remove metals. Cleaning with acid cleaners.
Normal to increased	Decreased	Normal to increased	Predominantly first stage	Colloidal fouling	SDI measurement of feed/ X-ray diffraction analysis of cleaning sol. residue.	Optimize pretreatment system for colloid removal. Clean with high pH, anionic detergent formulation.
Increased	Decreased	Increased	Predominantly last stage	Scaling (CaSO ₄ , CaSO ₃ , BaSO ₄ , SiO ₂)	Analysis of metal ions in cleaning sol. Check LSI of reject. Calculate maximum solubility for CaSO ₄ , BaSO ₄ , SiO ₂ in reject analysis.	Increase acid addition and scale inhibitor for CaSO ₃ and CaSO ₄ . Reduce recovery. Clean with an acid formulation for CaCO ₃ , CaSO ₄ and BaSO ₄ .
Normal to moderate increase	Decreased	Normal to moderate increase	Can occur in any stage	Biological fouling	Bacteria count in permeate and reject. Slime in pipes and vessels.	Shock dosage of sodium bisulfite. Continuous feed of low conc. bisulfite at reduced pH. Peracetic acid sterilization. Clean with alkaline anionic surfactant. Chlorine dosage upstream with dechlorination. Replace cartridge filters.
Decreased or moderately increased	Decreased	Normal	All stages	Organic fouling	Destructive testing, e.g. IR reflection analysis.	Optimization of pretreatment system (e.g. coagulation process.) Resin/activated carbon treatment. Clean with high pH detergent.
Increased	Increased	Decreased	Most severe in the first stage	Chlorine oxidant attack	Chlorine analysis of feed. Destructive element test.	Check chlorine feed equipment and dechlorination equipment.
Increased	Increased	Decreased	Most severe in the first stage	Abrasion of membrane by crystalline material	Microscopic solids analysis of feed. Destructive element test.	Improved pretreatment. Check all filters for media leakage.
Increased	Normal to increased	Decreased	At random	O-ring leaks, End or side seal glue leaks.	Probe test. Vacuum test. Colloidal material passage.	Replace O-rings. Repair or replace elements.
Increased	Normal to low	Decreased	All stages	Conversion too high.	Check flows and pressures against design guidelines	Reduce conversion rate. Calibrate sensors. Increase analysis and data collection.