

# **Oxidation of As(III) by Aeration and Storage**

by

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## Abstract

A study of the effects of aeration and storage on the oxidation of arsenic(III) was undertaken at three utilities in the U.S. to establish the engineering significance of aeration as a potential pre-treatment method for arsenic removal. Aeration has been referred to in the literature as a possible useful pre-treatment method to ensure that arsenic is in the arsenic(V) state before subsequent removal by any of several treatment processes. Since aeration is a common process for treating groundwater for iron oxidation, radon, volatile organics, carbon dioxide, and hydrogen sulfide, it is reasonable to investigate its effectiveness for arsenic(III) oxidation.

The results of this study clearly establish that aeration and aerobic storage do not oxidize arsenic(III). The major conclusion is that aeration is not effective for this purpose and should not be relied upon or expected to contribute to the oxidation of arsenic(III). One of the test sites in this study clearly showed that arsenic(III) is significantly removed by the oxidation and precipitation of iron, but this should not be attributed to an oxidation of arsenic(III) to arsenic(V) by dissolved oxygen. Past research has established that iron precipitation can be partially effective for the adsorptive removal of arsenic(III), and this is the likely explanation for the apparent drop in arsenic(III) at the site that had high iron.

The effect of iron precipitation on the removal of arsenic was also present in the long term storage of aerated water in this study. When all of the iron (initial iron at  $\approx 2.7$  mg/L) precipitated from the quiescent storage water, the remaining aqueous total arsenic was entirely dissolved and in the arsenic(V) state. The aqueous arsenic(III) was below detection and apparently completely removed or converted by the insoluble iron. Even in this case it is doubtful if DO was responsible for any oxidation of arsenic(III), because the loss directly correlated to the loss of iron precipitate and no other instance of arsenic(III) oxidation occurred at the other sites. In summary, the data supported the fact that iron is extremely important in the removal of arsenic(III), but did not support the idea that arsenic(III) is oxidized by aeration. This is true at least for the conditions used in this study.

While the subtleties of the results are interesting, especially for the site with high iron, it is important to emphasize the original objective of this study, which was to establish if typical aeration and storage methods could oxidize arsenic(III). Based upon the results of this study, it is concluded that aeration does not oxidize arsenic(III) and that subsequent storage for up to five days does not result in arsenic(III) oxidation. Dissolved oxygen should not be considered as a candidate for arsenic(III) oxidation; however, aeration will continue to be considered a very effective process for the oxidation of iron. In that way, aeration can be said to be effective in bringing about the removal of As via the oxidative precipitation of iron.

# Contents

Foreword .....	iii
Abstract .....	iv
Tables .....	vi
Figures .....	vii
Abbreviations .....	viii
Acknowledgements .....	ix
1.0 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Background .....	1
1.2 Objectives .....	2
2.0 Materials and Procedures .....	3
2.1 Selection of Water Supplies .....	3
2.2 Aeration Systems .....	5
2.3 Storage Container .....	7
2.4 Water Sampling & Data Collection .....	8
2.5 Analytical Procedures .....	9
3.0 Test Results .....	12
3.1 Northeast Site .....	12
3.2 Midwest Site .....	15
3.3 Southwest Site .....	22
4.0 Discussion and Conclusions .....	27
4.1 Oxidation of As(III) by Dissolved Oxygen .....	27
4.2 Sample Analysis Problems .....	28
4.3 Conclusions .....	28
5.0 References .....	29
6.0 Appendices .....	30
Appendix A: Northeast Site Data .....	31
Appendix B: Midwest Site Data .....	39
Appendix C: Southwest Site Data .....	42

## Tables

Table 2-1 Raw Water Quality for the Northeast Site.....	3
Table 2-2 Raw Water Quality for the Midwest Site .....	4
Table 2-3 Raw Water Quality for the Southwest Site.....	5
Table 2-4 Summary of Sampling for Aeration and Storage Testing .....	10
Table 2-5 Analytical Method Summary .....	10

## Figures

Figure 2-1	Spray Aeration nozzle spraying water at 0.5 L/s (8 gpm) .....	6
Figure 2-2	Aeration Systems (bubble - center; tower - left; spray - right).....	6
Figure 2-3	Forced-Draft Tray Aerators .....	7
Figure 3-1	As Speciation Test Results for Well Water, Northeast Site .....	13
Figure 3-2	Avg. Well & Aeration DO Concentrations (2 Test Runs), Northeast Site.....	13
Figure 3-3	As Speciation Test Results for Bubble Aeration (Day 1), Northeast Site .....	14
Figure 3-4	Avg. As Results for the Well & Aerated Samples (Run 1 & 2), Northeast Site .	14
Figure 3-5	As Speciation Test Results for the Storage Water, Northeast Site.....	15
Figure 3-6	As Speciation Test Results for the Blended Well Water, Midwest Site .....	16
Figure 3-7	Avg. Well & Aeration DO Concentrations (2 Runs), Midwest Site .....	17
Figure 3-8	Avg. Fe Test Results for Well & Aerated Water (Run 1), Midwest Site .....	17
Figure 3-9	Avg. Mn Test Results for Well & Aerated Water (Run 1), Midwest Site .....	18
Figure 3-10	pH Results for Well & Aerated Samples (Run 1), Midwest Site.....	18
Figure 3-11	Fe (total) Results for Packed Tower (Run 1 & 2) Samples, Midwest Site .....	19
Figure 3-12	As Speciation Test Results for FDA Samples (Run 1), Midwest Site .....	20
Figure 3-13	As Speciation Results for Well & Aerated Samples (Run 1), Midwest Site .....	21
Figure 3-14	As Speciation Test Results for the Storage Samples, Midwest Site.....	21
Figure 3-15	Fe & Mn Concentrations for Storage Samples, Midwest Site .....	22
Figure 3-16	Avg. Well & Aeration DO Concentrations (2 Test Runs), Southwest Site .....	23
Figure 3-17	pH Results for Well & Aerated Samples (Run 1), Southwest Site .....	23
Figure 3-18	As Speciation Test Results for Well Samples, Southwest Site.....	24
Figure 3-19	As Speciation Test Results for Spray Aeration (Run 2), Southwest Site.....	24
Figure 3-20	Average As Results for the Well & Aerated Samples, Southwest Site .....	25
Figure 3-21	As Speciation Test Results for Storage Water Samples, Southwest Site .....	26

## Abbreviations

AA	activated alumina
As	arsenic
A/W	air to water ratio
BAT	best available technology
BOSC	Board of Scientific Counselors
DO	dissolved oxygen
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
gpd	gallons per day
HPC	heterotrophic plate count
IX	ion exchange
MCL	maximum contaminant level
MHETL	Maine Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory
MF	coagulation microfiltration
RO	reverse osmosis
SDWA	Safe Drinking Water Act
TOC	total organic carbon



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