

CALIBRATION CHARACTERISTICS

A. Flow Configuration. PID response is essentially independent of gas flow rate as long as it is sufficient to satisfy the pump demand. Four main flow configurations are used for calibrating a PID:

1. Pressurised gas cylinder (Fixed-flow regulator): The flow rate of the regulator should match the flow demand of the instrument pump or be slightly higher.

2. Pressurised gas cylinder (Demand-flow regulator): A demand-flow regulator better matches pump speed differences, but results in a slight vacuum during calibration and thus slightly high readings.

3. Collapsible gas bag: The instrument will draw the calibration gas from the bag at its normal flow rate, as long as the bag valve is large enough. The bag should be filled with enough gas to allow at least one minute of flow (~ 0.6 L for a MiniRAE, ~0.3 L for MultiRAE).

4. T (or open tube) method: The T method uses a T-junction with gas flow higher than the pump draw. The gas supply is connected to one end of the T, the instrument inlet is connected to a second end of the T, and excess gas flow escapes through the third, open end of the T.

To prevent ambient air mixing, a long tube should be connected to the open end, or a high excess rate should be used. Alternatively, the instrument probe can be inserted into an open tube slightly wider than the probe. Excess gas flows out around the probe.

The first two cylinder methods are the most efficient in terms of gas usage, while the bag and T methods give slightly more accurate results because they match the pump flow better.

B. Pressure. Pressures deviating from atmospheric pressure affect the readings by altering gas concentration and pump characteristics. It is best to calibrate with the instrument and calibration gas at the same pressure as each other and the sample gas. (Note that the cylinder pressure is not relevant because the regulator reduces the pressure to ambient.)

If the instrument is calibrated at atmospheric pressure in one of the flow configurations described above, then 1) pressures slightly above ambient are acceptable but high pressures can damage the pump and 2) samples under vacuum may give low readings if air leaks into the sample train.

C. Temperature. Because temperature effects gas density and concentration, the temperature of the calibration gas and instrument should be as close as possible to the ambient temperature where the unit will be used. We recommend that the temperature of the calibration gas be within the instrument's temperature specification (typically 14° to 113° F or -10° to 45° C).

Also, during actual measurements, the instrument should be kept at the same or higher temperature than the sample temperature to avoid condensation in the unit.

D. Matrix. The matrix gas of the calibration compound and VOC sample is significant. Some common matrix components, such as methane and water vapor can affect the VOC signal.

PIDs are most commonly used for monitoring VOCs in air, in which case the preferred calibration gas matrix is air. For a MiniRAE, methane, methanol, and water vapour reduce the response by about 20% when their concentration is 15,000 ppm and by about 40% at 30,000 ppm. Despite earlier reports of oxygen effects, RAE PID responses with 10.6 eV lamps are independent of oxygen concentration, and calibration gases in a pure nitrogen matrix can be used. H2 and CO2 up to 5 volume % also have no effect.

E. Concentration. Although RAE Systems PIDs have electronically linearised output, it is best to calibrate in a concentration range close to the actual measurement range. For example, 100 ppm standard gas for anticipated vapours of 0 to 250 ppm, and 500 ppm standard for expected concentrations of 250 to 1000 ppm. The correction factors in this table were typically measured at 50 to 100 ppm and apply from the ppb range up to about 1000 ppm. Above 1000 ppm the CF may vary and it is best to calibrate with the gas of interest near the concentration of interest.

F. Filters. Filters affect flow and pressure conditions and therefore all filters to be used during sampling should also be in place during calibration. Using a water trap (hydrophobic filter) greatly reduces the chances of drawing water aerosols or dirt particles into the instrument. Regular filter replacements are recommended because dirty filters can adsorb VOCs and cause slower response time and shifts in calibration.

G. Instrument Design. High-boiling ("heavy") or very reactive compounds can be lost by reaction or adsorption onto materials in the gas sample train, such as filters, pumps and other sensors. Multi-gas meters, including MultiRAE have the pump and other sensors upstream of the PID and are prone to these losses. Compounds possibly affected by such losses are shown in green in the table, and may give slow response, or in extreme cases, no response at all.

TABLE ABBREVIATIONS
CF = Correction Factor (multiply by reading to get corrected value for the compound when calibrated to isobutylene)

NR = No Response
IE = Ionisation Energy (values in parentheses are not well established)

C = Confirmed Value indicated by "+" in this column; all others are preliminary or estimated values and are subject to change

ne = Not Established ACGIH 8-hr. TWA

CF# = Ceiling value, given where 8-hr.TWA is not available

Table with columns: Compound Name, Synonym/Abbreviation, CAS No., Formula, 9.8, C, 10.6, C, 11.7, C (IE/eV), TWA. Lists various compounds like Acetic acid, Acetone, Benzene, etc.

Table with columns: Compound Name, Synonym/Abbreviation, CAS No., Formula, 9.8, C, 10.6, C, 11.7, C (IE/eV), TWA. Lists various compounds like Dichloropropane, Diethyl ether, Ethylene glycol, etc.

Table with columns: Compound Name, Synonym/Abbreviation, CAS No., Formula, 9.8, C, 10.6, C, 11.7, C (IE/eV), TWA. Lists various compounds like Isobutane, Isobutyl acetate, Isobutyl acrylate, etc.

Table with columns: Compound Name, Synonym/Abbreviation, CAS No., Formula, 9.8, C, 10.6, C, 11.7, C (IE/eV), TWA. Lists various compounds like Phenol, Phosgene, Phosphine, etc.



DISCLAIMER

TN-106 is a general guideline for Correction Factors (CF) for use with PID instruments manufactured by RAE Systems. The CF may vary depending on instrument and operation conditions. For the best accuracy, RAE Systems recommends calibrating the instrument to target gas. Actual readings may vary with age and cleanliness of lamp, relative humidity, and other factors as well. For accurate work, the instrument should be calibrated regularly under the operating conditions used. The factors in this table on the following pages were measured in dry air (40 to 50% RH) at room temperature, typically at 50 ppm. CF values may vary above about 1000 ppm.

NOTE:

The term "ionization energy" is more scientifically correct and replaces the old term "ionization potential." High-boiling ("heavy") compounds may not vaporize enough to give a response even when their ionization energies are below the lamp photon energy. Some inorganic compounds like H2O2 and NO2 give weak response even when their ionization energies are well below the lamp photon energy. \*\*Compounds indicated in green can be detected using a MiniRAE 3000, UltraRAE 3000 or MultiRAE 3000 with enough to give a response, but may be lost by adsorption on a MultiRAE, EntryRAE and AreaRAE. Response on multi-gas meters can give an indication of relative concentrations, but may not be quantitative and for some chemicals no response is observed.

