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SOP #  
Region 1 Calibration of  
Field Instruments  
Revision Number: DRAFT  
Date June 3, 1998  
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U S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 1

**DRAFT CALIBRATION OF FIELD INSTRUMENTS**  
(temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, conductivity/specific conductance,  
oxidation/reduction potential [ORP], and turbidity)

## I. SCOPE & APPLICATION

The purpose of this standard operating procedure (SOP) is to provide a framework for calibrating field instruments used to measure water quality parameters for ground water and surface water. Water quality parameters include temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, conductivity/specific conductance, oxidation/reduction potential [ORP], and turbidity. This SOP supplements, but does not replace, EPA analytical methods listed in 40 CFR 136 and 40 CFR 141 for temperature, dissolved oxygen, conductivity/specific conductance, pH and turbidity.

This SOP is written for instruments that utilize multiple probes (temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, conductivity/specific conductance, and/or oxidation/reduction potential [ORP]) and the probe readings for pH, dissolved oxygen, and specific conductance are automatically corrected for temperature. Communications to the instrument (programming and displaying the measurement values) are performed using a display/logger or a computer. Information sent to the instrument is entered through the keypad on the display/logger or computer. It is desirable that the display/logger or computer have data storage capabilities. If the instrument does not have a keypad, follow the manufacturer's instructions for entering information into the instrument.

For ground water monitoring, the instrument must be equipped with a flow-through-cell, and the display/logger or computer display screen needs to be large enough to simultaneously contain the readouts of each probe in the instrument. Turbidity is measured using a separate instrument because turbidity cannot be measured in a flow-through-cell. This procedure is applicable for use with the EPA Region 1 Low Stress (low flow) Purging and Sampling Procedure for the Collection of Ground Water Samples from Monitoring Wells.

## II. GENERAL

All monitoring instruments must be calibrated before they are used to measure environmental samples. Part of the calibration is performed prior to the field event. For instrument probes that rely on the temperature sensor (pH, dissolved oxygen, conductivity/specific conductance, and

oxidation/reduction potential [ORP]), each temperature sensor needs to be checked for accuracy against a thermometer that is traceable to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Before any instrument is calibrated or used to perform environmental measurements, the instrument must stabilize (warm-up) according to manufacturer's instructions.

Most instruments will require at least two standards to bracket the expected measurement range, that is, one standard less than the expected value and one higher. Calibration must be performed at the beginning of each sampling day prior to sample collection. To determine if the instruments have remained in calibration during transport to each sampling location, use one of the previously used standards as a check standard at the sampling site. If the check measurement does not agree with the initial calibration or is to within the specifications of the instrument, then the instrument must be re-calibrated. When an environmental sample measurement falls outside the calibration range, the instrument must be re-calibrated to bracket the new range before continuing measurements.

This SOP requires that the manufacturer's instruction manual (including the instrument specifications) accompany the instrument into the field.

### III. CALIBRATION PROCEDURES

Prior to calibration, all instrument probes must be cleaned according to the manufacturer's instructions. Failure to perform this step (proper maintenance) can lead to erratic measurements.

Program the multi-probe instrument so that the following parameters to be measured will be displayed: temperature, pH, percent dissolved oxygen, mg/l dissolved oxygen, conductivity, specific conductance, and ORP.

The volume of the calibration solutions must be sufficient to cover both the probe and temperature sensor (see manufacturer's instructions for additional information).

While calibrating or measuring, make sure there are no air bubbles lodged between the probe and the probe guard.

### TEMPERATURE

Most instrument manuals state there is no calibration of the temperature sensor, but the temperature sensor must be checked to determine its accuracy. This accuracy check is performed