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CONTINUOUS FLOW AQUATIC TOXICOLOGY TESTING USING DILUTION WATER BY REVERSE OSMOSIS

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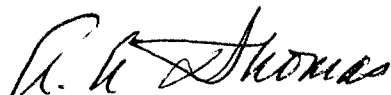
AMRL-TR-79-25

The experiments reported herein were conducted according to the "Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals," Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources, National Research Council.

This report has been reviewed by the Information Office (OI) and is releasable to the National Technical Information Service (NTIS). At NTIS, it will be available to the general public, including foreign nations.

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FOR THE COMMANDER


ANTHONY A. THOMAS, MD

Director
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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) This paper describes the design and operation of a continuous-flow aquatic toxicity testing system. Aquatic organisms are exposed to toxic chemicals in exposure tanks in which fresh water plus toxicant is continually being replenished. The water used to dilute the test chemical is well water treated by reverse osmosis filtration. The effluent is treated prior to discharging the waste water system. Specific system design considerations are discussed in detail.		

PREFACE

This study was conducted in the Toxic Hazards Division, Environmental Quality Branch, Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory. The research was performed in support of Project 6302, "Occupational and Environmental Toxic Hazards in Air Force Operations", Task 04, Workunit 18, from April 1978 to September 1978. This work was partially supported by funds provided under FY78 Laboratory Directors Fund.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to furnish a descriptive document of the equipment and techniques used in aquatic toxicity studies at the Environmental Quality Branch of the Hazards Division, Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory. In these studies, aquatic organisms are exposed to toxic wastes and chemicals in exposure tanks in which the fresh water plus toxicant is continually being replenished. Experiments are designed to establish dose-response relationships of aquatic organisms to logarithmically or geometrically spaced concentrations of potential pollutants. Exposure concentrations are produced using a proportional diluter (Mount and Brungs, 1967; Lemke et al., 1978). The water used to dilute the test chemical is well water that has been treated using a reverse osmosis filtration process which controls the concentration of dissolved solids in the water. Each concentration of the test chemical flows from the diluter to an individual glass or plexi-glass tank used as an exposure chamber. In each exposure chamber the aquatic organisms are observed to determine quantal or behavioral responses to that particular concentration of test chemical and the changes that occur as the length of exposure time increases. Each major aspect of the experimental design is described in detail.

METHODS

Dilution Water

The composition of the water in which aquatic organisms are held and exposed plays a critical role in biological responses to toxic contaminants. Bioassay results can be affected by many variables; possibly the most important is water quality (Slooff and Spierenburg, 1978). For example, hardness of the water may affect how rapidly or completely a pollutant is absorbed by the organisms. Natural components of water may affect pollutant concentration by binding with the pollutant or altering its rate of decomposition. The water quality of the tap water (Table 1) of building 433, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, has a CaCO_3 hardness in the range of 500-600 mg/liter with intermittent large quantities of suspended iron. These two parameters of the water quality present serious mechanical, chemical, and biological problems if unaltered. Without treatment most portions of the diluter and aquaria exposed to untreated water would be covered with precipitates to an unusable extent within a few weeks. Consequently, a reverse osmosis (R.O.) membrane filtering system (Figure 1) has been installed to improve the water quality for toxicity testing. The water for the R.O. membrane is pretreated with two disposable 1.0 micron rope filters (Filterite)®, a charcoal bed, and a water softener.

TABLE 1
TAP WATER ANALYSIS BY ATOMIC ABSORPTION

<u>Cation</u>	<u>ppm</u>	<u>Cation</u>	<u>ppm</u>
Ca	100	Cu	< 3
Mg	30	Fe*	< 1
Na	21	Ni	< 3
K	4	Zn	< 0.5
Al	<10	Cd	< 0.5
Cr	< 4	Hg	< 0.2
Co	< 1	Ag	< 1.0

Dissolved Solids 79.6 mg/100ml

* Suspended particles are not measured

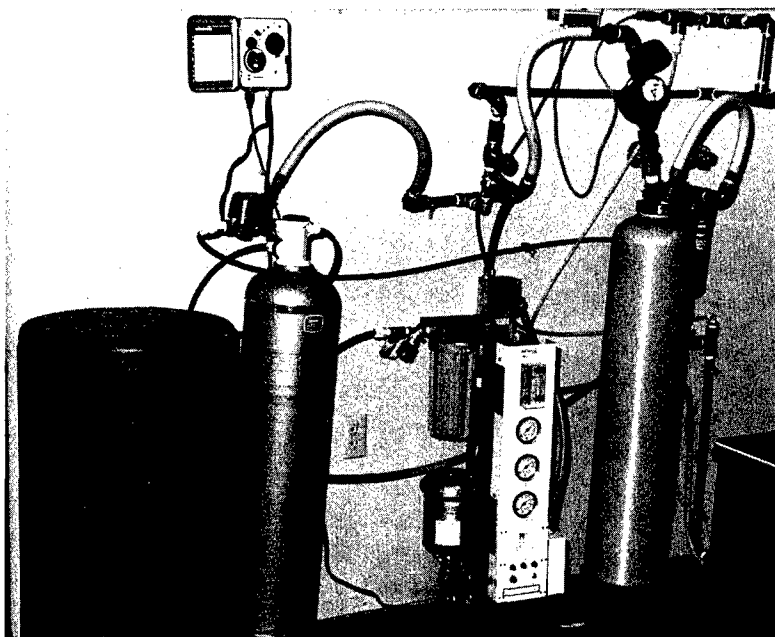


Figure 1, Reverse osmosis membrane with water softener, charcoal bed and two 1-micron rope filters.

Approximately 50 percent of the pretreated water is pumped through the R.O. membrane; the remaining 50 percent by-passes the membrane and contains the rejected dissolved solids of the water that did pass through the membrane. The R.O. membrane is capable of at least 90% rejection of total dissolved solids. This particular unit (Continental Model 3016) has a nominal rating of 800 gallons of treated water per day at 77°F. This system presently produces approximately 0.7 gallons per minute (gpm) of 0.03-0.05 megaohm water. This means the rejection of

total dissolved solids is 98-99%. In order to produce the desired hardness, the treated water of the R.O. system is diluted with charcoal treated tap water. During experimental tests the usual electrolyte content (NaCl) is 116-170 ppm.

The treated (R.O.) water mixed with the tap water after organic removal is stored in a 130 gallon "Living Stream"® tank. The water level in the reservoir is electrically controlled by activation or deactivation of a float switch. A safety overflow pipe is used to detour the water to a floor drain in case of an accidental overflow. A "Little Giant"® submerged pump in the reservoir attached to ½" (I.D.) stainless steel tubing is used to deliver the conditioned water to the proportional diluter. A stainless steel needle valve inline between the pump and the diluter regulates the flow rate of the water. The volume of the conditioned water in the reservoir must be large enough to maintain an adequate supply for the diluter during two periods, when the R.O. is not treating water during daily water softener regeneration (one hour) and when the R.O. membrane is flushed (30 minutes) by increasing the percentage of water by-passing the membrane. The treated water dwindles to approximately 0.2 gpm. These two operations can be performed manually or automatically.

Proportional Diluter

Lemke et al. (1978) in a recent paper describe the proportional diluter operation, construction, and calibration. Diluter modifications such as safety devices, toxicant delivery systems, and toxicant metering systems are also discussed. The paper helps clarify and provide modifications to Mount and Brungs (1967) original publication on diluter fabrication. The construction of the diluter used in this laboratory was a compromise between these two systems together with other modifications made by the laboratory. Only the modifications to the diluter designed by this laboratory was presented. The proportional diluter (Figure 2) cell volumes are equivalent to the Lemke et al. design; however, the siphons for the cells are designed as described by Mount and Brungs except for the use of glass bubble breaks rather than polyethylene bottles, and a 250 ml polyethylene bottle for the bubble-break below the top left cell (W-1).

One-fourth inch plexiglass (instead of glass) was used to construct the diluter cells, with the exception of a seven liter glass jar (M) used to contain the water and toxicant below the W-1 cell. The frame was built of unistrut steel and 3/4" plywood for support of the exposure aquaria and diluter cells.

The electrical wiring to the proportional diluter (Figure 3) is housed in conduit and connection boxes. A 125 ml polyethylene bottle attached with string to a microswitch regulates the cycling time; as the water fills the valve bucket (located below and to the right of top right cell of the diluter), the bottle rises, deactivating the microswitch, thus halting the treated water entering the W-1 cell

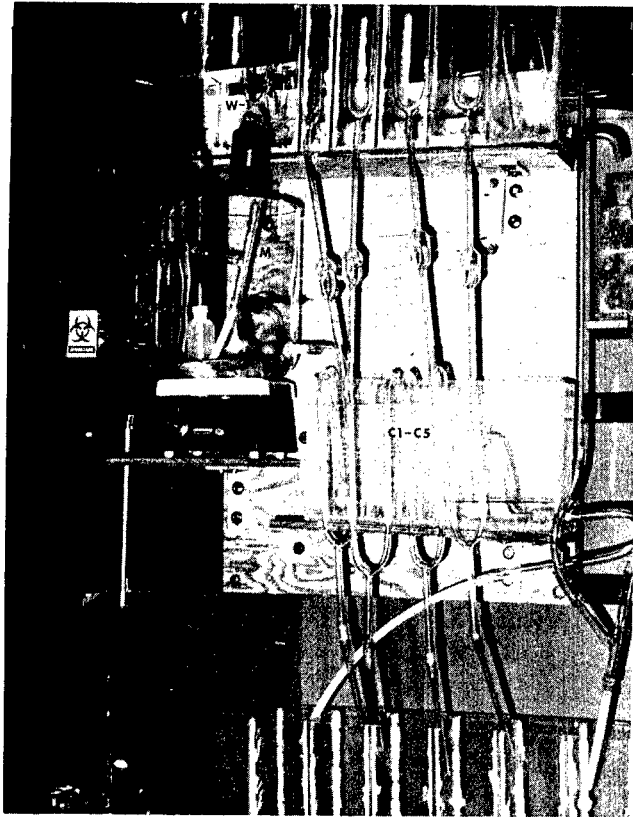


Figure 2. Proportional Diluter

The toxicant delivery system is a Hamilton® precision dispenser (Figure 4) activated by 20-30 pounds per square inch of compressed air. This dispenser can deliver from one microliter to ten milliliters of neat toxicants into the mixing chamber cell (M), located directly below the W-1 cell. The M cell with the W-1 cell water and the diluted toxicant then fills the cells C1 to C5, located directly below and to the right of the M cell.

A 125 ml polyethylene bottle is located in the M cell with a 1/8" x 12" stainless steel rod attached to the top of the bottle. When the water flow from cell W-1 fills cell M, the bottle rises with the attached rod. The guide for the rod, a 1/4" (I.D.) x 10" tube is used to align the rising rod with a sensitive valve (i.e. automotive tire valve) located at the end of the guide. The valve is located inside the tygon tubing and the tygon tubing is attached to the rod guide. Consequently, when the water in M cell rises, the bottle and the rod inside the guide also rise, triggering the dispenser as the rod presses against the valve.

Exposure Aquaria

The receiving aquaria consist of six 30 liter aquaria (Figure 5) on one side of the diluter and six 9-liter aquaria (Figure 6a and 6b)

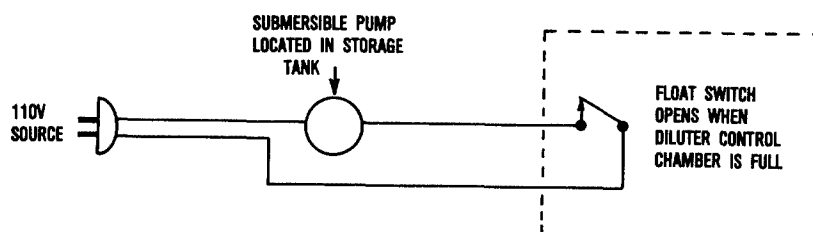


Figure 3. Schematic of the electrical system for the water delivery to the proportional diluter.

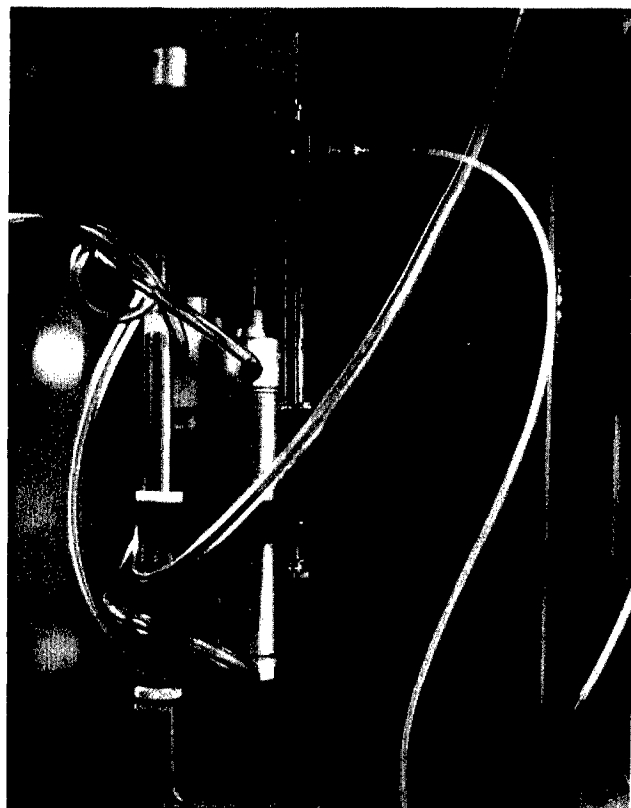


Figure 4. Hamilton precision dispenser used for the toxicant delivery.

on the other side. The smaller aquaria are used for behavioral observations (Vinyard and O'Brian, 1975). To adjust for differences in partial replacement time due to differing volumes, stainless steel elbows were installed at the end of the receiving tubes of the behavioral aquaria to reduce the flow rate. This provides a flow ratio of approximately 2:1 for the large and smaller aquaria, respectively. All aquaria are fabricated with 1/4" plexiglass.

Effluent Disposal

The effluent from the exposure tanks is drained into a 15-gallon plexiglass decontamination aquarium via 2" polyvinylchloride pipe. A separatory funnel placed over this aquarium provides a constant delivery of chemicals (i.e. sodium hypochlorite) to the aquarium to decontaminate the effluent from the exposure tanks. The decontaminated effluent is siphoned to the floor drain. The approximate retention time for the effluent from the exposure tanks and decontaminant from the separatory funnel in this aquarium is 15 minutes.

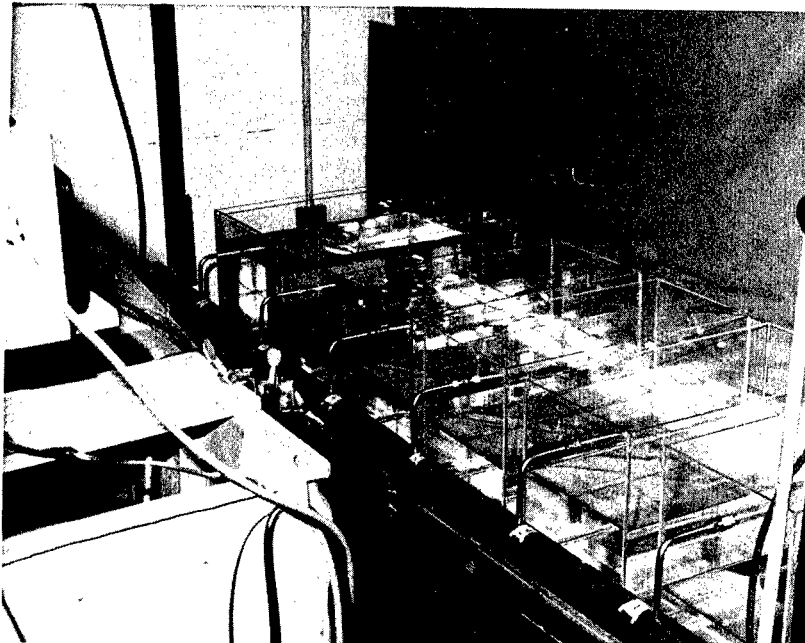


Figure 5. The 30 liter aquaria used for quantal responses.

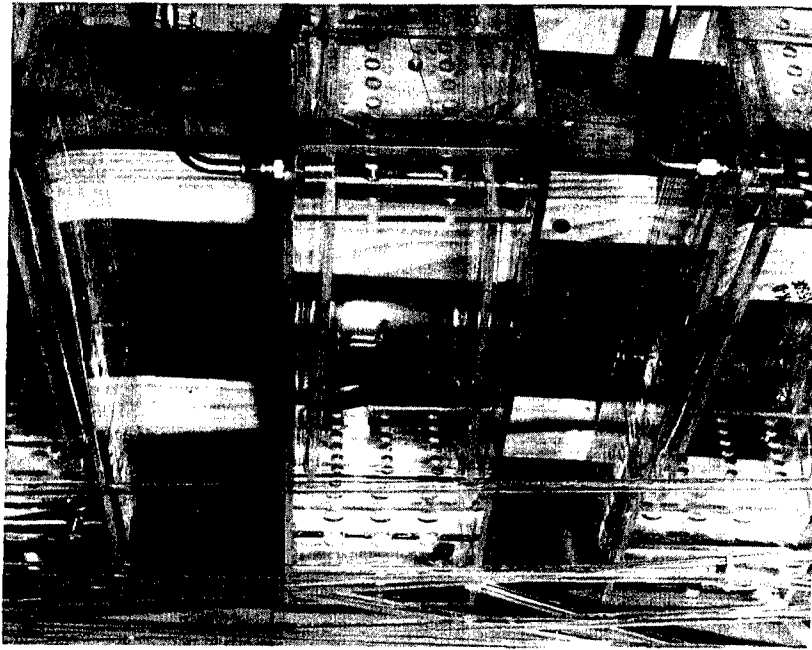


Figure 6a. Behavioral response aquaria.

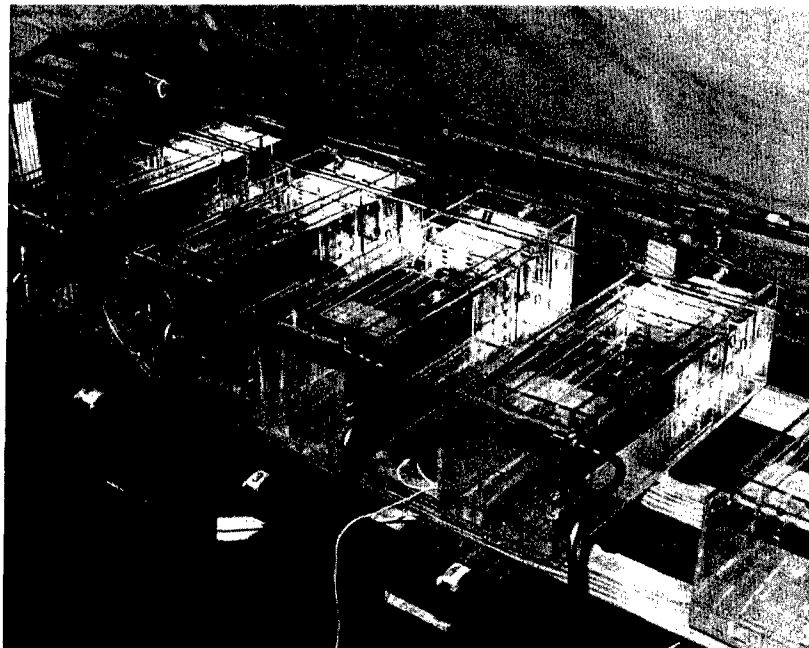


Figure 6b. Front view of behavioral response aquaria showing construction design.

DISCUSSION

This system was designed for limited use in an aquatic toxicology laboratory. The floor space and water quality can become limiting factors, depending on the amount of water used, cost to produce the water, and methodology used to clean the water (Figure 7). The pretreatment of the water before the R.O. membrane may require the addition of a flocculating agent and/or sand filtration before organic removal and water softening. Possible use of an ultrafiltration unit should filter particles 0.0005 microns or larger. Pretreatment of the water before the R.O. membrane is essential because divalent cations or chlorine will cause irreversible damage to the R.O. membrane. Long term use of the R.O. with periodic cleaning of the membrane may still yield reduced quality of water that has been attributed to a foulant coating containing 70% organic matter (Cadotte and Peterson, 1977).

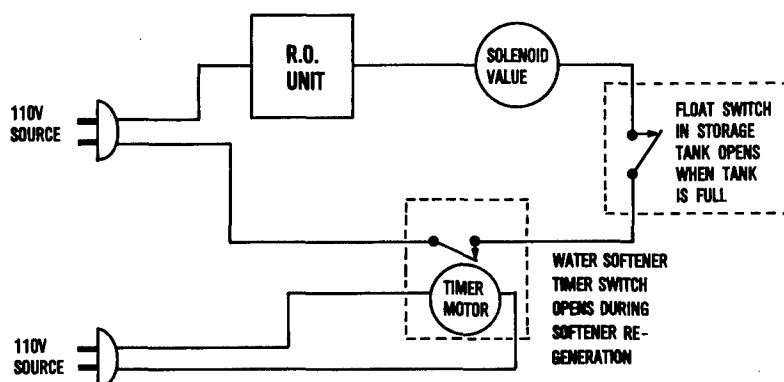


Figure 7. Electrical schematic of R.O. system and reservoir design.

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