Determination of Inorganic Oxyhalide Disinfection Byproduct Anions and Bromide in Drinking Water Using Ion Chromatography with the Addition of a Postcolumn Reagent for Trace Bromate Analysis

Dave Thomas and Jeff Rohrer
Thermo Fisher Scientific, Sunnyvale, CA, USA

Introduction
The chlorination of drinking water can produce trihalomethanes and other suspected carcinogenic disinfection byproducts (DBPs) that endanger human health. Unfortunately, common alternatives to chlorination can also produce harmful DBPs. The use of chlorine dioxide for the disinfection of drinking water generates the inorganic oxyhalide DBPs chlorite and chlorate, and the presence of chlorate has been reported in waters treated with hypochlorite. Ozonation, an increasingly prevalent and effective disinfection technique, produces bromate as a DBP anion if the source water contains naturally occurring bromide. Bromate has been judged by both the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a potential carcinogen, even at very low µg/L levels. The U.S. EPA has estimated a potential cancer risk equivalent to 1 in 104 for a lifetime exposure to drinking water containing bromate at 5 µg/L. The U.S. EPA has recently issued new rules that require public water supplies to control previously unregulated microbes (for example, cryptosporidium and giardia) and cancer-causing DBPs in finished drinking water. The Stage 1 Disinfectants/Disinfection Byproducts (D/DBP) Rule specifies a maximum contaminant level (MCL) for bromate of 10 µg/L and an MCL for chlorite of 1000 µg/L. The EPA intends to convene Stage 2 of the D/DBP Rule in the near future, while both Germany and Japan are considering regulatory limits for inorganic DBPs.

The recent efforts by global regulatory agencies to monitor levels and establish regulatory limits has generated considerable interest in the development of improved analytical methods for the determination of trace level inorganic oxyhalide DBPs. The determination of bromate and other inorganic DBPs traditionally has been accomplished by ion chromatography (IC) using a Thermo Scientific™ Dionex™ IonPac™ AS9-SC anion-exchange column with a carbonate/bicarbonate eluent and suppressed conductivity detection, as described in U.S. EPA Method 300.0 (B). EPA Method 300.1 was published as an update to Method 300.0 in 1997. Method 300.1 specifies the use of a Dionex IonPac AS9-HC column and suppressed conductivity detection for the determination of bromate, bromide, chlorite, and chlorate at low µg/L levels by direct injection. The detection limit for bromate determined by IC with suppressed conductivity detection can be further reduced to 1 µg/L by using preconcentration after appropriate sample cleanup.

Postcolumn derivatization can also be used to improve detection limits when using IC for inorganic DBP analysis. The use of IC with dual postcolumn addition of hydrochloric acid and then chlorpromazine can achieve a method detection limit (MDL) for bromate of 0.49 µg/L. Iodate, chlorite, and bromate have been detected by using a postcolumn reaction with excess bromide under acidic conditions. The tribromide ion formed can be detected spectrophotometrically at 267 nm, allowing an MDL of less than 0.5 µg/L for bromate with a large-volume injection. Sub-µg/L MDLs for bromate have also been reported by workers using other postcolumn reagents, such as fuchsin or excess iodide under acidic conditions. In addition to postcolumn reaction (PCR) methods, electrospray tandem mass spectrometry (MS-MS) and inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-MS) have been used as specific detection techniques for the ion chromatographic analysis of bromate. The use of electrospray MS-MS detection can achieve an MDL for bromate of approximately 0.1 µg/L; the use of ICP-MS detection has been reported to permit an MDL for bromate of 0.8 µg/L.

This application note describes an improved IC method to quantify low levels of oxyhalide DBP anions and bromide in reagent water, bottled water, and finished drinking water. The method uses a Dionex IonPac AS9-HC column and suppressed conductivity detection, followed by postcolumn addition of o-dianisidine (ODA) to enhance visible absorbance detection of the bromate ion. This method allows quantification of all the key oxyhalide anions and bromide at low µg/L levels by using conductivity detection, and the postcolumn addition of ODA.
followed by visible detection allows quantification of bromate down to 0.5 µg/L. This method requires only a single postcolumn reagent delivered pneumatically with conventional postcolumn instrumentation. The approach described in this application note is technically equivalent to that described in U.S. EPA Method 317.0 titled “Determination of Inorganic Oxyhalide Disinfection By-Products in Drinking Water Using Ion Chromatography with the Addition of a Postcolumn Reagent for Trace Bromate Analysis”.

**Equipment**

- Thermo Scientific™ Dionex™ DX-500 Ion Chromatography System:
  - GP50 Gradient Pump with vacuum degas option
  - ED40 Conductivity Detector with DS3 Detector Cell
  - AD20 UV/Vis Absorbance Detector with 10 mm cell
  - AS50 Autosampler
- PC10 Pneumatic Postcolumn Delivery module (P/N 50601)
- PCH-2 Postcolumn Reaction Heater (P/N 39348)
- Knitted Reaction Coil, 500 µL, potted (for PCH-2) (P/N 39349)
- Two 4 L plastic bottle assemblies (for external water mode suppression)
- Thermo Scientific™ Dionex™ PeakNet™ 5.1 Chromatography Workstation

**Reagents and Standards**

- Deionized water, Type I reagent grade, 18 MΩ-cm resistivity or better
- 0.5 M Carbonate Anion Eluent Concentrate (P/N 37162)
- o-Dianisidine, dihydrochloride salt (ODA; Sigma-Aldrich, D-3252)
- Iron (II) sulfate heptahydrate (Fe₂SO₄•7H₂O; Aldrich 21,542-2)
- Ethylenediamine (EDA; Sigma E-1521)
- Nitric acid, (70%; J.T. Baker® Instra-Analyzed®, 9598-00)
- Methanol (spectrophotometric grade; Sigma M-3641)
- Potassium bromide (KBr; J.T. Baker 2998)
- Sodium bromide (NaBr; Aldrich 31,050-6)
- Sodium bromate (NaBrO₃; EM SX 03785-1)
- Sodium chlorate (NaClO₃; Fluka, 71370)
- Sodium chloride (NaCl; Fluka 71388, ~80% pure)
- Bromate standard, 1000 mg/L, NaBrO₃ in H₂O (SPEX CertiPrep®, AS-BRO39-2Y)
- Bromide standard, 1000 mg/L, NaBr in H₂O (SPEX CertiPrep AS-BR9-2Y)
- Chlorate standard, 1000 mg/L, NaClO₃ in H₂O (SPEX CertiPrep AS-ClO39-2Y)
- Chloride standard, 1000 mg/L, NaClO₂ in H₂O (SPEX CertiPrep AS-ClO29-2Y)

**Conditions**

- **Columns**: Dionex AG9-HC, 50 × 4 mm i.d., Guard (P/N 51791)
  - Dionex AS9-HC, 250 × 4 mm i.d., Analytical (P/N 51786)
- **Eluent**: 9.0 mM sodium carbonate (Na₂CO₃)
- **Flow Rate**: 1.3 mL/min
- **Temperature**: Ambient
- **Sample Volume**: 225 µL
- **Detection**: Suppressed conductivity: Thermo Scientific™ Dionex™ ASRS™ ULTRA (P/N 53946), auto-suppression, external water mode, 100 mA current, DS3 Cell (P/N 44130), 35 °C, 1.7%°C
- **Background Conductance**: ~24 µS
- **System Backpressure**: ~2300 psi
- **Run Time**: 25 min

**PCR Conditions**

- **Detection**: Absorbance at 450 nm (tungsten lamp)
- **Reagent Flow**: 0.7 mL/min
- **Postcolumn Heater Temp.**: 60 °C

**Preparation of Solutions and Reagents**

**Reagent Water**

Distilled or deionized water, 18 MΩ-cm or better, free of the anions of interest and filtered through a 0.2 µm filter.

**Eluent Solution (9 mM Sodium Carbonate)**

Dilute 18 mL of 0.5 M sodium carbonate concentrate to 1 L with deionized water. Unless the in-line degas option is being used, sparge eluent prior to use with helium or sonicate under vacuum for 10 min.

**Postcolumn Reagent**

Add 40 mL of 70% nitric acid to about 300 mL reagent water in a 500 mL volumetric flask. Add 2.5 g KBr and stir to dissolve. Dissolve 250 mg of o-dianisidine • 2 HCl in 100 mL methanol and add to the nitric acid/KBr solution. Bring to volume with reagent water. Prepare in advance, set aside overnight until the slight champagne color fades, and filter through a 0.45 µm filter. Discard any PCR reagent that is not colorless or nearly colorless after sitting overnight. The reagent is stable for one month when stored at room temperature.

**Stock Standard Solutions**

Purchase certified solutions or prepare stock standard solutions by dissolving the corresponding mass of the salt for each of the anions of interest (see Table 1) in reagent water and dilute to 100 mL.

Prepare a mixed anion calibration stock standard at 20 mg/L by combining 2 mL of each of the bromide, chlorite, and chlorate stock standards in a 100 mL volumetric flask. Mix and bring to volume with reagent water. These standards are stable for at least one month when stored at < 6 ºC.
Because bromate decomposes in the presence of chlorite, prepare a bromate-only calibration stock standard at 5 mg/L by adding 0.5 mL of the bromate stock standard to a 100 mL volumetric flask and bringing to volume with reagent water. This standard is stable for two weeks when stored at < 6 °C.

**Working Standard Solutions**

Use reagent water to prepare appropriate dilutions of the calibration stock standards as needed.

**Ethylenediamine (EDA) Preservative Solution**

Dilute 2.8 mL of ethylenediamine (99%) to 25 mL with reagent water. Prepare fresh monthly.

**Ferrous Iron Solution (1000 mg/L Fe (II))**

Add 6 µL concentrated nitric acid to about 15 mL reagent water in a 25 mL volumetric flask. Add 0.124 g ferrous sulfate heptahydrate (FeSO\(_4\)·7H\(_2\)O), dissolve, and bring to volume with reagent water. Prepare fresh monthly.

**Sulfuric Acid Solution (0.5 N)**

Dilute 1.4 mL of concentrated sulfuric acid to 100 mL with reagent water.

**Sample Preparation**

When taking a sample from a treatment plant that uses chlorine dioxide or ozone, the sample must be sparged immediately with an inert gas (for example, nitrogen, argon, or helium) for 5 min. Add 1.00 mL of EDA preservative solution per 1.0 L of sample to prevent conversion of residual hypochlorite or hypobromite to chlorate or bromate. This also prevents metal-catalyzed conversion of residual hypochlorite or hypobromite to chlorate or bromate.

After appropriate preservation, most samples can be filtered through a 0.45 µm filter and directly injected onto the ion chromatograph. However, each sample that contains excess chlorite must be treated to remove chlorite and then reanalyzed for bromate, because elevated levels of chlorite can interfere with the quantification of bromate by PCR.

The treatment procedure to remove chlorite requires two portions of sample. Place two 10 mL aliquots of the sample into separate 20 mL beakers. Fortify one aliquot with bromate at a level approximating the native concentration of bromate in the untreated sample. This laboratory fortified matrix (LFM) will indicate correct performance of the chlorite removal step. Acidify both aliquots with 33 µL of sulfuric acid reagent and confirm the final pH (5–6) with pH test strips. Add 40 µL of ferrous iron solution, mix, and allow to react for 10 min. Filter the treated samples through a 0.45 µm nylon filter to remove precipitated ferric hydroxide, and then pass the solution through a hydronium form cation-exchange cartridge (Thermo Scientific Dionex OnGuard™-H, P/N 39596) to remove excess soluble iron. The treated samples must be analyzed within 30 h.

**System Preparation and Set-up**

Configure the IC with the PCR system as depicted in Figure 1. Determine the PCR flow rate by collecting the combined effluent from the IC pump and the PCR module in a 10 mL graduated cylinder for 1 min. The PCR flow rate is the difference between the total flow rate and that of the IC pump. Adjust the air pressure of the postcolumn delivery module (PC10) and remeasure the flow rate until the correct flow rate of 0.7 mL/min is established.

Confirm this flow rate on a weekly basis or whenever detector response for a calibration check standard deviates beyond quality control acceptance criteria.

![Diagram](Image)

**Results and Discussion**

Figure 2 shows the chromatograms of a mixed anion standard containing 10 µg/L bromate and 15 µg/L each of chlorite, bromide, and chlorate obtained by using dual A) suppressed conductivity and B) UV/Vis absorbance after postcolumn reaction with ODA. The bromate peak is...
baseline-resolved from chlorite on both detector channels; however, it shows a significantly enhanced response on the absorbance detector after PCR with ODA compared to the response obtained on the conductivity detector.

Table 2 summarizes the calibration data and MDLs obtained for the oxyhalide DBP anions and bromide using dual conductivity and PCR detection. The MDL for each analyte was established by making seven replicate injections of a reagent water blank fortified at a concentration of 3 to 5 times the estimated instrument detection limit. The use of PCR addition and UV/Vis detection allows quantification of bromate down to 0.5 µg/L without compromising detection limits obtained with suppressed conductivity detection for the other anions of interest. Note that the use of electronic smoothing (Olympic, 25 points, 5 sec, 1 iteration) of the UV/Vis signal improves the calculated MDL for bromate. Figure 3 demonstrates the effect of smoothing on the performance of the PCR detection for a 1.0 µg/L bromate standard. No significant loss of peak response is observed after smoothing, although baseline noise is reduced by a factor of approximately 2×, which results in a similar improvement in the detection limit (Table 2).

Table 2. Linear ranges and MDLs for oxyhalides and bromide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solute</th>
<th>Range (µg/L)</th>
<th>r²</th>
<th>MDL Standard (µg/L)</th>
<th>Calculated MDL* (µg/L)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chlorite</td>
<td>5.0–500</td>
<td>0.9999</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromate–conductivity</td>
<td>5.0–50</td>
<td>0.9986</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromide</td>
<td>5.0–500</td>
<td>0.9999</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chlorate</td>
<td>5.0–500</td>
<td>0.9999</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromate–UV/Vis (smoothed)</td>
<td>0.5–15</td>
<td>0.9986</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromate–UV/Vis (no smoothing)</td>
<td>0.5–15</td>
<td>0.9986</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*MDL = (t) × (S) Where t = student’s t value for a 99% confidence level and a standard deviation estimate with n – 1 degrees of freedom (t = 3.14 for seven replicates of the MDL standard), and S = standard deviation of the replicate analysis.

Figure 3. Effect of smoothing on bromate determination: A) unsmoothed data and B) smoothed data (Olympic, 25 points, 5 sec, 1 iteration).

Figures 4–7 illustrate the performance of the method for the determination of inorganic oxyhalide DBP anions and bromide in drinking and bottled water samples. Figure 4 shows the chromatograms from a direct injection of drinking water (from Sunnyvale, California) obtained by using dual A) suppressed conductivity and B) UV/Vis absorbance after postcolumn reaction with ODA. Neither chloride nor bromate are observed in the drinking water sample; however, bromide and chlorate (frequently observed as a disinfection byproduct from the use of hypochlorite) are well resolved from the sample matrix.
Figure 5 shows the chromatograms of the same drinking water sample spiked with chlorite, bromate, bromide, and chlorate at levels of 108, 11.3, 36, and 72 µg/L, respectively. The chromatograms were obtained using, in series, dual A) suppressed conductivity and B) UV/Vis absorbance after postcolumn reaction with ODA. Quantitative recoveries were obtained for all anions, as shown in Table 3. The benefits of PCR with UV/Vis detection for bromate determination can clearly be seen in Figure 5B: bromate peak response is significantly enhanced compared to the response on the conductivity detector and no response is observed for the large peak from about 20 µg/L chloride that elutes immediately after bromate. The use of PCR with UV/Vis detection allows the quantification of bromate down to 0.5 µg/L in the presence of 200 mg/L chloride (a 400,000-fold excess) with no sample pretreatment.

Table 3. Anion recoveries for spiked water samples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anion*</th>
<th>Tap Water</th>
<th>Bottled Water</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amount Added (µg/L)</td>
<td>Recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chlorite</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>104%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromate–condu...</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>105%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromide</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chlorate</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>107%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromate–UV/Vis</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>102%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromate–UV/Vis</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Bromate only  | (2.2 µg/L) was added to tap and bottled water samples to determine low level recovery for this anion using UV/Vis detection.**

*Data were obtained from multi-analyte spikes into tap and bottled water samples.
**Figure 6** shows the chromatograms from a direct injection of bottled spring water obtained using, in series, dual A) suppressed conductivity and B) UV/Vis absorbance after postcolumn reaction with ODA. In this instance, both bromate and bromide are observed in the bottled water sample. Bromate, which is formed during ozonation of source water containing bromide, is present at about 2 µg/L and can clearly be seen in the UV/Vis chromatogram, although no peak is evident on the conductivity detector.

**Figure 7** shows the chromatograms of the same bottled water sample spiked with chlorite, bromate, bromide, and chlorate at levels of 126, 13.2, 42, and 84 µg/L, respectively. These chromatograms were obtained by using, in series, dual A) suppressed conductivity and B) UV/Vis absorbance after postcolumn reaction with ODA. Table 3 shows that quantitative recoveries were again obtained for all anions. Table 3 also shows the recoveries obtained for bromate spiked into the same drinking and bottled water samples at a lower concentration of 2.2 µg/L when using UV/Vis absorbance after postcolumn reaction with ODA. This method permits quantitative recoveries (80–120%) for bromate at levels down to 1 µg/L when using PCR and UV/Vis detection.

**Removal of Chlorite Interference**

When chlorine dioxide is used to disinfect drinking water, the DBP anion chlorite is found in the finished drinking water. Chlorite, like bromate, reacts with o-dianisidine to form a complex that absorbs at 450 nm. High chlorite levels can interfere with quantification of low-level bromate.\(^1\) One approach to minimize the interference from chlorite is to remove the chlorite by reduction with ferrous sulfate, as described in the “Sample Preparation” section. This treatment was evaluated by applying it to a series of simulated chlorine dioxide-treated tap waters, which had been spiked with varying levels of bromate, and the corresponding LFM s. The results, summarized in Table 4, show that acceptable recoveries of bromate are obtained after such treatment. This treatment approach is recommended when analysis of low-level bromate is required in chlorine dioxide-treated drinking waters.
Table 4. Bromate recovery from simulated chlorine dioxide treated waters (STW)*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spiked STW Fe (II)-Treated</th>
<th>Laboratory Fortified Matrix Fe (II)-Treated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amount Added (µg/L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STW</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STW-1</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STW-2</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STW-3</td>
<td>4.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STW-4</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Chlorine present at 100 µg/L.

Summary
The IC method described in this application note, which uses a Dionex IonPac AS9-HC column and suppressed conductivity detection, followed by postcolumn addition of o-dianisidine with UV/Vis detection specifically to enhance bromate response, allows the determination of all the key oxyhalide anions and bromide at low µg/L levels in drinking and bottled waters. The use of postcolumn addition and UV/Vis detection allows the quantification of bromate in the range of 0.5–15 µg/L without compromising the suppressed conductivity detection of chlorite, bromide, and chlorate. Conductivity detection is recommended for the quantification of bromate in the range of 15–50 µg/L.

References

Suppliers
Aldrich Chemical Co., P.O. Box 2060, Milwaukee, WI 53201, USA. Tel: 800-558-9160. www.sigma-aldrich.com.
Fluka, P.O. Box 2060, Milwaukee, WI 53201, USA. Tel: 800-558-9160. www.sigma-aldrich.com.
Pierce Chemical Co., 3747 North Meridian Road, P.O. Box 117, Rockford, IL 61105, USA. Tel: 800-874-3723. www.piercenet.com.
Sigma Chemical Co., P.O. Box 14508, St. Louis, MO 63178, USA. Tel: 800-325-3010. www.sigma-aldrich.com.

www.thermofished.com/dionex
©2013 Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc. All rights reserved. ISO is a trademark of the International Standards Organization. Sigma-Aldrich and Roka are registered trademarks of Sigma-Aldrich Co., LLC. J.T. Baker and Baker Instra-Analyzed are registered trademarks of Avantor Performance Materials, Inc. SPEX CertiPrep is a registered trademark of SPEX Certiprep Group LLC. All other trademarks are the property of Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc. and its subsidiaries. This information is presented as an example of the capabilities of Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc. products. It is not intended to encourage use of these products in any manners that might infringe the intellectual property rights of others. Specifications, terms and pricing are subject to change. Not all products are available in all countries. Please consult your local sales representative for details.