

# CHROMIUM

## FACT SHEET



See related Fact Sheets: Acronyms & Abbreviations; Glossary of Terms; Cost Assumptions; Raw Water Composition; Total Plant Costs; and WaTER Program.

### 1. CONTAMINANT DATA

**A. Chemical Data:** Chromium (Cr), atomic number: 24, atomic weight: 51.996, a steel-gray metallic element with a high melting point. It is a micronutrient (essential trace element).

**B. Source in Nature:** Cr is a naturally occurring ubiquitous element found in the air, water, rocks, soil, animals, and in volcanic dust and gases. Cr is found in the environment in three major forms or oxidation states: trivalent Cr (III), hexavalent Cr (VI), and metallic Cr (0), the first two being the most important and most common. The form depends on the pH level. Very small amounts of Cr III are found in food. Cr is deposited into the environment through steel, refractory and chemical manufacturing, chrome plating, and municipal sewage wastes via surface runoff. Cr may be found in tap water as a result of plumbing fixtures.

**C. SDWA Limits:** MCL/MCLG for Cr is 0.1 mg/L.

**D. Health Effects of Contamination:** In very small amounts, Cr (III) is an essential nutrient in our diet, helping maintain normal metabolism of glucose, cholesterol, and fat in human bodies. All forms of Cr can be toxic at high levels, but Cr (VI) is the most toxic. At short-term exposure levels above the MCL, Cr causes skin and stomach irritation, or ulceration. Long-term exposure at levels above the MCL can cause dermatitis, damage to the liver, kidney circulation and nerve tissue damage, and death in large doses. Skin contact with liquids containing Cr (VI) may lead to allergic reactions.

### 2. REMOVAL TECHNIQUES

**A. USEPA BAT:** Coagulation and filtration, ion exchange, reverse osmosis, or lime softening (for Cr III only).

! Coagulation and filtration uses the conventional treatment processes of chemical addition, coagulation, and dual media filtration. Benefits: low capital costs for proven, reliable process. Limitations: operator care required with chemical usage; sludge disposal.

! IX for Cr uses a charged anion resin to exchange acceptable ions from the resin for the undesirable Cr in the water. Benefits: acid addition, degasification, and repressurization is not required; effective; well developed. Limitations: pretreatment lime softening may be required; restocking of regenerate supply; regular regeneration; concentrate disposal.

! RO for soluble Cr uses a semipermeable membrane, and the application of pressure to a concentrated solution which causes water, but not suspended or dissolved solids (soluble Cr), to pass through the membrane. Benefits: produces high quality water. Limitations: cost; pretreatment/feed pump requirements; concentrate disposal.

! Lime softening for soluble Cr uses  $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$  in sufficient quantity to raise the pH to about 10 to precipitate carbonate hardness and heavy metals, like Cr. Benefits: lower capital costs; proven and reliable. Limitations: operator care required with chemical usage; sludge disposal; insoluble Cr compounds may be formed at low carbonate levels requiring coagulation and flocculation.

**B. Alternative Methods of Treatment:** Distillation (for home drinking water only) heats water until it turns to steam. The steam travels through a condenser coil where it is cooled and returned to liquid. The Cr remains in the boiler section. Alternately, solid block or precoated absorption filters made with carbon or activated alumina certified to reduce Cr are available.

**C. Safety and Health Requirements for Treatment Processes:** Personnel involved with demineralization treatment processes should be aware of the chemicals being used (MSDS information), the electrical shock hazards, and the hydraulic pressures required to operate the equipment. General industry safety, health, and self protection practices should be followed, including proper use of tools.

### 3. BAT PROCESS DESCRIPTION AND COST DATA

**General Assumptions:** Refer to: Raw Water Composition Fact Sheet for ionic concentrations; and Cost Assumptions Fact Sheet for cost index data and process assumptions. All costs are based on ENR, PPI, and BLS cost indices for March 2001. General sitework, building, external pumps/piping, pretreatment, or off-site sludge disposal are not included.

### 3A. Coagulation and Filtration:

Process - Coagulation and filtration for insoluble Cr uses the conventional chemical and physical treatment processes of chemical addition, rapid mix, coagulation with dry alum, flocculation, and dual media filtration. Chemical coagulation and flocculation consists of adding a chemical coagulant combined with mechanical flocculation to allow fine suspended and some dissolved solids to clump together (floc).  $Al_2(SO_4)_3$  has been proven to be the most effective coagulant for insoluble Cr removal. Filtration provides final removal by dual media filtering of all floc and suspended solids.

Pretreatment - Jar tests to determine optimum pH for coagulation, and resulting pH adjustment, may be required.

Maintenance - A routine check of chemical feed equipment is necessary several times during each work period to prevent clogging and equipment wear, and to ensure adequate chemical supply. All pumps, valves, and piping must be regularly checked and cleaned to prevent buildup of carbonate scale, which can cause plugging and malfunction. Routine checks of contaminant buildup in the filter is required, as well as filter backwash. Recharging or clean installation of media is periodically required.

Waste Disposal - Filter backwash and spent material require approved disposal.

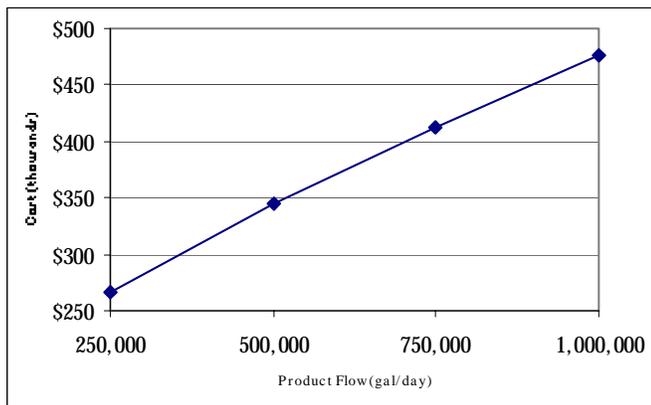
#### Advantages -

- ! Lowest capital costs.
- ! Lowest overall operating costs.
- ! Proven and reliable.
- ! Low pretreatment requirements.

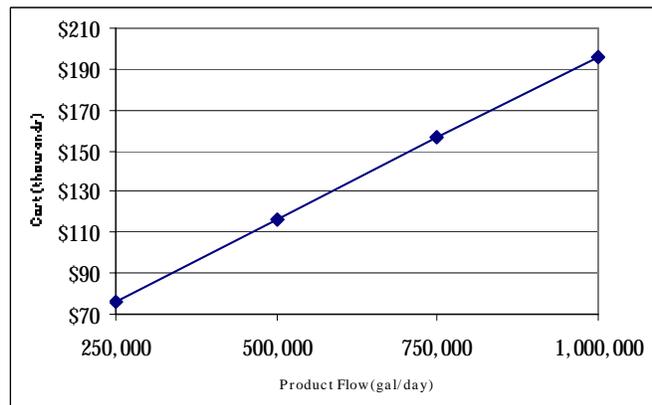
#### Disadvantages -

- ! Operator care required with chemical handling.
- ! Produces high sludge volume.
- ! Waters high in sulfate may cause significant interference with removal efficiencies.

**BAT Equipment Cost\***



**BAT Annual O&M Cost\***



\*Refer to Cost Assumptions Fact Sheet. Does not include general sitework, building, external pumps/piping, pretreatment, or off-site sludge disposal. Costs are presented for direct filtration (coagulation and filtration plus flocculation). Costs for coagulation and filtration would be less since flocculation is omitted.

### 3B. Ion Exchange:

**Process** - In solution, salts separate into positively-charged cations and negatively-charged anions. Deionization can reduce the amounts of these ions. Anion IX is a reversible chemical process in which ions from an insoluble, permanent, solid resin bed are exchanged for ions in water. The process relies on the fact that water solutions must be electrically neutral, therefore ions in the resin bed are exchanged with ions of similar charge in the water. As a result of the exchange process, no reduction in ions is obtained. In the case of Cr reduction, operation begins with a fully recharged anion resin bed, having enough negatively charged ions to carry out the anion exchange. Usually a polymer resin bed is composed of millions of medium sand grain size, spherical beads. As water passes through the resin bed, the negatively charged ions are released into the water, being substituted or replaced with the Cr anions in the water (ion exchange). When the resin becomes exhausted of negatively charged ions, the bed must be regenerated by passing a strong, usually NaCl (or KCl), solution over the resin bed, displacing the Cr ions with Cl<sup>-</sup> ions. Many different types of anion resins can be used to reduce dissolved Cr concentrations. The use of IX to reduce concentrations of Cr will be dependant on the specific chemical characteristics of the raw water.

Cation IX, commonly termed water softening, can be used with low flows (up to 200 GPM) and when the ratio of hardness-to-Cr is greater than 1.

**Pretreatment** - Guidelines are available on accepted limits for pH, organics, turbidity, and other raw water characteristics. Pretreatment may be required to reduce excessive amounts of TSS which could plug the resin bed, and typically includes media or carbon filtration.

**Maintenance** - The IX resin requires regular regeneration, the frequency of which depends on raw water characteristics and the Cr concentration. Preparation of the NaCl solution is required. If utilized, filter replacement and backwashing will be required.

**Waste Disposal** - Approval from local authorities is usually required for the disposal of concentrate from the regeneration cycle (highly concentrated alkaline solution); occasional solid wastes (in the form of broken resin beads) which are backwashed during regeneration; and if utilized, spent filters and backwash waste water.

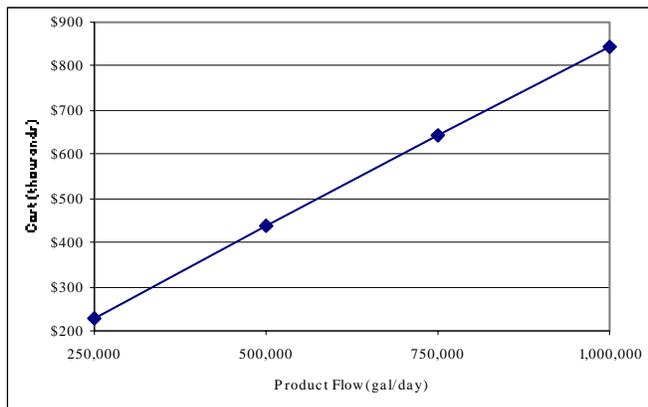
#### Advantages -

- ! Acid addition, degasification, and repressurization is not required.
- ! Ease of operation; highly reliable.
- ! Lower initial cost; resins will not wear out with regular regeneration.
- ! Effective; widely used.
- ! Suitable for small and large installations.
- ! Variety of specific resins are available for removing specific contaminants.

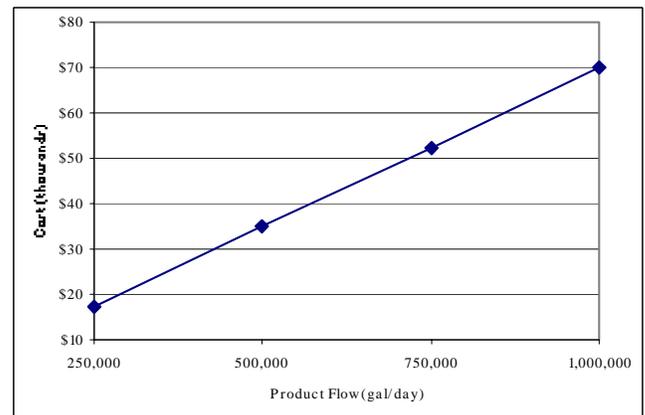
#### Disadvantages -

- ! Pretreatment lime softening may be required.
- ! Requires salt storage; regular regeneration.
- ! Strongly basic anion resins are susceptible to organic fouling; reduced life; thermodynamically unstable.
- ! Concentrate disposal.
- ! Usually not feasible with high levels of TDS.
- ! Resins are sensitive to the presence of competing ions.

**BAT Equipment Cost\***



**BAT Annual O&M Cost\***



\*Refer to Cost Assumptions Fact Sheet. Does not include general sitework, building, external pumps/piping, pretreatment, or off-site sludge disposal.

### 3C. Reverse Osmosis:

**Process** - RO is a physical process in which contaminants are removed by applying pressure on the feed water to direct it through a semipermeable membrane. The process is the "reverse" of natural osmosis (water diffusion from dilute to concentrated through a semipermeable membrane to equalize ion concentration) as a result of the applied pressure to the concentrated side of the membrane, which overcomes the natural osmotic pressure. RO membranes reject ions based on size and electrical charge. The raw water is typically called feed; the product water is called permeate; and the concentrated reject is called concentrate. Common RO membrane materials include asymmetric cellulose acetate or polyamide thin film composite. Common membrane construction includes spiral wound or hollow fine fiber. Each material and construction method has specific benefits and limitations depending upon the raw water characteristics and pretreatment. A typical large RO installation includes a high pressure feed pump, parallel 1st and 2nd stage membrane elements (in pressure vessels); valving; and feed, permeate, and concentrate piping. All materials and construction methods require regular maintenance. Factors influencing membrane selection are cost, recovery, rejection, raw water characteristics, and pretreatment. Factors influencing performance are raw water characteristics, pressure, temperature, and regular monitoring and maintenance.

**Pretreatment** - RO requires a careful review of raw water characteristics and pretreatment needs to prevent membranes from fouling, scaling, or other membrane degradation. Removal of suspended solids is necessary to prevent colloidal and bio-fouling, and removal of dissolved solids is necessary to prevent scaling and chemical attack. Large installation pretreatment can include media filters to remove suspended particles; ion exchange softening or antiscalant to remove hardness; temperature and pH adjustment to maintain efficiency; acid to prevent scaling and membrane damage; activated carbon or bisulfite to remove chlorine (postdisinfection may be required); and cartridge (micro) filters to remove some dissolved particles and any remaining suspended particles.

**Maintenance** - Monitor rejection percentage to ensure Cr removal below MCL. Regular monitoring of membrane performance is necessary to determine fouling, scaling, or other membrane degradation. Use of monitoring equations to track membrane performance is recommended. Acidic or caustic solutions are regularly flushed through the system at high volume/low pressure with a cleaning agent to remove fouling and scaling. The system is flushed and returned to service. NaHSO<sub>3</sub> is a typical caustic cleaner. RO stages are cleaned sequentially. Frequency of membrane replacement dependent on raw water characteristics, pretreatment, and maintenance.

**Waste Disposal** - Pretreatment waste streams, concentrate flows, and spent filters and membrane elements all require approved disposal.

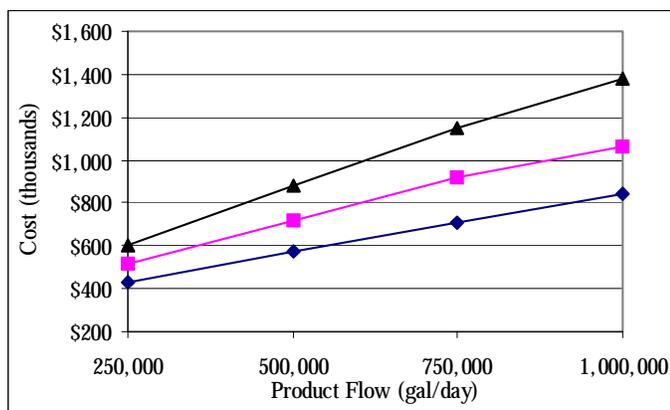
#### Advantages -

- ! Produces highest water quality.
- ! Can effectively treat wide range of dissolved salts and minerals, turbidity, health and aesthetic contaminants, and certain organics; some highly-maintained units are capable of treating biological contaminants.
- ! Low pressure (<100 psi), compact, self-contained, single membrane units are available for small installations.

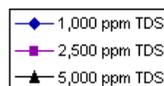
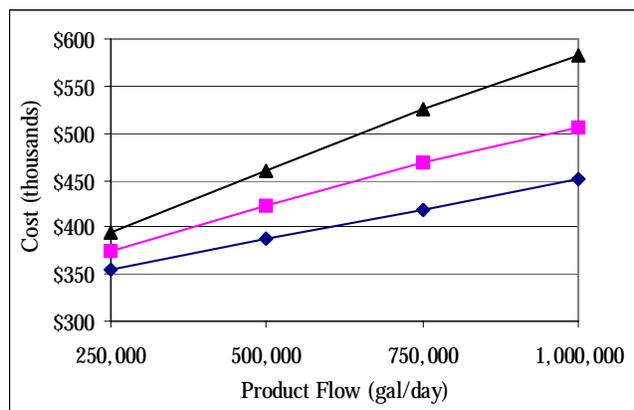
#### Disadvantages -

- ! Relatively expensive to install and operate.
- ! Frequent membrane monitoring and maintenance; monitoring of rejection percentage for Cr removal.
- ! Pressure, temperature, and pH requirements to meet membrane tolerances. May be chemically sensitive.

**BAT Equipment Cost\***



**BAT Annual O&M Cost\***



\*Refer to Cost Assumptions Fact Sheet. Does not include general sitework, building, external pumps/piping, pretreatment, or off-site sludge disposal.

### 3D. Lime Softening:

**Process** - Lime softening uses a chemical addition followed by an upflow SCC to accomplish coagulation, flocculation, and clarification. Chemical addition includes adding  $\text{Ca(OH)}_2$  in sufficient quantity to raise the pH while keeping the levels of alkalinity relatively low, to precipitate carbonate hardness. Heavy metals, like Cr, precipitate as  $\text{Cr(OH)}_2$ . In the upflow SCC, coagulation and flocculation (agglomeration of the suspended material, including Cr, into larger particles), and final clarification occur. In the upflow SCC, the clarified water flows up and over the weirs, while the settled particles are removed by pumping or other collection mechanisms (i.e. filtration).

**Pretreatment** - Jar tests to determine optimum pH and alkalinity for coagulation, and resulting pH and alkalinity adjustment, may be required. Optimum pH is about 10.

**Maintenance** - A routine check of chemical feed equipment is necessary several times during each work period to prevent clogging and equipment wear, and to ensure adequate chemical supply. All pumps, valves, and piping must be regularly checked and cleaned to prevent buildup of carbonate scale, which can cause plugging and malfunction. Similar procedures also apply to the sludge disposal return system, which takes the settled sludge from the bottom of the clarifier and conveys it to the dewatering and disposal processes.

**Waste Disposal** - There are three disposal options for Cr sludges: incineration, landfill, and ocean disposal. Isolation and recovery of the Cr and other economically important materials is also a viable option, however, costs of the isolation and recovery must be compared to the value of the recovered materials.

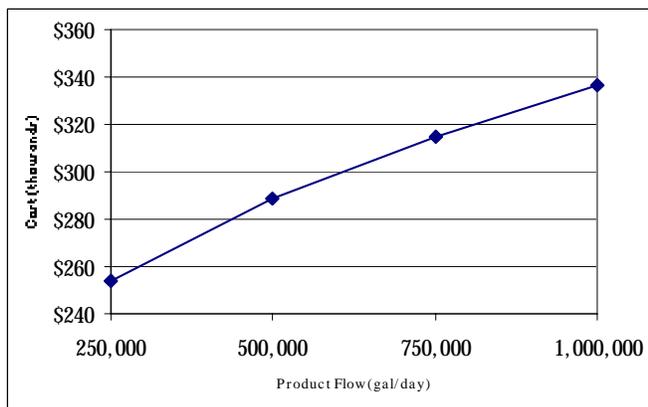
#### Advantages -

- ! Other heavy metals are also precipitated; reduces corrosion of pipes.
- ! Proven and reliable.
- ! Low pretreatment requirements.

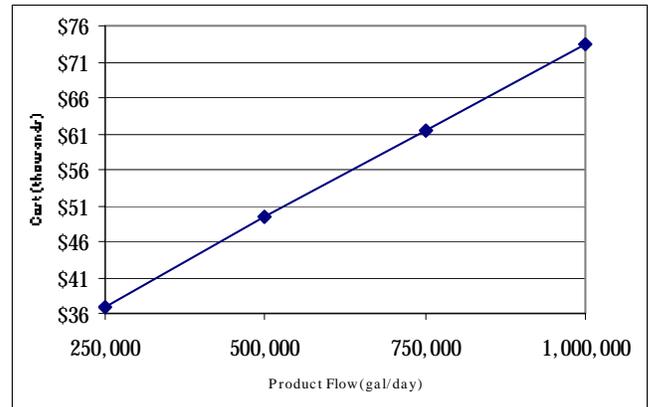
#### Disadvantages -

- ! Excessive insoluble Cr may be formed requiring coagulation and filtration.
- ! Operator care required with chemical handling.
- ! Produces high sludge volume.

**BAT Equipment Cost\***



**BAT Annual O&M Cost\***



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