
**Water quality — Determination of
phosphorus — Ammonium molybdate
spectrometric method**

*Qualité de l'eau — Dosage du phosphore — Méthode spectrométrique
au molybdate d'ammonium*



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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

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The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 6878 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 147, *Water quality*, Subcommittee SC 2, *Physical, chemical and biochemical methods*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 6878:1998), which has been technically revised.

Introduction

This International Standard specifies the determination of different forms of phosphorus compounds present in ground, surface and waste waters in various concentrations in the dissolved and undissolved state.

The user should be aware that particular problems could require the specification of additional marginal conditions.

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WARNING — Persons using this International Standard should be familiar with normal laboratory practice. This International Standard does not purport to address all of the safety problems, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user to establish appropriate safety and health practices and to ensure compliance with any national regulatory conditions. It is absolutely essential that tests conducted according to this International Standard be carried out by suitably qualified staff. Molybdate and antimony waste solutions should be disposed of properly.

1 Scope

This International Standard specifies methods for the determination of

- orthophosphate (see Clause 4);
- orthophosphate after solvent extraction (see Clause 5);
- hydrolysable phosphate plus orthophosphate (see Clause 6);
- total phosphorus after decomposition (see Clauses 7 and 8).

The methods are applicable to all kinds of water including seawater and effluents. Phosphorus concentrations within the range of 0,005 mg/l to 0,8 mg/l may be determined in such samples without dilution.

A solvent extraction procedure allows smaller phosphorus concentrations to be determined with a detection limit of about 0,000 5 mg/l.

2 Interferences

See Annex A for some known interferences. There may be others and it is recommended to verify whether any such interferences exist and take action to eliminate them.

3 Principle

Reaction of orthophosphate ions with an acid solution containing molybdate and antimony ions to form an antimony phosphomolybdate complex.

Reduction of the complex with ascorbic acid to form a strongly coloured molybdenum blue complex. Measurement of the absorbance of this complex to determine the concentration of orthophosphate present.

Polyphosphate and some organophosphorus compounds are determined if converted to molybdate reactive orthophosphate formed by sulfuric acid hydrolysis.

Many organophosphorus compounds are converted to orthophosphate by mineralization with peroxodisulfate. Nitric acid-sulfuric acid mineralization is used if a more vigorous treatment is required.