13.4 Wet Cooling Towers

13.4.1 General[1]

Cooling towers are heat exchangers that are used to dissipate large heat loads to the atmosphere. They are used as an important component in many industrial and commercial processes needing to dissipate heat. Cooling towers may range in size from less than $5.3(10)^6$ kilojoules (kJ) ($5[10]^6$ British thermal units per hour [Btu/hr]) for small air conditioning cooling towers to over $5275(10)^6$ kJ/hr ($5000[10^6]$ Btu/hr) for large power plant cooling towers.

When water is used as the heat transfer medium, wet, or evaporative, cooling towers may be used. Wet cooling towers rely on the latent heat of water evaporation to exchange heat between the process and the air passing through the cooling tower. The cooling water may be an integral part of the process or may provide cooling via heat exchangers.

Although cooling towers can be classified several ways, the primary classification is into dry towers or wet towers, and some hybrid wet-dry combinations exist. Subclassifications can include the draft type and/or the location of the draft relative to the heat transfer medium, the type of heat transfer medium, the relative direction of air movement, and the type of water distribution system.

In wet cooling towers, heat transfer is measured by the decrease in the process temperature and a corresponding increase in both the moisture content and the wet bulb temperature of the air passing through the cooling tower. (There also may be a change in the sensible, or dry bulb, temperature, but its contribution to the heat transfer process is very small and is typically ignored when designing wet cooling towers.) Wet cooling towers typically contain a wetted medium called "fill" to promote evaporation by providing a large surface area and/or by creating many water drops with a large cumulative surface area.

Cooling towers can be categorized by the type of heat transfer; the type of draft and location of the draft, relative to the heat transfer medium; the type of heat transfer medium; the relative direction of air and water contact; and the type of water distribution system. Since wet, or evaporative, cooling towers are the dominant type, and they also generate air pollutants, this section will address only that type of tower. Diagrams of the various tower configurations are shown in Figure 13.4-1 and Figure 13.4-2.

13.4.2 Emissions And Controls[1]

Because wet cooling towers provide direct contact between the cooling water and the air passing through the tower, some of the liquid water may be entrained in the air stream and be carried out of the tower as "drift" droplets. Therefore, the particulate matter constituent of the drift droplets may be classified as an emission.

The magnitude of drift loss is influenced by the number and size of droplets produced within the cooling tower, which in turn are determined by the fill design, the air and water patterns, and other interrelated factors. Tower maintenance and operation levels also can influence the formation of drift droplets. For example, excessive water flow, excessive airflow, and water bypassing the tower drift eliminators can promote and/or increase drift emissions.

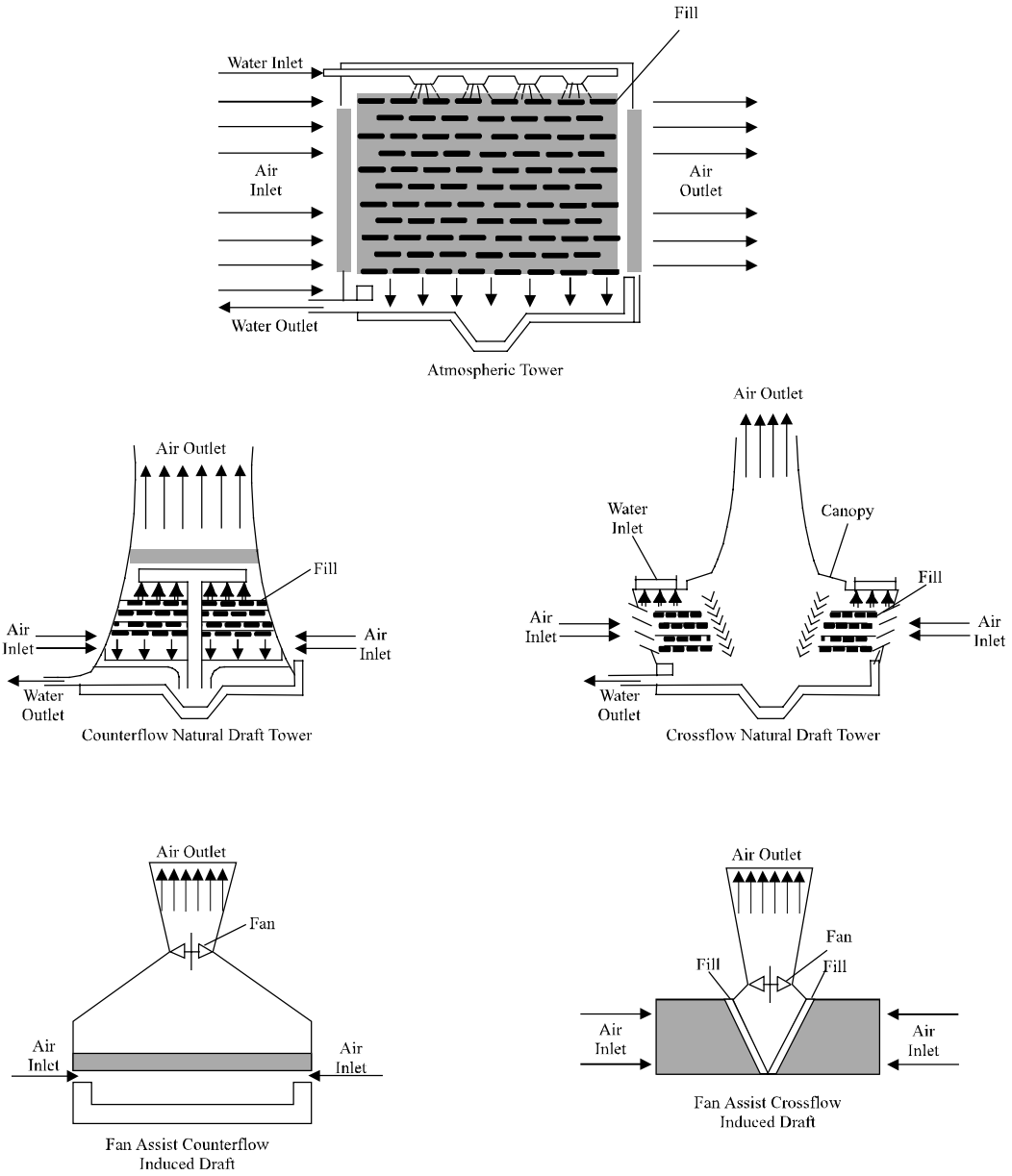

Figure 13.4-1 Atmospheric and natural draft cooling towers.

Because the drift droplets generally contain the same chemical impurities as the water circulating through the tower, these impurities can be converted to airborne emissions. Large drift droplets settle out of the tower exhaust air stream and deposit near the tower. This process can lead to wetting, icing, salt deposition, and related problems such as damage to equipment or to vegetation. Other drift droplets may evaporate before being deposited in the area surrounding the tower, and they also can produce PM-10 emissions. PM-10 is generated when the drift droplets evaporate and leave fine particulate matter formed by crystallization of dissolved solids. Dissolved solids found in cooling tower drift can consist of mineral matter, chemicals for corrosion inhibition, etc.

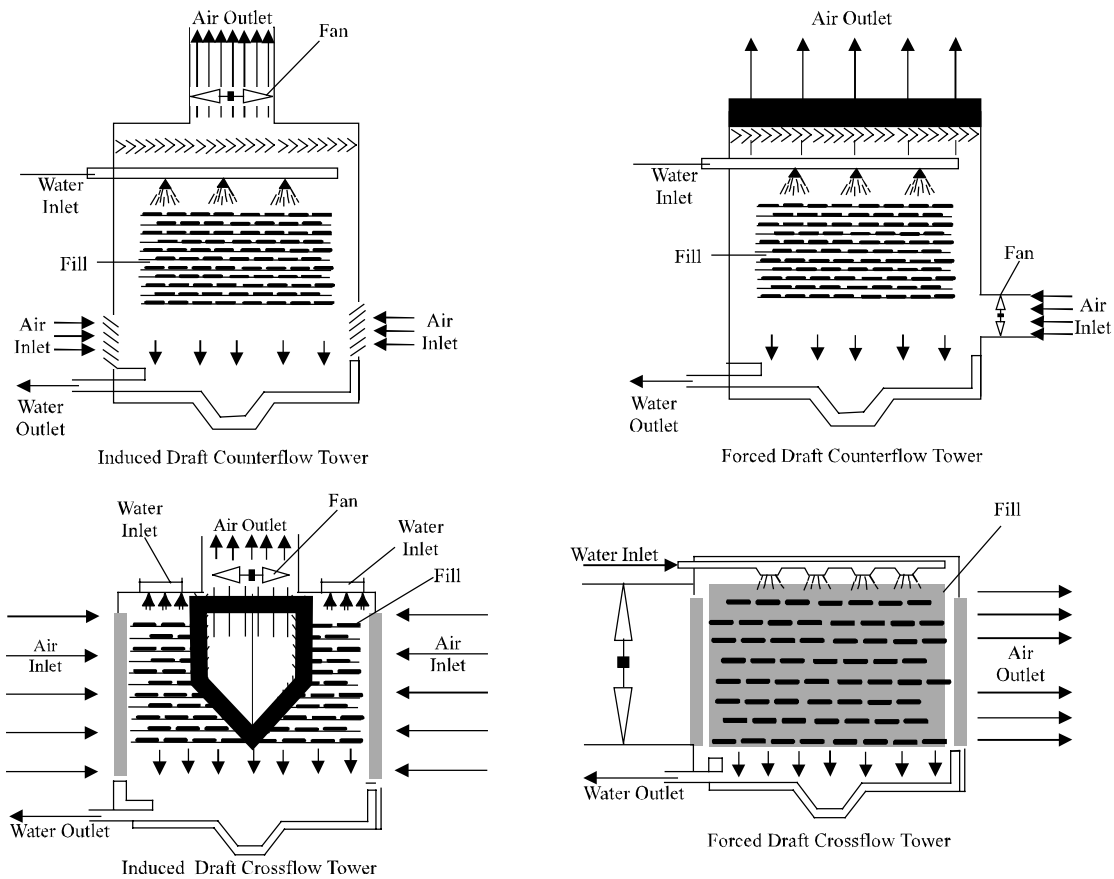

Figure 13.4-2. Mechanical draft cooling towers.

To reduce the drift from cooling towers, drift eliminators are usually incorporated into the tower design to remove as many droplets as practical from the air stream before exiting the tower. The drift eliminators used in cooling towers rely on inertial separation caused by direction changes while passing through the eliminators. Types of drift eliminator configurations include herringbone (blade-type), wave form, and cellular (or honeycomb) designs. The cellular units generally are the most efficient. Drift eliminators may include various materials, such as ceramics, fiber reinforced cement, fiberglass, metal, plastic, and wood installed or formed into closely spaced slats, sheets, honeycomb assemblies, or tiles. The materials may include other features, such as corrugations and water removal channels, to enhance the drift removal further.

Table 13.4-1 provides available particulate emission factors for wet cooling towers. Separate emission factors are given for induced draft and natural draft cooling towers. Several features in Table 13.4-1 should be noted. First, a *conservatively high* PM-10 emission factor can be obtained by (a) multiplying the total liquid drift factor by the total dissolved solids (TDS) fraction in the circulating water and (b) assuming that, once the water evaporates, all remaining solid particles are within the PM-10 size range.

Second, if TDS data for the cooling tower are not available, a source-specific TDS content can be estimated by obtaining the TDS data for the make-up water and multiplying them by the cooling tower cycles of concentration. The cycles of concentration ratio is the ratio of a measured

Table 13.4-1 (Metric And English Units). PARTICULATE EMISSIONS FACTORS FOR WET COOLING TOWERS[a]

Tower Type[d]	Total Liquid Drift[b]				PM-10[c]		
	Circulating Water Flow[b]	g/daL	lb/10^3 gal	EMISSION FACTOR RATING	g/daL[e]	lb/10^3 gal	EMISSION FACTOR RATING
Induced Draft (SCC 3-85-001-01, 3-85-001-20, 3-85-002-01)	0.020	2.0	1.7	D	0.023	0.019	E
Natural Draft (SCC 3-85-001-02, 3-85-002-02)	0.00088	0.088	0.073	E	ND	ND	—

[a] References 1-17. Numbers are given to 2 significant digits. ND = no data. SCC = Source Classification Code.

[b] References 2,5-7,9-10,12-13,15-16. Total liquid drift is water droplets entrained in the cooling tower exit air stream. Factors are for % of circulating water flow (10^{-2} L drift/L [10^{-2} gal drift/gal] water flow) and g drift/daL (lb drift/10^3 gal) circulating water flow. 0.12 g/daL = 0.1 lb/10^3 gal; 1 daL = 10^1 L.

[c] See discussion in text on how to use the table to obtain PM-10 emission estimates. Values shown above are the arithmetic average of test results from References 2,4,8, and 11-14, and they imply an effective TDS content of approximately 12,000 parts per million (ppm) in the circulating water.

[d] See Figure 13.4-1 and Figure 13.4-2. Additional SCCs for wet cooling towers of unspecified draft type are 3-85-001-10 and 3-85-002-10.

[e] Expressed as g PM-10/daL (lb PM-10/10^3 gal) circulating water flow.

parameter for the cooling tower water (such as conductivity, calcium, chlorides, or phosphate) to that parameter for the make-up water. This estimated cooling tower TDS can be used to calculate the PM-10 emission factor as above. If neither of these methods can be used, the arithmetic average PM-10 factor given in Table 13.4-1 can be used. Table 13.4-1 presents the arithmetic average PM-10 factor calculated from the test data in References 2, 4, 8, and 11 - 14. Note that this average corresponds to an effective cooling tower recirculating water TDS content of approximately 11,500 ppm for induced draft towers. (This can be found by dividing the total liquid drift factor into the PM-10 factor.)

As an alternative approach, if TDS data are unavailable for an induced draft tower, a value may be selected from Table 13.4-2 and then be combined with the total liquid drift factor in Table 13.4-1 to determine an apparent PM-10 factor.

As shown in Table 13.4-2, available data do not suggest that there is any significant difference between TDS levels in counter and cross flow towers. Data for natural draft towers are not available.

Table 13.4-2. SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR TOTAL DISSOLVED SOLIDS (TDS) CONTENT IN CIRCULATING WATER[a]

Type Of Draft	No. Of Cases	Range Of TDS Values (ppm)	Geometric Mean TDS Value (ppm)
Counter Flow	10	3700 - 55,000	18,500
Cross Flow	7	380 - 91,000	24,000
Overall[b]	17	380 - 91,000	20,600

[a] References 2,4,8,11-14.
[b] Data unavailable for natural draft towers.

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