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British Standard

# Water cooling towers

Part 3. Code of practice for thermal and functional design

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Tours de refroidissement par l'eau

Partie 3. Conception thermique et fonctionnelle — Code de bonne pratique

Wasserkühltürme

Teil 3. Leitfaden für die Bemessung unter thermischen und funktionalen Gesichtspunkten

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## Foreword

This Part of BS 4485, which has been prepared under the direction of the Civil Engineering and Building Standards Committee, deals with the thermal and functional design of natural draught, mechanical draught and factory prefabricated cooling towers. This Part of BS 4485 is a revision of BS 4485 : Part 3 : 1977, together with its Addendum No. 1 (1978) both of which are withdrawn. In this revision the following principal changes have been made.

- (a) The guidelines on water treatment have been expanded as these were not considered sufficient for good operating practice.
- (b) Reference has been made to the potential health hazard arising from the bacterial population of cooling towers, as it relates to the design of the towers. However, operational techniques for control in this area are outside the scope of this Part of BS 4485.
- (c) Factory prefabricated cooling towers previously dealt with in Addendum No. 1 to BS 4485 : Part 3 : 1977 have been covered by suitable modification of the main text of this Part of BS 4485.
- (d) Information to be supplied by the purchaser and the manufacturer, which was included in Addendum No. 1 to BS 4485 : Part 3 : 1977, now appears as appendix A in this Part of BS 4485 as it is considered relevant to all types of cooling towers.
- (e) Materials of construction have been omitted as these are dealt with in BS 4485 : Part 4\*.
- (f) A new clause on maintenance has been added which was in Addendum No. 1 to BS 4485 : Part 3 : 1977.

This Part of BS 4485 provides information on design principles, siting and spacing. Guidance is given on specific thermal and hydraulic requirements, on mechanical equipment and on environmental aspects such as discharge into rivers and cooling tower noise.

The other Parts of BS 4485 are as follows.

Part 1 Glossary of terms

Part 2 Methods for performance testing

Part 4 Structural design of cooling towers

Where necessary, definitions have been included in the revisions of BS 4485 : Parts 2, 3 and 4 so that when they have all been published BS 4485 : Part 1 can be withdrawn.

**Compliance with a British Standard does not of itself confer immunity from legal obligations.**

# Contents

	Page		Page
Foreword	Inside front cover	<b>Tables</b>	
Committees responsible	Back cover	1 Symbols and units	2
<b>Code of practice</b>		2 Standard reference sheet for physical dimensions	11
1 Scope	2	3 Addition of decibels	44
2 Symbols and units	2	4 Typical corrections to obtain octave band spectra for various fan types	45
3 Thermal design principles	4	5 Tower noise calculation	47
3.1 Cooling process	4	<b>Figures</b>	
3.2 Heat transfer diagram for counterflow conditions	6	1 Air-water flow paths in crossflow, counterflow and mixed flow towers	5
3.3 Crossflow tower calculation	9	2 Conditions of air and water in a cooling tower	6
3.4 Natural draught tower calculations	9	3 Heat transfer diagram	6
4 Types of cooling tower and their relative merits	9	4 Demand and characteristic curves	7
4.1 General	9	5 Performance curves for mechanical draught tower	8
4.2 Natural draught towers	11	6 Performance curves for natural draught tower	8
4.3 Mechanical draught towers	11	7 Illustrations of basic types of cooling tower	10
5 Siting, spacing and environmental considerations	13	8 Spacing	14
5.1 General	13	9 Screen dry bulb and wet bulb isotherms for the UK for temperatures exceeded for the stated percentage of hours during June to September: period 1964-70	18
5.2 Siting	13	10 Mechanical draught counterflow tower: variation of tower size with cooling range, approach and wet bulb temperature	20
5.3 Spacing	13	11 Natural draught tower: variation of duty factor with cooling range, approach and wet bulb temperature (at constant 70 % r.h.)	21
5.4 Environmental considerations	13	12 Natural draught tower: variation of base diameter with circulating water flow corrected for duty factor	22
6 Guidance on specified operational requirements	17	13 Drift eliminators	24
6.1 Selection of design conditions (including probability curves)	17	14 Basic recirculation allowance	25
6.2 Guidance on the effect of variations of parameters	20	15 Correction for cooling range and approach at 17 °C wet bulb temperature	26
7 General thermal design	23	16 Effect of altitude on heat transfer diagram	26
7.1 Packings	23	17 Natural draught tower: water distribution	28
7.2 Drift eliminators	23	18 Mechanical draught tower: water distribution	29
7.3 Recirculation	25	19 Variation in evaporation losses with ambient conditions	30
7.4 Effect of altitude	26	20 Purge, make-up and evaporation quantity balance	31
8 Hydraulic requirements of cooling towers	27	21 Relation between purge ratio and concentration factor	31
8.1 Water distribution	27	22 Pond characteristic	33
8.2 Water losses	30	23 Anti-icing arrangements	36
8.3 Cold water basin design	32	24 Effect of salinity on heat transfer diagram	38
8.4 Water quality	34	25 Typical arrangement for induced draught fan drive assembly	39
8.5 Design for winter operation	35	26 Attenuation for distance from source	46
8.6 Use of saline water	37	27 Directivity correction	46
8.7 Effect of salinity on heat transfer	37		
9 Mechanical equipment	38		
9.1 Fans	38		
9.2 Gearboxes	38		
9.3 Drive shafts and couplings	39		
9.4 Fan drivers	40		
9.5 Supports for mechanical equipment	40		
9.6 Vibration cut-out switches	40		
9.7 Keys and keyways	40		
10 Safety precautions	40		
10.1 General	40		
10.2 Mechanical plant	40		
10.3 Electrical plant	40		
10.4 Access	40		
10.5 Fire precautions	41		
11 Maintenance	41		
<b>Appendices</b>			
A Enquiry and suggested tender information for cooling			
B Evaluation			

# Code of practice

## 1 Scope

This Part of BS 4485 gives recommendations for the thermal and functional design of industrial and natural draught water cooling towers and factory prefabricated cooling towers.

NOTE. The titles of the publications referred to in this standard are listed on the inside back cover.

## 2 Symbols and units

For the purposes of this Part of BS 4485, the symbols and units given in table 1 apply.

**Table 1. Symbols and units**

Symbol	Quantity	Unit
$a$	Area of effective transfer surface per unit of tower packing volume	$\text{m}^2/\text{m}^3$
$A_s$	Area of sound propagation	$\text{m}^2$
$A_p$	Total packing area normal to air flow	$\text{m}^2$
$B$	Width or length dimensions perpendicular to tower axis	$\text{m}$
$c$	Specific heat capacity of water	$\text{kJ}/(\text{kg}\cdot\text{K})$
$C$	Concentration factor at equilibrium	
$C_T$	Concentration factor at time $T$	
$C_1$	Original make-up concentration of impurities	%
$C_2$	Stable state concentration of impurities in circulating system under continuous purge	%
$D$	Diameter	$\text{m}$
$g$	Acceleration due to gravity	
$G$	Mass flow of dry air per unit plan area of packing	$\text{kg}/(\text{m}^2\cdot\text{s})$
$h$	Enthalpy* of air-water vapour mixture	$\text{kJ}/\text{kg}$
$h_m$	Mean driving force	$\text{kJ}/\text{kg}$
$h_G$	Enthalpy* of air-water vapour mixture passing through the packing	$\text{kJ}/\text{kg}$
$h_L$	Enthalpy* of saturated air film in contact with and at the temperature of the water passing through the packing	$\text{kJ}/\text{kg}$
$H$	Height (vertical distance above or below basin kerb level)	$\text{m}$
$H_e$	Effective height of shell, normally taken as height from middle of packing to top of shell	$\text{m}$
$K$	Coefficient of mass transfer defined in terms of difference in absolute humidity	$\text{kg}/[\text{m}^2\cdot\text{s}\cdot(\text{kg}/\text{kg})]$
$L$	Mass water flow per unit plan area of packing	$\text{kg}/(\text{m}^2\cdot\text{s})$
$m_1$	Mass of solute	$\text{kg}$
$m_2$	Mass of solvent	$\text{kg}$
$M_1$	Relative molecular mass of solute	
$M_2$	Relative molecular mass of solvent	
$n$	Mole fraction of solvent	
$N$	Number of velocity heads representing the system resistance	
$p$	Total pressure	$\text{Pa}$
$p_2$	Vapour pressure of pure solvent	$\text{Pa}$
$p_3$	Vapour pressure of solution	$\text{Pa}$
$P_s$	Sound pressure	$\text{N}/\text{m}^2$
$P_0$	Sound pressure reference datum	$\text{N}/\text{m}^2$
$Q_1$	Circulating water flow	$\text{m}^3/\text{s}$
$R$	Surface radius from sound source	$\text{m}$

\* All enthalpies relate to 1 kg dry air and associated water vapour.

Table 1 (concluded)

Symbol	Quantity	Unit
$S_w$	Sound power level reading at a point source	dB
$S_p$	Sound pressure level reading some specified distance away from the source	dB
$T$	Time	h
$t_b$	Temperature of water with which boundary vapour is associated	°C
$t_m$	Mean water temperature	°C
$t_{DB}$	Dry bulb temperature	°C
$t_E$	Temperature of mixture of recooled water and make-up leaving cold water basin	°C
$t_{WB}$	Wet bulb temperature	°C
$t_1$	Hot water temperature at inlet	°C
$t_2$	Recooled water temperature	°C
$V$	Effective packing volume per unit area of packing	m <sup>3</sup> /m <sup>2</sup>
$V_b$	Volume in cold water basin	m <sup>3</sup>
$v_e$	Evaporation rate	m <sup>3</sup> /h
$v_p$	Purge rate	m <sup>3</sup> /h
$V_s$	Volume in system excluding pond	m <sup>3</sup>
$w_1$	Atmospheric moisture content of ambient air condition	kg/kg
$w_2$	Atmospheric moisture content at mean water temperature saturated conditions	kg/kg
$W_d$	Fan driver power	kW
$W_o$	Sound power threshold	W
$W_s$	Sound power	W
$x$	Pond surface area	m <sup>2</sup>
$X$	Spacing	m
$\rho$	Density of air	kg/m <sup>3</sup>
$\Delta h$	Change in air enthalpy	kJ/kg
$\Delta t$	Cooling range	K
$\Delta \rho$	Change in air density	kg/m <sup>3</sup>
	Approach	K
	Power	W
$KaV/L$	Tower characteristic	
$L/G$	Water/air ratio	

### 3 Thermal design principles

#### 3.1 Cooling process

A water cooling tower is a heat exchanger in which warm water falls gravitationally through a cooler current of air. Heat is transferred from the water to the air in two ways:

- (a) by evaporation as latent heat of water vapour;
- (b) by sensible heat in warming the air current in its passage through the tower.

As a general measure, about 80 % of the cooling occurs by evaporation and about 20 % by sensible heat transfer.

The transfer of heat is effected from the water through the boundary film of saturated air in contact with the water surface. This air is saturated at the water temperature.

From this saturated air film, heat transfer occurs to the general mass of air flowing through the tower.

In the interests of efficiency, it is essential that both the area of water surface in contact with the air and the time of contact be as great as possible. This may be achieved either by forming a large number of water droplets as repetitive splash effects in one basic kind of tower packing, or by leading the water in a thin film over lengthy surfaces.

Air flow is achieved either by reliance on wind effects, by thermal draught or by mechanical means. The direction of air travel may be opposed to the direction of water flow giving counterflow conditions, or may be at right angles to the flow of water giving crossflow conditions. Although the methods of analysis may be different for counterflow and crossflow conditions, the fundamental heat transfer process is the same in both cases. In some designs mixed flow conditions exist. These patterns of flow are illustrated in figure 1.

Present cooling tower technology relies on the fact that, with acceptable error, the effects of evaporative and sensible heat transfer can be combined into one dependent on enthalpy difference. The difference concerned is that between the enthalpy of the film of air surrounding the water surface (taken to be at water temperature) and the enthalpy of the general mass of air flowing through the tower. This enthalpy difference varies according to the point of measurement in the tower, but at all points it provides the enthalpy potential or driving force for the heat transfer.

The so-called combined transfer theory depends upon certain approximations, which are reasonable at normal cooling water temperatures and particularly when the characteristics of the packing have been determined in accordance with the theory. However, the approximations become progressively less valid with increasing water temperature and a more exact analysis should be adopted in applications where the mean water temperature exceeds 35 °C.

The air and air-water film conditions, in passage through the tower, may be illustrated on a psychrometric chart as shown in figure 2. The cooling range of the tower corresponds to the difference in temperature of the air-water film between entry to and exit from the tower.

Air enters the tower having wet and dry bulb characteristics dependent on the ambient conditions. It is generally in an unsaturated state and achieves near-saturation in passing through the tower. It may be considered saturated at exit in all but very dry climates.

The enthalpy of the entering air is considered, with acceptable error, to be equivalent to the enthalpy of air saturated at the wet bulb temperature. For the purposes of enthalpy differences in heat transfer, only the wet bulb temperature of the ambient air is therefore of significance.

The dry bulb temperature has, however, to be considered for draught assessment purposes in those towers whose air flow relies on thermally created draught. The thermal draught is defined by the change of density of the air between entry to and exit from the cooling tower multiplied by the effective shell height, and the dry bulb temperature as well as the wet bulb temperature is of significance in determining the density of ambient air.

The theoretical limit to which the water may be cooled is that of the ambient wet bulb temperature. This could only be achieved with an infinitely large tower and, in practice, the terminal or recooled water temperature has some approach to the wet bulb temperature. This approach may vary from about 3 K in rigorous chemical plant cooling to 10 K or above in easier conditions. The approach is fixed only at design air conditions and increases or decreases as ambient conditions vary from cold to warm, respectively, about the design point.