

Troubleshooting Guide

Oil Water Separator

Symptom	Potential Cause	Possible Solution
Water is collecting in product tank.	Oil water separator may not be level causing water to spill into the skimmer tube.	Check level of oil water separator and adjust if necessary.
	Skimmer tube is not adjusted properly.	Check position of skimmer tube ensure that tube is rotated so the skimming slot allows at least 1-2" of oil to collect before spilling over into the oil tank.
	Skimmer tube is cracked or leaking.	Check that skimmer tube is not cracked, replace if necessary.
	Separator can be full of sludge on the bottom restricting water flow through to the clean water reservoir.	Check for dirt buildup in bottom. Drain and clean separator if necessary.
Oil is collecting on the clean water side.	Oil water separator may be operating outside of design parameters.	Check that specific gravity of product and flow rate of separator match site-specific design print out for oil water separator. This can be found in the oil water separator section of your OEM manual or submittal package.
	Oil water separator was not primed with clean water on startup and large amounts of product were initially pumped into separator contaminating the clean water sections.	Drain separator, clean separator and media, and fill with clean water before proceeding.
	Silt can build up in the bottom of the separator restricting volume capacity and flow through media.	Inspect bottom of separator and inside of media. Drain and clean separator and clean or replace media if plugged or restricted.
	Inlet side of separator can have excessive amounts of oil on the top layer. This will reduce effective capacity of oil water separator.	Check level of oil collected in inlet side of separator. Adjust skimmer if required. Re-prime separator so only 1-2" of product remains on the top of the separator.
	Biological bacteria is suspending product in high-density mucus like collections that are passing through the separator.	Check for signs of bacteria in the inlet side of the separator. Contact MAE ² to discuss solutions to eliminating biological suspension.
	Product may be made up of two different components. The component breaking through may have a different density from what the separator was designed for.	Collect a sample of what is breaking through and confirm that it has the same properties as the product collecting on the inlet side.
	Oil storage tank may be fill and high-level alarm not working properly. This will back the product up and fill the inlet side of the separator with product until the product passes under the lower weir and collects in the clean-water side.	Check product storage tank and ensure that level switch is working properly and that tank has not overfilled.

continued

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Symptom	Potential Cause	Possible Solution
Oil and water is building up on inlet side but is not passing through separator and collecting in the clean water side.	Sludge and dirt may have built up on floor of separator preventing the water from passing by the lower weir.	Check for dirt buildup on bottom of separator. Drain and clean if necessary.
	Oil Water interface may be too low indicating that the separator has insufficient water to properly separate.	Fill the separator with clean water allowing water to collect in the inlet side forcing the oil water interface level to rise up too about 1-2" below the skimmer level.
	Only product is being pumped into inlet of separator.	If water is not present in sample entering the separator then it will not collect in the clean water side.
Water is in the oil outlet.	Skimmer opening is below the oil/water interface.	Adjust skimmer alignment to allow more oil to collect before skimming.
Oil is making its way to the outlet.	Water flow rate is too high.	Reduce flow rate through system.
	Filter media is plugged.	Replace or clean media.
	Oil discharge is plugged backing up OWS.	Drain oil down stream of skimmer.

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