

Technical Reference Section: pH/ORP

Standard versus Differential pH/ORP Electrodes:

+GF+ SIGNET offers what is called combination pH/ORP electrodes; that is, there is a combination of three or four electrodes built into one common body that measures the pH or ORP of the solutions. These electrodes are the pH/ORP sensing element, temperature sensing element (pH only), the reference, and sometimes a solution ground. An electrical path between the process solution, reference electrode, and the pH/ORP sensing electrode must always be present to complete the measuring circuit. When the circuit is broken or interrupted, the result is a faulty reading. There are only a few things in a chemical process that would affect the glass-sensing element. These include concentrations of HF, constant high temperatures, and particles that can break the glass.

On the other hand, there are many problems that can occur with the reference electrode. The reference silver chloride sensing element (wire) is exposed to the process liquid via the primary porous reference junction, which is in constant contact with the process and allows liquid to pass through to the reference electrolyte. Because of the direct contact with the process liquid, the reference electrolyte and reference silver chloride sensing element can react with chemicals in the process. Many application liquids do not chemically react with the reference and therefore a standard electrode will perform well in this scenario. However, there are other process chemicals that will easily attack the reference and therefore, a differential style electrode should be used. There are three advantages of the differential electrode:

1. If the process chemicals attack the KCl electrolyte, the reference electrolyte chamber is refillable.
2. If the reference junction becomes clogged by chemical reactions between the KCl and the process chemicals, the reference salt bridge is replaceable.
3. If there are stray currents or if there are process chemicals that attack the silver chloride wire in the standard electrodes, it will not attack it in the differential electrode because the wire is encased in a glass electrode.

A general rule of thumb is to use a differential electrode if you have mercury, copper, lead, chlorate, bromine, iodine, cyanide, or sulfide compounds in the process liquid. Differential electrodes may also be useful in processes that have oil, grease, and dirt that builds up on the reference junction because it is easily replaced.

See Model 2764-2767 Differential pH/ORP catalog pages for more information on standard versus differential electrodes.