

# Prediction of H<sub>2</sub>S production rate in sewer systems using the Z model: a case study in Dehloran city, Iran

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## ABSTRACT

Modeling of H<sub>2</sub>S buildup in sewers is performed due to the health problems associated with the high concentration of H<sub>2</sub>S, destruction of non-resistant structures in corrosion processes, and high costs of repairing corroded concrete sewer pipes. This analytical study aimed to predict the risk of H<sub>2</sub>S production in the sewage collection network of Dehloran city, Iran using the Z model. In total, 11 main sewage lines with various diameters were selected for wastewater sampling. For each pipeline, two samples per month were collected and processed for the analysis of various parameters in order to determine the H<sub>2</sub>S production based on the Z value. Biochemical oxygen demand, chemical oxygen demand, and SO<sub>4</sub><sup>2-</sup> values in warm seasons were 117, 291, and 251 mg/l, while they were 101, 247, and 234 mg/l in cold seasons, respectively. In all the samples, the Z value was >13,000. In addition, the Z level was higher in warm seasons (Z value in guaranteed H<sub>2</sub>S production category) compared to cold seasons (Z value in a large possibility of H<sub>2</sub>S production category), which could be due to the high temperature and anaerobic decomposition of organic matter in summer. A significant correlation was also observed between the Z value in different seasons and various diameters of the sewers. Considering the high risk of H<sub>2</sub>S production, it is recommended that proper scheming and planning be performed to eliminate this gas and prevent corrosion.

**Keywords:** Sewage Collection Network, Hydrogen Sulfide, Z Model

## Introduction

In sewerage, total sulfide is present in three forms, including dissolved sulfide, metal sulfide, and elemental sulfur. Due to their precipitate form, metal sulfide and elemental sulfur are not involved in H<sub>2</sub>S production, while dissolved sulfide participates in H<sub>2</sub>S production. Total dissolved sulfide is the composition of sulfide, mono-hydrogen sulfide, and hydrogen sulfide.<sup>1</sup>

H<sub>2</sub>S is a putrid gas with the characteristic odor of rotten eggs.<sup>2, 3</sup> This colorless, water-soluble gas is detrimental and generally exists in

wastewater collection lines and sediment deposits, possessing various deteriorating properties, such as toxicity, corrosivity, flammability, and explosivity.<sup>4</sup> The threshold odor limit of H<sub>2</sub>S is extremely low (0.011 mg/m<sup>3</sup>), so that it causes bronchial constriction in asthmatic patients at the concentration 2.8 mg/m<sup>3</sup> and expanded eye complaints at 5 ppm. H<sub>2</sub>S level of more than 140 mg/m<sup>3</sup> could cause olfactory paralysis, while an increased concentration of 560 mg/m<sup>3</sup> leads to respiratory distress. Furthermore, exposure to H<sub>2</sub>S concentrations of greater than 700 mg/m<sup>3</sup> may be fatal.<sup>5</sup>

In sewerage mechanism, the transformation process links with sulfide levels include the generation, oxidation, emission, and precipitation of sulphide.<sup>1</sup> In partially filled gravity sewer pipelines, the generated H<sub>2</sub>S is

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emitted to the gas phase by diffusion into the thin liquid film and absorption in the condensation layer of the exposed pipe surface.<sup>2, 6, 7</sup> In the next stage, the generation of  $H_2SO_4$  occurs through biological and chemical oxidation, thereby subjecting pipeline structures to attacks by the interactions with corrodible compounds.<sup>6, 7</sup>

Hydrogen sulfide fate is defined as the precipitation of metal sulfides in wastewater due to the presence of metals such as copper, lead, and iron.<sup>7</sup> Several factors control the sewer process, including the wastewater flow, hydraulic retention times, turbulence, type of sewer pipes (pressurized/gravity), temperature, sewerage structure (shape and slope), wastewater quality, and properties of the biochemical processes occurring in wastewater.<sup>1, 6</sup>

In gravity lines, sulfides are generated under anaerobic conditions in large-diameter pipes through slow-moving processes at high temperatures and high residence times.<sup>4, 6, 8-10</sup> Evidence suggests that  $H_2S$  concentrations have increased to approximately 300 mg/m in gravity sewers.<sup>3, 7</sup>

Corrosion in the sewer network is considered to be a notorious challenge in sewer management across the world, which is associated with the great costs of sewage network repair.<sup>11, 12</sup> In a study, Nadafi et al. stated that corrosion effects were minimal at the  $H_2S$  concentrations of less than 0.005 ppm,<sup>13</sup> and total sulfide concentration of 0.1-0.5 mg/l led to the slight corrosion of concrete.<sup>2, 7</sup> Reports have indicated that the hydrogen sulfide level of >2 ppm is needed for severe concrete corrosion in the presence of high dissolved oxygen and relative humidity.<sup>6, 14</sup> Additionally, the powerful corrosion rates in the  $H_2S$  concentrations of 5-10 ppm have a great potential to occur.<sup>15</sup> Repair and maintenance of corroded pipes account for 10% of the costs of wastewater treatment.<sup>7</sup>

Sewer gas seeping is potentially toxic to the environment and causes health hazards to the community, especially sewer workers, who could be affected by breathing difficulties, eye and skin irritation, and even death.<sup>1, 9</sup> Exposure to  $H_2S$  in concentrations range of 100-200 ppm

causes problems in the eyesight, coughing, and sense of smell within 2-15 minutes, as well as dizziness after 14-30 minutes.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, sewage effluent containing extreme sulfide contents is toxic to aquatic organisms, such as the fish.<sup>4</sup> Using chemical additives to limit  $H_2S$  production is one of the main sulfide control strategies, which is a costly technology.<sup>11, 16</sup>

Accurate and reliable predictions of sulfide generation is of paramount importance in the proper management of sewers, which affects the estimation of the dosages of chemicals, adoption of appropriate control strategies, design of gas treatment units, and evaluation of the overall service life of sewer pipes; therefore, such predictions are essential to the recognition of  $H_2S$  production routes.<sup>9, 12, 14</sup> Estimation of  $H_2S$  buildup in wastewater networks was first carried out in the 1950s.

Several empirical predictive models have been proposed for sulfide formation by various researchers, including Boon and Lister (1975), Pomeroy (1959), Pomeroy and Parkhurst (1977), and Thistlethwaite (1971).<sup>14, 10</sup> The mentioned empirical models have limitations in describing sulfide production. Among these models, the Z formula is considered to be more applicable and has been developed to analyze the variations during diurnal equilibrium. The testing of this model has yielded promising results about the concentration of hydrogen sulfide.<sup>10</sup>

The Z model for  $H_2S$  formation is affected by several parameters, such as wastewater discharge, concentrations of organic matters, and temperature. The present study aimed to apply the Z formula to investigate the risk of hydrogen sulfide production from municipal sewage conveyance systems in Dehloran city, located in Ilam, Iran.<sup>3</sup>

## Materials and Methods

### Overview of Study Region

Dehloran city is located in the southwest of Iran in Ilam province, covering an area of 6,674 square kilometers. This city is situated in a warm and dry climate.

The maximum and minimum temperatures are recorded to be 1 and 50.6 °C, respectively. Gravity lines are used in the sewer systems of

Dehloran to collect and transport wastewater. The city has only one hospital, the sewage of which is treated in a private wastewater treatment plant, and the effluent is discharged into the urban sewerage transfer network. In addition, Dehloran has a slaughterhouse located outside the city, and the slaughterhouse wastewater does not enter the sewer system. It is notable that Dehloran has no other industrial activities, and there are no industrial effluents in the gravity lines that carry wastewater.

**The Z Formula**

One of the objectives of the present study was to predict the risk of H<sub>2</sub>S production based on the Z formula (as described in Equation 1) in the gravity sanitary sewer pipes designed with a different slope.

$$Z = \frac{3 \cdot BOD_5 \cdot 1.07^{(T-20)} \cdot P}{\sqrt{S \cdot Q}} \cdot \frac{P}{b} \tag{1}$$

In Equation 1, *BOD*<sub>5</sub> is the five-day biochemical oxygen demand (g O<sub>2</sub>/m<sup>3</sup>), *Q* represents the wastewater discharge (l/s), *T* denotes the temperature (°C), *B* is the width of the water surface (m), *P* shows the wetted perimeter (m), and *S* represents the pipe slope (o/oo). Arrangement of the production risk of H<sub>2</sub>S in various lower and upper limits for the Z value is presented in Table 1.<sup>10</sup>

Table 1. Risk of H<sub>2</sub>S Production in Gravity Sewers Based on Z Formula

Lower Limit < Z < Upper Limit	Risk Assessment
0 < Z < 5000	No risk
5000 < Z < 10000	Possible H <sub>2</sub> S production
10000 < Z < 25000	The large possibility of H <sub>2</sub> S production
25000 < Z < ∞	Guaranteed H <sub>2</sub> S production

Random sampling was performed twice per month for each pipeline. In total, 132 wastewater samples were collected from 11 sewer pipelines with various diameters, including 400 millimeters (three pipelines), 500 millimeters (three pipelines), 600 millimeters (three pipelines), and 800 millimeters (two

pipelines). Sample collection was performed in warm and cold seasons, and the samples were transferred to the laboratory under standard conditions.

Various parameters were measured, such as the biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), chemical oxygen demand (COD), sulfate, sewage quantity, temperature, sewage height, and pH. Diameters and slopes of the sewers were obtained from the water and wastewater company. With the availability of the sewage height (h) and diameter of the pipes (D), wetted perimeter and surface width could be calculated in millimetres and filling percentage (h/D), respectively.

Data analysis was performed in SPSS using univariate analysis of variance for the basic data. After obtaining the historical data and various parameters from the field sites over a six-month monitoring period, the risk of H<sub>2</sub>S production was specified based on the Z levels.

**Results and Discussion**

The H<sub>2</sub>S emission resulting from very complex physical, biological, and chemical processes leads to problems such as bad odor, corrosion, and adverse health consequences.<sup>1</sup> Table 2 shows the data on the mean values of the measured variables, including wastewater discharge flow rate (Q) (l/s), pipe slope, filling percentage, wetted pipe perimeter, width of the water surface (b), and Z value. Furthermore, Table 2 presents the estimated mean values of all the parameters during the measurement period in the pipes with various diameters.

Reliable modeling of sulfide production in sewer systems provides valuable data for the managers of urban sewer systems.<sup>9</sup> As is shown in Table 1, the Z levels in warm and cold seasons were higher than 13,000 in the pipes with variable diameters (Figure 1). Therefore, it could be inferred that the risk of H<sub>2</sub>S production is higher in warm seasons compared to cold seasons. The risk of H<sub>2</sub>S production was under the ‘guaranteed H<sub>2</sub>S production’ category in warm seasons, while it was under the ‘large possibility of H<sub>2</sub>S production’ category in cold seasons.

Table 2. Estimated Mean Values of Different Parameters, Z Value, and Prediction of H<sub>2</sub>S Production

	Season	Q (l/s)	S (0.00)	h/D	h (mm)	P (m)	b (m)	P/b	Z	H <sub>2</sub> S production risk
D= 400 mm										
Pipeline No. 1	Hot	85	0.006	0.15	60	0.188	0.181	1.038	32284	Guaranteed H <sub>2</sub> S production
	Cold	88	0.006	0.16	64	0.2	0.192	1.042	13751	Large possibility of H <sub>2</sub> S production
Pipeline No. 2	Hot	93	0.0058	0.17	68	0.213	0.203	1.04	31643	Guaranteed H <sub>2</sub> S production
	Cold	91	0.0058	0.17	68	0.213	0.203	1.048	13830	Large possibility of H <sub>2</sub> S production
Pipeline No. 3	Hot	89	0.0056	0.16	64	0.2	0.192	1.041	33113	Guaranteed H <sub>2</sub> S production
	Cold	95	0.0056	0.18	72	0.226	0.214	1.054	13856	Large possibility of H <sub>2</sub> S production
D= 500 mm										
Pipeline No. 4	Hot	85	0.005	0.14	70	0.219	0.212	1.03	34989	Guaranteed H <sub>2</sub> S production
	Cold	90	0.005	0.17	85	0.266	0.254	1.048	14978	Large possibility of H <sub>2</sub> S production
Pipeline No. 5	Hot	91	0.0048	0.17	85	0.266	0.254	1.05	36739	Guaranteed H <sub>2</sub> S production
	Cold	88	0.0048	0.16	80	0.251	0.24	1.042	15374	Large possibility of H <sub>2</sub> S production
Pipeline No. 6	Hot	88	0.0047	0.16	80	0.251	0.24	1.042	36459	Guaranteed H <sub>2</sub> S production
	Cold	90	0.0047	0.18	90	0.282	0.267	1.054	15539	Large possibility of H <sub>2</sub> S production
D= 600 mm										
Pipeline No. 7	Hot	94	0.004	0.17	102	0.32	0.3	1.049	38035	Guaranteed H <sub>2</sub> S production
	Cold	97	0.004	0.18	108	0.339	0.321	1.054	16225	Large possibility of H <sub>2</sub> S production
Pipeline No. 8	Hot	98.5	0.0038	0.19	114	0.357	0.337	1.061	38470	Guaranteed H <sub>2</sub> S production
	Cold	99	0.0038	0.19	114	0.357	0.337	1.061	16581	Large possibility of H <sub>2</sub> S production
Pipeline No. 9	Hot	88.6	0.0037	0.16	96	0.301	0.289	1.041	40471	Guaranteed H <sub>2</sub> S production
	Cold	90	0.0037	0.17	102	0.32	0.305	1.048	17411	Large possibility of H <sub>2</sub> S production
D= 800 mm										
Pipeline No. 10	Hot	155	0.003	0.18	144	0.452	0.428	1.056	34371	Guaranteed H <sub>2</sub> S production
	Cold	162	0.003	0.2	160	0.502	0.47	1.068	14709	Large possibility of H <sub>2</sub> S production
Pipeline No. 11	Hot	156.1	0.0027	0.19	152	0.477	0.449	1.062	36253	Guaranteed H <sub>2</sub> S production
	Cold	157	0.0027	0.19	152	0.477	0.449	1.062	16089	Large possibility of H <sub>2</sub> S production

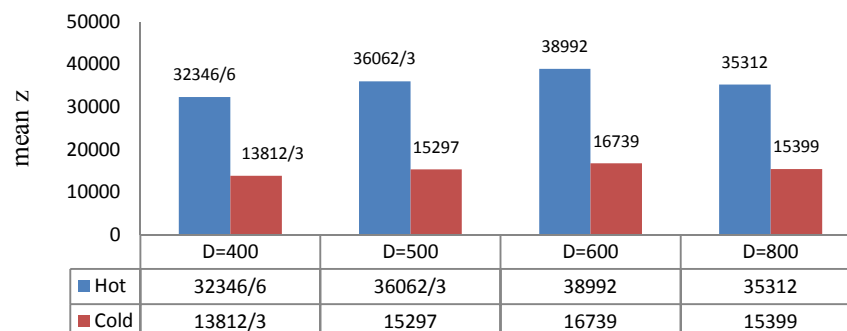


Fig. 1. Mean Z Value in Warm and Cold Seasons in Different Diameters of Pipes (D)

Due to the aforementioned changes in the wastewater composition, sulfide production kinetics is often affected by the presence of electron acceptors (oxygen) and soluble electron donors (organic matters), sulfate concentrations, temperature, and velocity of wastewater flow.<sup>14, 17</sup> In addition, the conditions that promote biofilm growth, solid settling, and septicity are of great importance for the total generation of sulfide.<sup>14</sup>

Field investigations have yielded clear evidence that BOD and COD values are undoubtedly the key influential factors in H<sub>2</sub>S production in sewers. According to the current research, BOD, COD, and SO<sub>4</sub><sup>2-</sup> values in warm seasons were 117, 291, and 251 mg/l, while they were 101, 247, and 234 mg/l in cold seasons, respectively.

In the present study, wastewater contained small quantities of BOD, which was an indicator of the low levels of organic materials. In addition, lack of manufacturing and industrial processes in Dehloran city was associated with the absence of industrial wastewater in sewage collection pipes. In a study in this regard, Pomeroy et al. confirmed that BOD<sub>5</sub>, wastewater temperature, slope of sewage pipes, h/D, and flow rate affected the buildup of H<sub>2</sub>S and corrosion.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the main source of sulfur was reported to be sulfate (SO<sub>4</sub><sup>2-</sup>) in domestic wastewater.<sup>7</sup>

In the present study, the highest rate of H<sub>2</sub>S production in wastewater was attributed to food industries, while the wastewater from mixed municipal and industrial (food) sources had an average rank, and typical domestic wastewater with slight/no contents of industrial sewage had the lowest production rate.<sup>10</sup> Figure 2 depicts the variations in the Z level due to the changes in various parameters in different seasons and pipelines.

The results of the present study indicated that the risk of H<sub>2</sub>S production increased with increasing temperature and organic loading (BOD<sub>5</sub>). Additionally, increased filling percentage and discharge flow rate (l/s) in the sewage pipelines was associated with the decreased possibility of H<sub>2</sub>S production in warm and cold seasons. Therefore, it could be concluded that the possibility of hydrogen sulfide production was inversely proportional to the filling percentage and quantity of the sewage and directly proportional to temperature and BOD<sub>5</sub>. Moreover, a significant difference was observed in the Z value in different seasons (P<0.001) and different sewer diameters (P<0.001). Since the value obtained for the adjusted R-squared was higher than 0.7 and close to one. Therefore, it could be concluded that more than 90% of the variations in the Z value depended on the season and D (adjusted R-squared=0.994).

Temperature plays a pivotal role in the emission rate of H<sub>2</sub>S from the liquid to the gas phase. In the current research, the temperature in two seasons in Dehloran city was 30.2 and 20 °C, respectively. In this regard, Joseph et al. have confirmed the specific influence of temperature and relative humidity.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Sharma et al. have reported that high organic and sulfate concentrations increase the temperature and sewage age conducive to sulfide generation.<sup>14</sup> At high temperatures, the biological activity in the sediment rises in sewer networks.<sup>7</sup> Baumgartner et al. have suggested that sulfide production is discontinued at the temperatures below 7 °C, and the highest sulfide production rate occurs at the temperature of 30 °C. High temperature increases H<sub>2</sub>S solubility, so that the H<sub>2</sub>S emissions increase by 7% per each 1 °C of temperature increment.<sup>18</sup>

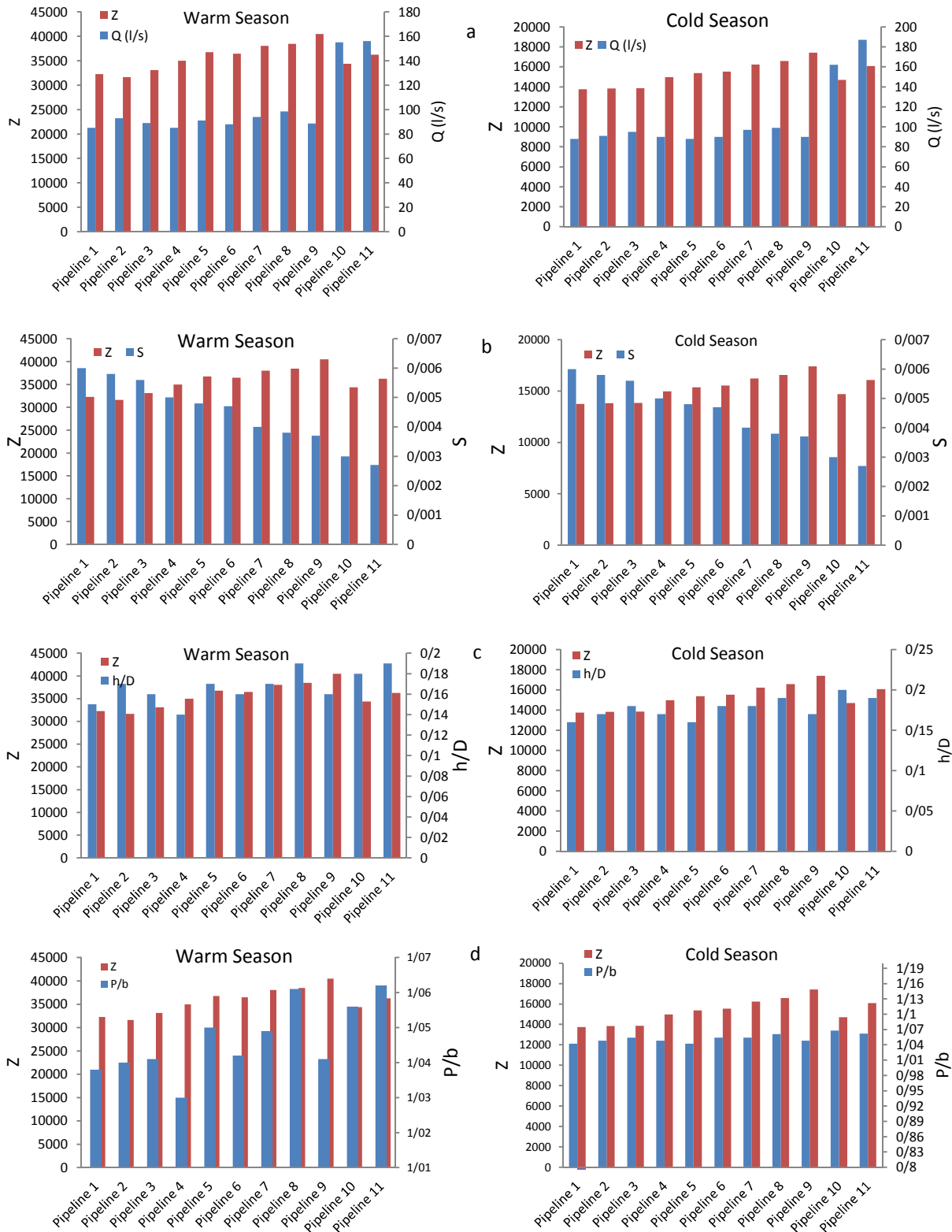


Fig. 2. Variations in Z Level Due to Changes in Several Parameters in Warm and Cold Seasons and Various Pipelines (a: different Q [l/s], b: different S, c: different h/D, d: different P/b)

Pipe diameter is another key factor to control H<sub>2</sub>S generation. Principally, the sulfide

generation in small diameters appears in the biofilm on the pipe walls, while the anaerobic



activity in the bulk liquid in large-diameter sewers greatly influences H<sub>2</sub>S production.<sup>10</sup> In a study, Alani et al. proposed a model using a novel data-driven technique, known as evolutionary polynomial regression, which encompasses the most effective parameters in the sulfide formation problem. In the mentioned research, the effects of each contributing parameter to sulfide formation were evaluated using the extended sensitivity analysis. The results demonstrated that while sulfide formation grows by increasing COD, temperature, retention time and/or flow velocity, sewer diameter has an inverse impact on sulfide buildup.<sup>19</sup>

In the current research, mean pH was 7.34 in the warm and cold seasons. In wastewater, pH is normally within the range of 6.6-7.2, where the chemical equilibrium between H<sub>2</sub>S and HS<sup>-</sup> is extremely sensitive. In other words, acidity (pH) plays a key role in the concentrations of H<sub>2</sub>S and HS<sup>-</sup> in sewage collection networks. At the pH of 7, the amount of sulfide ions and dissolved H<sub>2</sub>S are equal, while at lower pH, the H<sub>2</sub>S production rate and H<sub>2</sub>S transfer rate to the gas phase increase.

### Conclusion

Investigation of the H<sub>2</sub>S production risk in the sewage collection network of Dehloran city (Iran) indicated the high level of Z. The Z level in all the samples was more than 13,000, while the Z value was higher in warm seasons compared to cold seasons. Therefore, the corrosion potential was relatively high in the studied sewage pipe network. According to the findings, quantitative and qualitative parameters, such as the concentrations of sulfate and organic matters, temperature, sewage pH, flow velocity, and surface area of the pipe, had significant effects on the buildup of H<sub>2</sub>S based on the Z formula. Furthermore, the rate of H<sub>2</sub>S production in the wastewater of food industries had the highest rate. Due to the high costs of the rehabilitation and replacement of damaged sewers, management practices based on the estimation of H<sub>2</sub>S concentration are essential.

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