Spark discharge aerosol generator for field calibration of absorption photometers: Aerosol properties and stability

EGU2020: Sharing geoscience online
May 4th – 8th, 2020

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The need of a field soot generator

**Desired particle properties**

**FRESH SOOT PARTICLES**

- Particle diameter ($D_p$)
  - 50 – 100 nm

- Single scattering albedo (SSA)
  - 0.05 – 0.20

- Absorption Angstrom Coefficient (AAC)
  - ~1.0

- Minimal fraction of organic to elemental carbon.

**Criteria for a portable generator**

**Need of a field generator to calibrate absorption photometers**

- Particles should have the desired properties of fresh soot.

- Minimal operation requirements (gas usage, portability).

- Good stability and repeatability.
Spark discharge aerosol generator (SDAG)

Model: DNP digital 3000

Manufacturer: PALAS GmbH, Germany.

To improve portability, aerosol is produced using no dilution air.

The generators is operated by using only N₂ as carrier gas.
Volume mean diameter (VMD) is shown (y-axis).

Reaches plateau above ~500 Hz.

**Number mean diameters** are between 55 and 100 nm.

**Number concentration:** $8 - 11 \times 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-3}$

Although the nominal frequency of the spark discharge can go up to 1000 Hz, frequencies higher than 600 Hz are not reachable in the practice. The higher the voltage, the lower maximum frequency that can be reached.
Repeatability of particle diameter

Single operation point
10 l/min N₂
No dilution air
140 Hz
3500 V

30-min measurement points measured on 8 different days.

Interquartile range
86 – 90 nm

2σ = 8 nm
Particles with diameters between 500 and 1000 nm are produced at all operation settings. Contribution of large particles is relevant in terms of mass. Therefore, affecting absorption measurements. The desired OP is the one with the minimal amount of these large particles.
Particle diameter issues

Large particles (500 to 1000 nm) are more likely to be produced when using lower voltage settings.

**Optimal setting: 5000 V**

-> Lower fraction of larger particles.

By using a virtual impactor, the fraction of large particles can be further reduced but not completely removed.
Single scattering albedo (SSA)

The frequency setting affects size (VMD) but SSA remains constant within 10%.

Interquartile range 0.10 – 0.11 at 870 nm wavelength.