





FieldScout® TDR 250 Soil Moisture Meter Product Manual

Item #6250



GENERAL OVERVIEW

Thank you for purchasing a FieldScout TDR 250 Soil Moisture Meter. This manual describes the meter's general features and operations.

Soil moisture is a critical, and potentially highly valuable component of the soil environment. Time domain reflectometry (TDR) is a proven technology for quickly and accurately determining volumetric water content (VWC) in soil. Electrical conductivity (EC) is a function of the moisture and salt in the soil and can be factored out to increase the accuracy of VWC measurements. The meter measures EC but does not report it on the display. The user can quickly transition between taking VWC readings in standard, high-clay or sand based soils.

The TDR 250's shaft-mounted probe allows the user to take measurements while standing. The meter's built-in data logger eliminates the need to record data manually. Measurements can be saved to a USB flash drive using the built-in USB port.

Includes the Following Components:

- TDR 250 Meter
- 4 AA Batteries (already installed)

Note: TDR rods are sold separately

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This manual will familiarize you with the features and operation of your new FieldScout TDR 250 Soil Moisture Meter. Please read this manual thoroughly before launching the unit.

For customer support or to place an order, call Spectrum Technologies, Inc. at 800-248-8873 or 815-436-4440, FAX at 815-436-4460, or e-mail at info@specmeters.com.

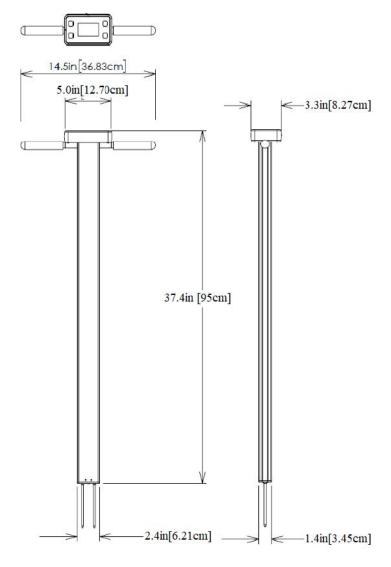
www.specmeters.com Spectrum Technologies, Inc. 3600 Thayer Court Aurora, IL 60504

PRODUCT DETAILS

Specifications

Characteristic	Description		
Power	4 AA Batteries (included)		
Weight	3.75 lb (8.27 kg)		
Log Capacity	Up to 124,000 Measurements		
Display	Backlit, High-Contrast, Graphic LCD		
IP Rating	Display: IP53, Probe: IP67		
Connectivity	USB Type A		
Measurement Units	% Volumetric Water Content (VWC) Period (raw sensor reading)		
Resolution, Accuracy & Range	VWC: 0.1% increment ± 3.0% @ <2 mS/cm 0% to Saturation (Saturation is typically around 50% volumetric water)		
Available Rod Dimensions	Turf		

Product Dimensions



Display Screens

The TDR 250 has 3 main display screens:

- Startup
- Reading
- Settings Menu

Startup Information Screen

Initially displayed after powered on

- Displays model, serial number and firmware version
- Press and hold ON/OFF|BACK button remain on this screen

Reading Screen

Displays the last measurements of VWC, rod type, selected soil type and a reading count with running average. VWC=0% readings will be displayed but will not increase the counter or be included in the average.



Settings Menu Screen

Used for changing device features, setting rod length and working with log files Use the arrow buttons to move to the desired option The Select button toggles through option choices

Clear Average*: Clears the display average and count

Note: Same as pressing and holding the **READ|Down** arrow button

Rod Length: Select the Rod length

Soil Type: Selects soil type used in measurements:

- Standard: for most soil types
- **Hi-Clay:** for soils with higher clay content (> 27%)
- Sand: for sand based fields or turf greens

Clear Logs*: Erases data logs from internal memory

Save to USB*: Transfers data logs to a USB flash drive if attached

Backlight: Sets the LCD backlight: ON, OFF, AUTO. In AUTO mode, the backlight will shut off 5 seconds after button press

Sound: Enable or disable beep for audible feedback

Moisture Type:

- VWC%: Volumetric Water Content with EC compensation
- Period: Raw sensor reading in microseconds (US)
- TDR 300: VWC% without EC compensation

Auto-Off: Power off delay (15, 30, 45, 60 minutes)

Current Date, Current Time: Set/display the current time and date values

Time Zone: Offset from Greenwich Mean Time, as the offset changes, the Time and Date will update

Daylight Savings: ON or OFF

Calibration*: Overrides factory calibration

Clear User Calibration: Clears the user applied calibration back to factory settings

Factory Defaults*: Resets menu settings and counter to the factory default value

*Pressing Select button for these options brings up additional screen

About: Displays general information (model and serial number, firmware versions for display and sensor)

Defaults:

Rod Length	Not Set	Moisture Type	VWC
Soil Type	Standard	Auto-Off	15 minutes
Sound	ON	Time Zone	GMT
Backlight	Disabled		

Optional Accessories

There are two optional items that can be used to expand the capabilities of the TDR250. Visit www.specmeters.com for more information and installation instructions.

TDR Spacer (Item 6435SP)

- Placed on the end of the sensor block to aid in identification of how fast and firm the turf greens are. The spacer has two orientations allowing it to work for either desired depth
- Requires 1.5" (3.8cm) turf rods
- Allows for the measurements of 0.5" (1.3cm) or 1.0" (2.5cm) soil depths

Pilot Hole Maker (Item 6430PH)

If the ground is especially hard or compact, you can use a Pilot Hole maker to make 3" holes to aid in starting the insertion of the probe rods.

OPERATIONS

Button Functions





ON/OFF|BACK Button

- Press briefly to power on
- Press and hold to power on and stay on the logo screen
- Press and hold for 2 seconds to power off
- Press within a menu to return to prior screen



MENU|SELECT Button

- Press to enter menus
- Press to select or confirm a menu selection



DELETE|UP Button

- Press to move up within a menu
- Delete last measurement from the running average, counter and its entry from the internal data log



READ DOWN Button

- Press to move down within a menu
- Press READ to take a reading
- Press and hold to reset the average and count

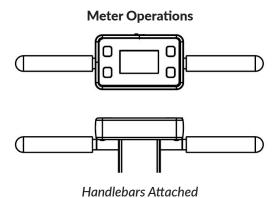
Setting Date/Time

The Date and Time are displayed in the Settings Menu.

Note: When the batteries are removed, the date and time are reset

Updating the Date and Time

- 1. Press the **MENU**|**SELECT** button to enter the Settings Menu
- Press the UP/DOWN arrow to navigate to either the Current Date or Current Time option
- 3. Press the MENU|SELECT button to access the Time/Date update screen
- 4. Press the **DELETE|UP** button to set the date and time. The current time for the timezone setting will be displayed
- 5. Use the **UP/DOWN** arrow to adjust the highlighted selection
- 6. Press the MENU|SELECT button to confirm the change and proceed to the next selection
- 7. After pressing the MENU|SELECT button to set the minutes, the display will return to the Reading screen
- 8. Press the ON/OFF|BACK button to return to the Settings Menu without making any change



Setting Up the Meter

- 1. Slide the lock washers onto the threaded ends of the handle bars
- 2. Install the two cushion grip handles and tighten securely
- 3. Pull the battery transport tab out of the display unit
- 4. Select a set of probe rods and screw them to the bottom of the probe block, tightening securely.
- 5. Set the desired user settings in the settings menu

Taking Readings

- 1. Grip the TDR handles to the left and right of the display
- 2. Push down on the handles maintaining a steady downward pressure to drive the rods into the soil until the sensor base is in contact with the soil surface. Refrain from any back and forth or side to side movement which can introduce air pockets into the soil medium which will alter the reading accuracy Caution: Exercise care not to bend or damage the rods
- 3. Press the **READ** button and observe the change in results on the top display

DATA LOGGING & MEASUREMENTS

Data Logs

Downloading Data Logs to a USB Flash Drive

- Connect the flash drive directly to the meter's USB port Note: Do not connect a USB cable as this may damage the TDR
- 2. Press the **MENU|SELECT** button to open the Settings Menu
- 3. Press the **READ|DOWN** arrow button to advance to the Save to USB option
- 4. Press the **MENU|SELECT** button to select the option

The data will be saved as a comma-separated text file (.csv) with the serial number as the file name. These files can be opened with common text-editing or spreadsheet software. If a previous data file exists on the flash drive with the same file name, it will be over-written. Be sure to backup any existing data logs on the flash drive prior to saving a new file.

Erasing the Internal Data Log

- 1. Press the MENU|SELECT button to open the Settings Menu
- 2. Press the **READ|DOWN** arrow button to advance to the **Clear Logs** option
- 3. Press the MENU|SELECT button to select the option
- 4. Press the MENU|SELECT button again to start the process or the ON/OFF|BACK button to return back to the menu

Data Collected

The following information is logged with each reading:

Time	Based on the GMT offset selected in the Time Zone option
VWC%	Volumetric Water Content based on the Moisture Type setting - EC Compensated or "TDR 300" (without EC Compensation)
Period	Raw Period result (after any applied user calibration)
Rod Length	Depicted as Long (L, 8"), Med (M, 4.8"), Short (S, 3"), Turf (T, 1.5"), 0.5" Spacer (1), 1.0" Spacer (2)
Soil Type	Depicted as Standard (S), Hi-Clay (H) or Sand (D)
VWC Mode	Depicted as EC Compensated (V) or TDR 300/non-compensated (3)

VWC Measurements

Volumetric Water Content (VWC)

The ratio of the volume of water in a given volume of soil to the total soil volume expressed as a decimal or percentage. Four soil moisture levels of most importance can be defined as follows:

Saturation: All soil pores are filled with water. The VWC will equal the percent pore space of the soil.

Field Capacity: The condition that exists after a saturated soil is allowed to drain to a point where the pull of gravity is no longer able to remove any additional water.

Permanent Wilting Point: The highest moisture content at which a plant can no longer extract water from the soil.

Plant Available Water: the amount of water between Permanent Wilting Point and Field Capacity. Irrigation should be initiated when half the Plant Available Water has been depleted.

Time Domain Reflectometry (TDR)

The speed of an electromagnetic wave along a waveguide in soil is dependent on the bulk dielectric permittivity (ϵ) of the soil matrix. The fact that water (ϵ = 80) has a much greater dielectric constant than air (ϵ = 1) or soil solids (ϵ = 3-7) is exploited to determine the VWC of the soil. The VWC measured by the TDR is an average over the length of the waveguide.

The sampling volume is an elliptical cylinder that extends approximately 3cm out from the rods. The high frequency signal information is then converted to volumetric water content. High amounts of clay or high electrical conductivity (EC > 2 mS/cm) will attenuate the high-frequency signal and affect the reading displayed by the meter. Very high organic matter content will similarly affect the VWC reading.

MAINTENANCE

Meter Care

The FieldScout TDR meter will funtion properly under normal conditions experienced in field use. The sensor block is sealed and will not be damaged by immersion in water. The display is <u>NOT</u> waterproof. The meter should not be used during heavy rainfall or left exposed during irrigation events. If the display does get wet, it should be dried out immediately.

Follow these tips to prolong the life of the device:

- Store in a cool and dry place when not in use
- Keep the meter and probe rods clean and dry in between uses
- Remove the batteries if not used for an extended period of time (i.e. between seasons)

Battery Life

If the battery level is low or a battery is inserted incorrectly, the low battery icon appears on the screen and the display will power off. Battery life is affected by the enabled features and frequency of use. If not needed, the backlight can be disabled or set to AUTO mode which allows enough time to see new measurements and then will power down the backlight to prolong the battery life.



Display and Sensor Separation

- 1. Remove the probe rods from the sensor base
- 2. Flip the display so the backing plate is facing up
- 3. Remove the 4 screws on the base using a Phillips screwdriver
- 4. Gently separate the display from the base plate

Note: The sensor cable connected in the center has limited cable length

Battery Replacement

- 1. Follow the steps above to access the batteries
- 2. Install four new AA batteries observing correct polarity by referencing the positive (+) and negative (-) labels
- 3. Follow the Display Installation steps to reinstall the display

Display Installation

- Reconnect the sensor cable to the 3.5mm connector on the back of the display module if previously removed.
- Insert the foam spacer back behind the sensor cable if previously removed. The split end fits around the sensor
- Guide the excess cable back down through the base plate.
- Align the arrows on the base and display in the same direction. The USB port should face the same side as the serial number label.
- Tighten the four mounting screws.



UPDATING & CALIBRATION

Updating Device Firmware

Firmware updates may be made available to add or improve the product features. The firmware can be updated using a USB flash drive. Firmware update files can be found on the Spectrum website.

- Copy the latest firmware update from your PC onto the root directory of the flash drive. The file will not be seen by the meter if it is renamed or stored within a folder on the drive.
- 2. Power off the meter
- Remove the protective cap from the meter's USB port
- Insert the flash drive directly into the meter's USB port. Do not connect a USB cable as this may damage the TDR.
- While pressing the DELETE|UP arrow button, press and release the ON/OFF|BACK button. The meter will beep briefly and the screen should stay blank.
- Release the buttons
 - Note: The display screen will remain blank during the update process. The meter will beep a second time once the process has completed and then reboot to the logo screen. The new firmware will now be displayed below the Spectrum logo.
- The display will alert the user if further updates are to be made and show a message when completed
- Remove the flash drive and replace the USB port cover

Soil-Specific Reading Correlation

Improve accuracy and correlate TDR period readings with a soil-specific sample set. VWC data can be correlated by measuring the weight of a known volume of saturated soil as it is gradually dried, by gradually wetting a known soil with measured increments of water or by using a neutron probe. In most cases, gravimetric sampling is performed. This procedure is briefly described below.

- Establish a number of field sites to sample
- Wet each site with varying amounts of water
- Obtain FieldScout TDR period reading at each sample site
- Extract an undisturbed soil core at each sample site. Store samples in a sealed plastic container to reduce evaporation.
- Weigh the wet soil samples.
- Dry the samples (221°F/105°C for 48 hours) and weigh again.
- Plot sample measurements against FieldScout TDR readings

Regression analysis is used to develop a formula to correlate TDR reading to the sample data

Volumetic Water Content Calculations:

 $VWC = 100*(M_{wet} - M_{dry})/(\rho_{w}*V_{tot})$

Gravimetric Water Constant Calculations:

VWC = GWC* (ρ_b/ρ_w)

 $GWC = 100*(M_{wet} - M_{drv})/M_{drv}$

 $\rho_h = M_{drv}/V_{tot}$

Where:

 $M_{wet} M_{dry} = mass (g)$ of wet and dry soil repectively V_{tot} = total soil volume (ml)

 ρ_{w} = density of water (1 g/ml)

Calibration

The FieldScout TDR is fully calibrated at the factory. Further calibration is not required, nor recommended. The meter has internal calibrations that will work for many soil types. Each meter will have a small difference in how it responds to identical soil conditions. This can be due to air being introduced while measuring, bent probes, loose probes, sensor drift or component tolerances. The meter allows for adjustments to the calibration to account for these differences. Should the user prefer to perform the calibration, the following are required:

- 1. A clean glass or plastic container. The container must be at least 4" (10cm) wide and 2" (5.08cm) longer than the length of the TDR rods.
- 2. A sufficient volume of unused distilled or de-ionized water to fill the above container **Note: Well or municipal tap water cannot be substituted.**



Procedure:

- Pour all the distilled/de-ionized water into the container
 Note: The water and container must be free of minerals and salts to calibrate properly
- 2. From the Settings Menu, set the rod length to the correct length of the rods currently installed
- 3. From the Settings Menu, choose the Calibration option
- 4. Press the **MENU**|**SELECT** button to initiate the calibration process. Follow the display messages.
- 5. While keeping objects and personnel clear from the area; raise the meter so the rods are in the air. Press the MENU|SELECT button and wait until the meter indicates it is ready.
- 6. Immerse the rods completely in the distilled/de-ionized water until the sensor base is in contact with the liquid. Keep the sensor base and rods centered in the container. Do not submerge the sensor base.
- 7. Press the MENU|SELECT button and wait until the meter indicates it is ready.
 The meter will then show that the calibration is complete for that specific rod length. If more than one rod size is being used, a calibration operation must be done for each rod length used.

Troubleshooting

Verifying Operation:

The meter should read a measurement of 0% VWC with clean rods raised in the air. Test measurements should be made using distilled water, not wall or municipal tap water, in a container at least 4" (10cm) wide and deep enough to submerge the full length of the sensor rods up to the sensor base. Measurements in water will not read 100% as the equations were set for typical water content of the soil type used.

Typical VWC range in water using VWC% mode and standard settings:

Rod Length	8" (20.3cm)	4.8" (12.2cm)	3" (7.6cm)	1.5" (3.8cm)
VWC %	60 - 65	70 - 75	75 - 80	65 - 70

Unable to save data to or load firmware from a USB flash drive:

Confirm the drive is not full or write protected. Verify the drive has FAT or FAT32 format. Firmware should be in the root directory, outside of any folders.

"Sensor Not Detected" appears on the display:

Communication lost between the sensor and display. The connection may be dirty, unplugged, or broken. Check the cable condition, clean the connection and reset. Power the meter off and then back on to reset.

"No Sensor" appears on the display:

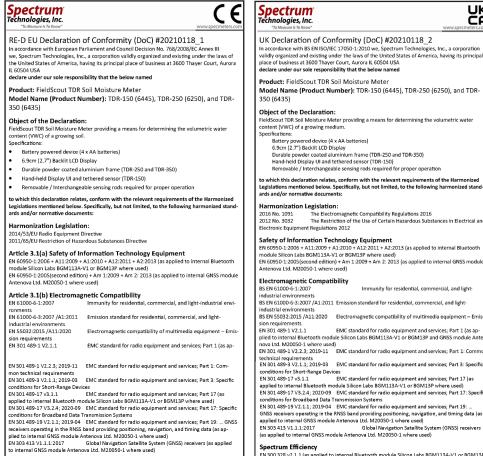
Sensor unplugged from the display. Be sure to keep the foam insert behind the cable to retain the cable during battery changes. Reconnect the sensor, power the meter off and then back on to reset.

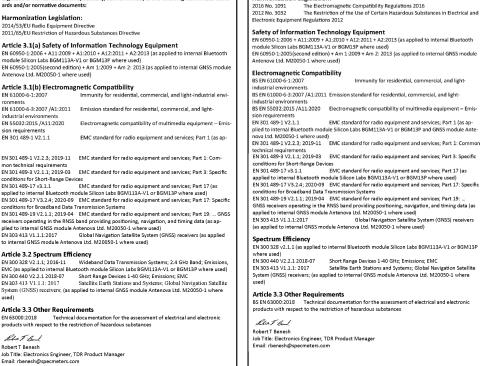


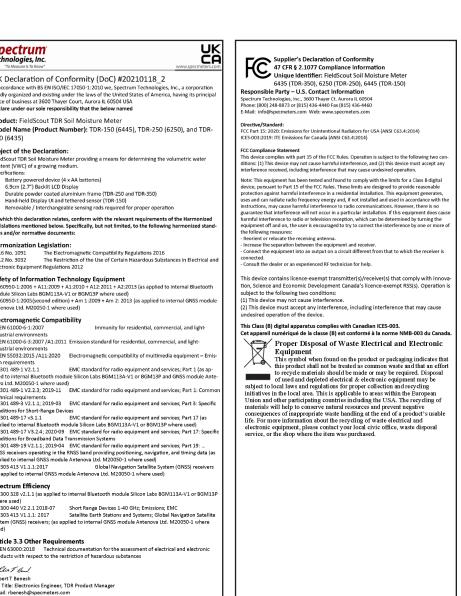


WARRANTY

This product is warranted to be free from defects in material or workmanship for one year from the date of purchase. During the warranty period Spectrum will, at its option, either repair or replace products that prove to be defective. This warranty does not cover damage due to improper installation or use, lightning, negligence, accident, unauthorized modifications, or to incidental or consequential damages beyond the Spectrum product. Before returning a failed unit, you must obtain a Returned Materials Authorization (RMA) from Spectrum. Spectrum is not responsible for any package that is returned without a valid RMA number or for the loss of the package by any shipping company.









Article 3.3 Other Requirements

3600 Thayer Court Aurora, IL 60504 800.248.8873 www.specmeters.com