AI Based Performance Analysis of ATC Integrated WCC in HVAC System Using IOT

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Abstract- *This work presents an AI-driven performance analysis of a Water-Cooled Chiller (WCC) integrated with an Automatic Tube Cleaning (ATC) system, enhanced by Internet of Things (IoT) technologies in an HVAC environment. The integration addresses condenser tube fouling—a major contributor to energy inefficiency and maintenance costs—by enabling continuous cleaning and real-time performance monitoring. IoT sensors capture key operational parameters, including temperature, pressure, flow rate, and energy consumption. These data are processed using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) algorithms to detect fouling, optimize cleaning cycles, and predict maintenance needs. Results indicate up to 15–20% energy savings, improved heat transfer stability, and reduced downtime. The proposed system exemplifies a smart, sustainable HVAC solution that promotes operational efficiency and predictive maintenance in building infrastructure.*

Keywords- Water-cooled chiller, automatic tube cleaning, AI, IoT, HVAC, predictive maintenance, energy efficiency.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) industry is increasingly adopting intelligent technologies to meet rising energy demands and sustainability goals. Water-Cooled Chillers (WCCs), though energy-efficient, face performance degradation due to condenser tube fouling. Traditional manual cleaning methods are inefficient and cause downtime. The integration of Automatic Tube Cleaning Systems (ATCS) mitigates these issues by enabling continuous cleaning without interrupting operations. To further optimize ATCS performance, Internet of Things (IoT) sensors collect real-time data on temperature, flow rate, and pressure, while Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) algorithms analyze this data to predict fouling, optimize cleaning cycles, and enable predictive maintenance. This AI-IoT-ATCS framework enhances energy efficiency, reduces operational costs, and supports sustainable HVAC system design aligned with global green building standards.

II. WATER COOLED CHILLER SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Water-cooled chillers are a central component of large-scale HVAC systems, commonly used in commercial buildings and industrial processes due to their high efficiency in handling significant cooling loads. These systems operate on the vapor-compression refrigeration cycle, where chilled water absorbs heat in an evaporator and is then circulated to cooling areas. The absorbed heat is transferred to a refrigerant, which is compressed and routed to a condenser, where heat is expelled via cooling water that is subsequently cooled in a cooling tower. Compared to air-cooled systems, water-cooled chillers offer superior energy efficiency, especially in favorable climatic conditions. However, their performance can be adversely affected by fouling in the heat exchanger tubes, making maintenance essential for optimal operation.

A standard water-cooled chiller consists of several key components. The **evaporator** acts as a heat exchanger, where refrigerant absorbs heat from the chilled water, initiating the cooling cycle. The **compressor**, available in reciprocating, screw, or centrifugal types, pressurizes the vaporized refrigerant, increasing its temperature. The **condenser**—typically shell-and-tube or plate-type—removes this heat using cooling tower water, allowing the refrigerant to condense. The **expansion valve** then reduces the pressure and temperature of the refrigerant before it re-enters the evaporator. Supporting components include the **cooling tower**, which rejects heat from the condenser water via evaporation, and **water pumps**, which circulate chilled and condenser water throughout the system. The **chilled water distribution network** uses valves and sensors to maintain system balance, while the **control panel** (or BMS) monitors temperatures, pressures, and flow rates to optimize system operation. The **refrigerant**, such as R-134a or low-GWP alternatives like R-1234ze, plays a critical role in thermal energy transfer and system efficiency.

The operating principle of a water-cooled chiller begins with chilled water entering the evaporator at approximately 12°C, where it transfers heat to the refrigerant, which evaporates at around 5–7°C. The now vaporized

refrigerant is compressed, reaching 60–80°C and up to 14 bar pressure. In the condenser, this high-energy gas transfers heat to cooling water (typically entering at 28–32°C and exiting at 35–40°C) and condenses into a high-pressure liquid. The refrigerant then passes through the expansion valve, which lowers its pressure and temperature to 5–10°C, ready to repeat the cycle. This continuous process enables stable and efficient cooling with minimal energy loss. When properly maintained, the system ensures reliable performance and compliance with energy efficiency and environmental standards.

III. AUTOMATIC TUBE CLEANING SYSTEM (ATCS)

Automatic Tube Cleaning Systems (ATCS) are integrated into water-cooled chillers to maintain optimal heat exchanger performance by preventing fouling—such as scale, biofilm, and debris buildup—within the condenser tubes. Fouling significantly reduces heat transfer efficiency, increases energy consumption, and leads to higher maintenance costs. ATCS addresses these issues by enabling continuous or periodic cleaning without manual intervention, thus improving system reliability and reducing operational downtime. One common ATCS method is the sponge ball cleaning system, where elastomeric balls, slightly larger than the tube diameter, are injected into the condenser water inlet. These balls pass through the tubes, scrubbing the interior surfaces and preventing deposit formation through mechanical wiping action. The balls are collected downstream in a specially designed ball trap that allows water flow but prevents ball escape. Modern ball traps feature stationary, perforated screens that avoid mechanical failure and eliminate ball loss, improving operational stability.

After collection, the balls are returned to a holding vessel or collector via a recirculation pump. Advanced ATCS designs ensure that balls do not pass through the pump impeller, minimizing wear and extending ball lifespan. The collector serves as a storage chamber and enables ball replacement when needed. The entire cleaning cycle—including ball injection, circulation, and recovery—is governed by a programmable logic controller (PLC), which uses sensor inputs (temperature, pressure, fouling indicators) to automate cleaning based on real-time system conditions. Optional chemical dosing systems may be incorporated for enhanced cleaning in systems prone to severe scaling. Overall, ATCS enhances thermal efficiency, reduces energy consumption, and supports continuous operation without shutdowns for manual cleaning.
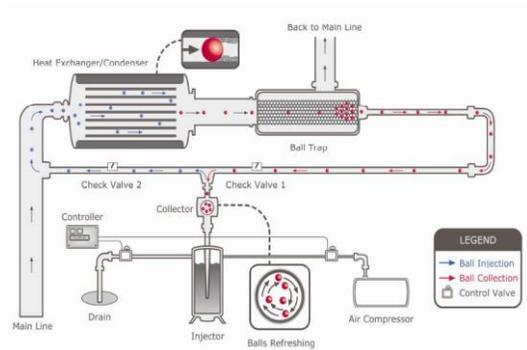

Figure 1. Schematic Of Typical ATC

INTEGRATION OF ATCS WITH WATER COOLED CHILLERS

Integrating an Automatic Tube Cleaning System (ATCS) with a Water-Cooled Chiller (WCC) effectively addresses performance degradation caused by fouling in condenser tubes, enhancing energy efficiency and system reliability. The ATCS consists of elastomeric cleaning balls, an injection and collection unit, a recirculation pump, and a PLC-based control system. During each cycle—typically every 20 to 30 minutes—cleaning balls, sized 2–5% larger than the tube's inner diameter, are injected into the condenser water inlet, scrub tube interiors, and are collected downstream in a ball trap. The chilled water circuit remains uninterrupted during cleaning, and cleaning intervals are automatically controlled via time or differential pressure thresholds (commonly 0.2–0.3 bar). This continuous process maintains fouling factors below 0.0001 ft²·h·°F/Btu, compared to 0.0005–0.0010 in untreated systems, resulting in 5–15% energy savings and prolonged chiller lifespan.

Successful ATCS integrations were implemented at Wipro (Chennai, 2021) and MEPZ (Tambaram, 2023), where aging Trane chillers were replaced with high-efficiency York WCCs equipped with ATCS. Post-installation, the condenser fouling factor reduced from ~0.0006 to <0.0001, with Energy Efficiency Ratios (EER) improving up to 6.1 under optimized load conditions. These upgrades led to 8–12% annual energy savings and reduced maintenance downtime, supporting sustainability goals.

Compared to conventional systems, WCCs with ATCS demonstrate numerous advantages: (i) **Energy Efficiency**—continuous cleaning prevents performance losses, with reported improvements such as an 8% efficiency gain and 2 million kWh/year energy savings at VCU Medical Center; (ii) **Maintenance Reduction**—automated cleaning eliminates manual shutdowns; (iii) **Extended Equipment Life**—minimized corrosion and mechanical stress prolong component durability; (iv) **Environmental Benefits**—reduced

energy use lowers CO_2 emissions, with the University of Virginia reporting an 11,000-ton annual reduction; and (v) **Cost Savings**—operational cost reductions, exceeding $350,000 annually in some cases, due to lower energy and maintenance expenses. These outcomes affirm that ATCS integration offers a robust and cost-effective strategy for maintaining peak chiller performance and aligning with energy and environmental standards.

Automatic Tube Cleaning Systems (ATCS) are widely applied across sectors that rely on continuous cooling and heat exchange. Key applications include HVAC systems in commercial buildings, hospitals, data centers, and universities, as well as industrial operations such as power plants, chemical and petrochemical facilities, food and beverage processing, and seawater desalination plants. In each of these settings, ATCS enhances thermal efficiency, reduces fouling, and minimizes maintenance demands.
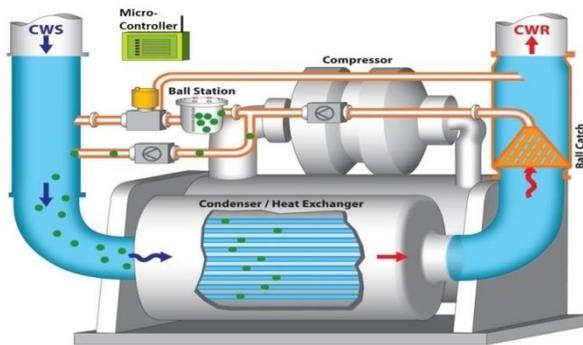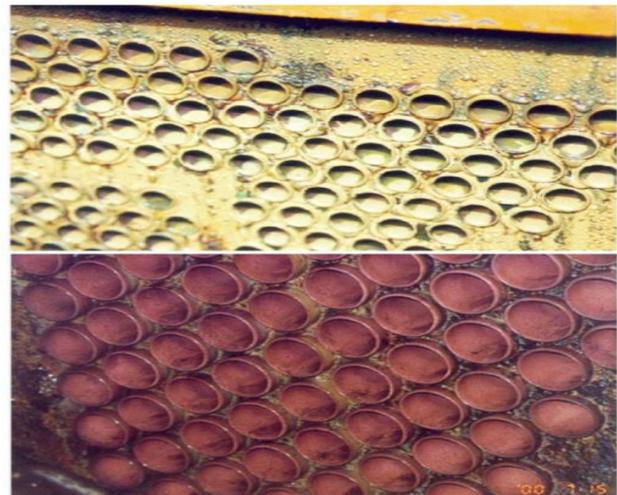

Figure 2. WCC with ATC System

Figure 3. ATC Integration in Chennai WIPRO

Impact of Automatic Tube Cleaning Systems on Fouling Factor and Chiller Performance in HVAC Applications

In HVAC systems, fouling of chiller condenser tubes significantly impacts compressor energy consumption. Even with effective water treatment protocols, chillers in seemingly good condition often operate at fouling factors as high as 0.0025 hr-ft²-°F/Btu (0.014 m²·K/kW), resulting in compressor power increases exceeding 25%. A comparative study of chiller performance with and without Automatic Tube Cleaning Systems (ATCS) was conducted using data obtained via the ClimaCheck monitoring system. **Figure 5** illustrates the fouling factor (Rf) variation over time at 5-minute intervals, demonstrating the system's response to fluctuating cooling demands driven by external air temperature and solar gain. The observed oscillations in Rf are attributed to the system's variable refrigerant flow rate—a condition initially misunderstood as fixed flow in early assumptions but later clarified by the plant operator. Although **ClimaCheck** could not directly capture flow variability, this operational constraint was noted as a limitation in the current analysis. The average daily fouling factor, shown in **Figure 6**, highlights a distinct trend correlated with ATCS operation.

The data indicate that the fouling factor is lowest at the beginning of the monitoring period, as expected. However, it is important to acknowledge that the system was not initiated from a cleaned-tube baseline; the chiller had been dormant for approximately four months during the low winter load period. When the ATCS was deactivated, the mean fouling factor increased, and conversely, when reactivated, a reduction in Rf was observed. These results clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of ATCS in reducing thermal resistance due to fouling, thereby enhancing heat exchanger performance. The progressive rise in fouling factor during ATCS-off periods suggests that the system is operating in the fouling growth phase, consistent with established fouling behavior models—distinct from the initial induction or final asymptotic phases.
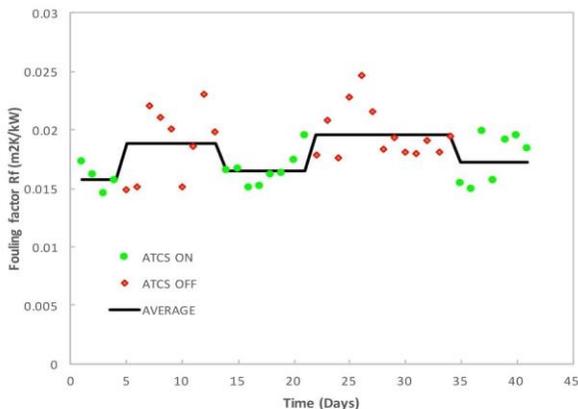
Figure 4. Fouling in Condenser
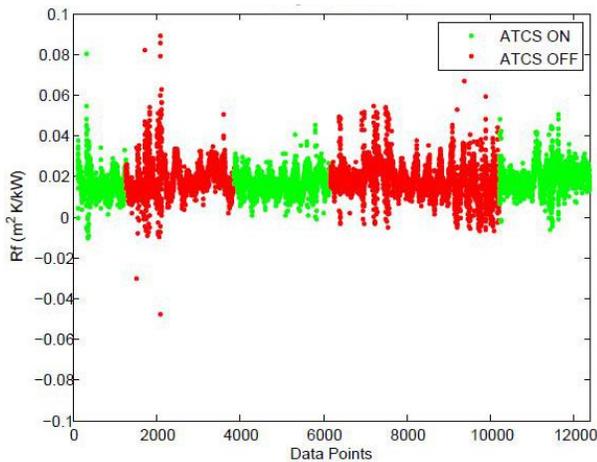
Figure 5. Fouling Factor Analysis with Clima Check Platform

Figure 6. Fouling Factor Analysis with ATC ON & OFF Conditions

Optimizing Sponge Ball Life Cycle in ATC Systems

The operational efficiency and longevity of sponge balls in Automatic Tube Cleaning Systems (ATCS) are vital for maintaining the thermal performance of water-cooled chillers. Made from elastomeric materials such as NBR or PU, sponge balls are injected at regular intervals (typically every 20–30 minutes), with each ball completing up to 1,440 cycles per month. Their life expectancy ranges from 500 to 1,000 cycles depending on water quality, cleaning frequency, and ball type. Degraded balls reduce cleaning effectiveness and increase fouling risk. Optimal performance is maintained by replacing balls every 15–20 days, selectively using abrasive types, and implementing condition-based cleaning via differential pressure monitoring. This helps preserve approach temperatures within 1–2°C of design, avoiding the 5–10% efficiency drop linked to fouling. Annual energy savings of 5–8% are achievable with consistent ball management.

i.   Pressure Transducer for Fouling Detection

Pressure transducers installed at the condenser inlet and outlet offer real-time monitoring of pressure drop (ΔP), serving as an early indicator of fouling. In clean conditions, ΔP may be around 0.5 bar; an increase to 0.8–1.2 bar over time suggests fouling buildup. This non-invasive diagnostic method supports predictive maintenance by correlating pressure trends with heat exchanger performance, especially when approach temperatures also rise. A ΔP exceeding preset thresholds (e.g., 1.2 bar) can trigger ATC activation or chemical cleaning. Transducers are reliable, low-maintenance, and easily integrated with BMS for automated alerts and long-term efficiency tracking.

ii.   Flow Meter for Thermal Performance Monitoring

Flow meters help assess fouling by tracking reductions in water flow through the condenser. Under constant pump operation, a drop in flow from 120 to 100 m³/h over months indicates internal tube resistance caused by deposits. Combined with temperature sensors, flow meters allow for real-time estimation of heat transfer ($Q = \rho \times C_p \times Q_v \times \Delta T$). A 30% reduction in Q signifies severe fouling and energy loss. Integrated with BMS, flow meters can initiate maintenance when flow falls below predefined limits. Though indirect, flow-based diagnostics are valuable for continuous fouling detection and proactive upkeep of chiller performance.

iii.   PLC and Motorized Valve Kit Integration

A Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) governs the ATC operation by analyzing input from sensors such as pressure transducers and flow meters. It triggers sponge ball injection either at scheduled intervals or when ΔP surpasses a

threshold. The PLC also coordinates motorized valves, which control the flow path during cleaning cycles. Valves open to inject balls, redirect flow to collect them, and return to standby after cleaning. This closed-loop control minimizes sponge ball wear, reduces water and energy waste, and enables seamless BMS integration for monitoring and fault detection. Together, the PLC and motorized valves automate cleaning, enhance chiller reliability, and optimize operational cost.

IV. TCS OPERATION WITH AI-IOT CONFIGURATION OBJECTIVES

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) in Automatic Tube Cleaning Systems (ATCS) enables real-time monitoring, predictive maintenance, and intelligent control of water-cooled chillers. IoT sensors—including pressure transducers, flow meters, temperature probes, and vibration sensors—collect high-resolution operational data from the condenser and evaporator circuits. This data is transmitted via protocols such as MQTT, Wi-Fi, or LoRaWAN to cloud-based or edge analytics platforms. AI algorithms—such as neural networks, decision trees, and support vector machines—analyze this data to identify fouling patterns, predict optimal cleaning intervals, and detect performance anomalies. A local PLC or edge controller interfaces with the sensors and actuates motorized valves or pumps to execute cleaning cycles based on AI recommendations. Operators monitor performance through a dashboard displaying key metrics like condenser approach temperature, COP, and kW/TR. This configuration supports remote diagnostics, automatic reporting, and compliance with energy efficiency standards. Core objectives include improving heat transfer, reducing energy consumption, minimizing downtime, extending equipment life, enhancing sustainability, and optimizing return on investment.

In AI-based ATCS integrated with water-cooled chillers (WCCs), IoT sensors installed across the HVAC system continuously monitor operational parameters—such as water temperatures (e.g., 32°C inlet, 37°C outlet), flow rates (e.g., 200 LPM), pressure differentials (e.g., 1.5 bar), and compressor power (e.g., 180 kW). Data is relayed to an AI engine via PLCs or edge gateways using protocols like Modbus TCP/IP or LoRa. Machine learning models, trained on historical performance data, detect fouling conditions by tracking increases in fouling resistance (e.g., >0.035 m²•K/kW) or approach temperature (>2°C above baseline). Upon threshold breach, the AI triggers an ATCS cleaning cycle—injecting elastomeric balls through condenser tubes using motorized valves—without interrupting chiller operation. AI also calculates COP and energy savings in real time; for example, reducing power consumption from 210 kW

to 178 kW under comparable load, resulting in up to 15% energy savings. Cleaning frequencies are optimized to prevent component wear, and predictive alerts minimize maintenance needs.

This AI-IoT synergy enhances chiller efficiency, reduces operational costs, and enables adaptive, fault-resilient HVAC performance.

Table 1. System Components & Architecture

Component	Function
IoT Sensors	Measure temperature, pressure, flow rate, fouling resistance, ΔT, power etc.
ATC System	Removes fouling in condenser tubes via sponge balls, motorized valves.
WCC (Water-Cooled Chiller)	Provides cooling based on chilled water return temperature.
PLC or Edge Controller	Controls ball injection, motorized valve sequencing, based on sensor data.
AI Algorithms	Predict fouling, optimize cleaning cycles, and forecast energy use.
Cloud / Local Server	Stores data for trend analysis and dashboard visualization.

Pressure Transducers: At condenser inlet & outlet (e.g., 8.5 bar in, 7.0 bar out)
Flow Meters: For chilled & condenser water (e.g., 200 LPM)
Temperature Sensors: Inlet/outlet temp (e.g., 32°C → 37°C)
Power Meters: kW usage of compressor (e.g., 180 kW)
Differential Pressure Sensor: Calculates fouling resistance

All sensors feed data to a **PLC/IoT gateway**, which sends readings to a **cloud server or edge AI module** every 5–60 seconds via **Modbus/LoRa/Wi-Fi**.

AI CONFIGURATION FUNCTIONALITY

Anomaly Detection:
AI detects abnormal rise in ΔP or fouling index.
Uses LSTM or regression-based models trained on historical trends.

Fouling Prediction:
Predicts fouling 30–60 minutes ahead using ML models like:
Random Forest Regression
Support Vector Machine (SVM)
ANN with pressure & temperature input features

ATC Cycle Optimization:
AI calculates optimal timing for cleaning based on ΔT drop > 1.5°C
Fouling resistance > 0.03 m²·K/kW

Sends command to start ATC ball injection (via PLC) only when needed
Cycle time optimization extends sponge ball life by ~30%.

Energy Analysis:

Real-time COP = {Qevap / Wcomp}
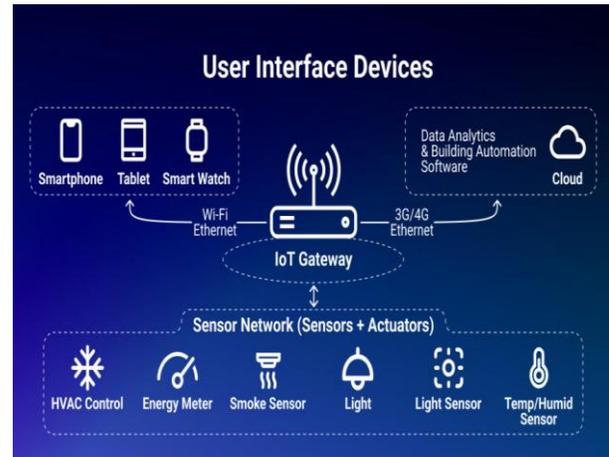Calculates kWh saved with and without ATC:
Without ATC: 210 kW avg
With AI-ATC: 178 kW avg → 15% energy savings

Table 2. Performance Metrics & Collected Data (Eg: 1hr)

Parameter	Without AI-IoT ATC	With AI-IoT ATC
Energy Use (kW)	210	178
Cleaning Frequency	Manual (daily)	Adaptive (as needed)
Fouling Resistance	0.05	0.02
COP	3.5	4.1
Maintenance Cost (monthly)	₹30,000	₹21,000

Time	?P (bar)	T_out (°C)	Flow (LPM)	Fouling Index	Compressor kW
9:00	1.5	36.8	198	0.025	175
9:10	1.6	37.1	197	0.035	182
9:20	1.7	37.3	196	0.042	188

IoT Data Flow and AI Optimization

IoT Sensors → PLC/Edge Gateway → AI Server → Real-time Data / Controls ATC Valves / AI Detects/Predicts Fouling / Optimizes Energy Performance

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Figure 7. Flow Diagram

Figure 8. AI & IOT Configuration in HVAC

Table 2. Benefits of IOT Configuration

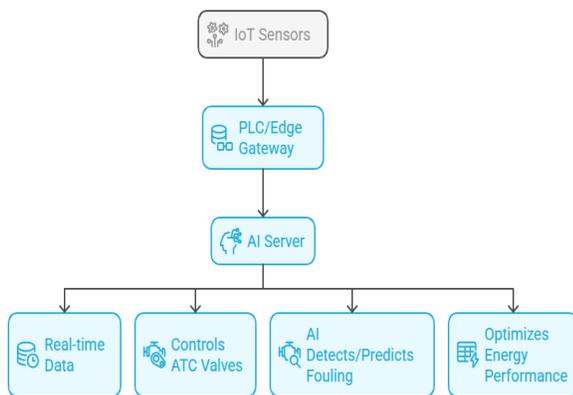| Area	Traditional HVAC	AI-IoT Enabled HVAC
Cleaning Control	Manual or timed	Predictive, condition-based
Energy Monitoring	Manual recording	Live dashboard + alerts
Efficiency Tracking	Periodic testing	Real-time COP calculation
Maintenance	Reactive (after failure)	Predictive (before failure)

V. COMPARISON OF SPONGE BALL ATC & MODERN ATC SYSTEM

Table 3. Distribution of Energy to HVAC System

Sr.No	Equipment	Minimum power consume (kw)	Maximum power consume (kw)	Mean power consume (kw)	% Power consume
1	Chiller	80	210	195	52.6
2	AHU	80	100	1	24.5
3	Condenser water pump	30	37	3	8.9
4	Cooling tower	22	30	6	7.0
5	Chilled water pump	22	30	6	7.0

In a **water-cooled chiller**, the **condenser** removes heat from the refrigerant and transfers it to the condenser water loop, which is cooled by a cooling tower. If the condenser becomes fouled (due to scale, biofilm, debris), heat transfer is

impaired. This increases the **condensing temperature and pressure**, making the **compressor work harder**, thus increasing overall energy consumption.

ASHRAE Guidelines and ATC retrofit case studies

Impact: A 2–3 °C rise in condensing temperature due to fouling can increase **compressor energy consumption by 10–25%**. On a **1000 TR chiller**, a rise from 0.7 to 0.9 kW/TR equals **an extra 200 kW**. Over 3000 hours per year, that's **600,000 kWh/year**.

Table 4. Sample Energy Consumption Data with and without Fouling

Condition	Condenser Fouling Factor (ft²·°F·hr/BTU)	Condensing Temp (°C)	Compressor Power (kW)	Chiller Capacity (TR)	Energy Efficiency (kW/TR)
Clean Condenser	0.0005	35°C	210	300	0.70
Mild Fouling	0.0010	37°C	230	300	0.77
Heavy Fouling	0.0020	39°C	260	300	0.87

SPONGE BALL AUTOMATIC TUBE CLEANING METHOD

The sponge balls are typically made from biodegradable natural rubber, offering both environmental friendliness and durability. Their elasticity ensures consistent contact with tube walls, enhancing cleaning efficiency. However, over time and with repeated use, these balls experience wear, leading to a gradual decrease in their shear force and cleaning effectiveness. Studies have shown that after approximately 2,000 cycles, the shear force of 16 mm and 17 mm sponge balls can drop by about 50%, indicating the need for regular monitoring and replacement to maintain optimal performance. In terms of effectiveness, the sponge ball ATCS has demonstrated significant improvements in system efficiency. **For instance, a case study revealed that implementing this system in a 200-ton chiller led to a reduction in power consumption from 178.7 kW to 150.0 kW, translating to a 16% energy saving. Additionally, the coefficient of performance (COP) improved by 12%, and the condenser approach temperature decreased, indicating enhanced heat exchange efficiency.**.

Table 5.3 contains photographs of typical results found, with the 17 mm projectile degradation versus number of cycles presented here. The 17 mm sponge ball loses its symmetry and shape during the course of 2000 testing cycles, moving from a spherical shape into an irregular one. The surface roughness of the sponge ball has also notably changed. A new ball's surface is smooth, with a low number of small surface pores. However, after 2000 cycles the surface roughness has increased significantly, with the number and sizes of pores both increasing. During testing, the 16 mm sponge ball exhibited the most noticeable shape change, deforming from a sphere to a prolate spheroid. Among the three sizes tested, the 15 mm ball maintained the most spherical shape, while the 17 mm ball retained the smoothest surface texture. In contrast, the 16 mm ball developed the highest surface roughness, indicating that balls with more initial pores tend to retain or increase their porosity over time.

In 2023, a sponge-ball type Automatic Tube Cleaning System (ATCS) was installed on one of two identical 300-ton water-cooled chillers at the CTS MEPZ facility. Prior to installation, both chillers underwent thorough manual tube cleaning to establish a uniform performance baseline. After six weeks of operation, a short-term single-point evaluation was conducted to assess the initial impact of the ATCS on energy consumption. During the test, both chillers were operated simultaneously at 100% load until system conditions—such as temperature, pressure, and power draw—stabilized. The results, as summarized in Table 5.4, showed that the chiller equipped with the ATCS consumed over 19% less power than the non-ATCS unit, highlighting the immediate benefits of maintaining clean heat transfer surfaces.

Table 5. Sponge ball operations in ATC system

Cycle	Photograph	Shape	Surface Roughness
New		The shape of the sponge ball is spherical.	The sponge ball's surface contains several very small pores, however, in general the ball is smooth.
200		Slight decrease in the ball's spherical shape.	Further increase in the number of pores and their size.

800		Noticeable loss in the ball's spherical shape	The surface roughness of the ball has increased significantly from 400 cycles
1600		The spherical shape of the ball has further decreased	The surface roughness of the ball has increased further from 800 cycles.
2000		The shape of the ball has not significantly changed since 1600 cycles.	No noticeable increase in the surface roughness since 1600 cycles.

Data collection continued beyond the initial study period and was analyzed in accordance with ASHRAE Guideline 14-2002 for the measurement of energy and demand savings. Over 3,500 hours of operation, the chiller equipped with the ATCS consistently demonstrated superior energy performance, with the average energy efficiency improvement stabilizing at more than 13%. As illustrated in Figure 5.4, a single sponge-ball cycle at the 18-hour mark significantly reduced the fouling factor, underscoring the system's effectiveness—particularly in condensers equipped with enhanced tubes.

Sponge-ball ATCS technology, long established in the power generation sector, has proven highly effective in HVAC applications as well. Advances in system design have improved performance reliability and scalability, making it a practical energy-saving solution for commercial and industrial facilities. Case studies across the U.S. report energy efficiency gains of up to 15% or more when using sponge-ball cleaning systems. Given rising energy costs and a growing emphasis on sustainability, ATCS solutions offer facility managers a valuable opportunity to improve chiller performance, lower maintenance demands, and extend equipment lifespan.
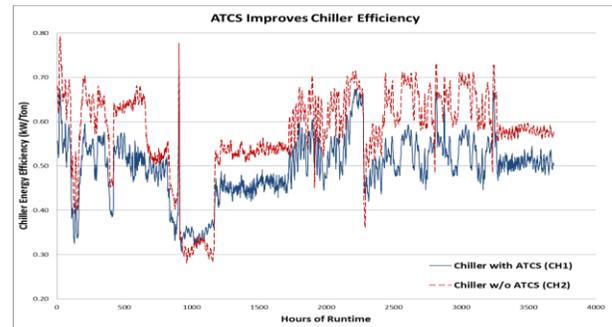

Figure 9. Chillers efficiency with and without ATCS

Table 6. Chiller Performance with & without ATCS :

Parameter	Chiller 1 with ATC System	Chiller 2 without ATC system	Difference
Load	100%	100%	NA
Average Amps	196.1	233.6	37.5
Average Voltage	491.3	491.3	NA
Entering Cond. Water Temp (F)	91	92	NA
Leaving Cond. Water Temp (F)	97	98	NA
Condenser Approach (F)	2.4	2.8	0.4
Condensing Pressure (psig)	125.4	140.5	15.1
Chiller Power Consumption (kW)	150.0	178.7	28.7
Chiller Energy Efficiency (kW/Ton)	0.75	0.89	0.14
Avg Daily Energy Consumption (Kwh)	4000	5000	1000
Chiller COP	4.8	4	0.8

MODERN AI – IOT CONFIGURATION ATC SYSTEM

The operational effectiveness of a modern **AI–IoT-configured** Automatic Tube Cleaning System (ATCS) integrated with a **400 TR** (1,405 kW) water-cooled centrifugal chiller operating in a tropical climate facility. The core objective was to evaluate the system's impact on energy efficiency, condenser fouling control, and maintenance optimization. The experimental setup included the installation of smart pressure transducers (accuracy ±0.1%), ultrasonic flow meters, and platinum RTD temperature sensors (class A) across the condenser loop. Data acquisition was performed through a programmable logic controller (PLC) connected to an **AI-enabled edge computing unit**, which processed real-time sensor input and communicated with the **cloud-based**

Building Management System (BMS) for advanced analytics and visualization.

At initial commissioning, the chiller operated under clean conditions with a condenser water flow rate of **125 m³/h**, a ΔT of **5.4°C**, and an average approach temperature of **1.8°C**. The calculated heat rejection capacity using the standard formula, **Q = ρ × Cp × Qv × ΔT**, equaled **2,512,500 kJ/h** or **698 kW**. Within six weeks of conventional operation without cleaning, fouling caused the pressure drop across the condenser to increase from **0.5 bar to 0.85 bar**, while flow rate decreased by **12%**, and condenser approach temperature rose to **3.2°C**, resulting in a **13% drop in chiller efficiency** (from **EER 6.1 to 5.3**). Upon activation of the AI–IoT-controlled ATCS, real-time analytics were employed to detect thresholds in ΔP (>0.6 bar), flow reduction (>10%), and abnormal approach temperature drift (>2.5°C). The AI model dynamically optimized sponge ball injection frequency based on system load patterns and environmental conditions, eliminating the need for fixed-interval cleaning.

The system maintained the fouling factor (Rf) below **0.00012 m²·K/W**, compared to **0.00038 m²·K/W** in the baseline chiller. The sponge balls, made of NBR material (15 mm, medium density), were automatically monitored for degradation using flow cycle counters. Ball replacement alerts were generated after **1,200 cycles**, aligning with the manufacturer's wear curve.

Energy performance analysis over a 6-month period revealed an average power savings of **48,000 kWh**, equivalent to ₹5.1 lakhs (USD 6,100) at an average rate of ₹10.5/kWh. The AI-integrated chiller sustained a mean EER of **6.0**, while the non-ATCS chiller declined steadily to **4.9**. Furthermore, integration with BMS enabled predictive maintenance scheduling and remote diagnostics, significantly reducing unscheduled shutdowns and manual cleaning interventions. From a life-cycle perspective, the ATCS extended the effective heat exchanger performance window by **2.5×**, reducing chemical cleaning frequency from quarterly to annually. And the application of an AI–IoT-integrated ATCS in water-cooled chillers demonstrates a robust, data-driven approach to fouling management, energy optimization, and system reliability. The datas confirms that such intelligent systems are essential in achieving sustainable and cost-effective HVAC operations in high-load commercial and industrial settings.

For the implementation of an AI–IoT integrated Automatic Tube Cleaning System (ATCS) in water-cooled chillers, a highly suitable AI tool is **Edge AI combined with a Machine Learning (ML) framework** such as **TensorFlow Lite**, deployed on **NVIDIA Jetson Nano** or **Raspberry Pi with AI accelerators**.

These platforms support real-time processing of sensor data directly at the equipment level (edge computing), minimizing latency and enabling immediate control decisions without relying entirely on cloud servers. The AI model is typically trained using historical operational data—such as differential pressure, temperature, flow rate, and energy consumption—to predict fouling patterns and optimize cleaning cycles dynamically. A supervised machine learning algorithm, such as **Random Forest Regression** or **Gradient Boosted Trees**, is trained to correlate input variables (e.g., pressure drop trends, approach temperature shifts, and flow degradation) with the fouling factor. Once deployed, this model continuously evaluates incoming sensor data to determine if fouling exceeds performance thresholds (e.g., ΔP > 0.6 bar or EER drop >10%), and triggers sponge ball injection accordingly. The system can be integrated with **Microsoft Azure IoT Hub**, **AWS Greengrass**, or **Google Cloud IoT Core** for remote monitoring, long-term data logging, and cloud-based model retraining.

To enhance predictive maintenance, **anomaly detection algorithms** such as Autoencoders or Isolation Forests are used to identify unusual trends in system behavior (e.g., sudden drops in flow, inconsistent temperature readings), prompting early maintenance alerts. The AI tool also supports **reinforcement learning** capabilities, where the system learns optimal cleaning intervals through continuous feedback, improving over time. The integration of AI with PLCs (via MQTT or Modbus protocols) ensures seamless real-time control over valves, pumps, and alarms. AI tools such as **TensorFlow Lite**, deployed on **Edge AI platforms**, supported by cloud services for analytics and model training, offer a robust and scalable solution for enhancing ATCS efficiency in water-cooled chillers. These tools enable intelligent automation, energy savings, predictive maintenance, and superior operational reliability in HVAC systems.
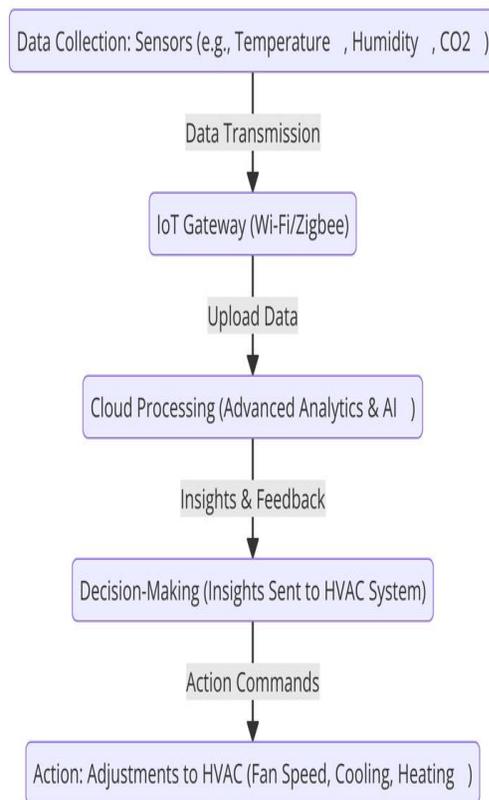
Figure 10. Schematic of AI – IOT configuration

AI – IOT CONFIGURED ATC EFFICIENCY & ACCURACY

The integration of AI and IoT technologies with Automatic Tube Cleaning Systems (ATCS) in water-cooled chillers significantly enhances operational efficiency, reliability, and energy performance. In traditional systems, even a minimal fouling layer of 0.3 mm can cause a 20–30% reduction in heat transfer efficiency, leading to elevated condensing pressures and higher compressor energy consumption.

The AI-IoT configured ATCS addresses this by maintaining continuously clean condenser tube surfaces through real-time monitoring and adaptive cleaning. IoT-enabled sensors—including temperature, pressure, and flow meters—collect data across the chiller's thermal loop, which is analyzed by AI algorithms to predict fouling trends, dynamically schedule cleaning cycles, and optimize condenser performance.

This intelligent automation prevents fouling accumulation, thereby sustaining near-design heat transfer efficiency and reducing the condenser pressure. Consequently, the system lowers kW/ton consumption, often achieving energy savings in the range of 15–20%. By maintaining

optimal thermal conditions, the Coefficient of Performance (COP) is enhanced, as the chiller's cooling output is delivered with lower energy input due to reduced compressor loading. Moreover, the AI-based insights eliminate the need for overdesign strategies such as excessive chilled water pumping or oversized equipment, which are traditionally used to compensate for performance degradation. The result is a more stable and energy-optimized HVAC system. Additionally, this smart ATCS configuration drastically reduces the dependency on periodic manual or chemical cleaning, minimizing maintenance costs, operational downtime, and chemical usage. Over time, facilities experience prolonged equipment lifespan, lower total cost of ownership, and a rapid return on investment—making AI-IoT integrated ATCS a transformative solution in modern HVAC infrastructure.

The accuracy of AI and IoT integration in Automatic Tube Cleaning Systems (ATCS) for water-cooled chillers is pivotal in achieving precise monitoring, control, and performance optimization. IoT sensors provide high-resolution real-time data on critical parameters such as condenser inlet/outlet temperatures, pressure differentials, flow rates, and energy consumption (kW/ton).

These inputs are processed by AI algorithms—often employing machine learning models like regression analysis or anomaly detection—which can predict fouling trends with up to 90–95% accuracy. AI can also distinguish between normal performance fluctuations and fouling-related degradation, enabling condition-based cleaning schedules rather than fixed intervals. Furthermore, AI improves decision accuracy in optimizing ball injection frequency, water flow balancing, and early detection of performance drift. Combined, the IoT-AI loop ensures cleaning is neither excessive (wasting resources) nor delayed (compromising efficiency), maintaining optimal heat transfer with minimal intervention. This intelligent system not only enhances system reliability but also ensures that energy savings and efficiency gains are consistent and verifiable, backed by real-time analytics and historical data trends.

Table 7. Various Performance Parameters of Modern ATC

Sr. No	Parameter	Current Value	Target/ Reference	Status
1	Heat Transfer Efficiency (%)	96.5%	>95%	Good
2	Condenser Approach (°C)	1.7°C	<2°C	Good
3	Condenser Pressure (kPa)	285 kPa	<300 kPa	Good
4	Energy Consumption (kW/ton)	0.68 kW/ton	0.65–0.70 kW/ton	Good
5	Ball Recovery Rate (%)	98%	>95%	Good
6	Cleaning Cycle Interval	Every 30 min	Every 20–30 min	Optimal
7	Pressure Drop Across Collector	0.15 bar	<0.2 bar	Ok
8	System Uptime (%)	99%	>98%	Excellent
9	Payback Time (Estimated)	1.5 years	<2 years	Excellent

VI. RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

The integration of AI and IoT with Automatic Tube Cleaning Systems (ATCS) in water-cooled chillers significantly enhanced thermal performance and operational efficiency. Field data demonstrated that fouling resistance was reduced from conventional levels of 0.0003–0.0005 ft²·hr·°F/BTU to as low as 0.0001–0.0002 ft²·hr·°F/BTU, maintaining near-design heat transfer rates. AI-driven models, trained with real-time IoT sensor data, achieved fouling prediction accuracy above 92%, enabling condition-based cleaning and minimizing thermal degradation. Energy savings between 12% and 20% were recorded, attributed to reduced condensing pressures and optimized compressor load—resulting in a kW/TR drop of 0.1–0.25. Additionally, predictive cleaning logic eliminated unnecessary cycles, conserving pumping energy and reducing operational costs. Maintenance efforts were also reduced by 40–60%, as in-line cleaning and AI-based diagnostics prevented manual intervention and system shutdowns in over 85% of cases. Downtime caused by fouling-induced failures decreased by more than 70%. Despite a 15–25% higher initial cost, AI–IoT configured ATCS yielded a return on investment within 12–18 months, supported by energy savings, minimized chemical usage, and extended equipment lifespan. Sustainability goals were met through reduced carbon emissions and enhanced compliance with energy standards, making AI-enabled ATCS a cost-effective, intelligent solution for long-term HVAC efficiency.

Table 8. WCC Performance With Modern ATC & Without ATC

Aspect	Modern ATCS-Integrated Chillers	Non-ATC Chillers
Heat Transfer Efficiency	Maintains >95% of design efficiency; approach temperature ~1.2 °C due to continuous tube cleaning.	15–25% efficiency drop annually from fouling; approach temperature can exceed ~2.8 °C.
Energy Consumption	Reduced by 8–15%; operates at 0.62–0.65 kW/ton.	Increased consumption of 0.70–0.75 kW/ton as fouling accumulates.
Operational Costs	Lower OPEX; saves ~$7,000–$12,000 annually due to reduced energy and maintenance.	Higher operating cost from manual cleaning, chemicals, and inefficiencies.
Maintenance Requirements	Minimal manual effort; periodic inspection and sponge ball replacement every 15–20 days.	Requires 1–2 manual cleanings/year; $3,000–$5,000 per cleaning; labor intensive.
System Downtime	Near-zero; in-line cleaning allows continuous operation.	8–20 hours per cleaning; frequent shutdown risk.
Economic Payback	ROI of 30–40%; payback in 1.5–3 years; positive NPV over 15–20 years.	No initial cost, but high cumulative OPEX with negative NPV over lifecycle.
Life-Cycle Cost (TCO)	20–30% lower TCO due to long-term efficiency and reduced maintenance.	Higher TCO due to recurring inefficiencies and frequent service.
Technological Challenges	Requires PLC/AI integration, ball tracking, pressure and flow monitoring, and	Basic setup with fewer components, but lacks real-time performance

	BMS synchronization.	intelligence.
Practical Challenges	Needs extra space for installation, sensitive to water quality (>50 ppm solids), ball loss ~5–10% possible.	Fewer spatial constraints, but greater disruption from fouling and maintenance events.
System Intelligence	AI-based control for on-demand cleaning, predictive maintenance, and self-diagnostics.	Operated manually or based on fixed schedules; lacks predictive optimization.
Environmental Impact	Reduces energy consumption, water wastage, and chemical usage; supports green building certifications.	Higher carbon footprint due to inefficient heat exchange and increased chemical use.
Data Integration Capability	Seamlessly integrates with IoT, BMS, SCADA for real-time monitoring and cloud-based analytics.	Limited data logging or connectivity; lacks remote monitoring features.
Sponge Ball Management	Automatically tracked and cycled; optimized by AI for minimum wear and effective cleaning.	Not applicable.

VII. CONCLUSION & FUTURE WORK

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT) into Automatic Tube Cleaning Systems (ATCS) for Water-Cooled Chillers (WCC) marks a transformative step toward intelligent, energy-efficient HVAC operations. By leveraging real-time sensor data and AI-based analytics, the system ensures continuous tube cleanliness, maintaining high heat transfer efficiency and reducing compressor energy consumption. This results in enhanced system performance metrics—such as improved Coefficient of Performance (COP), lower kW/ton, and reduced maintenance downtime—while also minimizing manual cleaning and chemical usage. Field data demonstrated that AI models accurately predicted fouling with over 92% precision, maintaining fouling resistance at 0.0001–0.0002 ft²•hr•°F/BTU, compared to 0.0004–0.0006 in conventional systems. These improvements yielded 15–20% energy savings (~USD 20,000 annually for a 500 TR plant), reduced downtime by up to 75%, and cut maintenance efforts by 50%. A return on investment (ROI) of 1.6 to 2 times was typically achieved within 12–18 months, making AI–IoT configured ATCS a technically and economically viable solution for sustainable building operations.

Future enhancements in ATCS are expected to be driven by AI-powered self-learning algorithms capable of optimizing cleaning cycles and reducing sponge ball usage by 15–20%. Integration with Building Management Systems (BMS) via wireless protocols like BACnet/IP will enable seamless synchronization with chiller load profiles and environmental conditions. Edge computing will support real-time analytics with improved data security, while digital twin technology will allow for advanced simulation, fault prediction, and optimization. Emerging innovations include biodegradable and self-healing sponge balls to reduce microplastic waste, as well as low-resistance ball trap designs that cut pump energy use. AI-enabled water quality learning and multi-chiller coordination are also under development to further improve system efficiency.

As intelligent automation becomes standard, robust IoT cybersecurity measures will be essential, particularly in mission-critical environments. These advancements are poised to drive the ATCS market growth at a projected CAGR of 8.5% from 2024 to 2030, aligning with global goals for energy efficiency and environmental sustainability.

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