



Designation: E1269 – 11 (Reapproved 2018)

Standard Test Method for Determining Specific Heat Capacity by Differential Scanning Calorimetry¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E1269; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the determination of specific heat capacity by differential scanning calorimetry.

1.2 This test method is generally applicable to thermally stable solids and liquids.

1.3 The normal operating range of the test is from -100 to 600°C . The temperature range can be extended, depending upon the instrumentation and specimen holders used.

1.4 Computer or electronic-based instrumentation, techniques, or data treatment equivalent to this test method may be used.

NOTE 1—Users of this test method are expressly advised that all such instruments or techniques may not be equivalent. It is the responsibility of the user of this test method to determine equivalency prior to use.

1.5 This test method is similar to ISO 11357–4, but contains additional methodology not found in that method. Additionally, ISO 11357–4 contains practices not found in this standard. This test method is similar to Japanese Industrial Standard K 7123, but contains additional methodology not found in that method.

1.6 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard.

1.7 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use. Specific precautionary statements are given in Section 9.*

1.8 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E37 on Thermal Measurements and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E37.01 on Calorimetry and Mass Loss.

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2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards*:²

E473 Terminology Relating to Thermal Analysis and Rheology

E967 Test Method for Temperature Calibration of Differential Scanning Calorimeters and Differential Thermal Analyzers

E968 Practice for Heat Flow Calibration of Differential Scanning Calorimeters

E1142 Terminology Relating to Thermophysical Properties

2.2 *ISO Standard*:³

ISO 11357–4 Plastics: Differential Scanning Calorimetry (DSC)—Determination of Specific Heat Capacity

2.3 *Japanese Industrial Standard*:

K 7123 Testing Methods for Specific Heat Capacity of Plastics³

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—Technical terms used in this test method are described in Terminologies E473 and E1142.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 This test method consists of heating the test material at a controlled rate in a controlled atmosphere through the region of interest. The difference in heat flow into the test material and a reference material or blank due to energy changes in the material is continually monitored and recorded.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Differential scanning calorimetric measurements provide a rapid, simple method for determining specific heat capacities of materials.

5.2 Specific heat capacities are important for reactor and cooling system design purposes, quality control, and research and development.

² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

³ Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036, http://www.ansi.org.

6. Interferences

6.1 Since milligram quantities of specimen are used, it is essential that specimens are homogeneous and representative.

6.2 The occurrence of chemical changes or mass loss on heating during the measurement may invalidate the test. Therefore, the temperature range and specimen holders should be chosen so as to avoid these processes.

6.3 Water samples have a special interference. The large heat of evaporation causes the specific heat capacity to be too large if there is too much head space in the sealed crucible. Completely fill the crucible for most accurate results.

7. Apparatus

7.1 *Differential Scanning Calorimeter (DSC)*—The essential instrumentation required to provide the minimum differential scanning calorimetric capability for this test method includes:

7.1.1 *DSC Test Chamber*, composed of the following:

7.1.1.1 *Furnace(s)*, to provide uniform controlled heating (cooling) of a specimen and reference to a constant temperature or at a constant rate within the applicable -100 to 600°C temperature range of this test method.

7.1.1.2 *Temperature Sensor*, to provide an indication of the specimen temperature to ± 10 mK (0.01°C).

7.1.1.3 *Differential Sensor*, to detect heat flow difference between the specimen and reference equivalent to $1\ \mu\text{W}$.

7.1.1.4 A means of sustaining a test chamber environment of inert purge gas at a purge flow rate of 10 to 50 mL/min ± 5 mL/min.

NOTE 2—Typically, 99+ % pure nitrogen, argon, or helium are employed when oxidation in air is a concern. Use of dry purge gas is recommended and is essential for operation at subambient temperatures.

7.1.2 *Temperature Controller*, capable of executing a specific temperature program by operating the furnace(s) between selected temperature limits at a rate of temperature change of 10 to $20^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{min}$ constant to $\pm 0.1^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{min}$ or at an isothermal temperature constant to $\pm 0.1^{\circ}\text{C}$.

7.1.3 *Data Collection Device*, to provide a means of acquiring, storing, and displaying measured and calculated signals. The minimum output signals required for the DSC are heat flow, temperature and time.

7.1.4 While not required, the user may find useful software to perform the mathematical treatments described in this test method.

7.1.5 *Containers* (pans, crucibles, vials, etc., and lids) that are inert to the specimen and reference materials and which are of suitable structural shape and integrity to contain the specimen and reference in accordance with the specific requirements of this test method.

7.1.6 Cooling capability to hasten cool down from elevated temperatures, to provide constant cooling rates of up to $10^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{min}$, to achieve subambient operation, or to sustain an isothermal subambient temperature, or a combination thereof.

7.2 *Balance*, with a capacity of 100 mg or greater to weigh specimens or containers, or both, to ± 10 μg .

8. Reagents and Materials

8.1 Specific heat capacity standard: synthetic sapphire disk, 10 to 100 mg.

NOTE 3—Interlaboratory studies indicate that physical forms of the synthetic sapphire other than disks give lower precision and greater bias in the results.

9. Hazards

9.1 *Safety Precautions*—If a specimen is heated to decomposition, toxic or corrosive products may be released.

9.2 *Technical Precautions*:

9.2.1 The same heating rate should be used for both the calibration and specimen runs.

9.2.2 Precision of heating rate, placement of the specimen holder, use of flat specimen holders, and the establishment of equilibrium are essential. Instrument settings should not be adjusted once a specific heat capacity calibration has been performed.

10. Sampling

10.1 Powdered or granular specimens should be mixed prior to sampling and should be sampled by removing portions from various parts of the container. These portions, in turn, should be combined and mixed to ensure a representative specimen for the determinations.

10.2 Liquid specimens may be sampled directly after stirring. Make sure the crucible is as full as possible if the sample is water or aqueous. Do not exceed the pressure limit for the crucible.

10.3 Solid specimens may be sampled by cutting or slicing with a clean knife or razor blade. Sample uniformity should be ascertained, since segregation within the solid is possible.

NOTE 4—Solid specimens should be so sampled as to maximize contact with the surface of the specimen holder.

10.4 Samples are usually analyzed as received. If some heat or mechanical treatment is applied to the specimen prior to analysis, this treatment should be noted in the report.

11. Calibration

11.1 Specific heat capacity is a quantitative measurement of energy made as a function of temperature. Thus, the instrument used in its measurement must be calibrated in both the temperature and heat flow modes. Since specific heat capacity is not a rapidly changing function of temperature, the instrument's temperature mode is ordinarily calibrated and checked only occasionally. The heat flow information, however, is much more critical and becomes an integral part of the specific heat capacity measurement through the use of a reference material.

11.2 Perform any calibration procedures described by the manufacturer in the operations manual.

11.3 Perform a temperature calibration for the apparatus using Test Method [E967](#).

11.4 Perform a heat flow calibration for the apparatus using Practice [E968](#).

11.5 Heat Flow Calibration:

11.5.1 Synthetic sapphire disk (α -aluminum oxide; alumina) is recommended as a heat flow calibration standard for specific heat capacity measurements for both heating and cooling experiments. Specific heat capacity values for synthetic sapphire are given in [Table 1](#).

NOTE 5—It is possible to use other standard materials or other physical forms of synthetic sapphire, but their use should be noted in the report. The potential adverse impact of increased interfacial resistance encountered with granular/textured samples may be minimized with the use of a powdered synthetic sapphire standard. It is preferred that the physical form of the sample be similar to that of the standard. Synthetic sapphire is usually available from your DSC supplier.

11.5.2 The heat flow calibration may be performed at some regular interval or prior to every specific heat capacity determination or test specimens.

NOTE 6—A frequency of calibration of at least once a day is recommended. Other time intervals may be selected for heat flow calibration but should be noted in the report.

11.5.3 If the heat flow calibration is performed at a regular interval, the calorimetric sensitivity, E , may be calculated using the specific heat capacity values for synthetic sapphire given in [Table 1](#) and the following equation:

$$E = [b/(60 \cdot Dst)] [Wst \cdot Cp(st) + \Delta W \cdot Cp(c)] \quad (1)$$

Refer to [Section 13](#) for the procedure and [Section 14](#) for the list of symbols.

11.5.4 If the heat flow calibration is performed prior to every specific heat capacity determination, it is unnecessary to calculate the calorimetric sensitivity, E . Refer to [Section 13](#) for the procedure.⁴

12. Conditioning

12.1 Specimens and specimen holders for specific heat capacity determinations may be handled in ordinary laboratory environments for screening or qualitative measurements. However, if quantitative data are needed over a wide temperature range, specimen conditioning may be required. Specimens which will be exposed to low temperatures should be protected from moisture. Specimens that will be exposed to very high temperatures should be protected from the effects of oxidation.

12.2 Any volatile specimens suspected of being sensitive to moisture or oxidation should be hermetically sealed in a dry, inert environment. All materials which will come in contact with the specimen should also be purged in a dry, inert environment. Vacuum degassing of specimens to be heated to a very high temperature is recommended.

12.3 Conditioning of nonvolatile specimens run in crimped lid or open pans may be accomplished in the DSC apparatus, using the inert purge stream of the instrument. This conditioning procedure will not protect specimens that are hermetically sealed under normal laboratory atmospheric conditions.

12.4 The specimen should be held at the starting temperature for several minutes before initiation of the temperature

program. An equilibrium time of four minutes is suggested. However, other equilibrium times may be used but shall be reported.

13. Procedure

13.1 *Reference Material*—Synthetic sapphire.

13.1.1 Purge the DSC apparatus with dry nitrogen (or other inert gas) at a flow rate of 10 to 50 ± 5 mL per min throughout the experiment.

13.1.2 Weigh a clean, empty specimen holder plus lid to a precision of ± 0.01 mg. Record as the tare weight.

13.1.3 Position the empty specimen holder plus lid and a reference specimen holder plus lid (weight-matched, if possible) in the DSC apparatus.

NOTE 7—The same reference specimen holder + lid should be used for the sapphire standard run and for the test specimen run.

13.1.4 Heat or cool the DSC test chamber to the initial temperature for the experiment at $20^\circ\text{C}/\text{min}$.

13.1.5 Hold the DSC test chamber isothermally at the initial temperature for at least 4 min to establish equilibrium. Record this thermal curve (refer to [12.4](#)).

13.1.6 Heat the test specimen from the initial to final temperature at a rate of $20^\circ\text{C}/\text{min}$. Continue to record the thermal curve.

NOTE 8—The precision of this test method is enhanced by this high heating rate. Other heating rates may be used but shall be reported.

13.1.7 Record a steady-state isothermal baseline at the upper temperature limit. Refer to [12.4](#).

13.1.7.1 Terminate the thermal curve after this period.

13.1.7.2 Cool the DSC test chamber to ambient temperature.

13.1.8 Place the sapphire standard into the same specimen holder plus lid used in [13.1.2](#).

13.1.9 Weigh sapphire standard and specimen holder plus lid to a precision of ± 0.01 mg and record the weight.

13.1.10 Follow [13.1.4](#) – [13.1.7](#).

NOTE 9—The procedure ([13.1.1](#) – [13.1.9](#)) may be performed at some regular interval, or prior to every specific heat capacity determination of test specimens. Refer to [11.5](#).

13.2 Unknown Specimens—[13.1.1](#) – [13.1.7](#).

NOTE 10—Calculations are simplified if the same specimen holder is used for the empty specimen holder and the specimen plus specimen holder scans. In cases where two different specimen holders have to be used, a correction for the difference in weights of the two specimen holders can be made. Refer to [14.1](#).

13.2.1 Place the test specimen (after conditioning, if necessary) into the empty specimen holder plus lid.

NOTE 11—The specimen size and the instrument sensitivity should be adjusted to give optimum displacement to improve the precision of the measurement. Masses of about 5 to 15 mg for organic liquids and solids and 20 to 50 mg for inorganic specimens are recommended. Low bulk density specimens may be compressed into pellets or melted (if stable) and charged as liquids.

13.2.2 Weigh the specimen plus specimen holder plus lid to a precision of ± 0.01 mg and record the weight.

NOTE 12—Volatile specimens should be charged, hermetically sealed,

⁴ The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to the list of references at the end of this standard.