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Standard Specification for ASTM Reference Fluid for Coolant Tests¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This specification covers a reference ethylene glycol-base test fluid to be used in providing base line data for ASTM coolant test procedures.

1.2 *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.*

1.3 *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.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

D501 Test Methods of Sampling and Chemical Analysis of Alkaline Detergents

D538 Specification for Trisodium Phosphate (Withdrawn 2001)³

D891 Test Methods for Specific Gravity, Apparent, of Liquid Industrial Chemicals

D1078 Test Method for Distillation Range of Volatile Organic Liquids

D1119 Test Method for Percent Ash Content of Engine Coolants

D1120 Test Method for Boiling Point of Engine Coolants

D1121 Test Method for Reserve Alkalinity of Engine Coolants and Antirusts

D1122 Test Method for Density or Relative Density of Engine Coolant Concentrates and Engine Coolants By The Hydrometer

D1123 Test Methods for Water in Engine Coolant Concentrate by the Karl Fischer Reagent Method

D1176 Practice for Sampling and Preparing Aqueous Solutions of Engine Coolants or Antirusts for Testing Purposes

D1177 Test Method for Freezing Point of Aqueous Engine Coolants ⁽²⁰²⁰⁾

D1287 Test Method for pH of Engine Coolants and Antirusts ^{9-b922-408b-bfae-81d8bae51931/astm-d3585-082020}

D1384 Test Method for Corrosion Test for Engine Coolants in Glassware

D1613 Test Method for Acidity in Volatile Solvents and Chemical Intermediates Used in Paint, Varnish, Lacquer, and Related Products

D1881 Test Method for Foaming Tendencies of Engine Coolants in Glassware

D3634 Test Method for Trace Chloride Ion in Engine Coolants

D5827 Test Method for Analysis of Engine Coolant for Chloride and Other Anions by Ion Chromatography

D5931 Test Method for Density and Relative Density of Engine Coolant Concentrates and Aqueous Engine Coolants by Digital Density Meter

E202 Test Methods for Analysis of Ethylene Glycols and Propylene Glycols

3. Chemical Composition Requirements

3.1 The reference test fluid concentrate shall be prepared to conform to the requirements as to chemical composition prescribed in [Table 1](#).

¹ This specification is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D15 on Engine Coolants and Related Fluids and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D15.01 on Reference Test Materials.

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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 The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on [www.astm.org](#).

TABLE 1 Chemical Composition Requirements

NOTE 1—The reference coolant shall be colored blue-green using Alizarine Cyanine Green G Extra 100 % added in the proportion of 0.3 g of dye/gal of coolant.

Ingredient	Mass %	lb/100 gal ^A	kg/m ³
Ethylene glycol	89.86	847.9	1016.0
Diethylene glycol	5.00	47.2	56.5
Sodium tetraborate, pentahydrate	3.06	28.9	34.6
Trisodium phosphate, dodecahydrate	0.30	2.8	3.4
Sodium mercaptobenzothiazole solution (50 mass % aqueous)	0.40	3.8	4.5
Pluronic L-61 ^B			
Water ^C	0.02	0.2	0.2
	1.36	12.8	15.4

^A Based on a test fluid relative density of 1.133 at 60/60°F (15.5/15.5°C)-60/60 °F (15.5/15.5 °C).

^B A nonionic polyol manufactured by BASF Corporation, 100 Cherry Hill Rd., Parsippany, NJ 07054.

^C Calculated value; the total water content (water originally present in the base materials, added water, water of hydration, and water of reaction and quantitative interference by the reaction of the reagent used (in Test Method Methods D1123) with the ingredients) should be adjusted to 4.0 ± 0.2 mass % as the final step in the preparation.

4. Ingredient Requirements

4.1 The materials used to prepare the reference test fluid shall meet the requirements given in **Annex A1 – Annex A5**.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 The data obtained for the reference test fluid are intended to be used by laboratory personnel to determine their capability to perform tests properly. If a particular determination does not fall within the prescribed limits, it has to be assumed that an error occurred in the application of the test procedure.

5.2 The coolant composition given in this specification is not intended to be a commercial product.

6. Chemical and Physical Requirements

6.1 The formulated reference test fluid concentrate shall conform to the requirements for physical and chemical properties prescribed in **Table 2**.

7. Performance Requirements

7.1 The formulated reference test fluid concentrate shall conform to the requirements for laboratory test performance prescribed in **Table 3**.

8. Sampling

8.1 To obtain a sample of the concentrated reference test fluid from the storage container, allow the material to come to room temperature (not below 68°F (20°C)) and shake well before withdrawing the sample.

TABLE 2 Physical and Chemical Requirements

Property	Requirements		ASTM Test Method
	min	max	
pH, concentrate	6.1	6.3	D1287
33 volume % solution	7.7	8.0	
50 volume % solution	7.5	7.8	
Reserve alkalinity, mL	26.5	27.5	D1121
Water content, weight %	3.8	4.2	D1123
Freezing protection:			D1177
—Concentrate	-23°C (-9°F)	-25°C (-13°F)	
—Concentrate	-23°C (-9°F)	-25°C (-13°F)	
—33 volume % solution	-18°C (0°F)	-19°C (-2°F)	
—33 volume % solution	-18°C (0°F)	-19°C (-2°F)	
—50 volume % solution	-36°C (-33°F)	-38°C (-36°F)	
—50 volume % solution	-36°C (-33°F)	-38°C (-36°F)	
Relative Density at 15.6°C	1.131	1.134	D1122, D5931
Relative Density at 15.6 °C	1.131	1.134	D1122, D5931
—at 20°C	1.129	1.132	D891
—at 20 °C	1.129	1.132	D891
Boiling point, °C (°F)	330 (166)	340 (171)	D1120
Ash, weight %	1.4	1.6	D1119
Chloride, ppm	—	25	D3634, D5827

TABLE 3 Performance Requirements^A

Test	Mass Loss, max, mg/Specimen ^B	ASTM Test Method
Corrosion in glassware		D1384
Copper	5	
Solder	5	
Brass	5	
Steel	5	
Cast iron	5	
Aluminum	15	
Foaming	volume 75 mL, max ^C break time 5 s, max ^D	D1881

^A Average data for triplicate tests.

^B The multilaboratory standard deviation has been found to be 1.8 mg for all metals that lose an average of less than 3 mg per specimen. Therefore, results of two properly conducted tests from two different laboratories on samples of the same lot of reference test fluid should not differ by more than 4.1 mg, provided the average loss is less than 3 mg per specimen. The multilaboratory standard deviation has been found to be 59 % of the obtained value on metals that lose an average of more than 3 mg per specimen. Therefore, results of two properly conducted tests from two different laboratories on samples of the same lot of reference test fluid should not differ by more than 167 %, provided the average loss is greater than 3 mg per specimen.

^C The multilaboratory standard deviation for foam volume has been found to be 12.0 mL. Therefore, results of two properly conducted tests from two different laboratories on samples of the same lot of reference test fluid should not differ by more than 33.9 mL.

^D The multilaboratory standard deviation for foam break time has been found to be 0.7 s. Therefore, results of two properly conducted tests from two different laboratories on samples of the same lot of reference test fluid should not differ by more than 2.0 s.

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8.2 All aqueous solutions to be used for test purposes shall be prepared in accordance with Section 5 of Test Method Practice D1176.

9. Mixing Procedure

9.1 Weigh the ingredients according to the batch size required.

9.2 Mix the ethylene and diethylene glycols. [ASTM D3585-08\(2020\)](#)

9.3 Dissolve the sodium tetraborate in the glycol mixture using continuous agitation. <https://standards.itih.ai/standards/astm-d3585-082020>

9.4 Dissolve the trisodium phosphate in the above solution.

9.5 Add the sodium mercaptobenzothiazole solution and continue agitating the mixture until it is homogeneous.

9.6 Slurry the dye into a convenient portion of the solution; then add the dye slurry solution back into the formulation.

9.7 Add the Pluronic L-61 antifoam and mix thoroughly.

9.8 Determine the water content of the formula in accordance with Test Method Methods D1123 and adjust to 4.0 ± 0.2 mass % by the addition of distilled water.

10. Precision and Bias

10.1 For statements on the precision and bias of the various test methods for physical and chemical properties used in this specification, refer to the appropriate ASTM standards.

10.2 For statements on the precision and bias of the performance tests used in this specification, see the footnotes to **Table 3**.

10.3 It should be noted that the requirements listed in **Table 2** on physical and chemical properties, and in **Table 3** on performance, are based on the results of many different laboratories testing the same batch of reference test fluid.

11. Packaging and Storage

11.1 The test fluid concentrate may be affected by light. Therefore, after preparation, it should be packaged in opaque plastic containers or plastic lined metal cans.

11.2 Solutions prepared for testing should also be stored in opaque containers or kept in a cool, dark place to prevent the formation of flocculent precipitates.

11.3 Except when taking a sample, containers should be closed to avoid absorption of moisture from the air.