



Designation: **E104 – 02 (Reapproved 2012) E104 – 20**

Standard Practice for Maintaining Constant Relative Humidity by Means of Aqueous Solutions¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E104; 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.

This standard has been approved for use by agencies of the U.S. Department of Defense.

1. Scope

1.1 This practice describes one method for generating constant relative humidity (rh) environments in relatively small containers.

1.2 This practice is applicable for obtaining constant relative humidities ranging from dryness to near saturation at temperatures spanning from 0 to 50°C.

1.3 This practice is applicable for closed systems such as environmental conditioning containers and for the calibration of hygrometers.

1.4 This practice is not recommended for the generation of continuous (flowing) streams of constant humidity unless precautionary criteria are followed to ensure source stability. (See Section 9.)

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

1.6 **Warning**—Saturated salt solutions are extremely corrosive, and care should be taken in their preparation and handling. There is also the possibility of corrosive vapors in the atmospheres over the saturated salt solutions.~~Caution—Saturated salt solutions are extremely corrosive, and care should be taken in their preparation and handling. There is also the possibility of corrosive vapors in the atmospheres over the saturated salt solutions.~~²

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.* For more specific safety precautionary information see ~~1.5~~1.6 and 10.1.

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.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*³

[D1193 Specification for Reagent Water](#)

[D1356 Terminology Relating to Sampling and Analysis of Atmospheres](#)

2.2 *Other Document:*

~~[DIN50008 “Konstantklimate über waessrigen Loesungen” \(Constant Climates Over Aqueous Solutions\): Part 1: Saturated Salt and Glycerol Solutions.](#)~~⁴

3. Terminology

3.1 ~~*non-hygroscopic material*~~—~~material which neither absorbs nor retains water vapor.~~

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of other terms used in this practice, refer to Terminology [D1356](#).

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D22](#) on Air Quality and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D22.11](#) on Meteorology. Current edition approved April 1, 2012/March 1, 2020. Published July 2012/April 2020. Originally approved in 1951. Last previous edition approved in 2007/2012 as E104 – 02 (2007) (2012). DOI: [10.1520/E0104-02R12-10.1520/E0104-20](#).

² Opila, R., Jr., Weschler, C. J., and Schubert, R., “Acidic Vapors Above Saturated Salt Solutions Commonly Used for Control of Humidity,” *IEEE Trans. Components, Hybrids and Manufacturing Technology*, Vol 12, No. 1, March 1989, pp. 114–120.

³ 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.

TABLE 1 Humidity Fixed Point (HFP) Salt Solutions

HFP Designation	Salt Name	Chemical Symbol	Temperature Range (°C)
HFP 4	Caesium fluoride	CsF	15 to 80
HFP 7	Lithium bromide	LiBr	5 to 80
HFP 12	Lithium chloride	LiCl	5 to 80
HFP 23	Potassium acetate	CH ₃ COOK	10 to 30
HFP 33	Magnesium chloride	MgCl ₂	5 to 80
HFP 43	Potassium carbonate	K ₂ CO ₃	5 to 30
HFP 59	Sodium bromide	NaBr	5 to 80
HFP 70	Potassium iodide	KI	5 to 80
HFP 75	Sodium chloride	NaCl	5 to 80
HFP 85	Potassium chloride	KCl	5 to 80
HFP 98	Potassium sulfate	K ₂ SO ₄	5 to 50

3.1.1 non-hygroscopic material, n—material which neither absorbs nor retains water vapor.

3.2 For definitions of other terms used in this practice refer to Terminology **D1356**.

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 Standard value relative humidity environments are generated using selected aqueous saturated salt solutions.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Standard value relative humidity environments are important for conditioning materials in shelf-life studies or in the testing of mechanical properties such as dimensional stability and strength. Relative humidity is also an important operating variable for the calibration of many species of measuring instruments.

6. Interferences

6.1 Temperature regulation of any solution-head space environment to $\pm 0.1^\circ\text{C}$ is essential for realizing generated relative humidity values within $\pm 0.5\%$ (expected).

6.2 Some aqueous saturated salt solutions change composition following preparation by hydrolysis or by reaction with environmental components (for example, carbon dioxide absorption by alkaline materials). These solutions should be freshly prepared on each occasion of use.

7. Apparatus

7.1 *Container*—The container, including a cover or lid which can be secured airtight, should be made of corrosion resistant, non-hygroscopic material such as glass. A metal or plastic container is acceptable if the solution is retained in a dish or tray made of appropriate material. Refer also to **9.2** for size restrictions.

8. Reagents and Materials

8.1 *Purity of Reagents*—Reagent grade chemicals shall be used for preparation of all standard solutions. Unless otherwise indicated, it is intended that all reagents conform to the specifications of the Committee on Analytical Reagents of the American Chemical Society where such specifications are available.⁴ Other grades may be used, provided it is first ascertained that the reagent is of sufficiently high purity to permit its use without lessening the accuracy of the determination.

8.1.1 Saturated salt solutions may be prepared using either amorphous or hydrated reagents (that is, reagents containing water of crystallization). Hydrated reagents are often preferred to amorphous forms for their solvating characteristics.

8.2 *Purity of Water*—Reagent water produced by distillation, or by ion exchange, or reverse osmosis followed by distillation shall be used. See Specification **D1193**.

8.3 *Nomenclature for Salts*—The proper nomenclature for the Humidity Fixed Point (HFP) salt chemicals and the corresponding acceptable temperature ranges are provided in **Table 1**. The scale encompasses relative humidity ranges from 2 % to 98.5 % and a temperature range from 5°C to 80°C. When the salt solutions are used at temperatures above 40°C, the risk of salt crystals settling on the surface rather than being immersed in the solution must be taken into account.

⁴Published by Deutsches Institut für Normung, 4-10 Burggrafenstrasse Postfach 1107, D-1000 Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany. Also available from ANSI Publication Office, New York, NY.

⁴*Reagent Chemicals, American Chemical Society Specifications, ACS Reagent Chemicals, Specifications and Procedures for Reagents and Standard-Grade Reference Materials*, American Chemical Society, Washington, DC. For suggestions on the testing of reagents not listed by the American Chemical Society, see *Analar Standards for Laboratory Chemicals*, BDH Ltd., Poole, Dorset, U.K., and the *United States Pharmacopeia and National Formulary*, U.S. Pharmaceutical Pharmacopeial Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.