



Designation: D3934 – 20

Standard Test Method for Flash/No Flash Test—Equilibrium Method by a Closed-Cup Apparatus¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D3934; 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.

INTRODUCTION

ASTM Flash Point Test Methods **D56**, **D93**, **D3278**, and **D3941** are specified by government departments and agencies for determining whether liquids are flammable or combustible. These classifications are used as the basis for regulating the handling and shipping of liquids.

ISO/TC 35, Paints and Varnishes, and ISO/TC 28, Petroleum and Related Products, have issued ISO 1516 as a common standard, applicable to paints, varnishes, petroleum, and related products. This method is similar to ISO 1516 but uses standard ASTM cups and style and format. Test Methods **D3278** and **D3828** operate on the equilibrium principle by using the Setaflash tester that has a temperature-control device.

This test method does not determine the finite flash point but whether or not flashing occurs at a single specified temperature. The latter determination is made more accurate by ensuring that the test is carried out only when the material under test and the air/vapor mixture above it are in approximate equilibrium at the specified temperature.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the determination of whether a liquid complies with the closed-cup flash point requirements in government regulations, or in specifications, or as agreed between the purchaser and the seller.

1.2 This test method is limited to a temperature range between 0 and 110°C (32 and 230°F).

1.3 The values stated in inch-pound units are to be regarded as standard. The values given in parentheses are mathematical conversions to SI units that are provided for information only and are not considered standard.

1.4 **Warning**—Mercury has been designated by many regulatory agencies as a hazardous substance that can cause serious medical issues. Mercury, or its vapor, has been demonstrated to be hazardous to health and corrosive to materials. Use caution when handling mercury and mercury-containing products. See the applicable product Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for additional information. The potential exists that selling mercury or mercury-containing products, or both,

is prohibited by local or national law. Users must determine legality of sales in their location.

1.5 This standard is used to measure and describe the response of materials, products, or assemblies to heat and flame under controlled conditions, but does not by itself incorporate all factors required for fire hazard or fire risk assessment of the materials, products, or assemblies under actual fire conditions.

1.6 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.

1.7 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
D56 Test Method for Flash Point by Tag Closed Cup Tester

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D01 on Paint and Related Coatings, Materials, and Applications and is the direct responsibility of ASTM Subcommittee D01.21 on Chemical Analysis of Paints and Paint 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.

D93 Test Methods for Flash Point by Pensky-Martens Closed Cup Tester

D3278 Test Methods for Flash Point of Liquids by Small Scale Closed-Cup Apparatus (Withdrawn 2020)³

D3828 Test Methods for Flash Point by Small Scale Closed Cup Tester

D3941 Test Method for Flash Point by the Equilibrium Method With a Closed-Cup Apparatus

E1 Specification for ASTM Liquid-in-Glass Thermometers

E1137 Specification for Industrial Platinum Resistance Thermometers

E2251 Specification for Liquid-in-Glass ASTM Thermometers with Low-Hazard Precision Liquids

E2877 Guide for Digital Contact Thermometers

2.2 *ISO Standard:*

ISO 1516 Paints, varnishes, petroleum, and related products—Flash/no-flash test—Closed cup equilibrium method⁴

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *flash point, n*—the lowest temperature corrected to a pressure of 760 mm Hg (101.3 kPa) (1013 millibars) at which application of an ignition source causes the vapor of the specimen to ignite under specified conditions of test.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 A specimen in a closed cup of standard design is heated in a suitable liquid bath. After the specimen has been maintained under equilibrium conditions for at least 10 min at the lowest allowable flash point temperature (within a permitted tolerance) of the specification or regulation, it is determined whether the specimen does or does not flash.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method ensures that before the flash test is run the air/vapor space above the specimen has attained a saturation concentration of vapor by using standard closed cups under equilibrium conditions. The saturation concentration of the vapors will be attained at some temperature between that of the liquid and the cooler apparatus lid. However, this temperature will be close to the temperature of the specimen after it has been maintained at the specified temperature for at least a 10-min period. This test method does not provide for the determination of the actual flash point but only whether a specimen does or does not flash at a specified temperature.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Test Cups*, specified in Test Methods **D56** (Tag) and **D93** (Pensky-Martens). Remove the test cup assembly (including lid and specimen thermometer) from the Tag and Pensky-Martens apparatus to permit either to be used in a separate water bath.

NOTE 1—If a stirrer is fitted to the test cup, it shall be operated during the heating period but must be stopped during the flashing determination. If a stirrer originally fitted to the test cup is removed, the aperture in the cover shall be securely plugged before starting the test.

6.2 *Liquid Bath*, capable of being adjusted to the required specification temperature and of adequate heat capacity to meet the requirements of the test. A bath fitted with a stirrer and an adjustable thermostat is convenient (see 9.2).

NOTE 2—The bath should be fitted with a cover, especially when the specified temperature is above 160°F. At about this temperature the inerting effect of the water vapor may prevent or delay the flashing of the liquid under test.

6.3 *Thermometers*—Standard thermometers as specified in Test Methods **D56** and **D93**. Alternative temperature measuring devices are permitted providing they have a similar response time and meet the respective performance and immersion depth specifications of thermometers listed in Specification **E1**. See Specifications **E1137** and **E2251**, and Guide **E2877** when selecting alternative temperature measuring devices. One thermometer shall be used to measure the temperature of the water bath and one shall be used for measuring the temperature of the specimen in the cup.

NOTE 3—The thermometers for the water bath should be mounted in the bath at the correct level of immersion for which they are specified in Specification **E1**.

6.4 *Support*, for holding the test cup in the liquid bath so that the cover and upper edge are horizontal and the cup is immersed in direct contact with the liquid in such a position that the level of the specimen in the cup is the same as that of the liquid in the water bath.

6.5 *Shield*—A three-sided shield open in the front, each side 18 in. (460 mm) wide and 24 in. (610 mm) high, is recommended.

7. Reagents and Materials

7.1 *Water or a 1 + 1 Mixture of Water and Ethylene Glycol* may be used as the bath liquid.

8. Preparation of Sample

8.1 Obtain a representative sample of the product under test and keep it in an airtight container.

8.2 Because of the possibility of loss of volatiles, the sample shall receive only the minimum treatment to assure uniformity. After removal of the specimen, immediately close the sample container tightly to ensure that no volatile flammable components escape from the container (otherwise a new sample may be necessary if further testing is required).

8.3 Do not open containers unnecessarily. Do not make transfers unless the sample temperature is at least 10°C (20°F) below the flash point.

8.4 Discard samples in leaky containers.

8.5 Do not store samples in plastic (polyethylene, polypropylene, etc.), since volatile material may diffuse through the walls of the bottles.

9. Preparation of Apparatus

9.1 Support the cup and liquid bath on a level, steady table. Unless tests are made in a draft-free room or compartment,

³ The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.

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