



Designation: D5303 – 20

# Standard Test Method for Trace Carbonyl Sulfide in Propylene by Gas Chromatography<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D5303; 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 ( $\epsilon$ ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

## 1. Scope\*

1.1 This test method covers the determination of traces of carbonyl sulfide (COS) in propylene. It is applicable to COS concentrations from 0.5 mg/kg to 4.0 mg/kg (parts per million by mass). See [Note 1](#).

NOTE 1—The lower limit of this test method is believed to be below 0.1 mg/kg, depending on sample size and sensitivity of the instrumentation being used. However, the cooperative testing program was conducted in the 0.5 to 4.0 range due to limitations in preparing commercial test mixtures.

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

1.3 *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 hazards statements are given in [Section 9](#).

1.4 *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:*<sup>2</sup>

- [D1835 Specification for Liquefied Petroleum \(LP\) Gases](#)
- [D3609 Practice for Calibration Techniques Using Permeation Tubes](#)
- [D4468 Test Method for Total Sulfur in Gaseous Fuels by](#)

<sup>1</sup> This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D02 on Petroleum Products, Liquid Fuels, and Lubricants and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D02.D0.03 on Propylene.

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<sup>2</sup> For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org), or contact ASTM Customer Service at [service@astm.org](mailto:service@astm.org). For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

- [Hydrogenolysis and Rateometric Colorimetry](#)
- [E355 Practice for Gas Chromatography Terms and Relationships](#)
- [E840 Practice for Using Flame Photometric Detectors in Gas Chromatography](#)

## 3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions:*

3.1.1 Additional terminology related to the practice of gas chromatography can be found in [Practice E355](#).

3.1.2 *liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), n*—hydrocarbon gases that can be stored or handled in the liquid phase through compression or refrigeration, or both.

3.1.2.1 *Discussion*—LPG's generally consist of C<sub>3</sub> and C<sub>4</sub> alkanes and alkenes or mixtures thereof and containing less than 10 % by volume of higher carbon number material. Vapor pressure does not normally exceed 2000 kPa at 40 °C.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.2.1 *propane/propene mixtures, n*—mixtures primarily composed of propane and propene where one of these components is usually in the concentration range of 30 % to 85 % by mass with the other comprising the majority of the remainder. Commercial Propane in [Specification D1835](#) is typically this sort of product mixture.

3.2.1.1 *Discussion*—Other components may be present, usually at less than 10 % by mass.

## 4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 A procedure is given for removing a sample from the sample cylinder, separating COS from propylene, detecting COS, calibrating the detector, quantitating COS content in the sample, and assaying the gas standard. General comments and recommended techniques are given.

4.2 A relatively large volume of sample is injected into a gas chromatograph having a single packed column, operated isothermally at 10 °C to 50 °C, that separates COS from propylene. COS is detected with a flame photometric detector.

4.3 Calibration data, based on peak areas, are obtained using a known gas standard blend of COS in the range expected for the sample. The COS peak area in the sample is measured and the concentration of COS calculated.

\*A Summary of Changes section appears at the end of this standard

4.4 The COS gas standard blend is assayed prior to use for calibration.

## 5. Significance and Use

5.1 In processes producing propylene, COS usually remains with the C<sub>3</sub> hydrocarbons and must be removed, since it affects product quality. COS acts as a poison to commercial polymerization catalysts, resulting in deactivation and costly process downtime.

5.2 Accurate gas chromatographic determination of trace COS in propylene involves unique analytical problems because of the chemical nature of COS and idiosyncracies of trace level analyses. These problems result from the reactive and absorptive nature of COS, the low concentration levels being measured, the type of detector needed, and the interferences from the propylene sample matrix. This test method addresses these analytical problems and ways to properly handle them to assure accurate and precise analyses.

5.3 This test method provides a basis for agreement between two laboratories when the determination of trace COS in propylene is important. The test method permits several calibration techniques. For best agreement between two labs, it is recommended that they use the same calibration technique.

## 6. Interferences

6.1 Hydrogen sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S) or sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) can be present in the propylene and must be separated from COS. (See [Note 2](#).)

NOTE 2—H<sub>2</sub>S and SO<sub>2</sub> are separated from COS with the Carpack BHT 100 columns or with the Chromosil 300 column.

## 7. Apparatus

7.1 *Gas Chromatograph*—Any gas chromatograph (GC) equipped with a flame photometric detector/electrometer system (FPD), as described in [7.2](#), may be used. A GC/FPD equipped with an output signal linearizer is also permitted.

7.2 *Detector System*, flame photometric detector, either single or dual burner design. Noise level must be no more than one recorder chart division (see [7.5](#)). The signal for COS must be at least twice the noise level at the 0.1 mg/kg level. A discussion of this detector is presented in Practice [E840](#). The electrometer used with the detector must have a sensitivity of 10<sup>-12</sup> A full scale on a 1 mV recorder to achieve optimum detectability at lowest levels.

NOTE 3—The sulfur detector based on the chemiluminescence principle (GC\_SCD) has shown good results for COS. However, no precision is determined for this detector in this application. The achievable lower limit for COS in Propylene is 0.04 mg/kg (30 ppbMol).

7.3 *Column*—Any column that will effect the complete separation of COS from propylene and other compounds normally present in propylene concentrates, and that is sufficiently inert to preclude the loss of COS, may be used. Columns that meet these criteria, and that were used in the cooperative study for this test method, are listed in [Table 1](#).

7.4 *Sample Inlet System*—Any gas sampling valve or gas tight syringe that will permit introduction of up to 5.0 mL to the column, and that will not cause any loss of COS, is suitable.

**TABLE 1 Suitable GC Columns and Temperatures<sup>A</sup>**

Column Number	Size, m × mm	Tubing <sup>B</sup> Type	Packing and Oven Temperature, °C
1	0.9 × 3.78	SS	Porapak R, 80/100 Mesh; 47
2	1.4 × 3.78	TFE <sup>C</sup>	Carbopack BHT 100, 40/60 Mesh; 25,40 <sup>D</sup>
3	1.8 × 3.78	TFE	Carbopack BHT 100; 25,30 <sup>D</sup>
4	1.8 × 3.78	TFE	Porapak Q, AW, 50/80 Mesh (Above in Series); 74
5	2.4 × 3.78	SS	Carbopack BHT 100; 47
6	2.8 × 3.78	TFE	Carbopack BHT 100, 40/60 Mesh; 50
7	3.6 × 3.78	TFE	Carbopack BHT 100, 40/60 Mesh; 50
8	4.3 × 3.78	TFE	Chromosil 300; 50 <sup>E</sup>
9	6.1 × 3.78	TFE	Hayes Sep Q, 80/100 Mesh; 65

<sup>A</sup> These columns have been tested cooperatively and found suitable for use with this test method.

<sup>B</sup> 316 SS Tubing for columns or connection of sample cylinder to sampling system can be TFE lined internally to improve on system stability. This tubing is commercially available from chromatography vendors.

<sup>C</sup> TFE—Homopolymer of tetrafluoroethylene.

<sup>D</sup> Identical columns used by different labs at different temperatures.

<sup>E</sup> Propyne (methyl acetylene) can interfere with COS using this column.

7.5 *Recorder*—Any strip chart recorder with a full scale range of 1 mV, a maximum full scale balance time of 2 s, and a minimum chart speed of 0.5 cm/s, may be used.

7.6 *Data Handling System*—Any commercially available GC integrator or GC computer system capable of accurately integrating the area (uVs) of the COS peak is satisfactory. Data systems that will linearize the logarithmic output of the FPD are also satisfactory.

7.7 *Sample Cylinders*, 300 mL capacity or larger, fluorocarbon lined stainless steel, Type DOT 3E, 12409 kPa (1800 psi) working pressure.

## 8. Reagents and Materials

8.1 *Air*, zero grade.

8.2 *Carbonyl sulfide (COS)*, lecture bottle, 97.5 % min. (**Warning**—Toxic! See Section [9](#), Hazards.)

8.3 *Gas Calibration Blends*, 1 mg/kg to 10 mg/kg COS in either nitrogen, argon, propylene or a propylene/argon mixture. They can be obtained from any commercial supplier or prepared as shown in [Appendix X1](#) or Test Method [D4468](#).

8.4 *Gas Sampling Syringe*, 0.1 mL, 1.0 mL, and 5.0 mL.

8.5 *Gas Sampling Valve and Sample Loops*, fluorocarbon or 316 stainless steel. See Footnote B of [Table 1](#).

8.6 *Glass Vials*, 125 cm.

8.7 *Hydrogen*, pure grade, 99.9 %.

8.8 *Isooctane* (2,2,4-trimethylpentane), sulfur free, minimum purity 99 mol %. (**Warning**—Flammable! Health Hazard.)

8.9 *Nitrogen or Helium*, 99.999 % min.

8.10 *TFE-fluorocarbon septa and aluminum seals for vials*.

## 9. Hazards

9.1 Carbonyl sulfide is toxic and narcotic in high concentrations, and upon decomposition can liberate hydrogen

sulfide. Exposure to dangerous concentrations of COS is most likely when handling the pure component for preparation of standard blends for assaying the COS calibration gas standards.

## 10. Sampling

10.1 Supply samples to the laboratory in high pressure cylinders coated internally with TFE-fluorocarbon, or otherwise specially treated to reduce or eliminate loss of COS due to reaction with the cylinder walls.

10.2 The sample cylinder and contents should be at room temperature prior to sampling to the chromatograph. Test samples as soon as possible after receipt.

NOTE 4—Cooperative studies indicate that the measured value for COS will decrease with time.

10.3 Place the sample cylinder in a vertical position and use either of the following two techniques to obtain a vaporized sample from the container for introduction into the GC.

10.3.1 Connect the sample cylinder to the sampling valve on the chromatograph, using a minimum length of 316 ss tubing, so that sample is withdrawn from the bottom of the cylinder. Adjust the flow rate from the sample cylinder so that complete vaporization of the liquid occurs at the cylinder valve. A flow rate of 5 bubbles/s to 10 bubbles/s through a water bubbler placed at the sample vent is sufficient (see Note 5). Turn the sampling valve to the “flush” position and flush for approximately 15 s. Shut off the cylinder valve and allow the pressure to drop to atmospheric.

NOTE 5—If the flow rate is too fast, warming of the valve can be required to avoid freezing and to ensure complete vaporization of the sample.

10.3.2 Alternatively, obtain a sample with a gas tight syringe. A convenient way to do this is to use flexible plastic tubing to connect the bottom of the sample cylinder to the water bubbler and then to pierce the tubing with the syringe needle after flow is established.

## 11. Preparation of Apparatus

11.1 Install in the GC according to the manufacturer’s instructions any of the columns that meet the criteria in 7.3. Set the instrument conditions as follows:

11.1.1 *Oven Temperature*, as determined by column used,

11.1.2 *Detector*, 100 °C to 200 °C, and

11.1.3 *Injector*, 100 °C to 150 °C.

## 12. Calibration

12.1 Three methods of calibration are permitted. These are the Standard Sample Method (see 12.2), the Permeation Tube Method (see 12.3) and Blend Preparation Techniques (see 12.4). Obtain a calibration standard according to one of these methods, which are described below. Then follow the procedure in 13.1 – 13.4 and the calculations described in 12.5.

12.2 *Standard Sample Method*—Purchase a certified commercial calibration sample of 10 mg/kg COS in propylene, or other suitable matrix gas such as nitrogen, argon, or a propylene/argon mixture. If an inert gas is chosen, the user must ensure that the column is actually effecting a separation of COS and propylene. Establish a calibration curve with the

standard sample using either a gas syringe or different size sample loops. For example, assume the normal sample size for the analysis is 1.0 mL and the calibration range to be established is 0.5 mg/kg to 5 mg/kg of COS. Establish a calibration curve by injecting the volumes of a 10 mg/kg standard sample shown in the first column of the table below. The equivalent concentration of COS in a 1.0 mL sample would be that shown in the second column:

Standard Sample	Equivalent Concentration, COS mg/kg
0.05	0.5
0.10	1.0
0.20	2.0
0.30	3.0
0.40	4.0
0.50	5.0

12.3 *Permeation Tube Method*—Refer to Practice D3609 for directions on using permeation tubes.

12.4 *Blend Preparation Techniques*—Techniques for the preparation and assay verification of calibration blends in the laboratory are described in Appendix X1 and Appendix X2. Also, a technique using a moving piston graduated cylinder apparatus, that is described in the calibration section of Test Method D4468, can be used. However, some laboratories have found that the preparation of such blends is far from easy, and successful efforts require considerable knowledge and experience.

12.5 *Quantitation*—The flame photometric detector responds logarithmically to the mass of the sulfur present in the flame. Some GC/FPD systems are programmed to linearize logarithmic data, and with such systems the output can be correlated directly with the COS concentration, using a single point calibration. Calculate a calibration factor,  $F$ , in accordance with (Eq 1) below:

$$F = CIA \quad (1)$$

where:

$F$  = calibration factor,

$C$  = concentration, mg/kg, of COS in this test method, and

$A$  = area (uVs) of the COS peak in this test method.

$F$  will be used in (Eq 2) in 14.1.1. However, if a linearizer is not used, or if the data system does not have a provision to handle logarithmic output, use the method in 12.5.1 or the alternate in 12.5.2, below:

12.5.1 Calculate the nanogram (ng) amounts of sulfur, as described in Appendix X3, for each injection of the standard, and plot the natural logarithm ( $1n$ ) of peak area versus the  $1n(\text{ng})$  of sulfur, as illustrated in Table 2 and Fig. 1. The plot should be a straight line.

12.5.2 Alternatively, plot the concentration of COS in mg/kg versus the square root of the peak area. This plot should also be a straight line.

## 13. Procedure

13.1 Using either the gas sampling valve or a gas tight syringe, as described in 10.3, inject the sample into the gas chromatograph.

13.2 Record the response of the FPD on the strip chart recorder as the COS elutes from the column.

TABLE 2 Example of COS Calibration Data<sup>A</sup>

NOTE 1—COS Standard (3.00 ng S/cm<sup>3</sup>).

Amount of Standard Injected (cm <sup>3</sup> )	Amount of Standard Injected (ng S)	y <sup>B</sup> (peak area units)
3.0	9.0	53
3.0	9.0	51
2.5	7.5	39
2.5	7.5	38
2.0	6.0	25
2.0	6.0	23
1.5	4.5	18
1.5	4.5	16
1.0	3.0	10
1.0	3.0	9
0.5	1.5	3
0.5	1.5	4

<sup>A</sup> Correlation coefficient of fit ( $r$ ) = 0.9952:  
 $m$  = slope (detector response factor) = 1.4920,  
 $y$  = peak area units,  
 $z$  = nanograms of sulfur as COS injected, and  
 $b$  = intercept = 1.8394.

<sup>B</sup> Calibration equation:  $y = bz^m$ .

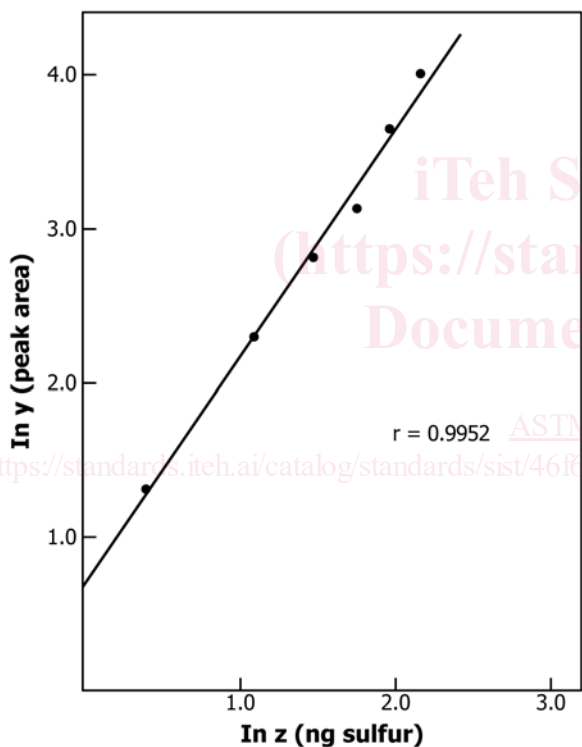
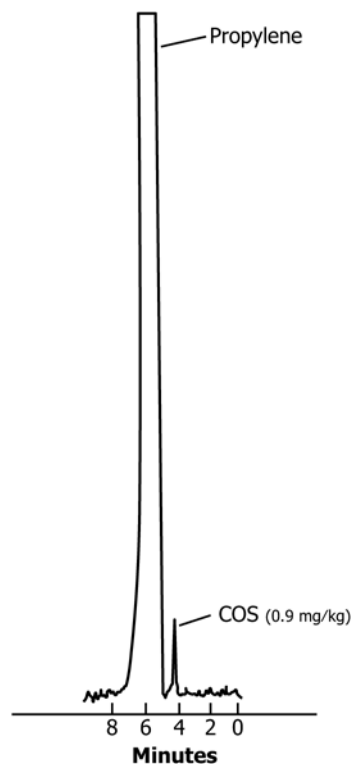


FIG. 1 COS Calibration Plot

13.3 Alternatively, obtain the computer or integrator output of COS retention time and peak area.

13.4 Obtain duplicate chromatograms of the sample. Fig. 2 illustrates a typical analysis using a Carpack BHT-100 column.



NOTE 1—Carpack BHT-100 column.

FIG. 2 Chromatogram of COS in Propylene

#### 14. Calculation

14.1 Depending on the method of calibration used (see Section 12), determine the concentration of COS in the sample.

14.1.1 If the system provides a linearized output, determine COS concentration according to (Eq 2), below:

$$COS, \text{ mg/kg} = F \times S \quad (2)$$

where:

$F$  = calibration factor from (Eq 1), and

$S$  = area (uVs) of the COS peak from the sample.

14.1.2 If a calibration curve of  $1n$  peak area versus  $1n$ (ng) sulfur was used (see 12.5.1), then determine the concentration of COS as shown in Appendix X1.

14.1.3 If a calibration curve of concentration versus log peak area was used (see 12.5.2), then determine the COS concentration as follows:

14.1.3.1 Calculate the log of the area of the COS peak of sample.

14.1.3.2 Take the COS concentration directly from the curve using the log value from 14.1.3.1.

NOTE 6—If a calibration method is used that gives results in cm<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>3</sup> (ppm by volume), such as that in Test Method D4468, then results must be converted to mg/kg. Use the following formula to do this: