



Designation: **D7938–15** **D7938 – 21**

Standard Practice for Sampling of C-14 in Gaseous Effluents¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D7938; 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 The intended use of this practice is for sampling of gasses containing ^{14}C in inorganic, organic or particulate forms. This sampling practice captures the ^{14}C in a media that can be submitted to a laboratory for analysis, typically by liquid scintillation counting (LSC)

1.2 This practice does not include the needed steps for the liberation of ^{14}C from the media on which it was adsorbed or those for the preparation for LSC sample preparation in the laboratory prior to liquid scintillation analysis. This practice does not include the methodology used to analyze the prepared samples by LSC.

1.3 The overall ^{14}C analytical detection capability is impacted by a number of factors including the volume sampled, the method used to desorb the ^{14}C from the media, and the analytical method used to measure ^{14}C from the media. This practice only directly addresses the volume of the gas stream from which any present ^{14}C would be adsorbed.

1.4 The values stated in pCi units are to be regarded as standard given the reporting requirements of the U.S. NRC Regulatory Guide 1.21. The Bq values given in parenthesis are mathematical conversions to SI units that are provided for information only and are not considered standard. Other values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard.

1.5 *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.*

1.6 *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

[D1129 Terminology Relating to Water](#)

[D7282 Practice for Set-up, Calibration, and Quality Control of Instruments Used for Radioactivity Measurements](#)

[D7902 Terminology for Radiochemical Analyses](#)

2.2 U.S. NRC Publications:³

[U.S. NRC Regulatory Guide 1.21 “Measuring, Evaluating, and Reporting Radioactive Material in Liquid and Gaseous Effluents and Solid Waste,” revision 2, June 2009](#)

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D19 on Water and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D19.04 on Methods of Radiochemical Analysis. Current edition approved Dec. 15, 2015/Dec. 15, 2021. Published February 2016/February 2022. Originally approved in 2015. Last previous edition approved in 2015 as D7938 – 15. DOI: [10.1520/D7938-15.10.1520/D7938-21](https://doi.org/10.1520/D7938-15.10.1520/D7938-21).

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 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, <http://www.nrc.gov>.

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 For definitions of terms used in this standard, refer to Terminologies [D1129](#) and [D7902](#).

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 *organic ¹⁴C, n*—any gaseous, chemical ¹⁴C form (including CO) that is not particulate and not CO₂.

3.2.1.1 Discussion—

Although no specific organic form is determined, the major contributors are likely to be CH₄, C₂H₆, C₂H₄, CO, and C₂H₂.

3.2.2 *inorganic ¹⁴C, n*—the gaseous, chemical form of ¹⁴C as CO₂.

3.2.2.1 Discussion—

These chemical form categorizations are based on U.S. NRC Regulatory Guide 1.21.

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 A sample of a flowing gaseous stream is extracted at a flow rate of 30 to 3000 mL/min. The sample is ~~filtered~~, filtered and split into two parallel flow paths. One flow path is passed through a furnace to convert all carbon to CO₂. This will yield a total ¹⁴C content of the sample. The other flow path collects only the CO₂ fraction of the gaseous stream. This yields the inorganic ¹⁴C content of the gaseous stream. The calculated difference between the measured total and inorganic carbon content is the organic content (U.S. NRC Regulatory Guide 1.21). The concentration of ¹⁴C in the particulate matter may also be determined.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This practice was developed⁴ for the purpose of sampling gaseous effluent streams from a facility that releases ¹⁴C in either organic or inorganic forms.

5.1.1 For many years ¹⁴C was not included in gaseous and liquid effluent measurements used for effluent dose calculations at nuclear power facilities. U.S. NRC Regulatory Guide 1.21 now requires ¹⁴C analysis (either estimated by calculation or actual measurement) and its impact on annual dose in the environs of nuclear plants be evaluated. Based on the revisions to the Regulatory Guide and NRC guidance to licensees, ¹⁴C activity will need to be reported and evaluated for dose contribution based on the activity concentration and chemical form of the ¹⁴C in the release.

5.2 While ¹⁴C releases may be estimated, the measurement of actual ¹⁴C emissions provides a more reliable and accurate means of reporting emissions. The chemical form of ¹⁴C that yields the greatest dose significance due to uptake by living organisms is the inorganic form. Thus the distribution of ¹⁴C chemical forms in plant effluents is important in assessing the overall dose impact.

5.3 Use of this sampling practice has identified that for pressurized water reactors (PWRs) >90 % of all ¹⁴C released may be in the *organic* form during operation, and for boiling water reactors (BWRs) <30 % of all ¹⁴C released may be in the *organic* form during operation.

5.3.1 Some power plants have catalytic hydrogen recombiners in the waste gas processing system. These can also oxidize organic carbon to CO₂, increasing the percentage of ¹⁴CO₂ in the effluent release.

5.3.2 During refueling outages, oxidizing conditions exist in the reactor cavity due to air saturation and radiolytic reactions by the nuclear fuel. The combination of these two effects has been shown to increase the ¹⁴CO₂ content of the sampled atmosphere inside the containment building.

5.4 The sampling methodology described in this practice is not capable of discriminating between *different* organic forms of ¹⁴C.

6. Interferences

6.1 Based on the chemical methodology used in this sampling practice, interference from non-volatile radionuclides is eliminated.

⁴ Holtzclaw, J., "Sample and Analysis Protocol for ¹⁴C in Gaseous Effluents," Radioactive Effluent Technical Specifications (RETS) and Radiological Environmental Monitoring Programs (REMP) Workshop, San Jose, CA, June 28–30, 2010.

However, the radon progeny of the uranium (^{222}Rn), thorium (^{220}Rn), and actinium (^{219}Rn) series may be possible interferences. Their contribution to the liquid scintillation activity of the samples should be assessed by an independent radiological method (for example, ~~gamma-ray~~ gamma-ray spectrometry, or monitoring the liquid scintillation region above the ^{14}C window).

6.2 Gaseous flow paths with carbon dioxide concentrations greater than those found in routine atmospheric samples may raise the detection limit for ^{14}C . This would require a lower sample volume ensuring that the adsorbent does not become saturated with stable CO_2 , allowing bypass of the $^{14}\text{CO}_2$.

6.3 Tritium can interfere with the analysis of ^{14}C by LSC. Tritium (when present as part of a water molecule) is effectively removed during the sampling collection process using a desiccant upstream of the carbon dioxide trap.

6.3.1 Tritium removal can also be accomplished during the sample preparation step in the laboratory by using a water trap with HCl prior to the final carbon dioxide trap (see Fig. X1.1).

6.4 High levels of moisture in the gaseous effluent would limit the sample volume raising the detection limit. A method of monitoring the level of depletion of the desiccant material should be employed in this method.

7. Apparatus

7.1 *Combustion Furnace*—Capable of attaining at least 600°C with the air flow at a maximum of 3000 mL/min.

7.1.1 The performance of the converter was determined by independent laboratory tests by measuring the conversion efficiency of methane to CO_2 . The conversion efficiency was found to be $>95\%$ over a sample flow rate of 300 to 3000 mL per minute. No reduction in conversion efficiency was observed as a function of methane concentration or flow rate.

7.2 *Air Sampling Pump*—Capacity in the range of 30 to ~~3,000~~3000 mL/min.

7.3 *Two Flow Monitors*—Calibrated for air flow in the desired flow range.

7.4 *Particulate Filter Holder*—Normally sized for a 47-mm diameter filter but may be sized to fit the sample flow.

7.5 *Desiccant Tube*—Sized for the amount of desiccant needed for the volume of air to be sampled.

8. Reagents and Materials

8.1 *Purity of Reagents*—Reagent grade chemicals shall be used in all tests. Unless otherwise indicated, it is intended that all reagents shall conform to the specifications of the Committee on Analytical Reagents of the American Chemical Society, where such specifications are available.⁵ Other grades may be used, provided it is first ascertained that the reagent is of sufficiently high purity to permit its use without increasing the background of the measurement.

8.1.1 Some chemicals, even of high purity, contain naturally occurring radioactive elements, for example, uranium, actinium, thorium, rare earths and potassium compounds. Also, some chemical reagents, including organic compounds, have been found to be contaminated with artificially produced radionuclides. Consequently, when carrier chemicals are used in the analysis of low-radioactivity samples, the radioactivity of the carriers shall be determined under identical analytical conditions as used for the sample. The radioactivity of the reagents may be considered as background and subtracted from the test sample counting rate. This increased background reduces the sensitivity of the measurement.

8.2 Ascarite II, commercially available⁶ solid material for adsorption of CO_2 .

⁵ ~~Reagent Chemicals, American 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~~ 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.

⁶ The sole source of supply of the apparatus known to the committee at this time is Arthur H. Thomas Company in Swedesboro, NJ, 08085. If you are aware of alternative suppliers, please provide this information to ASTM International Headquarters. Your comments will receive careful consideration at a meeting of the responsible technical committee,¹ which you may attend.

8.2.1 The use of another material which will trap carbon dioxide will be acceptable. However, validation of the ~~mediums' ability~~ ability of the medium to retain carbon dioxide should be verified.

8.3 Filter medium, 0.45 µm or equivalent, 47–mm diameter (or as needed to fit filter holder). The filter material may be paper, fiberglass, or polymeric.

8.4 Desiccant, commercially available material for water removal.

9. Calibration and Standardization

9.1 Put the flow monitoring instrument into operation according to the manufacturer's instructions.

9.2 Put the combustion furnace into operation following the manufacturer's instructions.

10. Sampling

10.1 In order to differentiate the three different physical plus chemical forms of ^{14}C the sampling apparatus must contain the distinct components shown in [Fig. 1](#).

10.1.1 The system consists of a particulate filter followed by two separate parallel sampling pathways.

10.1.2 The top pathway contains a desiccant for adsorbing water (including tritiated water, ^3HOH) prior to the adsorbent for capturing $^{14}\text{CO}_2$, a flow meter, and an air sample pump. This pathway will collect $^{14}\text{CO}_2$ (inorganic ^{14}C) but not organic ^{14}C .

10.1.3 The bottom pathway is identical to the top pathway except that the first component is a high temperature furnace that converts organic carbon to CO_2 . A desiccant is used for adsorbing water (including any tritiated water) prior to the adsorbent. The $^{14}\text{CO}_2$ can then be captured by the CO_2 adsorbent. Thus, the bottom pathway collects total ^{14}C that has been converted to $^{14}\text{CO}_2$. The difference between the amounts of ^{14}C adsorbed in the two pathways is the amount of organic ^{14}C .

10.2 The flow monitoring device should be placed in between the suction of the sample pump and the CO_2 adsorbent material (see [Fig. 1](#)). This ensures that any additional flow due to leaks in the pump will not be counted towards the final sample volume.

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/6617768e-a94d-46c9-b15d-b397468781e6/astm-d7938-21>
 10.3 Practical sampling times may range from 0.5 hours to more than 10 hours. This depends on the limit of detection desired for the particular flow path and the assumed distribution of ^{14}C between organic and inorganic forms.

10.4 The particulate filter mentioned in [10.1.1](#) may be used if ^{14}C concentration of the particulate matter is required. Particulate ^{14}C captured on the filtration medium is analyzed separately. If the measurement quality objectives require only total ^{14}C analysis, it is still recommended that the sample be filtered. The particulate filter should be treated separately to ensure the conversion to carbon dioxide will be complete prior to radiochemical analysis.

10.5 The preceding steps in this section of this practice should be used to develop facility specific sampling protocols. Once the samples have been collected they should be submitted for analysis following standardized methods. A description of single operator test data collected using this sampling practice and the selected laboratory analysis method is presented in [Appendix X1](#).

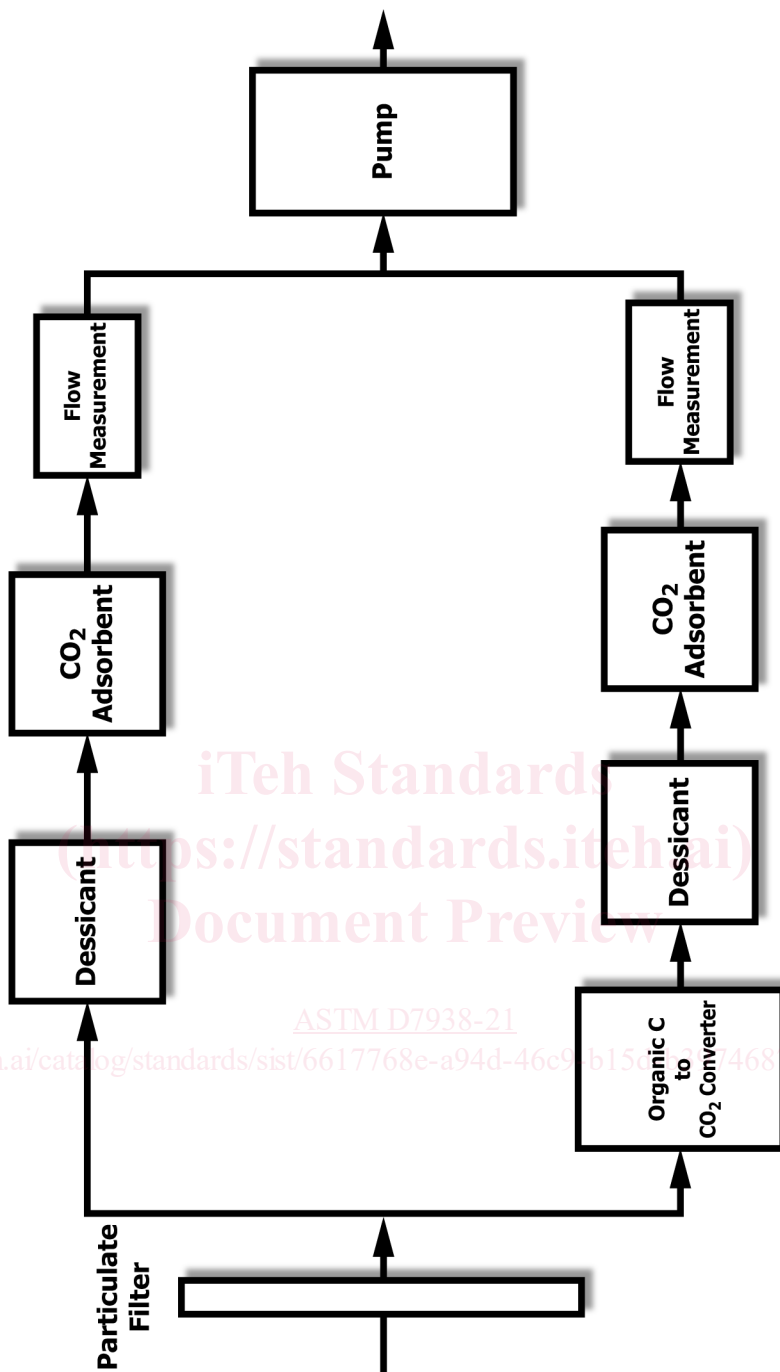
11. Calculation

11.1 A calculation may be required to convert the results of the laboratory analysis to the activity per unit volume sampled.

11.2 The results of the sample analysis will yield both the total ^{14}C and inorganic ^{14}C activity concentration. These values are used for the calculation of organic ^{14}C activity concentration based on [Eq 1](#).

11.3 The lower flow path in [Fig. 1](#) is designated as “Total ^{14}C ,” while the upper flow path is designated as “Inorganic ^{14}C .”

11.4 The organic absolute concentration and fraction of the ^{14}C content of the sample is calculated as:



NOTE 1—See Holtzclaw, J., “Sample and Analysis Protocol for ¹⁴C in Gaseous Effluents,” Radioactive Effluent Technical Specifications (RETS) and Radiological Environmental Monitoring Programs (REMP) Workshop, San Jose, CA, June 28–30, 2010.

FIG. 1 Flow of the Gaseous Effluent Sample Through the Sampling Device

11.4.1 Organic Content, pCi/L:

$$\text{Organic } ^{14}\text{C, pCi/L} = \text{Total } ^{14}\text{C} - \text{Inorganic } ^{14}\text{C} \quad (1)$$

11.4.2 Organic Percent of Total:

$$100 \times [\text{Total } ^{14}\text{C (pCi/L)} - \text{Inorganic } ^{14}\text{C (pCi/L)}] / \text{Total } ^{14}\text{C (pCi/L)} \quad (2)$$