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Standard Test Method for Measuring Relative Complex Permittivity and Relative Magnetic Permeability of Solid Materials at Microwave Frequencies Using Coaxial Air Line¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D7449/D7449M; 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 This test method covers a procedure for determining relative complex permittivity (relative dielectric constant and loss) and relative magnetic permeability of isotropic, reciprocal (non-gyromagnetic) solid materials. If the material is nonmagnetic, it is acceptable to use this procedure to measure permittivity only.

1.2 This measurement method is valid over a frequency range of approximately 1 GHz to over 20 GHz. These limits are not exact and depend on the size of the specimen, the size of coaxial air line used as a specimen holder, and on the applicable frequency range of the network analyzer used to make measurements. The size of specimen dimension is limited by test frequency, intrinsic specimen electromagnetism properties, and the request of algorithm. For a given air line size, the upper frequency is also limited by the onset of higher order modes that invalidate the dominant-mode transmission line model and the lower frequency is limited by the smallest measurable phase shift through a specimen. Being a non-resonant method, the selection of any number of discrete measurement frequencies in a measurement band would be suitable. The coaxial fixture is preferred over rectangular waveguide fixtures when broadband data are desired with a single sample or when only small sample volumes are available, particularly for lower frequency measurements.

1.3 The values stated in either SI units or in inch-pound units are to be regarded separately as standard. The values stated in each system are not necessarily exact equivalents; therefore each system shall be used independently of the other. Combining values from the two systems is likely to result in non conformance with the standard. The equations shown here assume an $e^{+j\omega t}$ harmonic time convention.

1.4 *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.*

1.5 *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

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D09 on Electrical and Electronic Insulating Materials and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D09.12 on Electrical Tests.

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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.

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

3. Terminology

3.1 For definitions of terms used in this test method, refer to Terminology **D1711**.

3.2 Definitions:

3.2.1 *relative complex permittivity (relative complex dielectric constant), ϵ_r^** —the proportionality factor that relates the electric field to the electric flux density, and which depends on intrinsic material properties such as molecular polarizability, charge mobility, and so forth:

$$\epsilon_r^* = \epsilon_r' - j\epsilon_r'' = \frac{\vec{D}}{\epsilon_0 \vec{E}} \quad (1)$$

where:

ϵ_0 = permittivity of free space

\vec{D} = electric flux density vector, and

\vec{E} = electric field vector.

3.2.1.1 Discussion—

In common usage the word “relative” is frequently dropped. The real part of complex relative permittivity (ϵ_r') is often referred to as simply relative permittivity, permittivity, or dielectric constant. The imaginary part of complex relative permittivity (ϵ_r'') is often referred to as the loss factor. In anisotropic media, permittivity is described by a three dimensional tensor. For the purposes of this test method, the media is considered to be isotropic, and therefore permittivity is a single complex number at each frequency.

3.2.2 *relative complex permeability, μ_r^** —the proportionality factor that relates the magnetic flux density to the magnetic field, and which depends on intrinsic material properties such as magnetic moment, domain magnetization, and so forth:

$$\mu_r^* = \mu_r' - j\mu_r'' = \frac{\vec{B}}{\mu_0 \vec{H}} \quad (2)$$

where:

μ_0 = permeability of free space

\vec{B} = magnetic flux density vector, and

\vec{H} = magnetic field vector.

3.2.2.1 Discussion—

In common usage the word “relative” is frequently dropped. The real part of complex relative permeability (μ_r') is often referred to as relative permeability or simply permeability. The imaginary part of complex relative permeability (μ_r'') is often referred to as the magnetic loss factor. In anisotropic media, permeability is described by a three dimensional tensor. For the purposes of this test method, the media is considered to be isotropic, and therefore permeability is a single complex number at each frequency.

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 A list of symbols specific to this test method is given in **Annex A1**.

3.2.2 *calibration, n*—a procedure for connecting characterized standard devices to the test ports of a network analyzer to characterize the measurement system’s systematic errors. The effects of the systematic errors are then mathematically removed from the indicated measurements. The calibration also establishes the mathematical reference plane for the measurement test ports.

3.2.2.1 *Discussion*—

Modern network analyzers have this capability built in. There are a variety of calibration kits that can be used depending on the type of test port. The models used to predict the measurement response of the calibration devices depends on the type of calibration kit. Most calibration kits come with media that can be used to load the definitions of the calibration devices into the network analyzer. Calibration kit definitions loaded into the network analyzer must match the devices used to calibrate. Since both transmission and reflection measurements are used in this standard, a two-port calibration is required.

3.2.3 *cutoff frequency, n*—the lowest frequency at which non-evanescent, higher-order mode propagation can occur within a coaxial transmission line.

3.2.4 *network analyzer, n*—a system that measures the two-port transmission and one-port reflection characteristics of a multiport system in its linear range and at a common input and output frequency.

3.2.4.1 *Discussion*—

For the purposes of this standard, this description includes only those systems that have a synthesized signal generator, and that measure the complex scattering parameters (both magnitude and phase) in the forward and reverse directions of a two-port network (S_{11} , S_{21} , S_{12} , S_{22}).

3.2.5 *scattering parameter (S-parameter), S_{ij} , n*—a complex number consisting of either the reflection or transmission coefficient of a component at a specified set of input and output reference planes with an incident signal on only a single port.

3.2.5.1 *Discussion*—

As most commonly used, these coefficients represent the quotient of the complex electric field strength (or voltage) of a reflected or transmitted wave divided by that of an incident wave. The subscripts i and j of a typical coefficient S_{ij} refer to the output and input ports, respectively. For example, the forward transmission coefficient S_{21} is the ratio of the transmitted wave voltage at Reference Plane 2 (Port 2) divided by the incident wave voltage measured at Reference Plane 1 (Port 1). Similarly, the Port 1 reflection coefficient S_{11} is the ratio of the Port 1 reflected wave voltage divided by the Port 1 incident wave voltage at reference plane 1 (Port 1).

3.2.6 *transverse electromagnetic (TEM) wave, n*—an electromagnetic wave in which both the electric and magnetic fields are everywhere perpendicular to the direction of propagation.

3.2.6.1 *Discussion*—

In coaxial transmission lines the dominant wave is TEM.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 A carefully machined test specimen is placed in a coaxial air line and connected to a calibrated network analyzer that is used to measure the S -parameters of the transmission line-with-specimen. A specified data-reduction algorithm is then used to calculate permittivity and permeability. If the material is nonmagnetic, a different algorithm is used to calculate permittivity only. Error corrections are then applied to compensate for air gaps between the specimen and the transmission line conductor surfaces.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Design calculations for radio frequency (RF), microwave, and millimetre-wave components require the knowledge of values of complex permittivity and permeability at operating frequencies. This test method is useful for evaluating small experimental batch or continuous production materials used in electromagnetic applications. Use this method to determine complex permittivity only (in non-magnetic materials), or both complex permittivity and permeability simultaneously.

5.2 Relative complex permittivity (relative complex dielectric constant), ϵ_r^* , is the proportionality factor that relates the electric field to the electric flux density, and which depends on intrinsic material properties such as molecular polarizability, charge mobility, and so forth:

$$\epsilon_r^* = \epsilon_r' - j\epsilon_r'' = \frac{\vec{D}}{\epsilon_0 E} \quad (1)$$

where:

ϵ_0 = permittivity of free space

\vec{D} = electric flux density vector, and

\vec{E} = electric field vector.

NOTE 1—In common usage the word “relative” is frequently dropped. The real part of complex relative permittivity (ϵ_r') is often referred to as simply relative permittivity, permittivity, or dielectric constant. The imaginary part of complex relative permittivity (ϵ_r'') is often referred to as the loss factor. In anisotropic media, permittivity is described by a three dimensional tensor.

NOTE 2—For the purposes of this test method, the media is considered to be isotropic and, therefore, permittivity is a single complex number at each frequency.

5.3 Relative complex permeability, μ_r^* , is the proportionality factor that relates the magnetic flux density to the magnetic field, and which depends on intrinsic material properties such as magnetic moment, domain magnetization, and so forth:

$$\mu_r^* = \mu_r' - j\mu_r'' = \frac{\vec{B}}{\mu_0 \vec{H}} \quad (2)$$

where:

μ_0 = permeability of free space,

\vec{B} = magnetic flux density vector, and

\vec{H} = magnetic field vector.

NOTE 3—In common usage the word “relative” is frequently dropped. The real part of complex relative permeability (μ_r') is often referred to as relative permeability or simply permeability. The imaginary part of complex relative permeability (μ_r'') is often referred to as the magnetic loss factor. In anisotropic media, permeability is described by a three dimensional tensor.

NOTE 4—For the purposes of this test method, the media is considered to be isotropic, and therefore permeability is a single complex number at each frequency.

5.4 Relative permittivity ((relative dielectric constant) (SIC) $\kappa'(\epsilon_r')$) is the real part of the relative complex permittivity. It is also the ratio of the equivalent parallel capacitance, C_p , of a given configuration of electrodes with a material as a dielectric to the capacitance, C_v , of the same configuration of electrodes with vacuum (or air for most practical purposes) as the dielectric:

$$\kappa' = C_p / C_v \quad (3)$$

NOTE 5—In common usage the word “relative” is frequently dropped.

NOTE 6—Experimentally, vacuum must be replaced by the material at all points where it makes a significant change in capacitance. The equivalent circuit of the dielectric is assumed to consist of C_p , a capacitance in parallel with conductance. (See Fig. 3 of Test Methods D150.)

NOTE 7— C_x is taken to be C_p , the equivalent parallel capacitance as shown in Fig. 3 of Test Methods D150.

NOTE 8—The series capacitance is larger than the parallel capacitance by less than 1 % for a dissipation factor of 0.1, and by less than 0.1 % for a dissipation factor of 0.03. If a measuring circuit yields results in terms of series components, the parallel capacitance must be calculated from Eq 5 of Test Methods D150 before the corrections and permittivity are calculated.

NOTE 9—The permittivity of dry air at 23 °C and standard pressure at 101.3 kPa is 1.000536. Its divergence from unity, $\kappa' - 1$, is inversely proportional to absolute temperature and directly proportional to atmospheric pressure. The increase in permittivity when the space is saturated with water vapor at

23 °C is 0.00025, and varies approximately linearly with temperature expressed in degrees Celsius, from 10 °C to 27 °C. For partial saturation the increase is proportional to the relative humidity.

6. Interferences

6.1 The upper limits of permittivity and permeability that can be measured using this test method are restricted by the transmission line and specimen geometries, which can lead to unwanted higher order waveguide modes. In addition, excessive electromagnetic attenuation due to a high loss factor within the test specimen can prevent determination of permittivity and permeability. No specific limits are given in this standard, but this test method is practically limited to low-to-medium values of permittivity and permeability.

6.2 The existence of air gaps between the test specimen and the transmission line introduces a negative bias into measurements of permittivity and permeability. In this test method, compensation for this bias is required, and to do so requires knowledge of the air gap sizes. Air gap sizes are estimated from dimensional measurements of the specimen and the specimen holder. Several different error correction models have been developed, and a frequency independent series capacitor model is described in [Annex A2](#). Air gap corrections are only approximate and therefore this test method is practically limited to low-to-medium values of permittivity and permeability.

7. Apparatus

7.1 *Experimental Test Fixture*—The test fixture includes a specimen holder connected to a network analyzer, as shown in [Fig. 1](#).

7.2 *Network Analyzer*—The network analyzer needs a full 2-port test set that can measure transmission and reflection-scattering parameters. Use a network analyzer that has a synthesized signal generator in order to ensure good frequency stability and signal purity.

7.3 *Coaxial Air Line Calibration Kit*—To define Port 1 and Port 2 measurement reference planes, calibration of the coaxial test fixture is required. A calibration kit consists of well-characterized standard devices and mathematical models of those devices. Use a through-reflect-line (TRL), an open-short-load-through (OSLT), or any other calibration kit that yields similar calibration quality to calibrate the coaxial test fixture.

7.4 *Specimen Holder:*

7.4.1 Because parameters such as specimen holder length and cross-sectional dimensions are of critical importance to the calculation of permittivity and permeability, carefully measure and characterize the physical dimensions of the specimen holder.

7.4.2 If a separate length of transmission line is used to hold the specimen, ensure that the empty length of line is also in place during calibration of the specimen holder.

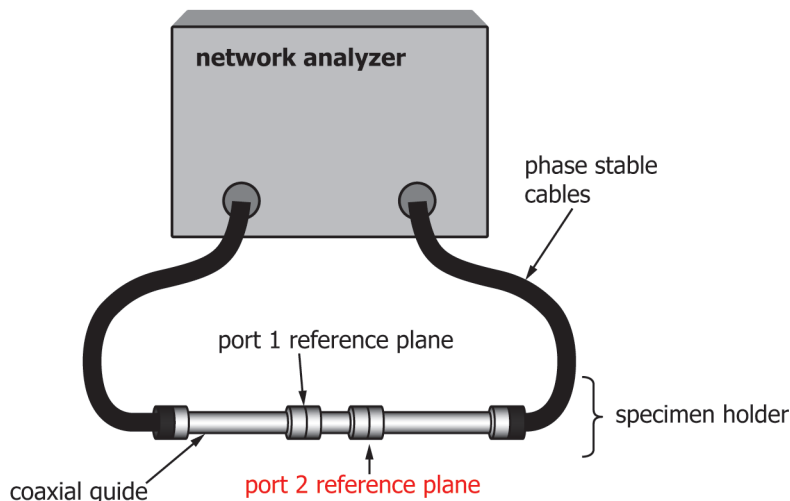


FIG. 1 Diagram of Experimental Fixture

7.4.3 The theoretical model used for this test method assumes that only the dominant mode of propagation exists (TEM). This fundamental mode has no lower cutoff frequency, so low-frequency measurements are possible. The existence of higher-order modes restricts the upper measurement frequency for a given coaxial air line test fixture.

7.4.4 Be sure that the specimen holder dimensions are within proper tolerances for the transmission line size in use. For a coaxial transmission line, the diameter of the center conductor, D_1 , and the inside diameter of the outer conductor, D_2 , are the critical dimensions. Proper tolerances for a “7-mm” coax are then:

7-mm coax center conductor diameter:

$$D_1 = 3.04 \text{ mm} \pm 0.01 \text{ mm} [0.1197 \text{ in.} \pm 0.0004 \text{ in.}] \quad (4)$$

7-mm coax outer conductor diameter:

$$D_2 = 7.00 \text{ mm} \pm 0.01 \text{ mm} [0.2756 \text{ in.} \pm 0.0004 \text{ in.}] \quad (5)$$

Dimensions and tolerances of other standard coaxial transmission lines are in the appropriate manufacturer’s specifications.

8. Test Specimen

8.1 Make the test specimen long enough to ensure good alignment inside the holder. Also, make the test specimen long enough to ensure that the phase shift through the specimen is much greater than the phase measurement uncertainty of the network analyzer at the lowest measurement frequency. If a specimen is expected to have low loss, sufficient length is also required to insure accurate determination of the loss factor. Finally, for high loss specimens, the specimen length cannot be so long that high insertion loss prevents material property inversion.

8.2 A test specimen that fits into a coaxial transmission line is a toroidal cylinder. Accurately machine the specimen so that its dimensions minimize the air gap that exists between the conductor surfaces and the specimen. In this respect, measure the specimen holder’s dimensions in order to specify the tightest tolerances possible for specimen preparation. Keep physical variations of specimen dimensions as small as is practicable and include specimen dimensions and uncertainties in the report.

9. Preparation of Apparatus

9.1 *Inspect Network Analyzer Test Ports*—Insure that the recession of both test ports’ center conductor shoulder behind the outer conductor mating plane meets the minimum specifications. Refer to network analyzer manufacturer’s documentation to provide connector specifications.

9.2 *Flexing and Tightening Cables and Connectors*—Cable flexing and improperly tightened connectors introduce phase and magnitude errors into S-parameter data. For this reason, bend the test cables as little as possible, and under no circumstances bend the test cables smaller than the manufacturer’s minimum recommended radius. Use of phase-stable cables is highly recommended. Insofar as possible, return the network analyzer cables to the same position during measurement of calibration standards and specimen. Use a torque wrench with the manufacturer’s recommended torque to tighten connectors.

9.3 *Inspect and Clean Specimen, Specimen Holder, and Connectors*—If contamination is a concern, handle specimens with laboratory gloves. Clean specimens, connectors, and transmission lines using lint-free swabs and isopropyl alcohol (not less than 99 % pure). Blow out specimens, connectors, and transmission lines using filtered, pressurized air (not breath). Examine specimens for cracks and chips on their edges. Note any damage to specimens.

9.4 *Network Analyzer Setup:*

9.4.1 Turn on the network analyzer before beginning calibration and measurements. Refer to manufacturer documentation for minimum warm-up period.

9.4.2 Put network analyzer into step frequency mode. Set the start frequency and stop frequency as desired. Set the number of measurement points to the desired value.

9.4.3 If available, set the network analyzer’s variable intermediate frequency (IF) bandwidth to less than 30 Hz, otherwise set the network analyzer data-averaging factor to a value >200.

9.4.4 Perform a two-port test fixture calibration using a coaxial air line calibration kit in accordance with the manufacturer's procedures and in accordance with Subsection 7.3.

10. Procedure

10.1 The following procedure applies to all coaxial transmission lines.

10.2 Calibration Verification:

10.2.1 Insert a known verification specimen, such as crosslinked polystyrene or polytetrafluoroethylene, into the coaxial transmission line. Make sure the front surface of the sample is flush with the Port 1 reference plane. It is possible that a dowel will be required to position the specimen so that it is flush. If the inversion algorithm to be used is not dependent on the specimen location, then special care in positioning the specimen is not necessary.

10.2.2 Tighten the coaxial air line connectors with the proper torque wrench.

10.2.3 Make sure that the position of the feed cables are identical to when the calibration was done, so that phase errors from cable movement are minimized.

10.2.4 Measure the scattering parameters of the specimen holder with verification specimen. The necessary scattering parameters depend on the calculation procedure used to determine intrinsic properties (refer to Section 11).

10.2.5 Calculate the intrinsic properties of the verification specimen from the measured scattering parameters, as described in Section 11. If the calculated intrinsic properties are incorrect, check the coaxial air line fixture to make sure connectors are properly tightened and that there is nothing wrong with the feed cables. Also check to make sure the calibration was done correctly and the inversion algorithm and phase correction was properly applied.

10.3 Specimen Measurement:

10.3.1 Measure and record the dimensions of the specimen with a micrometer or other precision instrument.

10.3.2 Insert the unknown specimen into the Port 1 side of the specimen holder, as shown in Fig. 2. Be careful not to damage the specimen when inserting into the holder. Make sure the front surface of the sample is flush with the Port 1 reference plane. The use of a dowel will aid in positioning the specimen so that it is flush. If the inversion algorithm to be used is not dependent on the specimen location, then special care in positioning the specimen is not necessary.

10.3.3 Record how the specimen fits (loose, snug, tight, loose at first, then tight, and so forth). This subjective observation helps to determine the dimensional qualities of the specimen. Measure both inner and outer air gaps (refer to Fig. 2).

10.3.4 Tighten the coaxial air line connectors with the proper torque wrench.

10.3.5 Make sure that the position of the feed cables are identical to when the calibration was done, so that phase errors from cable movement are minimized.

10.3.6 Measure the scattering parameters of the specimen holder containing the specimen. The necessary scattering parameters depend on the calculation procedure used to determine intrinsic properties (refer to Section 11).

10.3.7 Remove specimen, and if additional specimens exist, they can be measured by repeating 10.3.1 – 10.3.6.

10.3.8 If 1 h or more has lapsed since the calibration, renew the calibration and reverify with the known verification specimen. This will account for temperature changes of the waveguide fixture, which induce phase variations.

10.3.9 Calculate the intrinsic properties of the specimen(s) from the measured scattering parameters, as described in Section 11.