



Designation: C690 – 09 (Reapproved 2024)

# Standard Test Method for Particle Size Distribution of Alumina or Quartz Powders by Electrical Sensing Zone Technique<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation C690; 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, one of several found valuable for the measurement of particle size, covers the determination of the particle size distribution of alumina or quartz powders (0.6  $\mu\text{m}$  to 56.0  $\mu\text{m}$ ) using electrical sensing zone particle size analyzers. These instruments use an electric current path of small dimensions which is modulated by individual particle passage through an aperture, and produces individual pulses of amplitude proportional to the particle volume.

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.*

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. Summary of Test Method

2.1 A carefully dispersed, dilute suspension of the powder in a beaker filled with an electrolyte is placed on the instrument sample stand. The suspension is forced through a restricting aperture. Each particle passing generates an electric pulse that is recorded on an electronic counter.

2.2 The instrument response is essentially related to particle volume (liquid displacement). Equivalent spherical diameter is commonly used to express the particle size. (Comparisons with other techniques have been found to be good for spherical particles; for non-spherical particles results may differ.)

<sup>1</sup> This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee C21 on Ceramic Whitewares and Related Products and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee C21.04 on Raw Materials.

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## 3. Significance and Use

3.1 This test method is useful to both sellers and purchasers of alumina and quartz powders for determining particle size distributions for materials specifications, manufacturing control, and development and research.

## 4. Apparatus

4.1 *Electrical Sensing Zone Particle Counter.*

4.2 *Aperture Tubes*, diameter ranging from approximately 30  $\mu\text{m}$  to 140  $\mu\text{m}$ . The diameter required is dependent upon the particle size distribution of the sample. Generally any given tube will cover a particle size range from 2 % to 60 % of its aperture diameter.

NOTE 1—In certain cases, apertures up to 300  $\mu\text{m}$  are usable.

4.3 *Sample Beaker*, capable of maintaining all particles uniformly in suspension (for example, round-bottom).

4.4 *Blender*, capacity 1-L glass container. A means to control speed is required.

4.5 *Beakers*, 100 mL, 500 mL, and 1000 mL.

4.6 *Pipet.*

4.7 *Wash Bottles.*

4.8 *Membrane Filtering Device*, rated at 0.45  $\mu\text{m}$  filters or finer.

## 5. Reagents

5.1 *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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> *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. Pharmacopeial Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.

5.2 *Dispersing Media*—Ten percent solution of purified or reagent grade sodium hexametaphosphate in distilled water twice filtered through the membrane filtering device.

NOTE 2—Deionized water may be substituted for distilled water.

NOTE 3—This liquid should not be retained longer than 1 month and should not be pH modified or heated.

5.3 *Electrolyte*—Dissolve 10.0 g of reagent grade sodium chloride (NaCl) in 1000 mL of distilled water and filter twice through the membrane filtering device.

5.4 *Wash Water*—Distilled water twice filtered through the membrane filtering device.

5.5 *Calibration Particles*—NIST or NIST traceable monosized particle standards.

## 6. Procedure

6.1 *Summary*—Disperse the test powder in the electrolyte with a blender. Transfer a representative portion to the sample beaker that contains filtered electrolyte. Place sample beaker in the apparatus and obtain particle size distribution in a chosen size range. Obtain relative weight fraction by assuming constant particle density.

6.2 Precalibrate the aperture and electrolyte combination following the manufacturer's instruction manual.

NOTE 4—Calibration should be performed in accordance with the instruction manual. Monosized NIST or NIST traceable calibration standards should be selected from Fig. A1.1. Mutual agreement on the source and size of calibration standards is necessary for interlaboratory comparisons.

6.3 Check background counts by filling the sample beaker with filtered electrolyte and taking counts without any sample added. Follow 6.6, 6.7, and 6.8.

6.4 Disperse approximately 0.7 g of sample in 200 mL of electrolyte containing 5 drops of dispersing media, by mixing at high speed on the blender or its equivalent for 5 min.

NOTE 5—The proper dispersion conditions for a given mixer or blender should be predetermined by obtaining a time-speed versus median diameter curve (see typical curve in Fig. A1.2) while ensuring that grinding does not occur. The position of the plateau will indicate the proper dispersion conditions for the sample. Experience has shown that full speed on the Waring Blender may cause size reduction. Slightly less than full speed should be used. For some suspensions ultrasonic treatment from 1 to 5 min is effective.

6.5 With a pipet, transfer an appropriate aliquot of dispersed sample into the sample beaker containing electrolyte with dispersing media added in the ratio of 3 drops/200 mL of electrolyte. The aliquot size is dependent on the aperture size used. Wash down the pipet by rinsing with electrolyte several times (see 6.9.3).

NOTE 6—The blender or mixer should be stirring just rapidly enough to

maintain a uniform particle suspension while withdrawing the sample. The pipet should deliver all of the withdrawn slurry to ensure a representative transfer of sample in the event of any size classification during the transfer.

6.6 Place the sample beaker in position on the sample stand.

6.7 Adjust the speed of the stirrer to furnish sufficient agitation to maintain a uniform particle suspension, but below air bubble generation speeds.

6.8 Use the apparatus control software to set the measurement parameters. Make three measurements in which each measurement counts and measures at least 5000 particles. Average the particle size distribution from the three measurements and report the statistical parameters from the averaged results.

6.9 *Precautions:*

6.9.1 Before each analysis, using wash bottle and filtered wash water, wash all surfaces coming in contact with sample.

6.9.2 Ensure that the calibration of the instrument is correct by checking the calibration factor at least once a week.

6.9.3 The number of particles per unit volume in the sample beaker should not exceed that which will give a 5 % coincidence correction for the aperture tube being used (see Fig. A1.1).

## 7. Presentation of Data

7.1 Convert data to cumulative weight percent greater than stated particle size according to instrument instruction manual. Coincidence is insignificant if total counts are limited to Fig. A1.1.

NOTE 7—For all electrical sensing zone counters the conversion is actually to volume percent. If all particles in the sample have the same density the volume percent and weight percent are interchangeable.

7.2 Report size distribution graphs, tables, and statistics such as: weight percent, count percent, volume percent, mean, median, mode, quartiles, and standard deviation.

## 8. Precision and Bias

8.1 *Intralaboratory, Same Operator*—Experience of several laboratories indicates that the test method is capable of a precision of  $\pm 1\%$  (95 % confidence level) for all size values.

8.2 *Interlaboratory*—Experience of several laboratories indicates that the test method is capable of a precision of  $\pm 3\%$  (95 % confidence level) for all size values.

8.3 *Bias*—Instrument calibrations shall be performed using NIST or NIST traceable uniform spheres with relative standard deviation of 5 % or less.

## 9. Keywords

9.1 alumina; particle size; quartz; sensing zone