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Oil-filled electrical equipment – Sampling of gases and of oil for analysis of free and dissolved gases – Guidance

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INTERNATIONAL ELECTROTECHNICAL COMMISSION

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OIL-FILLED ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT – SAMPLING OF GASES AND OF OIL FOR ANALYSIS OF FREE AND DISSOLVED GASES – GUIDANCE

FOREWORD

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International Standard IEC 60567 has been prepared by IEC technical committee 10: Fluids for electrotechnical applications.

This third edition cancels and replaces the second edition published in 1992. This edition constitutes a technical revision.

The main changes with respect to the previous edition are listed below.

Since the publication of the second edition of this standard, a number of new gas extraction methods have been developed and are commercially available, such as mercury-free versions of the standard Toepler and partial degassing methods, which are referenced to in Annex C of the present edition. The head space method, based on a new concept for the extraction of gases from oil is introduced as a full method in this third edition, and reference is made to a simplified version of it also in Annex C (shake test method). More sensitive chromatographic techniques have also been developed since the last edition, and are presented in this third edition.

The text of this standard is based on the following documents:

FDIS	Report on voting
10/621/FDIS	10/630/RVD

Full information on the voting for the approval of this standard can be found in the report on voting indicated in the above table.

This publication has been drafted in accordance with the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The committee has decided that the contents of this publication will remain unchanged until the maintenance result date indicated on the IEC web site under "http://webstore.iec.ch" in the data related to the specific publication. At this date, the publication will be

- reconfirmed;
- withdrawn;
- replaced by a revised edition, or
- amended.

INTRODUCTION

Gases may be formed in oil-filled electrical equipment due to natural ageing but also, to a much greater extent, as a result of faults.

Operation with a fault may seriously damage the equipment, and it is valuable to be able to detect the fault at an early stage of development.

Where a fault is not severe, the gases formed will normally dissolve in the oil, with a small proportion eventually diffusing from the liquid into any gas phase above it. Extracting dissolved gas from a sample of the oil and determining the amount and composition of this gas is a means of detecting such faults, and the type and severity of any fault may often be inferred from the composition of the gas and the rate at which it is formed.

In the case of a sufficiently severe fault, free gas will pass through the oil and collect in the gas-collecting (Buchholz) relay if fitted; if necessary, this gas may be analysed to assist in determining the type of fault that has generated it. The composition of gases within the bubbles changes as they move through the oil towards the gas-collecting relay.

This can be put to good use, as information on the rate of gas production may often be inferred by comparing the composition of the free gases collected with the concentrations remaining dissolved in the liquid.

The interpretation of the gas analyses is the subject of IEC 60599.

These techniques are valuable at all stages in the life of oil-filled equipment. During acceptance tests on transformers in the factory, comparison of gas-in-oil analyses before, during and after a heat run test can show if any hot-spots are present, and similarly analysis after dielectric testing can add to information regarding the presence of partial discharges or sparking. During operation in the field, the periodic removal of an oil sample and analysis of the gas content serve to monitor the condition of transformers and other oil-filled equipment.

The importance of these techniques has led to the preparation of this standard to the procedures to be used for the sampling, from oil-filled electrical equipment, of gases and oils containing gases, and for subsequent analysis.

NOTE Methods described in this standard apply to mineral insulating oils, since experience to date bas been almost entirely with such oils. The methods may also be applied to other insulating liquids, in some cases with modifications.

General caution, health, safety and environmental protection

This International Standard does not purport to address all the safety problems associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of the standard to establish appropriate health and safety practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.

The mineral insulating oils which are the subject of this standard should be handled with due regard to personal hygiene. Direct contact with the eyes may cause irritation. In the case of eye contact, irrigation with copious quantities of clean running water should be carried out and medical advice sought. Some of the tests specified in this standard involve the use of processes that could lead to a hazardous situation. Attention is drawn to the relevant standard for guidance.

Mercury presents an environmental and health hazard. Any spillage should immediately be removed and be properly disposed of. Consult local regulations for mercury use and handling. Mercury-free methods may be requested in some countries.

Environment

This standard is applicable to mineral oils, chemicals and used sample containers.

Attention is drawn to the fact that, at the time of writing of this standard, many mineral oils in service are known to be contaminated to some degree by PCBs. As this is the case, safety countermeasures must be taken to avoid risks to workers, the public and the environment during the life of the equipment, by strictly controlling spills and emissions. Disposal or decontamination of these oils must be carried out strictly according to local regulations. Every precaution should be taken to prevent release of mineral oil into the environment.

OIL-FILLED ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT – SAMPLING OF GASES AND OF OIL FOR ANALYSIS OF FREE AND DISSOLVED GASES – GUIDANCE

1 Scope

This International Standard deals with the techniques for sampling free gases from gas-collecting relays and for sampling oil from oil-filled equipment such as power and instrument transformers, reactors, bushings, oil-filled cables and oil-filled tank-type capacitors. Three methods of sampling free gases and three methods of sampling oil are described; the choice between the methods often depends on the apparatus available and on the quantity of oil needed for analysis.

Before analysing the gases dissolved in oil, they must first be extracted from the oil. Three basic methods are described, one using extraction by vacuum (Toepler and partial degassing), another by displacement of the dissolved gases by bubbling the carrier gas through the oil sample (stripping), and the last one by partition of gases between the oil sample and a small volume of the carrier gas (head space). The gases are analysed quantitatively after extraction by gas chromatography; a method of analysis is described. Free gases from gas-collecting relays are analysed without preliminary treatment.

The preferred method for assuring the performance of the gas extraction and analysis equipment, considered together as a single system, is to degas samples of oil prepared in the laboratory and containing known concentrations of gases ("gas-in-oil standards") and quantitatively analyse the gases extracted. Two methods of preparing gas-in-oil standards are described.

For daily calibration checks of the chromatograph, it is convenient to use a standard gas mixture containing a suitable known amount of each of the gas components to be in a similar ratio to the common ratios of the gases extracted from transformer oils.

The techniques described take account, on the one hand, of the problems peculiar to analyses associated with acceptance testing in the factory, where gas contents of oil are generally very low and, on the other hand, of the problems imposed by monitoring equipment in the field, where transport of samples may be by un-pressurized air freight and where considerable differences in ambient temperature may exist between the plant and the examining laboratory.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

IEC 60296, *Fluids for electrotechnical applications – Unused mineral insulating oils for transformers and switchgear*

IEC 60599, *Mineral oil-impregnated electrical equipment in service – Guide to the interpretation of dissolved and free gases analysis*

ISO/IEC 17025, *General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories*

ISO 5725 (all parts), *Accuracy, trueness and precision of measurement methods and results*

3 Sampling of gases from gas-collecting (Buchholz) relays

3.1 General remarks

It is important to bear in mind that receiving a qualitative and a representative sample is crucial for obtaining a reliable diagnosis of the electrical equipment. Even the most sophisticated extraction or diagnosis methods cannot overcome faulty samples.

Gas samples from relays should be taken from the equipment with the minimum delay after gas accumulation has been signalled. Changes in composition caused by the selective re-absorption of components may occur if free gases are left in contact with oil.

Certain precautions are necessary when taking gas samples. The connection between the sampling device and the sampling vessel must avoid the ingress of air. Temporary connections should be as short as possible. Any rubber or plastic tubing used should have been proved to be impermeable to gases.

Gas samples should be properly labelled (see Clause 5) and analysed without undue delay to minimize hydrogen loss (for example, within a maximum period of one week).

Oxygen, if present in the gas, may react with any oil drawn out with the sample. Reaction is delayed by excluding light from the sample, for example, by wrapping the vessel in aluminium foil or suitable opaque material.

Of the three methods described below, the syringe method is recommended. The other two methods are alternatives to be used exclusively in case of serious hindrance.

Sampling into a sampling tube by liquid displacement using transformer oil as a sealing liquid is simple, but the different solubilities of the gas components may need to be taken into account if the gas quantity is such that some oil remains in the tube.

The vacuum method requires skill to avoid contaminating the sample by leakage of air into the system. It is particularly true where the gas to be sampled may be at less than atmospheric pressure (for example, some sealed transformers).

3.2 Sampling of free gases by syringe

3.2.1 Sampling equipment

See Figure 1.

a) Impermeable oil-resistant plastic or rubber tubing (3) provided with a connecter to fit onto a suitable sampling connection of the gas-collecting relay. To avoid cross-contamination, the tubing should be used only once.

b) Gas-tight syringes of suitable volume (1) (25 ml to 250 ml). Medical or veterinary quality glass syringes with ground-in plungers may be suitable; alternatively, syringes with oil-proof seals may be used. The syringe should be fitted with a cock enabling it to be sealed. It is often convenient to use the same syringes for both gas sampling and for oil sampling (see item b) of 4.2.1). The gas tightness of a syringe may be tested by storing an oil sample containing a measurable quantity of hydrogen for at least two weeks and analysing aliquots for hydrogen at the beginning and end of the period. An acceptable syringe will permit losses of hydrogen of less than 2,5 % per week. General experience suggests that all-glass syringes leak less than those using plastic seals. Improvement of the gas tightness may be obtained by the use of a lubricant such as a light grease or transformer oil.

   It is a good practice to test the integrity of syringes and stopcock system before the sampling. A recommended procedure appears in Annex A.

c) Transport containers which should be designed to hold the syringe firmly in place during transport but allow the syringe plunger freedom to move, and prevent its tip from contacting the container whatever its position during transportation.

3.2.2 Sampling procedure

The apparatus is connected as shown in Figure 1. The connections should be as short as possible and filled with oil at the start of sampling.

Sampling valve (5) is opened. If sampling from a gas-collecting relay on a transformer fitted with a conservator, a positive pressure will exist; the three-way cock (4) is carefully turned to position A and the oil in the connecting tubing (3) allowed to flow to waste (7). When gas reaches the three-way cock (4), the latter is turned to position B to connect the pre-lubricated syringe (1). Cock (2) is then opened and the syringe allowed to fill under the hydrostatic pressure, taking care that its plunger is not expelled. When a sufficient sample has been taken, cock (2) and sampling valve (5) are closed and the apparatus is disconnected.

The oil in the syringe is expelled by inverting the syringe and applying gentle pressure to the plunger.

Label carefully the sample (see Clause 5).

3.3 Sampling of free gases by displacement of oil

This method is reliable only where the gas sample is at or above atmospheric pressure. The apparatus is shown in Figure 2.

The sampling tube (28), typically of 100 ml capacity, is preferably of glass since the operator can then see how much oil remains in it during gas sampling. The sampling tube is filled with oil from the transformer on site. Before being used as described below, the connecting tube (3) should also be filled with oil.

The open end of the connecting tube (3) is fitted onto the gas sampling valve (5). The sampling valve and inlet cock of the sampling tube are opened. The sampling tube is inclined so that its closed end is the lowest point. The outlet cock on the sampling tube is then opened, allowing oil to run out to waste (7), drawing first any oil from the connection between relay and sampling valve, and the gas from the relay, into the sampling tube.

Sampling is complete when the gas collecting relay is completely filled with oil or when nearly all oil has gone from the sampling tube.

Both cocks (2) on the sampling tube and the sampling valve (5) are closed and then the connections removed.

3.4 Sampling of free gases by vacuum

The apparatus is connected as shown in Figure 3. With the equipment sampling valve closed, cocks (1), (2) and (10) open, and the three-way cock (4) turned to position A, the vacuum pump (12) is allowed to evacuate the connecting tubing, the trap and the sampling vessel.

A satisfactory vacuum will be below 100 Pa. The system should be checked for leaks by closing the pump suction cock (10) and observing that no appreciable change in vacuum occurs. Over a time equal to that which will be taken for sampling, the pressure should not increase by more than 100 Pa. Similarly, the stopcock (1) on the sampling tube should be vacuum tight to the same degree over several weeks.

If the connecting tubing between the equipment sampling valve (5) and the gas-collecting relay is filled with oil, the three-way cock (4) is turned to position (B). The equipment sampling valve (5) is carefully opened and oil allowed to flow into the trap (9). When the end of the oil stream is observed to reach the three-way cock (4), it is turned to position D to evacuate the oil from it. Thereafter, cock (4) is turned to position C. When sampling is complete, cock (1) is closed first, then the equipment sampling valve (5) closed and the apparatus disconnected.

If the connecting tubing between the equipment and the sampling valve is empty of oil, the procedure for draining oil is omitted and the three-way cock (4) used in position C after evacuating and testing that the apparatus is leak tight.

4 Sampling of oil from oil-filled equipment

4.1 General remarks

It is important to bear in mind that receiving a qualitative and a representative sample is crucial for obtaining a reliable diagnosis of the electrical equipment. Even the most sophisticated extraction or diagnosis methods cannot overcome faulty samples.

Warning: When sampling oil, precautions should be taken to deal with any sudden release of oil and avoid oil spillage.

Of the three methods described below, the method of sampling by syringe is recommended. The other two methods are alternatives to be used in case of difficulties.

Sampling into glass sampling tubes is also suitable provided they are fitted with sufficient lengths of rubber tubing acting as expansion devices.

Stainless steel sampling tubes fitted with valves are very robust and are not affected by large temperature changes and can be used without expansion devices.

Sampling in glass bottles is also adequate provided the bottles are fitted with a suitable cap which allows oil expansion. Sampling into bottles is simple, requires little skill, and is adequate for many purposes such as routine sampling on a large scale from equipment on site. The use of bottles (0,5 l to 2,5 l capacity) may be preferred where comparatively large samples of oil are required. When using the glass bottle sampling method, care should be taken to minimize air contact with the sample.

The methods described are suitable for large oil-volume equipment such as power transformers. With small oil-volume equipment, it is essential to ensure that the total volume of oil drawn off does not endanger the operation of the equipment.

The selection of points from which samples are drawn should be made with care. Normally, the sample should be taken from a point where it is representative of the bulk of the oil in the equipment. It will sometimes be necessary, however, to draw samples deliberately where they are not expected to be representative (for example, in trying to locate the site of a fault).

Samples should be taken with the equipment in its normal condition. This will be important in assessing the rate of gas production.

Some of the dissolved oxygen present in the oil sample may be consumed by oxidation. The reaction can be delayed by exclusion of light (for example, by wrapping a clear glass sampling vessel in an opaque material) but, in any case, the analysis should be carried out as soon as possible after sampling.

NOTE 1 When sampling from bushings, the manufacturer's instructions should be followed carefully. Failure to do so may lead to serious damage and bushing failure. The oil sampling should be carried out on de-energized bushings. When sampling, precautions should be taken to deal with any sudden release of oil. Samples should be taken with the off-load equipment in its normal position in order to assess correctly the bushing condition.

NOTE 2 For transformers with two sampling valves, the following procedure should be used: open the outer valve first, followed by the second one. This is particularly important to avoid entrance of air into the transformers.

4.2 Sampling of oil by syringe

4.2.1 Sampling equipment

a) Impermeable oil-proof plastic or rubber tubing to connect the equipment to the syringe. This should be as short as possible. A three-way cock should be inserted in the tubing.

   The connection between the tubing and the equipment will depend upon the equipment. If a sampling valve suitable for fitting to a tubing has not been provided, it may be necessary to use a drilled flange or a bored oil-proof rubber bung on a drain or filling connection.

   NOTE Sampling by syringe is the procedure recommended for bushings by IEC SC36A. In the case of bushings fitted with a sampling point at the mounting flange, the described procedure applies.

   In the case of bushings not fitted with a sampling point at mounting flange, it may be possible to take a sample from the top of the bushing. The manufacturer's instructions should be consulted to determine a suitable position. Insert one end of the sampling tube into the bushing, from the top, and connect the other end to the three-way stopcock on the syringe, using plastic coupling, then follow the same procedure.

   In the case of bushings pressurized at ambient temperature, the procedure is not applicable, and reference should be made to the instructions of the equipment manufacturer.