



Standard Test Method for Thermal Stability of Organic Heat Transfer Fluids¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 6743; 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 the determination of the thermal stability of unused organic heat transfer fluids. The procedure is applicable to fluids used for the transfer of heat at temperatures both above and below their boiling point (refers to normal boiling point throughout the text unless otherwise stated). It is applicable to fluids with maximum bulk operating temperature between 260°C (500°F) and 454°C (850°F). The procedure shall not be used to test a fluid above its critical temperature. In this test method, the volatile decomposition products are in continuous contact with the fluid during the test. This test method will not measure the thermal stability threshold (the temperature at which volatile oil fragments begin to form), but instead will indicate bulk fragmentation occurring for a specified temperature and testing period. Because potential decomposition and generation of high pressure gas may occur at temperatures above 260°C (500°F), do not use this test method for aqueous fluids or other fluids which generate high-pressure gas at these temperatures.

1.2 DIN Norm 51528 covers a test method that is similar to this test method.

1.3 The applicability of this test method to siloxane-based heat transfer fluids has not been determined.

1.4 The values stated in SI are the standard. The values provided in parentheses are for information only.

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 and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.* For specific precautionary statements, see 7.2, 8.8, 8.9 and 8.10.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:

D 2887 Test Method for Boiling Range Distribution of Petroleum Fractions by Gas Chromatography²

D 4175 Terminology Relating to Petroleum, Petroleum Products, and Lubricants²

2.2 DIN Norms:

51528 Determination of the Thermal Stability of Unused Heat Transfer Fluids³

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *thermal stability, n*—the resistance to permanent changes in properties caused solely by heat. **D 4175**

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 *decomposition products that cannot be vaporized, n*—materials from the thermally stressed heat transfer fluid, from which those fractions that can be vaporized are removed by distillation procedures, that are quantitatively determined as residues in a bulb tube distillation apparatus.

3.2.2 *gaseous decomposition products, n*—materials with boiling points below room temperature, at normal pressure, such as hydrogen and methane, that escape upon opening the test cell and that can be determined by measuring the mass immediately thereafter.

3.2.3 *high boiling components, n*—materials from the thermally stressed heat transfer fluid, with boiling points above the final boiling point of the unstressed heat transfer fluid, but which can still be separated by distillation from the heat transfer fluid by means of classical separation procedures.

3.2.4 *low boiling components, n*—materials from the thermally stressed heat transfer fluid, with boiling points below the initial boiling point of the unstressed heat transfer fluid.

3.2.5 *mass percentage of high boiling components, n*—the percentage of thermally stressed heat transfer fluid with a boiling point above the final boiling point of the unstressed fluid.

3.2.6 *mass percentage of low boiling components, n*—the percentage of thermally stressed heat transfer fluid with a boiling point below the initial boiling point of the unstressed fluid.

3.2.7 *original fluid, n*—any fluid components with boiling point between the initial boiling point and final boiling point of the unstressed fluid.

3.2.8 *test cell, n*—an ampoule constructed from stainless steel tubing and sealed with compression fittings at each end.

3.2.9 *thermally stressed, adj*—subjected to heating, as described in this test method.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D02 on Petroleum Products and Lubricants and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D02.L00 on Industrial Lubricants.

Current edition approved Dec. 10, 2001. Published February 2002.

² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 05.02.

³ Available from Beuth Verlag GmbH, Burggrafen Strasse 6, 1000 Berlin 30 Germany.



4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Charge the test fluid in a thermal stability test cell purged with nitrogen and tightly seal the test cell to remove and preclude introduction of oxygen and water from the atmosphere. Heat the fluid in an oven at a given temperature and for a given period of time. Determine the boiling range of the heated fluid by gas chromatography (GC) analysis and compare it to the boiling range of pure, unused fluid.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Heat transfer fluids degrade when exposed to sufficiently high temperatures. The amount of degradation increases as the temperature increases or the length of exposure increases, or both. Due to reactions and rearrangement, degradation products can be formed. Degradation products include high and low boiling components, gaseous decomposition products, and products that cannot be evaporated. The type and content of degradation products produced will change the performance characteristics of a heat transfer fluid. In order to evaluate thermal stability, it is necessary to quantitatively determine the mass percentages of high and low boiling components, as well as gaseous decomposition products and those that cannot be vaporized, in the thermally stressed heat transfer fluid.

5.2 This test method differentiates the relative stability of organic heat transfer fluids at elevated temperatures in the absence of oxygen and water under the conditions of the test.

5.3 The user shall determine to his own satisfaction whether the results of this test method correlate to field performance. Heat transfer fluids in industrial plants are exposed to a variety of additional influencing variables. Interaction with the plant's materials, impurities, heat build-up during impaired flow conditions, the temperature distribution in the heat transfer fluid circuit, and other factors can also lead to changes in the heat transfer fluid. The test method provides an indication of the relative thermal stability of a heat transfer fluid, and can be considered as one factor in the decision-making process for selection of a fluid.

5.4 The accuracy of the results depends very strongly on how closely the test conditions are followed.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Test Cell*—The test cell shall be a new, clean ampoule made from ASTM A-269 grade 316L stainless steel tubing, 25 mm (1 in.) outside diameter, 2 mm (0.083 in.) wall thickness. The test cell shall be 0.152 ± 0.003 m (6 ± 0.125 in.) in length and sealed with compression fittings at each end.

NOTE 1—Where tubing with SI dimensions is not readily available, the use of tubing with inch-pound dimensions is acceptable.

6.2 *Heating Oven*—The oven shall be capable of being controlled within $\pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ ($\pm 1.8^\circ\text{F}$) at test temperature. The test temperature selected will typically be between 260°C (500°F) and 427°C (800°F), depending on the fluid being tested.

6.3 *Bulb Tube Distillation Apparatus*—This apparatus shall be capable of heating to at least 250°C (482°F) and vacuum to at least 0.7 mm Hg.

6.4 *Dewar Flask*—The flask is used to hold the test cells during cooling after removal from the heating oven.

6.5 *Balance*—The balance shall be capable of measuring mass to the nearest 0.01 g.

7. Preparation of Apparatus

7.1 *Test Cell*—The test cell used shall always be a clean, new ampoule. Reuse of ampoules is not permitted.

7.2 *Cleaning of Test Cell*—A new test cell shall be cleaned by washing with a suitable volatile solvent such as acetone and dried. (**Warning**—Use adequate safety precautions with all solvents and cleaners.)

8. Procedure

8.1 Determine the initial boiling point (IBP) and final boiling point (FBP) of the unstressed heat transfer fluid by GC, in accordance with Test Method D 2887 with the following requirements: the column shall be wall-coated open tubular type of 7.5 to 10 m length with a 100 % polydimethylsiloxane film thickness of 0.88 μm , the detector shall be flame ionization type, the initial oven temperature shall be set to 35°C (95°F) eliminating cryogenic cooling, the calibration mixture shall cover the boiling range from *n*-C₅ to *n*-C. The following GC parameters are recommended: oven temperature rate 10°C (18°F) per minute, oven final temperature 375°C (707°F), time at oven final temperature 3 min, injector initial temperature 100°C (212°F), injector temperature rate 10°C (18°F) per minute, injector final temperature 375°C (707°F), detector temperature 375°C (707°F).

8.2 Measure the mass of a clean, dry test cell to the nearest 0.01 g. Pour the unstressed heat transfer fluid into the clean, dry test cell. The quantity of heat transfer fluid transferred to the test cell shall be $27 \text{ g} \pm 0.2 \text{ g}$. Invert the test cell and allow it to drain until all free-flowing material has been removed. More viscous fluids may require as long as 15 min to drain completely. Measure the mass of the test cell and its remaining contents to the nearest 0.01 g.

8.3 Adjust the heating oven to the proper test temperature. Measure the mass of a clean, dry test cell to the nearest 0.01 g. Blow nitrogen into the clean, dry test cell for 2 min at 60 to 70 mL/min.

NOTE 2—To ensure accurate results, at least three test cells containing samples of the same heat transfer fluid should be heated simultaneously.

8.4 Pour the thermally unstressed heat transfer fluid into the clean, dry test cell. The quantity of heat transfer fluid transferred to the test cell shall be $27 \text{ g} \pm 0.2 \text{ g}$.

8.5 Completely displace the air remaining in the gas space in the test cell by introducing high purity nitrogen beneath the liquid surface near the bottom of the test cell at 30 to 35 mL/min for 12 min at ambient temperature.

8.6 Carefully seal the test cell and measure its mass to the nearest 0.01 g.

8.7 Insert the test cell vertically in the oven. The test temperature shall be maintained throughout the entire test duration and controlled in such a way that the temperature of the test liquid does not deviate by more than $\pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ ($\pm 1.8^\circ\text{F}$) at any location, including the heated wall. Temperature shall be measured and recorded throughout the test. If test cells containing different fluids are tested at the same time, the test cells shall be distributed symmetrically inside the oven to