



Designation: D 4658 – 03

Standard Test Method for Sulfide Ion in Water¹

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1. Scope*

1.1 This test method uses an ion-selective electrode to determine sulfide ion in water. The test method is applicable in the range from 0.04 to 4000 mg/L of sulfide.

1.2 Precision data presented in this test method were obtained using reagent water only. It is the user's responsibility to ensure the validity of this test method for untested types of water.

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 and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.* Sulfide samples, when acidified, can release highly toxic hydrogen sulfide gas. For a specific precautionary statement, see [Note 2](#).

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*

- [D 1129](#) Terminology Relating to Water²
- [D 1193](#) Specification for Reagent Water²
- [D 2777](#) Practice for Determination of Precision and Bias of Applicable Test Methods of Committee D-19 on Water²
- [D 3370](#) Practices for Sampling Water from Closed Conduits²
- [D 4127](#) Terminology Used with Ion-Selective Electrodes²
- [D 5810](#) Guide for Spiking into Aqueous Samples²
- [D 5847](#) Practice for the Writing Quality Control Specifications for Standard Test Methods for Water Analysis²

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D19 on Water and are the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D 19.05 on Inorganic Constituents in Water.

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² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 11.01.

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions:* For definitions of terms used in this test method, refer to Terminology [D 1129](#).

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.2.1 For definitions of terms specific to this test method, refer to Terminology [D 4127](#).

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Sulfide ion is measured potentiometrically using a sulfide ion-selective electrode in conjunction with a double-junction sleeve type reference electrode. Potentials are read using a pH meter having an expanded millivolt scale capable of being read to the nearest 0.1 mV, or a specific ion meter having a direct concentration scale for sulfide ion.

4.2 Samples are treated prior to analysis with sulfide anti-oxidant buffer (SAOB). This buffer fixes the solution pH at a highly alkaline level and contains ascorbic acid to retard air oxidation of sulfide ion in solution. This ensures that the sulfide present occurs chiefly as S^{2-} ion rather than as complexed HS^{-} or H_2S that are present at lower pH values.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Sulfide ion is found in ground waters and wastewater, causing odor and corrosion problems. If acidified, these waters can release hydrogen sulfide, which is extremely toxic even at low levels. This test method provides a means for interference-free measurement of free sulfide ion.

NOTE 1—Sulfide forms complexes with hydrogen ions (HS^{-} and H_2S). In addition, sulfide ion forms soluble complexes with elemental sulfur (S_2^{2-} , S_3^{2-} , S_4^{2-} , etc.), tin, antimony, and arsenic ions.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *pH Meter*, with expanded millivolt scale, or a specific ion meter having a direct concentration scale for sulfide ion.

6.2 *Sulfide Ion-Selective Electrode*.

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

6.3 *Reference Electrode*, double-junction sleeve type with 1.0 *M* potassium nitrate solution, pH adjusted to 13.5 with 1.0 *M* sodium hydroxide in the outer sleeve.

7. Reagents

7.1 *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.³ 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.

7.2 *Purity of Water*—Unless otherwise indicated, reference to water shall be understood to mean reagent water conforming to Specification **D 1193**, Type I. Other reagent water types may be used provided it is first ascertained that the water is of sufficiently high purity to permit its use without adversely affecting the bias and precision of the test method. Type III water was specified at the time of round robin testing of this method.

7.3 *Cadmium Nitrate Solution (0.1 M)*—Place 12.84 g of cadmium oxide into a 125-mL beaker. Add 12 to 14 mL of concentrated nitric acid (sp gr 1.42), stir with a glass stirring rod, and add about 10 mL of water. Stir thoroughly, add an additional 40 to 50 mL of water, washing off the glass stirring rod with part of the water. Transfer to a 1-L volumetric flask and dilute to 1000 mL with water.

7.4 *Lead Perchlorate Solution (0.1 M)*—Commercially available. Alternatively, it can be prepared using lead perchlorate and water. Dissolve 46.02 g of the salt in water using a 1-L volumetric flask and dilute to 1000 mL with water.

7.5 *Sodium Sulfide Solution, Stock*—Prepare sodium sulfide stock solution from sodium sulfide hydrate ($\text{Na}_2 \cdot 9\text{H}_2\text{O}$).

NOTE 2—Warning: All sulfide solution preparation and measurement must be performed in a hood to avoid breathing noxious fumes.

7.5.1 Precise standards cannot be prepared by weighing the salt because of the large and variable water of hydration. Instead, prepare a saturated sodium sulfide solution by adding approximately 100 g of the $\text{Na}_2\text{S} \cdot 9\text{H}_2\text{O}$ to approximately 100 mL of water, shake well, stopper securely, and allow it to stand, at least overnight.

7.5.2 To prepare the sodium sulfide stock solution, pipette 1 mL of the saturated solution described above into 50 mL of SAOB (7.6), and dilute to 100 mL with water.

7.6 *Sulfide Anti-Oxidant Buffer (SAOB)*—In a 1000-mL beaker containing approximately 600 mL of water, add 200 mL of 10 *M* sodium hydroxide (or 80 g pellets), 35 g of ascorbic acid, and 67 g of disodium EDTA. Stir until everything dissolves and transfer the solution to a 1000-mL volumetric flask. Dilute to the mark with water. The solution composition is as follows; 2 *M* NaOH; 0.2 *M* ascorbic acid, and 0.2 *M* disodium EDTA (dihydrate).

NOTE 3—Freshly prepared SAOB, when stored in a tightly stoppered bottle, has a shelf life of approximately two weeks, if opened frequently. When oxidized, the solution turns dark brown and should be discarded.

7.7 *Zinc Acetate Solution (2.0 M)*—Dissolve 43.90 g of zinc acetate [$\text{Zn}(\text{C}_2\text{H}_3\text{O}_2)_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$] in water, using a 100 mL volumetric flask, and dilute to 100 mL with water.

8. Sampling and Storage

8.1 Collect samples in accordance with Practices **D 3370**.

8.2 Samples should be taken with a minimum of aeration to avoid air oxidation of sulfide or loss of volatile hydrogen sulfide from the sample. Preserve samples by adding 0.2 mL (4 drops) of 2 *M* zinc acetate (equivalent to 128 mg/L $\text{S}^{=2-}$) and 0.05 mL (1 drop) of 6 *M* sodium hydroxide to a 100-mL bottle. Fill the bottle completely with the sample and stopper it. There should be no air bubbles trapped under the stopper. If the concentration of sulfide is greater than approximately 100 mg/L, the amounts of both reagents should be increased.

8.3 Sulfide in samples that have been “preserved” with zinc acetate can be determined without special treatment, since SAOB contains EDTA to redissolve the zinc and free the sulfide. The entire sample is used for analysis, and since the results will be given in milligrams sulfide per litre, the sample volume must be known.

9. Calibration

9.1 Prepare four calibration standards each day using 100-mL volumetric flasks as follows:

9.1.1 *Standard A*—5.00 mL of sodium sulfide stock solution, 45 mL of SAOB (use a graduated cylinder), and dilute to 100 mL with water.

9.1.2 *Standard B*—1.00 mL of sodium sulfide stock solution, 50 mL of SAOB (use a graduated cylinder), and dilute to 100 mL with water.

9.1.3 *Standard C*—2.00 mL of calibration standard A, 50 mL of SAOB (use a graduated cylinder), and dilute to 100 mL with water.

9.1.4 *Standard D*—1.00 mL of calibration standard A, 50 mL of SAOB (use a graduated cylinder), and dilute to 100 mL with water.

9.2 The concentrations of the calibration standards, in milligrams per litre, are calculated from the concentration, *S*, of the sodium sulfide stock solution as determined by titration:

$$A = 0.05S$$

$$B = 0.01S$$

$$C = 0.001S$$

$$D = 0.0005S$$

9.3 Prepare a calibration curve by immersing the electrode pair in each of the calibration standards, beginning with the most dilute, and record the stable electrode potential millivolt reading developed in each. Construct a graph using this data, using semilog paper. Record the sulfide ion concentrations on the logarithmic scale and the millivolt readings on the linear scale (**Fig. 1**).

10. Standardization

10.1 The concentration of the sodium sulfide stock solution must be determined by potentiometric titration before proceeding with the calibration.

³ *Reagent Chemicals, American Chemical Society Specifications*, 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.