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Standard Test Method for Major and Minor Elements in Coal and Coke Ash By X-Ray Fluorescence¹

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Note—Section 13 Precision and Bias, was corrected and the year date was changed on May 26, 2004.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the analysis of the commonly determined major and minor elements in ash from coal or coke using X-ray fluorescence (XRF) techniques.

NOTE 1—Test Method D 1757 is used for determination of sulfur.

NOTE 2—Although not included in the present method, the determination of barium, strontium, and manganese may be required to yield adequate totals.

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. The values given in parentheses are for information only.

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.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

D 1757 Test Methods for Sulfur in Ash from Coal and Coke

D 3174 Test Method for Ash in the Analysis Sample of Coal and Coke from Coal

E 2 Methods of Preparation of Micrographs of Metals and Alloys (Including Recommended Practice for Photography as Applied to Metallography)³

E 11 Specification for Wire-Cloth Sieves for Testing Purposes

3. Summary of Test Method

3.1 The coal or coke to be analyzed is ashed under standard conditions and ignited to constant weight. Previously ashed materials are ignited to constant weight under standard conditions. The ash is fused with lithium tetraborate ($\text{Li}_2\text{B}_4\text{O}_7$) or other suitable flux and either ground and pressed into a pellet or cast into a glass disk. The pellet or disk is then irradiated by an X-ray beam of short wavelength (high energy). The characteristic X-rays of the atom that are emitted or fluoresced upon absorption of the primary or incident X-rays are dispersed and intensities at selected wavelengths are measured by sensitive detectors. Detector output is related to concentration by calibration curves or by computerized data-handling equipment.

3.2 The K spectral lines are used for all of the elements determined by this procedure.

3.3 All elements are determined as the element and reported as the oxide and include Si, Al, Fe, Ca, Mg, Na, K, P, Ti, Mn, Sr, and Ba.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 A compositional analysis of ash is used in describing the quality of coal for its complete characterization. Ash composition is useful in predicting slagging and fouling characteristics of combusted materials as well as the potential utilization of ash by-products.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D05 on Coal and Coke and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D05.29 on Major Elements in Ash and Trace Elements of Coal.

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² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 05.05.

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.

³ Discontinued, see 1982 *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Part 11.

³ Withdrawn.

4.2 The chemical composition of laboratory prepared coal or coke ash is rarely, if ever, representative of the composition of the mineral matter in the coal because the ashing process can alter some minerals. However, it can approximate the composition of the fly ash and slag resulting from commercial combustion of coal or coke.

5. Apparatus

5.1 *Ashing Furnace*, with air circulation as specified in Test Method D 3174 and capable of having its temperature regulated between 700 and 750°C.

5.2 *Fusion Furnace or Fluxing Device*, with an operating temperature of at least 1000°C.

5.3 *Fusion Crucibles*, either high-purity graphite (22 mm high and 19 mm wide, inside diameter) or platinum-gold alloy of a similar or larger capacity.

5.4 *Pulverizers*, including agate, mullite or tungsten carbide mortar, and pestle, minimum capacity 25 mL.

5.5 *Sieves*, 250- μm (No. 60) and 75- μm (No. 200) U.S.A standard sieve as specified in Specification E 11.

5.6 *Compactor*—A press equipped with a gage enabling reproducible pressures (exceeding 1.72×10^8 Pa (25 000 psi)) if pressed pellets are utilized.

5.7 *Excitation Source*, with a stable electrical power supply ($\pm 1\%$) and a high-intensity, short-wavelength X-ray capability.

5.8 *Spectrometer*—A wavelength or energy dispersive system equipped with a vacuum sample chamber.

5.8.1 *Analyzing Crystal (Wavelength Units)*—The choice of the analyzing crystal is made on the basis of the element to be determined. An attempt should be made to use the crystal that yields the maximum sensitivity with minimum interferences. The same crystal must be used for standards and unknowns.

5.8.2 *Detectors*—Scintillation and gas-flow counters are used with wavelength systems while lithium-drifted diodes are used for energy dispersive systems.

6. Reagents

6.1 *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.⁴ 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.

6.2 *Detector Gas*—The usual gas composition of the gas used in the flow-proportional counters is 90 % argon, 10 % methane, although other compositions may be used.

6.3 *Heavy Absorber*—Where heavy absorbers, such as lanthanum oxide or barium oxide, are used they shall be a minimum of 99.99 % purity.

6.4 *Fluxes*—Lithium or sodium borates or carbonates, or combination thereof, are often used for sample fusion. Lithium or ammonium iodide used as a nonwetting agent and potassium or ammonium nitrate used as an oxidizing agent may be used provided they do not contribute to spectral interference.

6.5 *Binders*—Where pressed pellets are used for analysis, the binder used shall contribute no spectral interferences during the determination.

7. Preparation of Coal Ash and Coke Ash

7.1 Prepare the ash from a thoroughly mixed representative analysis sample of air-dried coal or coke that has been ground to pass a 250- μm (No. 60) U.S.A standard sieve. Spread the coal or coke in a layer not over 6 mm ($\frac{1}{4}$ in.) in depth in a fireclay, porcelain, or platinum roasting dish. Place the ash in a cold muffle furnace and heat gradually so that the temperature reaches 500°C in 1 h and 750°C in 2 h. Ignite at 750°C to constant weight, cool, grind to pass a 74- μm (No. 200) U.S.A standard sieve, and reignite at 750°C for 1 h. Immediately, prepare the analysis sample or store the dry ash in a vacuum desiccator. If samples are stored and the absorption of moisture or CO₂, or both, is in question, reignite the ash using the 500-750°C staged combustion before use. Alternatively, determine loss on ignition using the 500-750°C staged combustion on a separate sample weighed out at the same time as the test portion and make the necessary corrections. Thoroughly mix each sample before weighing.

7.2 Materials previously ashed, fly ash, or bottom ash must be ignited to constant weight at 750°C and cooled in a desiccator before analysis sample preparation, or alternatively, weight loss or gain must be determined on a second sample at 750°C taken at the same time as the analysis sample so that analysis determined on an as-received basis can be reported on an ignited ash basis.

8. Preparation of Analytical Sample

8.1 Mix the powdered sample, weigh a portion of the sample, and mix with a suitable amount of flux (2 to 10 g of flux per gram of sample) (Note 3). When a heavy absorber is used (Note 4), it is added at this point in an amount equal to the amount of sample and thoroughly blended with the mix. A portion of the flux used as a cap on the mix ensures washing down any of the material from the sides of the crucible.

⁴ *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 14.02: 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. Pharmaceutical Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.