



Standard Test Method for Measuring *n*-Heptane Induced Phase Separation of Asphaltene- Containing Heavy Fuel Oils as Separability Number by an Optical Scanning Device¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 7061; 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 quantitative measurement, either in the laboratory or in the field, of how easily asphaltene-containing heavy fuel oils diluted in toluene phase separate upon addition of heptane. This is measured as a separability number (%) by the use of an optical scanning device.

1.2 The test method is limited to asphaltene-containing heavy fuel oils. ASTM specification fuels that generally fall within the scope of this test method are Specification D 396, Grade Nos. 4, 5, and 6, Specification D 975, Grade No. 4-D, and Specification D 2880, Grade Nos. 3-GT and 4-GT. Refinery fractions from which such blended fuels are made also fall within the scope of this test method.

1.3 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard.

1.4 *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 396 Specification for Fuel Oils

D 975 Specification for Diesel Fuel Oils

D 2880 Specification for Gas Turbine Fuel Oils

D 4057 Practice for Manual Sampling of Petroleum and Petroleum Products

D 4177 Practice for Automatic Sampling of Petroleum and Petroleum Products

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *asphaltene, n*—in petroleum technology, a molecule of high molecular mass, high carbon/hydrogen ratio, and containing heteroatoms.

3.1.1.1 *Discussion*—Asphaltenes are found largely in crude oils and in heavy fuel oils containing residual fractions. They are insoluble in alkanes, such as *n*-heptane and cetane, but soluble in aromatic solvents, such as benzene, toluene, and 1-methylnaphthalene.

3.1.2 *compatibility, n*—of crude oils or of heavy fuel oils, the ability of two or more crude oils or fuel oils to blend together within certain concentration ranges without evidence of separation, such as the formation of multiple phases.

3.1.2.1 *Discussion*—Incompatible heavy fuel oils or crude oils, when mixed or blended, result in the flocculation or precipitation of asphaltenes. Some oils may be compatible within certain concentration ranges in specific mixtures, but incompatible outside those ranges.

3.1.3 *flocculation, n*—of asphaltenes from crude oils or heavy fuel oils, the aggregation of colloiddally dispersed asphaltenes into visibly larger masses that may or may not settle.

3.1.4 *peptization, n*—of asphaltenes in crude oils or heavy fuel oils, the dispersion of asphaltenes to produce a colloidal dispersion.

3.1.5 *stability reserve, n*—in petroleum technology, the property of an oil to maintain asphaltenes in a peptized state and prevent flocculation of the asphaltenes.

3.1.5.1 *Discussion*—An oil with a low stability reserve is likely to undergo flocculation of asphaltenes when stressed (for example, extended heated storage) or blended with a range of

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² 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.

other oils. Two oils each with a high stability reserve are likely to maintain asphaltenes in a peptized state and not lead to flocculation when blended together.

3.1.6 *transmittance, n—of light*, the fraction of the incident light of a given wavelength that is not reflected or absorbed, but passes through a substance.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.2.1 *separability number, n—in petroleum technology*, the standard deviation of the average transmittance, determined in this test method, expressed as a percentage figure.

3.2.1.1 *Discussion*—The separability number estimates the stability reserve of the oil, where a high separability number indicates that the oil has a low stability reserve and a low separability number that the oil has a high stability reserve.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Dilution of oil with toluene followed by addition of heptane causes asphaltenes to flocculate, and the oil to phase separate. The rate of the phase separation is determined by measuring the increase in transmittance in the sample from the bottom of a test tube to the top (or a portion thereof) over time. The standard deviation of the average transmittance from a number of scans gives a separability number (%).

4.2 The oil is first diluted with toluene in ratios that depend on the oil type (*Annex A1*). Mix 2 mL of the oil/toluene solution with 23 mL of heptane. Transfer 7 mL of the oil/toluene/heptane mixture into a glass vial that is inserted into an optical scanning device.

4.3 The change in light transmittance through the glass vial containing the oil/toluene/heptane mixture is recorded by scanning the vial vertically with the optical scanning device. One scan is run every 60 s for 15 min. An average of the transmittance is calculated from 1125 readings at 0.04-mm intervals along the glass vial, starting 10 mm above the bottom of the vial and continuing up to 55 mm for each scan. The separability number from 16 scans is calculated and reported.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This procedure describes a rapid and sensitive method for estimating the stability reserve of an oil. The stability reserve is estimated in terms of a separability number, where a low value of the separability number indicates that there is a stability reserve within the oil. When the separability number is between 0 to 5, the oil can be considered to have a high stability reserve and asphaltenes are not likely to flocculate. If the separability number is between 5 to 10, the stability reserve in the oil will be much lower. However, asphaltenes are, in this case, not likely to flocculate as long as the oil is not exposed to any worse conditions, such as storing, aging, and heating. If the separability number is above 10, the stability reserve of the oil is very low and asphaltenes will easily flocculate, or have already started to flocculate.

5.2 This test method can be used by refiners and users of oils, for which this test method is applicable, to estimate the stability reserves of their oils. Hence, this test method can be used by refineries to control and optimize their refinery processes. Consumers of oils can use this test method to estimate the stability reserve of their oils before, during, and after storage.

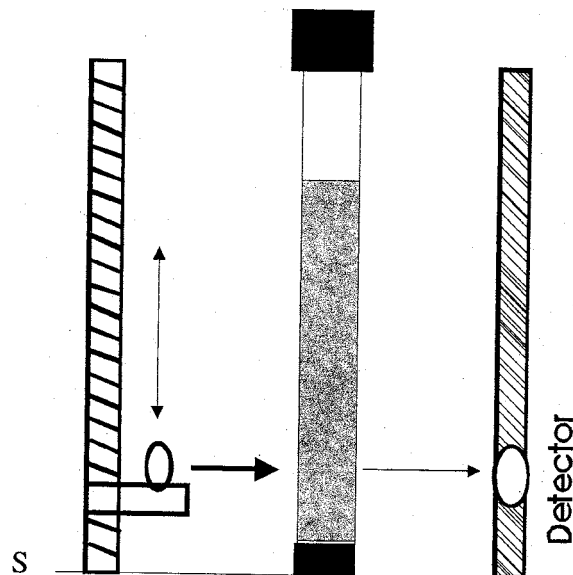


FIG. 1 Schematic Representation of a Typical Measurement Using an Optical Scanning Device

5.3 This test method is not intended for predicting whether oils are compatible before mixing, but can be used for determining the separability number of already blended oils. However, oils that show a low separability number are more likely to be compatible with other oils than are oils with high separability numbers.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *PC-Based Computer*, into which the software³ that controls the apparatus can be loaded. Data is acquired and accumulated on the hard disk in the computer.

6.2 *Optical Scanning Device*—The apparatus³ consists of a reading head, composed of a pulsed infrared light source that uses a wavelength of 850 nm. A detector is situated opposite from the light source and reads the transmittance through the glass vial containing the specimen. During a scan, the reading head moves up and down along the glass vial and scans the whole vial going up. The transmittance is automatically measured every 0.04 mm. During one measurement, the time interval between each scan shall be 60 s and 16 scans shall be run. The measuring principle is schematically shown in *Fig. 1*. The measured transmittance along the glass vial is reported every 0.04 mm and is automatically stored on the hard disk in the computer and can be further processed as described in *Section 10*.

6.3 *Cylindrical Clear Glass Vial with Screw Cap*, 15 mL, 16 mm outside diameter, 12 mm inner diameter, and 140 mm high, shall be used as a sample container.

³ The sole source of supply of the optical scanning device (Turbiscan MA2000), and corresponding software (Turbisoft), known to the committee at this time is available from Formulaction, 10 Impasse Borde Basse, 31240 l'Union, France. This device has been found satisfactory for the purpose of this test method. If you are aware of alternative suppliers, please provide this information to ASTM International Headquarters. Your comments will receive careful consideration at a meeting of the responsible technical committee,¹ which you may attend.