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Standard Guide for Controlling the Quality of Industrial Radiographic Film Processing¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This guide² establishes guidelines that may be used for the control and maintenance of industrial radiographic film processing equipment and materials. Effective use of these guidelines aid in controlling the consistency and quality of industrial radiographic film processing.

1.2 Use of this guide is limited to the processing of films for industrial radiography. This guide includes procedures for wet-chemical processes and dry processing techniques.

1.3 The necessity of applying specific control procedures such as those described in this guide is dependent, to a certain extent, on the degree to which a facility adheres to good processing practices as a matter of routine procedure.

1.4 If a nondestructive testing agency as described in Practice E543 is used to perform the examination, the testing agency shall meet the requirements of Practice E543.

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, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of federal and local codes prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*³

E94 Guide for Radiographic Examination

E543 Specification for Agencies Performing Nondestructive Testing

E1079 Practice for Calibration of Transmission Densitometers

E1254 Guide for Storage of Radiographs and Unexposed Industrial Radiographic Films

E1316 Terminology for Nondestructive Examinations

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E07 on Nondestructive Testing and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E07.01 on Radiology (X and Gamma) Method.

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² For ASME Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code applications see related Specification SE-999 in Section II of that Code.

³ 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.

2.2 *ANSI Standard:*

ANSI PH 4.8 Methylene Blue Method for Measuring Thio-sulfate and Silver Densitometric Method for Measuring Residual Chemicals in Films, Plates, and Papers⁴

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of terms used in this guide, see Terminology E1316.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 The provisions in this guide are intended to control the reliability or quality of the image development process only. The acceptability or quality of industrial radiographic films processed in this manner as well as the materials or products radiographed remain at the discretion of the user, or inspector, or both. It is further intended that this guide be used as an adjunct to and not a replacement for Guide E94.

5. Chemical Mixing for Manual and Automatic Processes

5.1 Any equipment that comes in contact with processing solutions should be made of glass, hard rubber, polyethylene, PVC, enameled steel, stainless steel, or other chemically inert materials. This includes materials such as plumbing, mixing impellers, and the cores of filter cartridges. Do not allow materials such as tin, copper, steel, brass, aluminum, or zinc to come into contact with processing solutions. These materials can cause solution contamination that may result in film fogging or rapid oxidation.

5.2 *Mixing Chemicals:*

5.2.1 Do not mix powdered chemicals in processor tanks, since undissolved particles may be left in the square corners of the tank. Mix solutions in separate containers made from materials specified in 5.1.

5.2.2 Carefully follow the manufacturer's package directions or formulas for mixing the chemicals. Start with the correct volume of water at the temperature specified in the instructions, and add chemicals in the order listed. (**Warning**—During the mixing and use of radiographic film processing chemicals, be sure to observe all precautionary information on chemical containers and in instructions.)

⁴ Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036.

5.3 Contamination of Solutions:

5.3.1 Thoroughly clean all mixing equipment immediately after use to avoid contamination when the next solution is mixed. When mixing fixer from powder, make sure to add the powder carefully to the water in the mixing tank so fixer dust does not get into other processing solutions. When mixing any chemical, protect nearby tank solutions with floating lids and dust covers. The use of a vent hood is recommended as a safety precaution.

5.3.2 The water supply should either be distilled or filtered so it is clean and sediment-free.

5.3.3 If large tanks are used for mixing, carefully mark the volume levels to be certain that volumes are correct.

5.3.4 Use of impeller-type mixers provides rapid, thorough mixing. When positioning the impeller special caution should be taken in choosing angle and depth to minimize the amount of air being drawn into the solution. Over-mixing of the solutions can cause oxidation, especially with developers, and should be avoided. Rinse the shaft, impeller, and mounting clamp with water after use.

5.4 Maintaining Equipment:

5.4.1 Immediately clean all mixing equipment after use.

5.4.2 In addition to cleaning equipment immediately after use, wash any mixing apparatus that has been idle for a long period of time to eliminate dust and dirt that may have accumulated.

5.4.3 Processing hangers and tanks should be free of corrosion and chemical deposits. Encrusted deposits that accumulate in tanks, trays, and processing equipment which are difficult to remove by conventional cleaning, can be removed by using the specially formulated cleaning agents recommended by the chemical or equipment manufacturer.

6. Storage of Solutions

6.1 *In Original Containers*—Follow the manufacturer's storage and capacity recommendations packaged with the chemicals. Do not use chemicals that have been stored longer than recommended.

6.2 *In Replenisher or Process Tanks*—Wherever possible, protect solutions in tanks with floating lids and dust covers. In addition to preventing contaminants from entering solutions, floating lids and dust covers help to minimize oxidation and evaporation from the surface of the solutions. Evaporation can concentrate solutions and reduce temperatures causing precipitation of some of the solution constituents.

6.2.1 Store replenisher solutions for small volume operations in airtight containers. The caps of these containers should be free of corrosion and foreign particles that could prevent a tight fit.

6.3 *Temperature*—Store all solutions at normal room temperature, between 40 to 80°F (4 to 27°C). Storing solutions, particularly developer, at elevated temperatures can produce rapid oxidation resulting in loss of activity and a tendency to stain the film. Storage at too low a temperature, particularly of fixer solutions, can cause some solutions to crystallize, and the crystals may not redissolve even with heating and stirring.

6.4 *Deterioration*—Radiographic film processing chemicals can deteriorate either with age or with usage. Carefully follow the manufacturer's recommendations for storage life and useful

capacity. Discard processing solutions when the recommended number of films have been processed or the recommended storage life of the prepared solution has been reached, whichever occurs first.

6.5 Contamination:

6.5.1 Liquid chemicals are provided in containers with tight-fitting tops. To avoid contamination, never interchange the top of one container with another. For this reason, it is common practice for radiographic film processing chemicals manufacturers to color code the container tops, that is, red for developer and blue for fixer.

6.5.2 Clearly label replenisher storage tanks with the solution that they contain and use that container only with that solution. If more than one developer or one fixer formulation are being used, a separate replenisher tank should be dedicated to each chemical. Differences in developer or fixer formulations from one manufacturer to another may contaminate similar solutions.

7. Processing

7.1 Manual Processing:

7.1.1 Follow the temperature recommendations from the film or solution manufacturer and check thermometers. Check thermometers and temperature-controlling devices periodically to be sure the process temperatures are correct. Process temperatures should be checked at least once per shift. Keep the temperature of the stop (if used), fixer, and wash water within $\pm 5^\circ\text{F}$ ($\pm 3^\circ\text{C}$) of the developer temperature. (**Warning**—An unprotected mercury-filled thermometer should never be used for radiographic film processing applications because accidental breakage could result in serious mercury contamination.)

7.1.2 Control of processing solution temperature and immersion time relationships are instrumental considerations when establishing a processing procedure that will consistently produce radiographs of desired density and quality. The actual time and temperature relationships established are governed largely by the industrial radiographic films and chemicals used and should be within the limits of the manufacturer's recommendations for those materials. When determining the immersion time for each solution assure that the draining time is included. Draining time should be consistent from solution to solution. The darkroom timers used should be periodically checked for accuracy.

7.1.3 Agitate at specified intervals for the times recommended by the film or solution manufacturer.

7.1.4 During film processing certain constituents within the solutions undergo chemical transformations that render them useless for further processing functions. In addition, some solution adheres to the film and is carried on into the next solution during processing. In order to compensate for these reductions in solution activity and volume, add replenishment solution. The volume of replenishment necessary is governed primarily by the number, size, and density of films processed. Manufacturer's recommendations for replenishment are based on these criteria and will generally provide suitable results for the expected life of the solution. In any case, maintain solution levels to ensure complete immersion of the film.