



Designation: E1388 – 05

Standard Practice for Sampling of Headspace Vapors from Fire Debris Samples¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E1388; 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 practice covers the procedure for removing small quantities of ignitable liquid vapor from samples of fire debris by sampling the headspace of the debris container.

1.2 Separation and concentration procedures are listed in the referenced documents. (See Practices [E1385](#), [E1386](#), [E1412](#), and [E1413](#).)

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

[E1385 Practice for Separation and Concentration of Ignitable Liquid Residues from Fire Debris Samples by Steam Distillation](#)³

[E1386 Practice for Separation of Ignitable Liquid Residues from Fire Debris Samples by Solvent Extraction](#)

[E1387 Test Method for Ignitable Liquid Residues in Extracts from Fire Debris Samples by Gas Chromatography](#)³

[E1412 Practice for Separation of Ignitable Liquid Residues from Fire Debris Samples by Passive Headspace Concentration With Activated Charcoal](#)

[E1413 Practice for Separation and Concentration of Ignitable Liquid Residues from Fire Debris Samples by Dynamic Headspace Concentration](#)

[E1459 Guide for Physical Evidence Labeling and Related Documentation](#)

[E1492 Practice for Receiving, Documenting, Storing, and Retrieving Evidence in a Forensic Science Laboratory](#)

[E1618 Test Method for Ignitable Liquid Residues in Extracts from Fire Debris Samples by Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry](#)

3. Summary of Practice

3.1 The sample, preferably in its original container, is heated in order to volatilize any petroleum products present in the debris. After heating, the headspace is sampled and analyzed by gas chromatography, GC/MS, or GC/IR.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 This procedure is particularly useful for screening fire debris samples to determine relative ignitable liquid concentrations and possible ignitable liquid class prior to extraction with other techniques.

4.2 This practice is useful when volatile oxygenated products such as alcohols or lacquer thinners are suspected.

4.3 This practice is the least sensitive of the sample preparation techniques and may not detect quantities of less than 10 μ L of petroleum product.

4.4 Because this separation takes place in a closed container, the sample remains in approximately the same condition in which it was submitted. Repeat and interlaboratory analyses are therefore possible.

4.5 Due to variables in the debris sample condition prior to headspace sampling, complete reproducibility of chromatograms may be difficult to obtain.

4.5.1 To obtain greater reproducibility, use one of the separation procedures which results in a solution of the flammable or combustible liquid residue (see Practices [E1385](#), [E1386](#), [E1412](#), and [E1413](#).)

4.6 High concentrations of highly volatile compounds may swamp the headspace, inhibiting the recovery of less volatile components.

5. Apparatus

5.1 *Heating System*—An oven, heating mantle or hot plate designed to fit the evidence container.

5.2 *Temperature Measuring Device*—A thermometer or thermocouple capable of measuring temperatures in the range from 40 to 150°C.

5.3 A gas-tight syringe capable of reproducibility introducing sample sizes in the range from 0.5 to 5 mL.

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E30 on Forensic Sciences and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E30.01 on Criminalistics. Current edition approved Sept. 1, 2005. Published October 2005. Originally approved in 1990. Last previous edition approved in 2005 as E1388 – 00 (2005). DOI: 10.1520/E1388-05.

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.

³ Withdrawn. The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.