



Designation: C776 – 06

Standard Specification for Sintered Uranium Dioxide Pellets¹

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INTRODUCTION

This specification is intended to provide the nuclear industry with a general specification for uranium dioxide pellets. It recognizes the diversity of manufacturing methods by which uranium dioxide pellets are produced and the many special requirements for chemical and physical characterization which may be imposed by the operating conditions to which the pellets will be subjected in specific reactor systems. Therefore, it is anticipated that the purchaser may supplement this specification with additional requirements for specific applications.

1. Scope

1.1 This specification is for finished sintered uranium dioxide pellets. It applies to uranium dioxide pellets containing uranium of any ²³⁵U concentration for use in nuclear reactors.

1.2 This specification recognizes the presence of reprocessed uranium in the fuel cycle and consequently defines isotopic limits for uranium dioxide pellets made from commercial grade UO₂. Such commercial grade UO₂ is defined so that, regarding fuel design and manufacture, the product is essentially equivalent to that made from unirradiated uranium. UO₂ falling outside these limits cannot necessarily be regarded as equivalent and may thus need special provisions at the fuel fabrication plant or in the fuel design.

1.3 This specification does not include (a) provisions for preventing criticality accidents or (b) requirements for health and safety. Observance of this specification does not relieve the user of the obligation to be aware of and conform to all federal, state, and local regulations pertaining to possessing, shipping, processing, or using source or special nuclear material. Examples of U.S. Government documents are Code of Federal Regulations (Latest Edition), Title 10, Part 50, Title 10, Part 71, and Title 49, Part 173.

1.4 The following precautionary caveat pertains only to the technical requirements portion, Section 4, of this specification: *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 or regulatory limitations prior to use.*

¹ This specification is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee C26 on Nuclear Fuel Cycle and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee C26.02 on Fuel and Fertile Material Specifications.

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2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

C696 Test Methods for Chemical, Mass Spectrometric, and Spectrochemical Analysis of Nuclear-Grade Uranium Dioxide Powders and Pellets

C753 Specification for Nuclear-Grade, Sinterable Uranium Dioxide Powder

C859 Terminology Relating to Nuclear Materials

C996 Specification for Uranium Hexafluoride Enriched to Less Than 5 % ²³⁵U

C1233 Practice for Determining Equivalent Boron Contents of Nuclear Materials

E105 Practice for Probability Sampling of Materials

2.2 ANSI Standard:³

ANSI/ASME NQA-1 Quality Assurance Requirements for Nuclear Facility Applications

2.3 U.S. Government Documents:

Code of Federal Regulations (Latest Edition), Title 10, Part 50, Energy (10 CFR 50) Domestic Licensing of Production and Utilization Facilities⁴

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, Part 71, Packaging and Transportation of Radioactive Material⁴

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 49, Part 173, General Requirements for Shipments and Packaging⁴

Regulatory Guide NUREG 1.126 An Acceptable Model and Related Statistical Methods for the Analysis of Fuel

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 Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036, <http://www.ansi.org>.

⁴ Available from U.S. Government Printing Office Superintendent of Documents, 732 N. Capitol St., NW, Mail Stop: SDE, Washington, DC 20401, <http://www.access.gpo.gov>.

Densification, Rev. 1 March 1978⁵

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of terms, refer to Terminology **C859**.

4. Technical Requirements

4.1 *Chemical Requirements*—All chemical analyses shall be performed on portions of the representative sample prepared in accordance with Section 6. Analytical chemistry methods used shall be as stated in Test Methods **C696** (latest edition) or demonstrated equivalent as mutually agreed upon between the seller and the buyer.

4.1.1 *Uranium Content*—The uranium content shall be a minimum of 87.7 weight % on a dry weight basis. (Dry weight is defined as the sample weight minus the moisture content.)

4.1.2 *Impurity Content*—The impurity content shall not exceed the individual element limit specified in **Table 1** on a uranium weight basis. The summation of the contribution of each of the impurity elements listed in **Table 1** shall not exceed 1500 µg/g. If an element analysis is reported as “less than” a given concentration, this “less than” value shall be used in the determination of total impurities.

4.1.3 *Stoichiometry*—The oxygen-to-uranium ratio of sintered fuel pellets shall be within the range from 1.99 to 2.02.

4.1.4 *Moisture Content*—The moisture content limit is included in the total hydrogen limit (see **Table 1**).

TABLE 1 Impurity Elements and Maximum Concentration Limits

Element	Maximum Concentration Limit (µg/g U)
Aluminum	250
Carbon	100
Calcium + magnesium	200
Chlorine	25
Chromium	250
Cobalt	100
Fluorine	15
Hydrogen (total from all sources)	1.3
Iron	500
Nickel	250
Nitrogen	75
Silicon	500
Thorium	10

4.2 Nuclear Requirements:

4.2.1 Isotopic Content:

4.2.1.1 For UO₂ pellets with an isotopic content of ²³⁵U between that of natural uranium and 5 %, the isotopic limits and radionuclide analytical requirements of Specification **C996** shall apply, unless otherwise agreed upon between the buyer and the seller⁶. The specific isotopic measurements required by Specification **C996** may be waived, provided that the seller can

⁵ Available from U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555. Attention: Director, Division of Document Control.

⁶ A ²³⁶U content greater than the one specified in Specification **C996** for Commercial grade UF₆ may be acceptable for the intended application since it is not a radiological safety concern. The intent of the **C996** isotope limits is to indicate possible presence of reprocessed UF₆. Acceptance of UO₂ pellets with a ²³⁶U content above that specified for Commercial Enriched UF₆, shall be based on a fuel performance evaluation.

demonstrate compliance with Specification **C996**, for instance, through the seller’s quality assurance records.

4.2.1.2 For UO₂ pellets not having an assay in the range set forth in **4.2.1.1**, the isotopic requirements shall be as agreed upon between the buyer and the seller.

4.2.2 *Equivalent Boron Content*—For thermal reactor use, the total equivalent boron content (EBC) shall not exceed 4.0 µg/g on a uranium basis. The total EBC is the sum of the individual EBC values. For purpose of EBC calculation B, Gd, Eu, Dy, Sm, and Cd shall be included in addition to elements listed in **Table 1** below. The method of performing the calculation shall be as indicated in Practice **C1233**. For fast reactor use, the above limitation on EBC does not apply.

4.3 Physical Characteristics:

4.3.1 *Dimensions*—The dimensions of the pellet shall be specified by the buyer. These shall include diameter, length, perpendicularity, and, as required, other geometric parameters including surface finish.

4.3.2 *Pellet Density*—The density of sintered pellets shall be as specified by the buyer. The theoretical density for UO₂ of natural isotopic content shall be considered as 10.96 g/cm³. Density measurements shall be made by the geometric method stated in the Specification **C753** Annex, an immersion method or by a demonstrated equivalent method as mutually agreed upon between the buyer and the seller.

4.3.3 *Grain Size and Pore Morphology*—The performance of UO₂ fuel pellets may be affected by the grain size and pore morphology. These characteristics shall be mutually agreed upon between the buyer and the seller.

4.3.4 *Pellet Integrity*—Pellets shall be inspected to criteria which maintain adequate fuel performance and ensure that excessive breakage will not occur during fuel-rod loading. Acceptable test methods include a visual (1×) comparison with pellet standards or other methods, for example, loadability tests, approved by both the buyer and the seller.

4.3.4.1 *Surface Cracks*—The suggested limits for surface cracks are defined as follows:

(1) *Axial Cracks, including those leading to the Pellet Ends*— $\frac{1}{2}$ the pellet length.

(2) *Circumferential Cracks*— $\frac{1}{3}$ of the pellet circumference.

4.3.4.2 *Chips*—The limits for chips (missing material) are as follows:

(1) Cylindrical Surface Chips

(a) *Cylindrical Surface Area*—the total area of all chips shall be less than 5% of the pellet cylindrical surface area.

(b) *Maximum Linear Dimension*—the maximum linear dimension shall be established to maintain adequate fuel performance in the intended application and shall be agreed upon between the buyer and the seller.

(2) *Pellet Ends*— $\frac{1}{3}$ of the pellet end surface (may be inspected as $\frac{1}{3}$ of missing circumference at the pellet end).

4.3.5 *Cleanliness and Workmanship*—The surface of finished pellets shall be visually free of macroscopic inclusions and foreign material such as oil and grinding media.

4.4 *Identification*—Pellets may be identified as to enrichment by either marking or coding.