



## Standard Guide for Sampling Waste and Soils for Volatile Organic Compounds<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 4547; 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 ( $\epsilon$ ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

### 1. Scope

1.1 This guide describes recommended procedures for the collection, handling, and preparation of solid waste, soil, and sediment samples for subsequent determination of volatile organic compounds (VOCs). This class of compounds includes low molecular weight aromatics, hydrocarbons, halogenated hydrocarbons, ketones, acetates, nitriles, acrylates, ethers, and sulfides with boiling points below 200° Celsius (C) that are insoluble or slightly soluble in water.

1.2 Methods of sample collection, handling, and preparation for analysis are described.

1.3 This guide does not cover the details of sampling design, laboratory preparation of containers, and the analysis of the samples.

1.4 It is recommended that this guide be used in conjunction with Guide D 4687.

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 and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

### 2. Referenced Documents

#### 2.1 ASTM Standards:

- D 3550 Practice for Ring-Lined Barrel Sampling of Soils<sup>2</sup>
- D 4687 Guide for General Planning of Waste Sampling<sup>3</sup>
- D 4700 Guide for Soil Sampling from the Vadose Zone<sup>2</sup>
- D 5058 Test Methods for Compatibility of Screening Analysis of Waste<sup>3</sup>
- D 5792 Practice for Generation of Environmental Data Related to Waste Management Activities: Development of Data Quality Objectives<sup>3</sup>
- D 6051 Guide for Composite Sampling and Field Subsampling for Environmental Waste Management Activities<sup>3</sup>
- E 856 Definitions of Terms and Abbreviations Relating to Physical and Chemical Characteristics of Refuse-Derived Fuel<sup>3</sup>

#### 2.2 Federal Standard:

Title 49 Transportation, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 172, List of Hazardous Substances and Reportable Quantities<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Terminology

3.1 *sample, n*—a portion of material taken from a larger quantity for the purpose of estimating properties or composition of the larger quantity. (E 856)

3.2 *subsample, n*—a portion of a sample taken for the purpose of estimating properties or composition of the whole sample. (D 6051)

3.2.1 *Discussion*—A subsample, by definition, is also a sample.

### 4. Summary of Guide

4.1 This guide addresses the use of tools for sample collection and transfer, conditions for sample storage, sample preservation, and two common means of sample preparation for analysis. Special attention is given to each step from sample collection to analysis to limit the loss of VOCs by volatilization of biodegradation. The sample collected and analyzed should be representative of the parent material sampled. The two methods cited for the preparation of samples for VOC analysis are methanol extraction and vapor partitioning (that is, purge-and-trap and headspace). The method of sample preparation for VOC analysis is dependent on the data quality objectives (see Practice D 5792). Although the equilibrium-driven proportions of VOCs in the different phases change during sample preparation and analysis, the overall intent of the methods in this guide are to minimize VOC losses.

### 5. Significance and Use

5.1 This guide describes sample collection and handling procedures designed to minimize losses of VOCs. The principal mechanisms for the loss of VOCs from materials during collection and handling are volatilization and biodegradation. Susceptibility of various VOCs to these two loss mechanisms is both compound and matrix specific. In general, compounds with higher vapor pressures are more susceptible to volatilization than compounds with lower vapor pressures. Also, aerobically degradable compounds are generally more susceptible to biodegradation than anaerobically degradable compounds. In some cases, the formation of other compounds not originally

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<sup>2</sup> *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 04.08.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 11.04.

<sup>4</sup> Available from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

present in the material can occur. Loss or gain of VOCs leads to analytical results that are both unrepresentative of the field conditions and ambiguous.

5.2 Ancillary information concerning sample collection and handling for VOC analysis is provided in Appendix X1 and Appendix X2. These appendices and cited references are recommended reading for those unfamiliar with many challenges presented during the collection and handling of samples for VOC analysis.

**6. Selection of Sample Preparation Method for VOC Analysis**

**6.1 Introduction:**

6.1.1 Sample collection, handling, and preservation methods should be compatible with the method used to prepare the sample for VOC analysis, and meet the project's data quality objectives (see Practice D 5792). Preparation of a sample for instrumental analysis can be initiated either in the field or laboratory. In either case, the sample should be placed into a tared volatile organic analysis (VOA) vial or bottle meeting the specifications given in 7.2.2. When working with an uncharacterized solid waste, it is advisable to perform compatibility tests (see Test Methods D 5058) between the sample material and the solution (see 7.2.2.1 and 7.2.2.2) into which it will be transferred in preparation for analysis. For instance, when collecting highly contaminated soils or waste of unknown composition, or both, it is strongly recommended that prelimi-

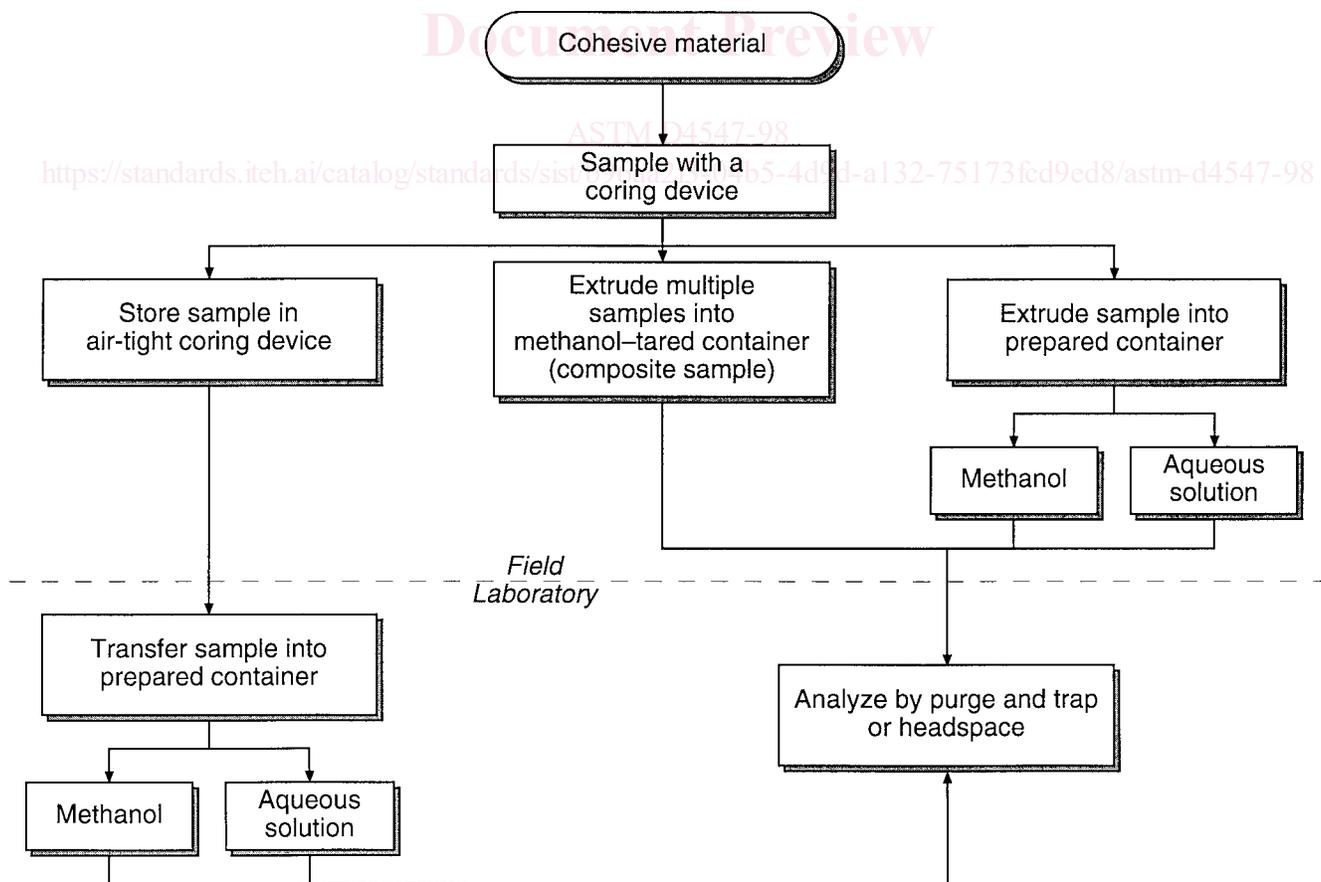
nary testing be performed to adequately characterize the waste materials so that when the user applies the procedures cited in this guide, there will be no chemical reaction which may jeopardize the user's safety.

6.1.2 Figs. 1 and 2 are flow diagrams showing some different options for combining sample collection, handling and preparation methods for instrumental analysis.

**6.2 Methanol Extraction:**

6.2.1 This method involves the extraction of VOCs from a sample with methanol and the subsequent transfer of an aliquot of the extract to water for either purge-and-trap or headspace analysis. Advantages of methanol extraction are (1) large samples or composite samples, or both, can be collected to enhance representativeness (see Guide D 6051), (2) biodegradation is inhibited, (3) an efficient extraction of VOCs from the matrix materials can be achieved with methanol due to its strong affinity for these compounds and favorable wetting properties, (4) a subsample can be analyzed several times, and (5) sample extracts can be archived (held up to two months, and perhaps longer, if verified that VOC losses have not occurred (see 8.2.1.2)).

6.2.2 The primary disadvantages of methanol extraction are (1) samples may have to be shipped as a flammable liquid depending on the amount of methanol present (U.S. DOT reg. 49CFR§172.101), (2) hazards to personnel due to methanol's toxicity and flammability, (3) detection limits are elevated due to analyte dilution, (4) possible interference of the methanol



**FIG. 1 Sample Handling Options for Cohesive Materials**

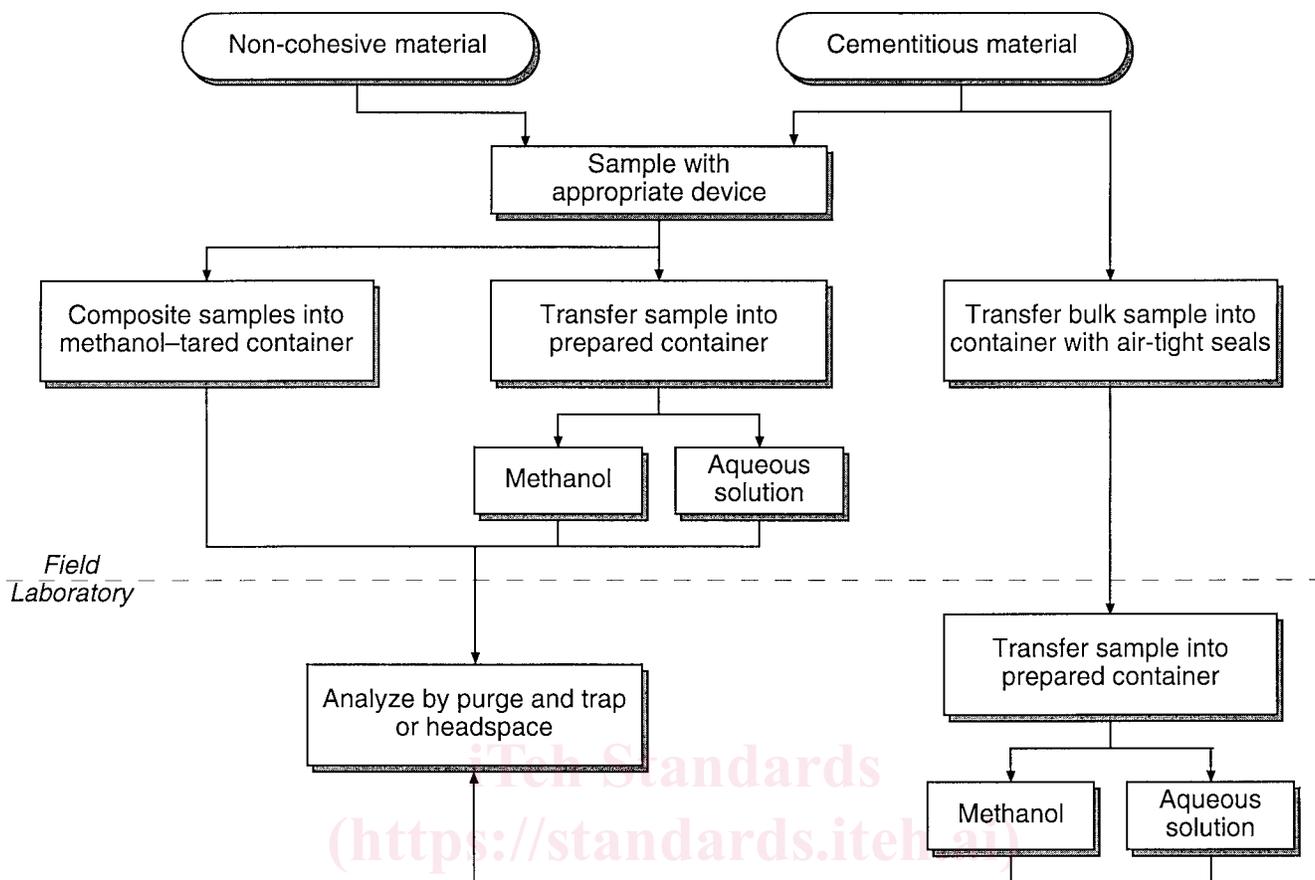


FIG. 2 Sample Handling Options for Non-Cohesive and Cementitious Materials

peak with VOCs of interest, (5) potential adverse impact of methanol on the performance of certain gas chromatograph/detector systems, and (6) in the United States of America, samples extracted with methanol must be disposed of as a regulated waste.

6.2.3 Some of these logistical challenges can be overcome by extracting samples with methanol once they have been received in a laboratory, provided that the samples are transported intact and undisturbed in an airtight container (see 8.1.1). Furthermore, if VOC levels are unknown, a replicate sample can be obtained and screened to determine if methanol extraction is appropriate for the expected contaminant concentrations.

#### 6.3 Vapor Partitioning:

6.3.1 Vapor partitioning involves the direct analysis of a sample by either purge-and-trap or headspace. In both cases, the sample is placed into a tared volatile organic analysis (VOA) vial from which the vapor is removed for analysis without the container being opened. Heat and water are usually used to assist with the partitioning of the VOCs from the sample. The principal advantages of this method are (1) it can offer lower detection limits than methanol extraction because no dilution is involved, (2) there are no organic solvent interferences, and (3) there is no use of regulated organic solvents, which may require special shipment, disposal, and field handling practices.

6.3.2 The disadvantages associated with vapor partitioning are (1) the VOA vial (VOA vials are different sizes for automated purge-and-trap and headspace instrumentation) or

adapter used in conjunction with a VOA vial, or both, often are instrument specific, (2) sample size is limited (<10 g) by automated systems, (3) a matrix-appropriate method of preservation may be necessary, (4) vapor partitioning is less efficient at recovering VOCs from some materials than methanol extraction, and (5) when using purge-and-trap, only a single analysis of the same sample can be made; similarly only a single analysis may be possible with headspace analysis unless concentrations allow for the use of a small injection volume.

6.3.2.1 Limitations imposed by vapor phase partitioning methods with regard to number of analyses that can be performed on a single sample can be addressed by taking replicate samples.

6.3.3 When employing vapor phase partitioning methods, the logistical challenges of performing sample preparation in the field (see 7.2.2.2) can be avoided by performing the preparation step in the laboratory, so long as the sample is transported to the laboratory intact and undisturbed, in an airtight container (see 8.1.1). If VOC levels are unknown, a replicate sample can be obtained and screened to determine if it is appropriate to use of vapor partitioning method of sample preparation.

## 7. Sample Collection

7.1 This section provides general sampling guidelines for a variety of materials and conditions. The guidelines are intended to allow flexibility in the following:

7.1.1 The procedure for obtaining a sample from, for example, walls of test pits, surface grid locations, waste piles, building, and from bulk samples obtained with subsurface retrieval systems.

7.1.2 The design and dimensions of the equipment used to obtain and transfer samples of the appropriate size for analysis.

7.1.3 The selection and preparation of sample containers.

#### 7.2 Preparation for Sampling:

7.2.1 All sampling and handling devices and vessels used to collect and store samples for analysis should be constructed of nonreactive materials that will not sorb, leach or diffuse constituents of interest. Examples of materials that meet these criteria are glass, stainless steel, and brass. Materials, such as polytetrafluoroethylene and many rigid plastics also can be used, however, it should be recognized that they may have some limited adsorptive properties or allow slow diffusive passage of some VOCs. Materials which show limited reactivity can be used when they have a very short period of contact with the sample or when they are necessary for making airtight (hermetic) seals. Collection tools and storage containers made of materials other than those cited in this section should only be used after they have demonstrated equivalency. All collection tools and storage containers should be cleaned in a manner consistent with their intended use.

7.2.1.1 There are often several steps to sampling, particularly if it involves obtaining bulk materials from subsurface regions. Most of the equipment used to obtain samples from the subsurface was originally developed for the geotechnical industry. These subsurface bulk sample retrieval systems are designed to obtain intact cylindrical cores of material, ranging anywhere from 1 to 4 in. diameter, and 1 to several ft in length. Two commonly used collection devices for subsurface sample collection are the split-spoon corer that opens to expose the entire length of the material obtained for subsampling and core barrel liners (that is, ring-lined barrel sampling, see Practice D 3550) that typically are subsampled through the open ends. Core barrel liners fit snugly within a corer and come in a variety of lengths and materials (stainless steel, brass, polytetrafluoroethylene, rigid plastics, etc.). Several liners, or a single long liner, can be placed within the core barrel, depending on the sampling plan. Additional information on the application and design of different types of subsurface collection systems available can be found in Guide D 4700. Subsurface materials retrieved for VOC characterization should be obtained (sampling tubes filled and brought to the surface) as quickly as possible and remain intact and undisturbed until they are subsampled. Subsampling of a bulk sample should occur within a couple of minutes of its being brought to the surface (see 7.3 through 7.6 for additional sampling guidance).

7.2.1.2 In addition to the coring devices which retrieve bulk quantities of material, there are smaller hand operated coring tools for obtaining samples of the appropriate size (for example, 5 and 25 g) for analysis. If one of these smaller coring devices is used to store the sample (see 8.1.1) for more than a few seconds, the main body should be constructed of materials that are nonreactive and have airtight seals that show limited sorption and penetration of VOCs. When the coring device is only used to rapidly transfer the sample to a VOA vial, corer

material requirements are less stringent.

7.2.2 VOA vials and bottles used for storage and preparation of samples for analysis should be made of glass and have airtight seals. To achieve an airtight seal, these containers should have a thick septum cushion between the sealing material (polytetrafluoroethylene) and cap (rigid plastic screw cap or aluminum crimp top). Polytetrafluoroethylene-lined caps that do not have flexible septum backing often fail to achieve a liquid or airtight seal. Furthermore, the thickness of the polytetrafluoroethylene used for a lined septum, should be at least 10 mil. These VOA vials and bottles should be prepared as described in 7.2.2.1 or 7.2.2.2 prior to adding the sample to the container.

7.2.2.1 *Preparation of Containers for Methanol Extraction*—The appropriate volume of analytical-grade methanol (high-performance liquid chromatography or spectrographic) is added to the organic-free container by the laboratory that supplies the container, by the sample collector, or by a third party. The party that adds the methanol to the container should also be responsible for providing trip blanks and introducing surrogate compounds (see Guide D 4687). Once methanol has been placed in a container, it should be opened only to add the sample(s) and to remove aliquots for analysis. The tared weight of the container with methanol should be recorded prior to adding the sample to the container. A predetermined volume of sample is added to the methanol. This sample volume corresponds to a weight in grams (g) that is equivalent to or less than the volume (mL) of methanol. The ratio (typically 1:1 to 10:1, methanol to material) between the two constituents should allow for formation of a clear layer of methanol over the sample after thorough mixing. The difference in weight of the container, measured before and after the sample is introduced, is used to establish the sample's wet weight. Because of the water (moisture) present in most samples, calculation of the recovery of surrogate concentrations in the sample should account for this source of dilution.

NOTE 1—Initially the concentration of the surrogates is influenced only by the volume of methanol. After adding a sample, however, the liquid volume is increased by the volume of water present in the soil sample. The increased liquid volume results in a reduction in the surrogate concentration due to its dilution effect. After the moisture content of a sample is known, the expected surrogate concentration can be determined by multiplying the original surrogate concentration by: volume of methanol/total liquid volume.

7.2.2.2 *Preparation of Containers for Vapor Partitioning*—This method allows for the direct analysis of a sample by either purge-and-trap or headspace techniques. In both cases, the sample is placed into a VOA vial from which the vapor (only a portion for headspace analysis) is removed for analysis without the container being opened. Moreover, water that contains no detectable levels of VOCs is usually present in the VOA vial prior to introducing the sample. Current automated equipment for purge-and-trap and headspace systems use 44- (or 40-) and 22-mL VOA vials, respectively. The volume of water used for these two different systems is typically 10 mL or less. The addition of surrogate compounds and matrix spikes to samples prepared for vapor partitioning analysis can be problematic. Adding surrogates or matrix spikes (see Guide D 4687) to an open sample container prior to or immediately



after sample collection can potentially result in the loss of VOCs from the VOA vial. A procedure for introducing surrogates or spikes that is less susceptible to VOC losses, can be performed by puncturing the septum with a needle (small gauge if done manually) after the sample has been sealed inside the container. If aromatic compounds are of concern and the sample will be held for more than 48 h before analysis, some form of chemical preservation in addition to refrigerated (4°C) storage should be used (see 8.2.2.2). When carbonates are not present, chemical preservation for aromatic compounds can be achieved by acidification to a pH of 2 or less with either sodium bisulfate or hydrochloric acid (for general guidance on testing for carbonates and the use of these acids to preserve samples, see Appendix X3). Precautions must be taken when preserving by acidification since certain compounds within the following classes: olefins, ketones, esters, ethers, and sulfides, will react under a low pH condition. Water, and if necessary, a chemical preservative, should be added to the sample container prior to adding the sample. Furthermore, the tared weight of the container should be recorded prior to adding the sample. The difference in weight of the container, measured before and after the sample is added, is used to determine the sample's wet weight.

NOTE 2—Promising alternative methods of preservation that may be considered when a low pH is undesirable or carbonates are present and longer holding times can not be avoided, are cited in Appendix X1 and Appendix X2.

7.2.3 A separate collocated sample should be collected within a couple centimeters and from the same stratum to determine percent moisture content so that analyte concentration can be expressed on a dry weight basis. The location adjacent to where the sample for VOC analysis was removed should be inspected visually and its characteristics logged. This adjacent material can also be retained for determining other relevant properties, such as general appearance, color, presence of oils, other visible signs of contamination, grain-size distribution, organic carbon content, etc. Collection of these ancillary samples should be performed after the collection of samples for VOC analysis.

7.3 *General Sampling Guidance*—After a fresh surface is exposed to the atmosphere, the sample collection process should be completed in a minimal amount of time. Removing a sample from a material should be done with at least amount of disruption (disaggregation) as possible. Additionally, rough trimming of the sampling location's surface layers should be considered if the material may have already lost VOCs (been exposed for more than a couple of minutes) or if it may be contaminated by other waste, different soil strata, or vegetation. Removal of surface layers can be accomplished by scraping the surface using a clean spatula, scoop, knife, or shovel.

7.4 *Sampling of Cohesive but Uncemented Materials Using Devices Designed to Obtain a Sample Appropriate for Analysis* :

7.4.1 Samples of the appropriate size for analysis should be collected using a metal or rigid plastic coring tool (Fig. 3). For example, coring tools for the purpose of transferring a sample can be made from disposable plastic syringes by cutting off the

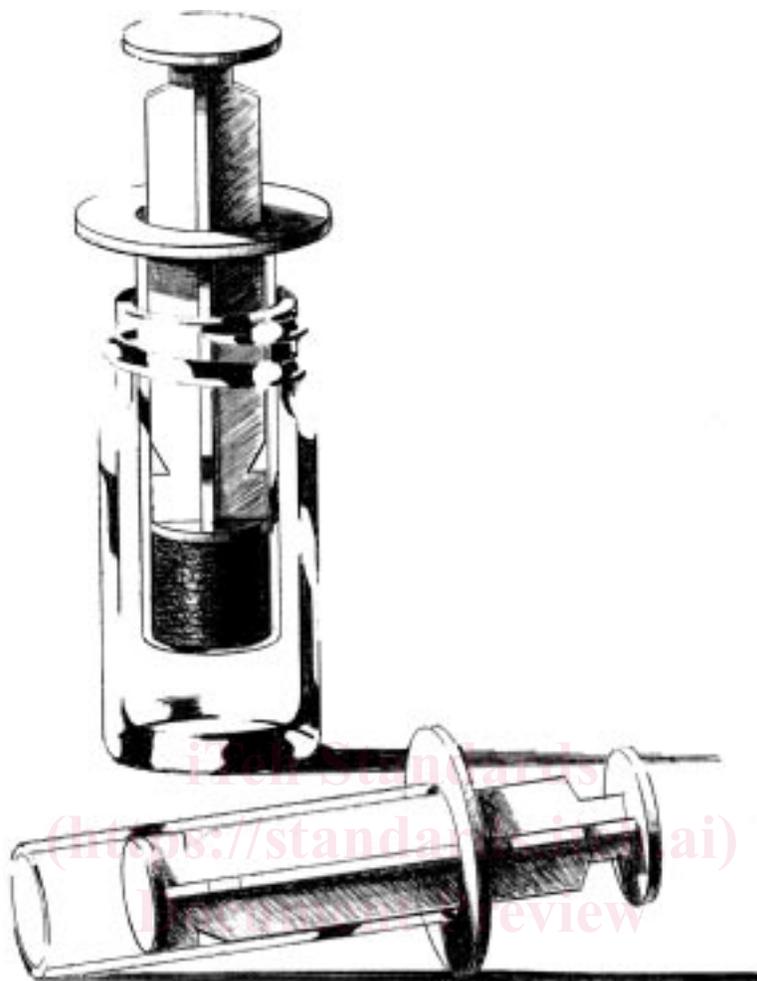
tapered front end and removing the rubber cap from the plunger (see Note 3). These smaller coring devices help maintain the sample structure during collection and transfer to the VOA vial or a larger bottle, as do their larger counterparts used to retrieve subsurface materials. When inserting a clean coring tool into a fresh surface for sample collection, air should not be trapped behind the sample. If air is trapped, it could either pass through the sampled material causing VOCs to be lost or cause the sample to be pushed prematurely from the coring tool. For greater ease in pushing coring tools into the solid matrix, their front edge can be sharpened. The optimum diameter of the coring tool depends on the following: size of the opening on the collection vial or bottle (tool should fit inside mouth), particle size of the solid materials (for example, gravel-size particles would require larger samplers), and volume of sample required for analysis. For example when a 5-g sample of soil is specified, only a single 3-cm<sup>3</sup> volume has to be collected (assuming the soil has density of 1.7 g/cm<sup>3</sup>). Larger sample masses or composite samples may be preferred as the heterogeneity of the material increases.

NOTE 3—**Caution:** This coring device is not appropriate for sample storage.

7.4.2 An undisturbed sample is obtained by pushing the barrel of the coring tool into a freshly exposed surface and removing the corer once filled. The exterior of the barrel should be quickly wiped with a clean disposable towel. If the coring tool is used as a storage container, cap the open end after ensuring that the sealing surfaces are cleaned (see 8.1.1). If the device is solely used for collection and not storage, immediately extrude the sample into a tared VOA vial or bottle by gently pushing the plunger. During transfer of the sample into the container, care should be taken to prevent the sample from contacting the sealing surfaces which can comprise these surfaces and prevent an airtight seal. The volume of material collected should not cause excessive stress on the coring tool during intrusion into the material, or be so large that the sample easily falls apart during extrusion. Obtaining and transferring a sample should be done rapidly (<10 s) to reduce volatilization losses. If the vial or bottle contains methanol or another liquid, it should be held at an angle when extruding the sample into the container to minimize splashing. Just before capping, a visual inspection of the lip and threads of the sample vessel should be made, and any foreign debris should be removed with a clean towel, allowing an airtight seal to form.

7.5 *Devices that Can be Used for Sampling a Cemented Material:*

7.5.1 Samples of hard or cementitious material may be obtained by fragmenting a larger portion of the material using a clean chisel to generate aggregate(s) of a size that can be placed into a VOA vial or bottle. When transferring the aggregate(s), precautions must be taken to prevent compromising the sealing surfaces and threads of the container. Losses of VOCs by using this procedure are dependent on the location of the contaminant relative to the surface of the material being sampled. Therefore, caution should be taken in the interpretation of the data obtained from materials that fit this description. As a last resort when this task can not be performed on-site a large sample can be collected in a vapor-tight container and



**FIG. 3 A Coring Tool Made by Cutting the Tip Off a Plastic Syringe**

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/b96aa2b3-04b5-4d9d-a132-75173fcd9ed8/astm-d4547-98>

transported to the laboratory for further processing (see 8.1.2). Collecting, fragmenting, and adding the sample to a container should be accomplished as quickly as possible.

*7.6 Devices that Can be Used for Sampling a Noncohesive Material:*

7.6.1 When sampling gravel, or a mixture of gravel and fines, that can not be easily obtained or transferred using coring tools, as a last resort, a sample can be quickly transferred using a spatula or scoop (see discussion concerning the use of a spatula or scoop to collect samples for VOC analysis, in Appendix X1). Typically the collection vial or bottle will contain methanol or an aqueous solution, therefore, samples should be dislodged with minimal splashing and without the spatula or scoop contacting the liquid contents. For some solids, a wide-bottom funnel or similar channeling device may be necessary to facilitate transfer to the container and prevent compromising of the sealing surfaces of the container. Caution should be taken in the interpretation of the data obtained from materials that fit this description. Losses of VOCs are likely because of the nature of the sampling method and the noncohesive nature of the material exposes more surface area to the atmosphere than for other types of samples. Another potential source of error during the sampling process, is the separation of coarser materials from fines, which can bias the concentration

data if the different particle sizes, which have different surface areas, are not properly represented in the sample.

**8. Sample Handling**

*8.1 Storage:*

8.1.1 *Material Stored in Coring Device*—If the coring device also serves as a shipping container, it should have air tight seals. Presently the En Core<sup>5</sup> sampler, which is available for the collection, storage and transfer of approximately 5 and 25 g samples, is the only commercially available coring device that has been specifically designed to meet this requirement (see Fig. 4). Currently, it is recommended that when samples are stored in the En Core sampler, they should be held for no longer than 48 h at  $4 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$  prior to preparing the sample for analysis.<sup>6</sup> Refer to Appendix X2 for additional information concerning coring devices used as storage and shipping containers.

<sup>5</sup> En Core sampler, En Novative Technologies, Inc., 1241 Bellevue St, Green Bay, WI 54302. The En Core sampler is covered by a patent. Interested parties are invited to submit information regarding the identification of an alternative(s) to this patented item to the ASTM Headquarters. Your comments will receive careful consideration at a meeting of the responsible technical committee, which you may attend.

<sup>6</sup> SW-846, Method 5035, 3rd Update.