



Designation: D61 – 75(Reapproved 2010)

Standard Test Method for Softening Point of Pitches (Cube-in-Water Method)¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D61; 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 determination of the softening point of pitches below 176°F (80°C). Pitches of higher softening point should be tested by Test Method D2319 or Test Method D3104.

1.2 The values stated in inch-pound units are to be regarded as standard. The values given in parentheses are mathematical conversions to SI units that are provided for information only and are not considered standard.

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

D140 Practice for Sampling Bituminous Materials

D2319 Test Method for Softening Point of Pitch (Cube-in-Air Method)

D3104 Test Method for Softening Point of Pitches (Mettler Softening Point Method)

E1 Specification for ASTM Liquid-in-Glass Thermometers

3. Summary of Test Method

3.1 Two cubes of pitch, supported on wire hooks, are heated at a controlled rate in water in a glass container. The softening point is defined as the mean of the temperatures at which the cubes sag downwards a distance of 25 mm.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 Pitch does not go through a solid-liquid phase change when heated, and therefore it does not have a true melting

point. As the temperature rises, pitch softens and becomes less viscous. The softening point is arbitrarily defined and shall be established by a closely controlled method which shall be carefully followed if test results are to be reproducible.

4.2 This test is useful in determining the consistency of pitch as one element in establishing the uniformity of shipments or sources of supply.

5. Apparatus

5.1 *Mold*—A mold suitable for forming two ½-in. (12.7-mm) cubes of pitch, having cylindrical core pins 12 gauge (2.05 mm) in diameter located in the base plate of the assembly to produce accurately centered suspension holes in the cubes. (See Fig. 1.)

5.2 *Hooks*—Two L-shaped hooks, made of 12-gauge (2.05-mm) copper wire. The foot of the hook shall be 1-in. (25-mm) long and at a right angle to the upright portion for insertion into the center hole of the pitch cube.

5.3 *Container*—A glass vessel that can be heated, not less than 85 mm in diameter and 105 mm deep. (A standard 600-mL low-form beaker meets these requirements).

5.4 *Thermometer*—An ASTM Low Softening Point Thermometer having a range from 30 to 180°F (–2 to 80°C) and conforming to the requirements for Thermometer 15F (15C) as described in Specification E1.

5.5 *Heat Source:*

5.5.1 *Electric Heater*—A hot plate or immersion heater provided with a variable transformer or other device suitable for regulating the temperature of the heating element.

5.5.2 *Gas Heater*—A bunsen-type burner, fitted with a chimney.

6. Sampling

6.1 Samples from shipments shall be taken in accordance with Practice D140 and shall be free of foreign substances. Thoroughly mix the sample before removing a representative portion for the determination or for dehydration.

6.2 If the presence of water is indicated by surface foam on heating, maintain the sample at a temperature of about 260°F (125°C) in an open container until the surface is free of foam. Take care not to overheat, and remove from the heat source as soon as the foam has subsided.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D02 on Petroleum Products and Lubricants and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D02.05 on Properties of Fuels, Petroleum Coke and Carbon Material.

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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.