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Standard Guide for Sampling Waste Piles¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This guide provides guidance for obtaining representative samples from waste piles. Guidance is provided for site evaluation, sampling design, selection of equipment, and data interpretation.

1.2 Waste piles include areas used primarily for waste storage or disposal, including above-grade dry land disposal units. This guide can be applied to sampling municipal waste piles.

1.3 This guide addresses how the choice of sampling design and sampling methods depends on specific features of the pile.

1.4 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard.

1.4.1 *Exception*—The inch-pound units in parentheses are included for information only and are not considered standard.

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:²

- D1452 Practice for Soil Exploration and Sampling by Auger Borings
- D1586 Test Method for Penetration Test (SPT) and Split-Barrel Sampling of Soils
- D1587 Practice for Thin-Walled Tube Sampling of Fine-Grained Soils for Geotechnical Purposes
- D4547 Guide for Sampling Waste and Soils for Volatile Organic Compounds
- D4687 Guide for General Planning of Waste Sampling

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D34 on Waste Management and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D34.01.01 on Planning for Sampling.

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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.

- D4700 Guide for Soil Sampling from the Vadose Zone
- D4823 Guide for Core Sampling Submerged, Unconsolidated Sediments
- D5088 Practice for Decontamination of Field Equipment Used at Waste Sites
- D5314 Guide for Soil Gas Monitoring in the Vadose Zone (Withdrawn 2015)³
- D5451 Practice for Sampling Using a Trier Sampler
- D5518 Guide for Acquisition of File Aerial Photography and Imagery for Establishing Historic Site-Use and Surficial Conditions
- D5681 Terminology for Waste and Waste Management
- D5730 Guide for Site Characterization for Environmental Purposes With Emphasis on Soil, Rock, the Vadose Zone and Groundwater (Withdrawn 2013)³

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:* (See also Terminology D5681.)

3.1.1 *hot spots*—strata that contain high concentrations of the characteristic of interest and are relatively small in size when compared with the total size of the materials being sampled.

3.1.2 *representative sample*—a sample collected such that it reflects one or more characteristics of interest (as defined by the project objectives) of the population from which it was collected.

3.1.2.1 *Discussion*—A representative sample can be a single sample, a set of samples, or one or more composite samples.

3.1.3 *waste pile*—unconfined storage of solid materials in an area of distinct boundaries, above grade and usually uncovered. This includes the following:

3.1.3.1 *chemical manufacturing waste pile*—a pile consisting primarily of discarded chemical products (whether marketable or not), by-products, radioactive wastes, or used or unused feedstocks.

3.1.3.2 *scrap metal or junk pile*—a pile consisting primarily of scrap metal or discarded durable goods such as appliances, automobiles, auto parts, or batteries.

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

3.1.3.3 *trash pile*—a pile of waste materials from municipal sources, consisting primarily of paper, garbage, or discarded nondurable goods that contain or have contained hazardous substances. It does not include waste destined for recyclers.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 This guide is intended to provide guidance for sampling waste piles. It can be used to obtain samples for waste characterization related to use, treatment, or disposal; to monitor an active pile; to prepare for closure of the waste pile; or to investigate the contents of an abandoned pile.

4.2 Techniques used to sample include both in-place evaluations of the pile and physically removing a sample. In-place evaluations include techniques such as remote sensing, on-site gas analysis, and permeability.

4.3 Sampling strategy for waste piles is dependent on the following:

4.3.1 Project objectives including acceptable levels of error when making decisions;

4.3.2 Physical characteristics of the pile, such as its size and configuration, access to all parts of it, and the stability of the pile;

4.3.3 Process that generated the waste and the waste characteristics, such as hazardous chemical or physical properties, whether the waste consists of sludges, dry powders, granules or larger grained materials, and the heterogeneity of the wastes;

4.3.4 History of the pile, including dates of generation, methods of handling and transport, and current management methods;

4.3.5 Regulatory considerations, such as regulatory classification and characterization data;

4.3.6 Limits and bias of sampling methods, including bias that may be introduced by waste heterogeneity, sampling design, and sampling equipment.

4.4 It is recommended that this guide be used in conjunction with Guide **D4687**, which addresses sampling design, quality assurance, general sampling considerations, preservation and containerization, cleaning equipment, packaging, and chain of custody.

4.5 A case history of the investigation of a waste pile is included in **Appendix XI**.

5. Site Evaluation

5.1 Site evaluations are performed to assist in designing the most appropriate sampling strategy. An evaluation may consist of on-site surveys and inspections, as well as a review of historical data. Nonintrusive geophysical and remote sensing methods are particularly useful at this stage of the investigation (see Guide **D5518**). **Table 1** summarizes the effects that various factors associated with the waste pile, such as the history of how the pile was generated, have upon the strategy and design of the sampling plan. The strategic and design considerations are discussed as well.

5.2 *Generation History*—The waste pile may have been created over an extended time period. A remote sensing method that is very useful in establishing historical management

TABLE 1 Strategy Factors

Waste Pile Factors	Strategic Considerations	Design Considerations
Generation history	Date of generation Types of processes Characteristics by process Delivery method Current management Regulatory considerations	Analysis required Location of samples
Physical characteristics of pile: – size – shape – stability	Access Safety	Number of samples Location of samples Equipment selection
Waste characteristics	Constituents present Constituent distribution Heterogeneity – physical variability – chemical variability	Number of samples Analysis required Location of samples Representative samples Equipment selection

practices for waste piles is aerial imagery. Aerial photographs and satellite imagery are widely available and may be used to determine the history of a waste pile, sources of waste, and the presence and distribution of different strata.

5.2.1 The date of generation could be important with respect to the types of processes that generated the waste, the characteristics of the waste, the distribution of the constituents, and regulatory concerns.

5.2.2 The type of process that generated the waste will determine the types of constituents that may be present in the waste pile. Chemical variability will influence the number of samples that are required to characterize the waste pile unless a directed (biased) sampling approach is acceptable.

5.2.3 The delivery method of the material to the waste pile could influence the concentrations of the constituents, affect the overall shape of the pile, or create physical dissimilarity within the waste pile through sorting by particle size or density.

5.2.4 If the pile is under current management and use, the variability in constituent types and concentrations may be affected. Current management activities also may influence the regulatory status of the waste pile, and therefore, the potential sampling protocols.

5.2.5 Regulatory considerations will typically focus on waste identification questions; in other words, “Is the material a solid waste that should be regulated and managed as a hazardous waste?” **(1)**.⁴ This may involve a limited, directed sampling approach, particularly if a regulatory agency is conducting the investigation. A more comprehensive sampling design may be required to determine if the waste classifies as hazardous. Remediation efforts and questions regarding permits may focus on characterizing the entire pile, possibly as the removal of material is occurring. It should be noted that concentrations of contaminants near regulatory levels may increase the number of samples required to meet the objectives of the investigation. These regulatory levels could be those established to determine if a waste is hazardous, or “cleanup” levels set for a removal or remediation.

⁴ The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to the list of references at the end of this standard.

5.3 Physical Characteristics of Pile—Several physical characteristics of the waste pile must be considered during the site evaluation. Variability in size, shape, and stability of the pile affects access to it to obtain samples as well as safety considerations. Physical variability will influence the number of samples that are required to characterize the waste pile unless a directed (biased) sampling approach is considered to be acceptable. Techniques that might be used include resistivity and seismic refraction (for determining the depth of very large piles).

5.3.1 The size of the waste pile will influence the sampling strategy in that increasing size is often accompanied by increased variability in the physical characteristics of the waste pile. The number of samples, however, that are needed to characterize a waste pile adequately will typically be a function of the study objectives as well as the inherent variability of the pile.

5.3.2 The shape of the waste pile can influence the sampling strategy by limiting access to certain locations within the pile, and if it is topologically complex it is difficult to lay out a sampling grid. Also, a waste pile may extend vertically both above and below grade, making decisions regarding the depth of sample collection difficult.

5.3.3 The stability of the waste pile also can limit access to both the face and the interior of the pile. The use of certain types of heavier sampling equipment also could be limited by the ability of the pile to bear the weight of the equipment.

5.4 Waste Characteristics:

5.4.1 The constituents could include inorganics, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and semivolatile organic compounds (including pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)) (see Practice D4547). Specialty analyses may be warranted, such as leaching tests or analyses for dioxin/furans or explosive compounds. Soil gas sampling is a minimally intrusive technique that may detect the presence and distribution of volatile organic compounds in soils and in porous, unconsolidated materials. Appropriate applications for soil gas monitoring are identified in Guide D5314.

5.4.2 The distribution of constituents in the waste pile could be influenced by changes in the manufacturing process which resulted in changes in the composition of the waste; the length of time the material has remained in the pile (particularly for VOCs); the mode of delivery of the waste materials to the pile; and management practices, such as mixing together wastes from more than one process.

5.4.3 Physical and chemical variabilities would include variability in the chemical characteristics of the material within the pile, as well as variability in particle size, density, hardness, whether brittle or flexible, moisture content, consolidated, or unconsolidated. The variability may be random or found as strata of materials having different properties or containing different types or concentrations of constituents.

5.4.3.1 Geophysical survey methods may be used on piles to estimate physical homogeneity, which may or may not be related to chemical homogeneity, and to detect buried objects, both of which may need to be considered during the development of the sampling design and the safety plan for the investigation. The most suitable technique for detecting non-

metallic objects is electromagnetics. Ground-penetrating radar, a more sophisticated and complex technique, also may be considered. Electromagnetic techniques are suited particularly to large piles that contain leachate plumes (for example, mine tailings) or for the detection of large discontinuities in a pile (for example, different types of wastes or the transition from a disposal area to background soils). For metallic objects, metal detectors and magnetometers are useful and relatively easy to use in the field.

5.5 Potential Investigation Errors:

5.5.1 Equipment selection can bias sampling results even if the equipment is used properly. Bias can result from the incompatibility of the materials that the sampling equipment is made of with the materials being sampled. For example, the equipment could alter the characteristics of the sample. Some equipment will bias against the collection of certain particles sizes, and some equipment cannot penetrate the waste pile adequately.

5.5.2 Equipment, use, and operation can introduce error (bias) into the characterization of a waste pile. Sampling errors typically are caused when certain particle sizes are excluded, when a segment of the waste pile is not sampled, or when a location outside the pile is inadvertently sampled.

5.5.3 When stratification, layering, or solid phasing occurs it may be necessary to obtain and analyze samples of each of the distinct phases separately to minimize sampling bias. Care should be taken when sampling stratified layers to minimize cross contamination. Proper decontamination procedures should be used for all sampling equipment (see Practice D5088).

5.5.4 Statistical bias includes situations where the data are not normally distributed or when the sampling strategy does not allow the potential for every portion of the pile to be sampled.

6. Sampling Strategy

6.1 Developing a strategy for sampling a waste pile requires a thorough examination of the site evaluation factors listed in Section 5. The location and frequency of sampling (number of samples) should be outlined clearly in the sampling plan, as well as provisions for the use of special sampling equipment, access of heavy equipment to all areas of the pile, if necessary, and so forth.

6.1.1 *Representative Sampling*—The collection of a representative set of samples from a waste pile typically will be complicated by the presence of a number of the site evaluation factors (2, 3).

6.1.2 *Heterogeneous Wastes*—Waste piles may be homogeneous, for applied purposes, or may be quite heterogeneous in particle size and contaminant distribution. If the particle sizes of the material in the waste pile and the distribution of contaminants are known, or can be estimated, then less sampling may be necessary to define the properties of interest in the waste pile. An estimate of the variability in contaminant distribution may be based on process knowledge or determined by preliminary sampling (4). The more heterogeneous the waste pile is, the greater the planning and sampling requirements.

6.1.3 *Strata and Hot Spots*—A waste pile also could contain strata that have less internal variation in physical properties or concentrations of chemical constituents than the remainder of the waste pile (2, 5). For example, strata may be present in a waste pile due to changes in the process that generated the waste, or if different processes at a facility contribute waste to different parts of the waste pile. A stratified sampling strategy would consider this situation by conducting independent sampling of each stratum, which could reduce the number of samples required. These strata could be in specific areas of the waste pile (4). Also, hot spots may be present in the waste pile that are unique in composition (2, 5).

6.2 *Specific Sampling Strategies:*

6.2.1 Although the most appropriate method for evaluating material in waste piles is to sample at or immediately following the point of generation (for example, conveyor belt), most sampling problems involve existing or in-place waste piles. Therefore, the following discussion will focus on in-place waste piles. Sampling strategies available for waste piles include directed or judgmental sampling, simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, systematic grid sampling, and systematic sampling over time (2, 6). General concerns about the collection of a representative sample, the existence of potential heterogeneity in the waste pile, the presence of strata within the waste pile, and the existence of distinct hot spots within the waste pile may also influence the selection of an appropriate sampling strategy and development of the sampling plan (5). The following paragraphs provide an introduction to determining the appropriate number of samples to collect and the sampling strategies available for determining sample locations.

6.2.2 *Determining the Frequency or Number of Samples*—The frequency of sampling or the number of samples to collect typically will be based on several factors including the study objectives, properties of wastes in the pile, degree of confidence required, access to sampling points, and budgetary constraints. Practical guidance for determining the number of samples is included in Guide D4687 and Refs (2, 3).

6.2.3 *Directed Sampling*—Directed sampling (Fig. 1) is based on the judgment of the investigator and will not result necessarily in a sample that reflects the characteristics of the entire waste pile. Directed sampling also is called judgmental sampling, authoritative sampling, or nonprobability sampling. The experience of the investigator often is the basis for sample collection, and, depending on the study objectives, bias should be recognized as a potential problem. For preliminary screening investigations of a waste pile and for certain regulatory investigations, however, directed sampling may be appropriate. A directed sampling strategy could call for the collection of a composite sample from the surface area or the collection of discrete grabs at the surface of the pile (see Fig. 1). Directed sampling would typically focus on worst case conditions in a waste pile, for example, the most visually contaminated area or most recently generated waste.

6.2.4 *Simple Random Sampling*—Simple random sampling (Fig. 2) ensures that each element in the waste pile has an equal chance of being included in the sample (2). This may be the method of choice when, for purposes of the investigation, the

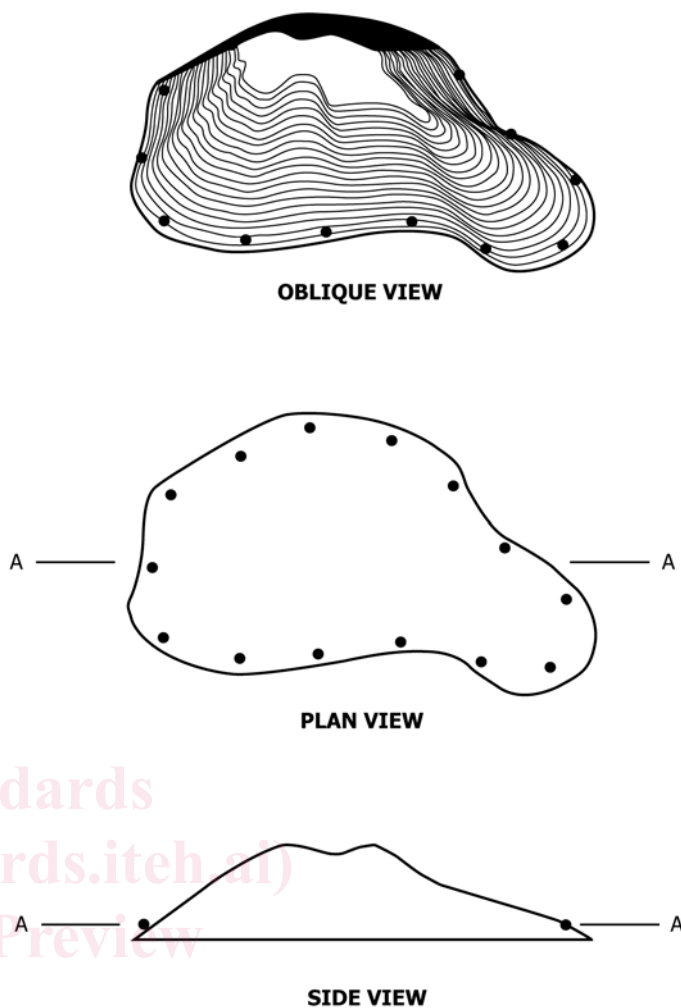


FIG. 1 Waste Pile Sampling Strategy—Directed Sampling

waste pile is randomly heterogeneous (5). If the waste pile contains trends or patterns of contamination, a stratified random sampling or systematic grid sampling strategy would be more appropriate (2) (see 6.2.5 and 6.2.6).

6.2.4.1 A simple random approach could use a grid with random grids selected for sample collection (see Fig. 2). Note that the grid size could be selected based on the number of samples that are required (some guidance suggests having at least ten times the number of grids as samples required). Once the grid is overlaid and the sampling locations are selected, the decision must be made to collect either a discrete grab sample (surface), a composite of surface samples taken from pre-designated locations within the grid cell (based on compass points), a vertical composite to a specified depth, or discrete grab samples at specified depths. If discrete grab samples are desired at specified depths, they typically would be collected at the same location as the bore hole is advanced into the pile. Fig. 2 illustrates the collection of vertical composites at each of the randomly selected locations.

6.2.5 *Stratified Random Sampling*—Stratified random sampling (see Fig. 3) may be useful when distinct strata or homogeneous subgroups are identified within the waste pile (2). The strata may be located in different areas of the pile or

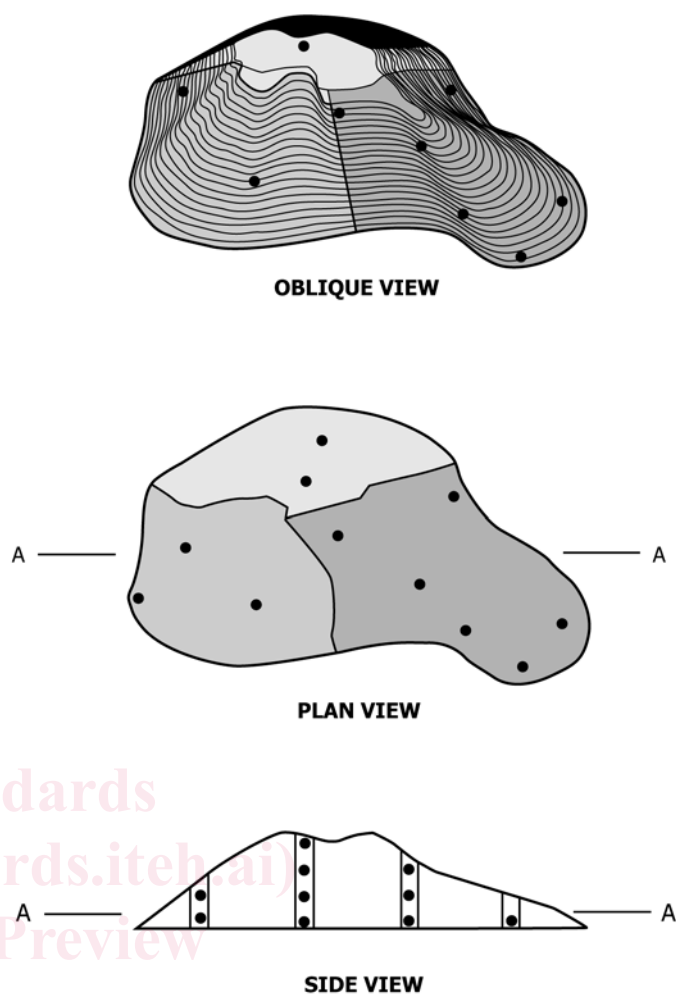
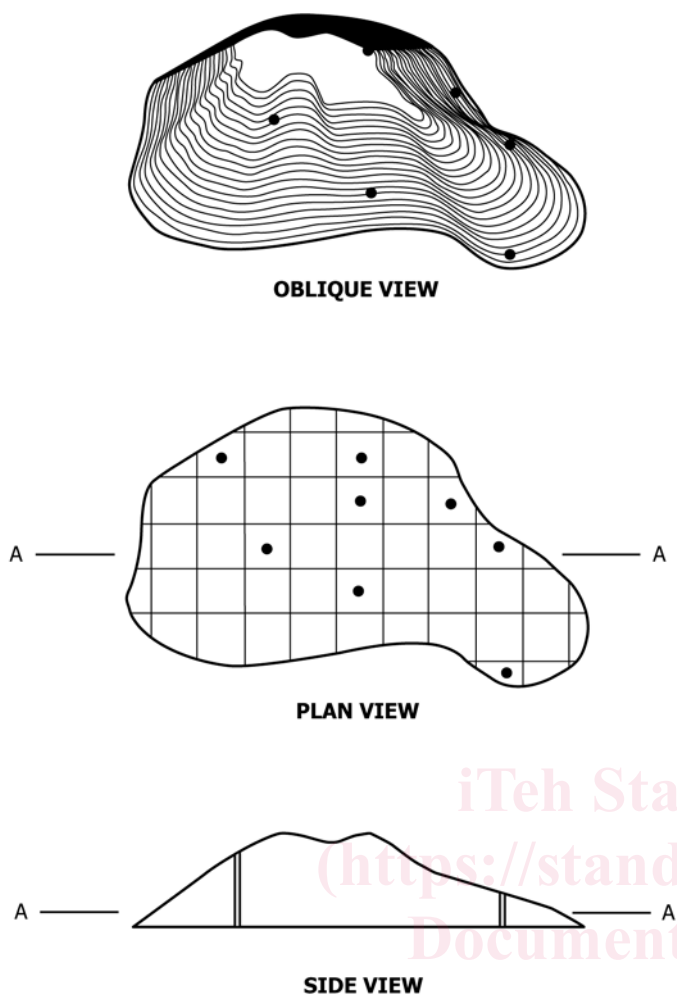


FIG. 2 Waste Pile Sampling Strategy—Simple Random Sampling

FIG. 3 Waste Pile Sampling Strategy—Stratified Random Sampling

may be comprised of different layers (see Fig. 3). This approach is useful when the individual strata may be considered internally homogeneous or at least have less internal variation in what would otherwise be considered a heterogeneous waste pile (2). Information on the waste pile usually is required to establish the location of individual strata unless process knowledge or changes in the composition of the material is obvious, such as with discoloration or with the type of waste. The grid may be utilized for sampling several horizontal layers if the strata are oriented horizontally (4). A simple random sampling approach then is used within each stratum. The use of a stratified random sampling strategy may result in the collection of fewer samples. Fig. 3 illustrates a scenario where the number of samples collected in each stratum varies (plan view), and discrete grabs are collected in each boring at predesignated depths (side view).

6.2.6 Systemic Grid Sampling—Systematic grid sampling (see Fig. 4) involves the collection of samples at fixed intervals and is useful when the contamination is assumed to be distributed randomly (2). This method also is commonly used with waste piles when estimating trends or patterns of contamination or when the objective is to locate hot spots. This approach may not be acceptable if the entire waste pile is not accessible or if the sampling grid locations become phased

with variations in the distribution of contaminants within the waste pile (6). It also may be useful for identifying the presence of strata within the pile. The grid and starting points should be laid out randomly over the waste pile, yet the method allows for rather easy location of exact sample locations by means of the grid (see Fig. 4). The same considerations discussed in 6.2.4 concerning the depth of each sample (surface, vertical composite, discrete grabs at depth) also should be considered. Fig. 4 illustrates the collection of vertical composites at each grid, which could be difficult and costly. Also note that the grid size typically would be adjusted according to the number of samples that are required.

6.2.7 Systematic Sampling Over Time—Systematic sampling over time at the point of generation is useful if the material is being sampled from a conveyor belt or being delivered by means of truck or pipeline to the waste pile. The sampling interval can be determined on a time basis, for example, every hour from a conveyor belt or pipeline discharge, or from every third truck load. The time between intervals is influenced by the factors addressed in 6.2.2.

NOTE 1—This approach is the preferred sampling method to determine waste characteristics of process wastes since it provides for an unaffected and accurate representation of the wastes. This approach often is not

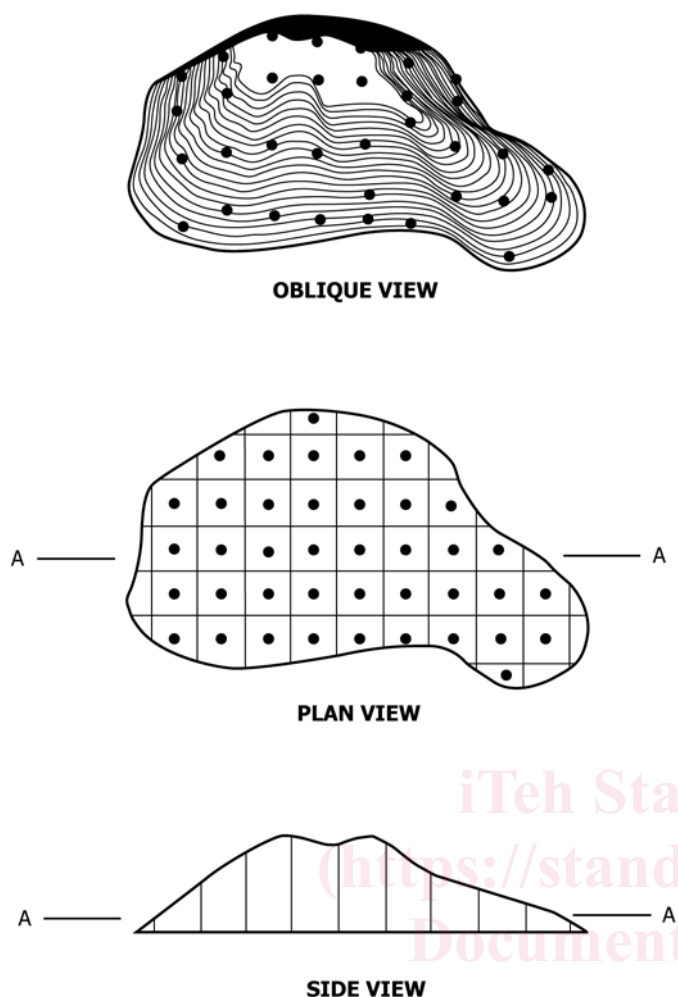


FIG. 4 Waste Pile Sampling Strategy—Systematic Grid Sampling

possible, though, and practitioners then are required to sample the accumulated waste pile.

6.2.8 *Alternative Approach*—In many cases, an objective of waste pile characterization is to determine the impact of the pile on the environment. At times this may be accomplished more easily by sampling the routes by which contaminants are dispersed from the pile than through direct sampling of the pile, especially for piles that are difficult to characterize. For example, ground water up-and-down gradient from the pile could be sampled to check for ground water contamination. The vadose zone below the pile also might be sampled to detect leachate (and potential ground water contamination) through soil sampling, vacuum lysimeters, or soil gas. Surface water and sediment in drainage channels down gradient from the pile also might be sampled. Surface soils, air samples, and contaminants deposited on vegetation can be used as indicators of atmospheric transport of contaminants from the pile, including both particulate and volatile materials. Such approaches will seldom replace pile sampling completely, but they may reduce the number of pile samples needed to make remedial action decisions (see Guide D5730), also Refs (7-9).

7. Selection of Sampling Equipment

7.1 Wastes in piles are often complex, multiphase mixtures of solids and semisolids. The wastes can range from powders to granules to large, heterogeneous solid fragments and can cover many acres in area. No single type of sampler can be used to collect representative samples of all types of waste from piles. Large, thick piles may require drill rigs to obtain samples from depth. The sampling of gases from within the pile requires other types of equipment. Table 2 lists typical waste types and the corresponding recommended samplers to use.

7.2 Sampling at depth from inside the pile may require heavy equipment designed for excavation or removal of soil or rock. Table 3 lists such equipment and its applications for sampling waste piles (10).

TABLE 2 Sampling Devices Suitable for Waste Piles⁴

Location and Waste Type	Sampling Devices	ASTM Standard	Limitations
Subsurface Powdered, granular, or soil-like solids; sludges	split-barrel push coring device	D1586 D1587 D4700 D4823 D5451	Limited application for sampling moist and sticky solids, or particles with diameter 0.6 cm (0.25 in.) or more. Depth limitation of about 1 m.
	trier		May not retain core sample of very dry granular materials. Not applicable to sampling solid wastes with particle diameter >1/2 the diameter of the sampling tube.
	auger	D1452 D4700	Does not collect undisturbed sample.
	thin-walled tube sampler	D4823 D4700	Collects relatively undisturbed core. Difficult to use on gravelly or rocky soils.
	drill rigs		Used for geoenvironmental exploration. To minimize sample contamination, avoid those using a water-based drilling fluid.
Surface Powdered, granular, or soil-like solids; sludges	soil gas samplers	D5314	Used for volatile organic compounds.
	trowel or scoop	D4700	Difficult to obtain reproducible mass of sample. May exclude certain particle sizes, especially large aggregates. Changes particle size.
Slag	hammer/chisel Impact device		

⁴ This table is not all inclusive; other equipment may be used.