
**Analysis of natural gas — Silicon
content of biomethane —**

**Part 1:
Determination of total silicon by
atomic emission spectroscopy (AES)**

*Analyse du gaz naturel — Teneur en silicium du biométhane —
Partie 1: Détermination de la teneur totale en silicium par
spectrométrie d'émission atomique (SEA)*

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 193, *Natural gas*, Subcommittee SC 1, *Analysis of natural gas*, in collaboration with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Technical Committee CEN/TC 408, *Biomethane for use in transport and injection in natural gas pipelines*, in accordance with the Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement).

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

This document describes a method for the measurement of the total concentration of silicon in biomethane, biogas and similar gaseous matrices when used in the natural gas grids and when using it as a transport fuel. The method is based on using a liquid impinger to accumulate the silicon from a gas sample, followed by instrumental analysis.

Due to the extensive usage of siloxane compounds, their volatility and great affinity to apolar environments, siloxanes are considered as one of the most important impurities in biogas. They are undesired because of their potential for abrasive SiO_2 formation as combustion product that can damage engines and appliances. Furthermore, some of these compounds present a health risk.

For the purpose of this document, silicon species measured is quoted as total silicon. Silicon measured is from organosilicon species that are trapped from the gas phase in liquid media and derivatized into analytical form of hexafluorosilicate (SiF_6^{2-}) ions which remain present in solution when analysed.

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Analysis of natural gas — Silicon content of biomethane —

Part 1:

Determination of total silicon by atomic emission spectroscopy (AES)

1 Scope

This document is applicable to the measurement of the total silicon content in gaseous matrices such as biomethane and biogas. Silicon is present in a gas phase contained predominantly in siloxane compounds, trimethylsilane and trimethylsilanol. The analytical form of the silicon measured in liquid phase after conducted sampling and derivatization procedure is soluble hexafluorosilicate anion stable in slightly acidified media. Total silicon is expressed as a mass of silicon in the volume of the analysed gas.

This document is applicable to stated gaseous matrices with silicon concentrations up to 5 mg/m³, and it is prevalently intended for the biomethane matrices with Si mass concentration of 0,1 mg/m³ to 0,5 mg/m³.

With adaptation to ensure appropriate absorption efficiency, it can be used for higher concentrations. The detection limit of the method is estimated as 0,05 mg/m³ based on a gas sample volume of 0,020 m³. All compounds present in the gas phase are volatile at the absorption and derivatization temperature and gaseous organosilicon species are trapped in absorbance media and derivatized into analytical silicon that is measured by this method. The concentration of the silicon is measured in diluted derivatization media using atomic emission spectrometry upon atomisation/ionisation in microwave or inductively coupled plasma.

Unless specified otherwise, all volumes and concentrations refer to standard reference conditions (temperature, 273 K, and pressure, 101,325 kPa).

NOTE When using appropriate dilution factors, the method can also be applied for silicon concentrations above 5 mg/m³.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 3696, *Water for analytical laboratory use — Specification and test methods*

ISO 6143, *Gas analysis — Comparison methods for determining and checking the composition of calibration gas mixtures*

ISO 14532, *Natural gas — Vocabulary*

ISO 10715, *Natural gas — Gas sampling*

ISO 14912, *Gas analysis — Conversion of gas mixture composition data*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 14532 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <https://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

siloxane

functional group where two silicon atoms are connected via an oxygen atom

Note 1 to entry: Depending on the substrate used to produce biogas and the process used for purification, biomethane can contain siloxanes. During combustion, siloxanes can be oxidized to silicon dioxide, an abrasive compound harmful for mechanical moving parts in e.g. engines and turbines.

3.2

atomic emission spectroscopy

AES

method of chemical analysis that uses the intensity of light emitted from a flame, plasma, arc, or spark at a particular wavelength to determine the quantity of an element in a sample

4 Principle

WARNING — Persons using this document should be familiar with normal laboratory practice. This standard does not purport to address all of the safety problems, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user to establish appropriate safety and health practices and to ensure compliance with any national regulatory conditions.

A methane matrix gas sample (e.g. biomethane, biogas, natural gas and blends thereof) containing siloxane compounds is passed through liquid absorbent (nitric acid) in serially connected gas bubblers/impingers to collect the silicon-containing compounds. After sampling of an adequate gas volume, content of sampling vessels (gas bubblers) is subjected to derivatization by adding hydroxide solution and hydrofluoric acid in order to obtain silicon in analytical form, hexafluorosilicate (SiF_6^{2-}) anion.

The derivatized sample is analysed for silicon content using an ICP/MWP atomic emission spectrometer at selected characteristic silicon emission wavelengths using a multipoint calibration using a straight line obtained from analysing a series of standard silicon solutions.

5 Reagents and labware

To carry out the method, the following reagents shall be of a recognized analytical grade and only ISO 3696 grade 1 water. If it is visually determined that the reagents have changed their appearance (colour, consistency, turbidity) they shall be discarded, and fresh ones shall be used.

5.1 Absorber media.

5.1.1 Nitric acid (HNO_3), $\rho_{(20\text{ }^\circ\text{C})} = 1,41\text{ g/ml}$; 65 % HNO_3 (mass fraction) – for trace elemental analysis.

CAUTION — This chemical is especially dangerous if used outside specialized laboratory conditions. Tests have been performed in which other non-oxo mineral acids (HCl) have been used, but they have been shown to be inadequate for the absorption of siloxanes from the gas phase. Special precautions are to be taken when handling this chemical in lab and field conditions.

5.2 Derivatization media.

5.2.1 Sodium hydroxide pellets, for the preparation of 8 mol/l – 10 mol/l hydroxide solution.

Accurately weigh an appropriate amount of sodium hydroxide pellets and dissolve these in an appropriate amount of reagent water (5.3). As an example for 100 ml of 10 mol/l sodium hydroxide solutions, weigh 40 g of sodium hydroxide pellets and dissolve in 100 ml water.

Potassium hydroxide can also be used, but sodium hydroxide is preferred due to operation safety.

WARNING — Reaction of dissolving sodium hydroxide in water is highly exothermic! Heat will be released and care should be taken when handling the reaction. Add pellets slowly to the water and cool the dissolution vessel until the dissolution is complete.

5.2.2 Hydrofluoric acid (HF), $\rho_{(20\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C})} = 1,16\text{ g/ml}$; 48 % HF (mass fraction).

WARNING — Hydrofluoric acid is a very toxic acid and penetrates the skin and tissues deeply if not treated immediately. Injury occurs in two stages: firstly, by hydration that induces tissue necrosis; and secondly, by penetration of fluoride ions deep into the tissue and thereby reacting with calcium. Boric acid and/or other complexing reagents and appropriate treatment agents should be administered immediately. Consult appropriate safety literature for determining the proper protective eyewear, clothing and gloves to use when handling hydrofluoric acid. Always have appropriate treatment materials readily available prior to working with this acid.

CAUTION — This chemical is especially dangerous if used outside specialized laboratory conditions. Tests have been performed in which other fluoride donor derivatization reagents (NaF) have been used, but they have been shown to be inadequate for the derivatization of absorbed siloxanes from the gas phase. Special precautions are to be taken when handling this chemical in lab and field conditions

5.3 Water, complying with grade 1 of ISO 3696.

5.4 Pure siloxane compounds.

Linear siloxanes	Molecular formula	Cyclic siloxanes	Molecular formula
Hexamethyldisiloxane - L2	$\text{C}_6\text{H}_{18}\text{OSi}_2$	Hexamethylcyclotrisiloxane - D3	$\text{C}_6\text{H}_{18}\text{O}_3\text{Si}_3$
Octamethyltrisiloxane - L3	$\text{C}_8\text{H}_{24}\text{O}_2\text{Si}_3$	Octamethylcyclotetrasiloxane - D4	$\text{C}_8\text{H}_{24}\text{O}_4\text{Si}_4$
Decamethyltetrasiloxane - L4	$\text{C}_{10}\text{H}_{30}\text{O}_3\text{Si}_4$	Decamethylcyclopentasiloxane - D5	$\text{C}_{10}\text{H}_{30}\text{O}_5\text{Si}_5$
Dodecamethylpentasiloxane - L5	$\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{36}\text{O}_4\text{Si}_5$	Dodecamethylcyclohexasiloxane - D6	$\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{36}\text{O}_6\text{Si}_6$

Use at least one representative of chain and one representative of cyclic siloxane compounds for the purpose of performing initial and regular quality control of the method validity.

5.5 pH colour-fixed indicator strips, pH range from 0 to 14, or, alternatively, a pH meter with HF resistant electrode.

5.6 Calibration solutions.

5.6.1 General

The following procedure for the preparation of standard and calibration solutions of silicon is adjusted to the lower range of silicon concentration in gas sample. If higher concentrations of silicon shall be measured, adjust the concentrations of the working standard and calibration solutions accordingly.

When determining silicon in aqueous samples, only plastic, PTFE or quartz labware shall be used from time of sample collection to completion of analysis.

5.6.2 Certified ICP-Si stock standard solution.

Example of certified Si standard solution is water solution (only trace level of HF is acceptable) with Si mass concentration of 10 000 µg/ml and relative expanded uncertainty (coverage factor $k = 2$) 0,5 %. This concentration is used in the example of the Si standard solution preparation in [5.6.3](#).

Certified Si stock standard solutions of other concentrations can also be used. Adjust the procedure for preparing standard solution accordingly.

If Si stock standard solution is prepared in-house gravimetrically from salt-containing silicon, apply required statistical procedure for obtaining accurate concentration accompanied with uncertainty value.

NOTE References [\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#) provide guidance.

5.6.3 Si standard solution.

The target Si mass fraction is $\rho(\text{Si}) \approx 100 \text{ mg/kg}$. Weigh empty 50 ml plastic volumetric flask using analytical balance ([6.3](#)). Add around 10 ml of 2 % nitric acid (mass fraction). Accurately pipette 0,5 ml of stock solution ([5.6.2](#)) and add it to the plastic volumetric flask. Dilute with 2 % nitric acid (mass fraction) to volume. Weigh full plastic volumetric flask and calculate the concentration of silicon.

Store the solution in plastic volumetric flask or similar vessel of silicon free material properly stoppered at room temperature or refrigerated ($\sim 5 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$). The solution is stable for at least two weeks if stored properly.

5.6.4 Si calibration solutions.

Gravimetrically prepare a minimum of five calibration solutions in accordance with expected silicon concentration in the collected sample.

As an example proceed as follows for the Si mass fraction range from 10 µg/kg to 200 µg/kg.

Weigh empty 100 ml (or 200 ml) plastic volumetric flasks.

Pipette 10 µl; 20 µl; 50 µl; 75 µl; 100 µl; 150 µl; and 200 µl; respectively of silicon standard solution ([5.6.3](#)) into 100 ml one-mark plastic volumetric flask that was empty-weighted and prefilled with around 10 ml - 20 ml of 2 % nitric acid (mass fraction). Dilute with 2 % nitric acid (mass fraction) to volume. Weigh full plastic volumetric flask and calculate the concentration of silicon.

The Si mass fraction in the calibration solutions is 10 µg/kg; 20 µg/kg; 50 µg/kg; 75 µg/kg; 100 µg/kg; 150 µg/kg and 200 µg/kg respectively.

Calculate the uncertainty of the mass fractions of the calibration solutions. Check what the contributions are of the combination of shared effects, such as the uncertainty of the concentration of the stock solution and the calibration of the pipette. If these effects account for more than 40 % of the uncertainty budget, then calculate the dilution factors and their associated uncertainties. Then the concentrations of these standards are substantially correlated.

5.6.5 Solution for wavelength calibration control.

Perform wavelength check using solution containing assorted elements covering the wavelength range of the instrumentation used provided by the manufacturer prior to daily calibration of the instrument for the analysis of silicon. This solution is usually provided as concentrate that needs to be diluted prior to the analysis in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Wavelength calibration control test result shows if the optical settings of the instrument are appropriate, and if the readings of the emission

lines for each individual element correspond to the instrumental settings when selecting the analytical wavelengths for the analyte of interest.

NOTE The solution for wavelength calibration control is usually provided by the manufacturer of the equipment.

5.7 Quality control.

5.7.1 Blanks.

Three types of blanks are used during the analysis. The calibration blank is used in establishing the analytical curve, the laboratory reagent blank is used to assess any contamination from the sample preparation procedure and a rinse blank is used to flush the instrument uptake system and nebulizer between standards, check solutions, and samples to reduce memory interferences.

5.7.1.1 The calibration blank is prepared by acidifying reagent water to the same concentrations of the acids as used for the standards; in this case it is 2 % nitric acid (mass fraction). The calibration blank should be stored in a plastic container as samples.

5.7.1.2 The laboratory reagent blank should contain all the reagents in the same volumes as used in the processing of the samples. The laboratory reagent blank shall be carried through the same entire preparation scheme as the samples including sample derivatization. This type of blank should be prepared at least every time new reagents are used.

5.7.1.3 The rinse blank is prepared by acidifying reagent water to the same concentrations of nitric acid as used in the calibration blank and stored in a convenient manner.

5.7.1.4 Labware blank – pure methane gas free from silicon used as blank gas sample to test the cleanliness of labware used.

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5.7.2 Instrument performance check i.e. wavelength calibration control sample ([5.6.5](#)).

5.7.3 Calibration Control Sample (CC).

A calibration control sample shall be used for initial and periodic verification of calibration standards or stock standard solutions in order to verify instrument performance. The CC shall be obtained from an outside source different from the standard stock solutions and prepared in the same acid mixture as the calibration standards. It can be either ready standard solution obtained from a different supplier, or at least from a different lot, or it can be prepared gravimetrically using pure $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{SiF}_6$ salt. The concentration of the silicon in the CC solution should be near to expected concentration of silicon in the sample or at the middle of calibration range. A fresh solution should be prepared prior to the analysis and stored in plastic container as samples.

5.7.4 Derivatization control sample (DC).

A derivatization control sample shall be used for initial and periodic verification of the completeness of the derivatization process. For this purpose pure siloxane compounds are used. For example, L2 and D4 siloxanes represent linear and cyclic siloxanes found in biomethane matrices. Other siloxanes may be used as well. The DC is prepared by accurately pipetting appropriate amount of siloxane with previously calculated mass of silicon contained, and adding this amount to the aliquot of nitric acid thus simulating the absorbance procedure. The solution of siloxane(s) is then subjected to derivatization by adding appropriate amount of hydroxide solution and hydrofluoric solution. The DC should be stored in a plastic container as sample. Concentration of the silicon in DC shall be within the calibration range and can be adjusted by dilution if needed.