



Designation: E 1437 – 98

Standard Practice for Handling Silicon Carbide Whiskers¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers recommended procedures to reduce health and safety problems which may arise during handling of respirable silicon carbide whiskers. Respirable silicon carbide whiskers are a crystalline silicon carbide (SiC) fiber, approximately cylindrical in shape with a diameter less than 3.0 μm and an aspect ratio equal to or greater than 5:1.

1.2 Fragments of longer silicon carbide fibers that meet the size definition of respirable silicon carbide whiskers are covered by this practice.

1.3 Mixtures of respirable and non-respirable whiskers or fibers, or both, are covered by this practice.

1.4 The information contained in this practice may be considered for use in a material safety data sheet (MSDS) for silicon carbide whiskers.

1.5 Other materials may be present in the final product (for example, crystalline silica); information specific to these additional materials should be included in each manufacturer's MSDS.

1.6 *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.* For specific hazard and precaution statements, see Sections 5, 7, 9, and 10.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

D 6056 Test Method for Determining the Concentration of Airborne Single-Crystal Ceramic Whiskers in the Workplace Environment by Transmission Electron Microscopy

D 6057 Test Method for Determining the Concentration of Airborne Single-Crystal Ceramic Whiskers in the Workplace Environment by Phase Contrast Microscopy

D 6058 Test Method for Determining the Concentration of Airborne Single-Crystal Ceramic Whiskers in the Workplace Environment

D 6059 Test Method for Determining the Concentration of Airborne Single-Crystal Ceramic Whiskers in the Workplace Environment by Scanning Electron Microscopy

E 1435 Practice for Handling Densified Articles of Aluminum Oxide Reinforced with Silicon Carbide Whiskers

E 1451 Guide for Disposal of Wastes Containing Respirable Silicon Carbide Whiskers

E 1516 Guide for Packaging of Unbound Respirable Silicon Carbide Whiskers

E 1576 Guide for Medical Surveillance Program for Workers with Occupational Exposure to Airborne Silicon Carbide Whiskers and Fibers

E 1716 Guide for Selection and Use of Personal Protective Equipment for Humans Working with Respirable Silicon Carbide Whiskers

E 1717 Guide for Personnel Training for Health and Safety Aspects of Working in Environments Containing Respirable Silicon Carbide Whiskers

E 1718 Guide for Administrative and Engineering Controls for Silicon Carbide Whisker Work Areas

2.2 *American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Standards:*³

ANSI Z88.2—1992, Respiratory Protection

ANSI Z9.2—1979, Fundamentals Governing the Design and Operation of Local Exhaust Systems

2.3 *Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Standard:*⁴

U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 29 CFR 1910.134, Respiratory Protection

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E34 on Occupational Health and Safety and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E34.70 on Single Crystal Ceramic Whiskers.

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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.

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 Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *aspect ratio, n*—ratio of whisker length to whisker diameter.

3.1.2 *HEPA, n*—disposable extended media dry-type, high-efficiency, particulate air filter with a particulate removal of no less than 99.97 % for 0.3 μm diameter particles.⁵

3.1.3 *respirable silicon carbide whiskers, n*—a crystalline silicon carbide fiber, approximately cylindrical in shape, with a diameter less than 3.0 μm and an aspect ratio equal to or greater than 5:1.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 Workers may be exposed to respirable SiC whiskers during handling, processing, or use of SiC whiskers or powdered blends containing SiC whiskers. Exposure may also occur during (re)finishing of consolidated or densified articles when respirable SiC whiskers are released.

4.2 This practice provides guidance for handling, processing, or use of SiC whiskers, either alone or combined with other materials. It is intended for use by health and safety professionals in determining whether an excessive exposure exists, in preparing procedures to establish a safe work environment, and in preparing relevant documentation.

4.3 Users of this practice are directed to the following ASTM standards as supplemental information: Test Methods D 6056, D 6057, D 6058, and D 6059; Practice E 1435; and Guides E 1451, E 1516, E 1576, E 1716, E 1717, and E 1718.

5. Hazardous Ingredients/Identity Information

5.1 *Hazardous Ingredients* (specific chemical identity common name(s))—Silicon carbide whiskers, an acicular form of silicon carbide, which is Chemical Abstract Service (CAS) 409-21-2. A CAS number specific to SiC whiskers has not been assigned. OSHA Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs) for SiC whiskers have not been established. American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) Threshold Limit Values (TLVs) have not been established. Manufacturers currently use the following exposure limits for respirable SiC whiskers.

5.1.1 A short term exposure limit (STEL) for respirable SiC whiskers of 2 fibers/cc as averaged over a sampling period of 30 min.

5.1.2 A long term exposure limit for respirable SiC whiskers of 0.2 fibers/cc 8-h time weighted average (TWA).

5.2 Silicon carbide whiskers are not classified by OSHA or the U.S. National Toxicology Program (NTP) as a carcinogen; however, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified the family of ceramic fibers, which contains SiC whiskers, in Group 2B as *possibly carcinogenic to humans*. (Group 2B: “There is sufficient evidence for the

carcinogenicity of ceramic fibers in experimental animals; no data were available on the carcinogenicity of ceramic fibers to humans.”)⁶

6. Physical/Chemical Characteristics

6.1 The following data are relevant when preparing an MSDS for SiC whiskers:

6.1.1 *Boiling Point*—Not applicable.

6.1.2 *Vapor Pressure (mm Hg)*—Not applicable.

6.1.3 *Vapor Density (AIR = 1)*—Not applicable.

6.1.4 *Solubility in Water*—Insoluble.

6.1.5 *Relative Density (specific gravity)*—3.2.

6.1.6 *Oxidation*—Occurs above 700°C.

6.1.7 *Melting Point*—Decomposes above 2500°C.

6.1.8 *pH*—Not applicable.

6.1.9 *Evaporation Rate (butyl acetate = 1)*—Not applicable.

6.1.10 *Appearance and Odor*—Variable, typically green to gray-green powder. No odor.

7. Fire and Explosion Hazard Data

7.1 The following data are relevant when preparing an MSDS for SiC whiskers:

7.1.1 *Flash Point*—Non-flammable by conventional test methods.

7.1.2 *Flammable Limits*—Non-flammable.

7.1.3 *Lower Explosive Limit (LEL)*—Not applicable.

7.1.4 *Upper Explosive Limit (UEL)*—Not applicable.

7.1.5 *Extinguishing Media*—Use extinguishing media appropriate for the surrounding materials.

7.1.6 *Special Fire Fighting Procedures*—Avoid actions that would cause whiskers to become airborne. Wear pressure-demand, self-contained breathing apparatus and full fire fighting protective clothing.

7.1.7 *Unusual Fire and Explosion Hazards*—Negligible fire and explosion hazard when whiskers alone are exposed to heat and flame.

NOTE 1—This section is applicable for fire and explosion hazards only and is not to be used for occupational exposures.

8. Reactivity Data

8.1 The following data are relevant when preparing an MSDS for SiC whiskers:

8.1.1 *Stability*—Stable.

8.1.2 *Conditions to Avoid*—None.

8.1.3 *Incompatibility*—None.

8.1.4 *Hazardous Polymerization*—Will not occur.

9. Health Hazard Data

9.1 *General*—Potential route(s) of entry are inhalation and ingestion.

9.2 *Health Hazard and Signs or Symptoms of Overexposure:*

⁵ Fundamentals of Industrial Hygiene, 4th ed., National Safety Council, 1121 Spring Lake Dr., Itasca, IL 60143-3201.

⁶ “Man-Made Mineral Fibres and Radon,” Monograph on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans, Vol 43, 1988, International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), 150 cours Albert-Thomas, 69372 Lyon Cedex 08, France. Also available from World Health Organization, Publications Ctr., 49 Sheridan Ave., Albany, NY 12216.