



Designation: D2492 – 02 (Reapproved 2012)

Standard Test Method for Forms of Sulfur in Coal¹

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This standard has been approved for use by agencies of the Department of Defense.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method applies to the determination of sulfate sulfur and pyritic sulfur in coal and calculates organic sulfur by difference. This test method is not applicable to coke or other carbonaceous materials. Monosulfides (pyrites and FeS_2 are disulfides) of iron and elements such as cadmium, lead, vanadium, and zinc can be present in coal. In the range of 0 to 100 ppm, these monosulfides do not contribute significantly to the total inorganic sulfide content.

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as 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

D1193 Specification for Reagent Water

D2013 Practice for Preparing Coal Samples for Analysis

D3173 Test Method for Moisture in the Analysis Sample of Coal and Coke

D3177 Test Methods for Total Sulfur in the Analysis Sample of Coal and Coke

D3180 Practice for Calculating Coal and Coke Analyses from As-Determined to Different Bases

D4239 Test Method for Sulfur in the Analysis Sample of Coal and Coke Using High-Temperature Tube Furnace Combustion

E832 Specification for Laboratory Filter Papers

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D05 on Coal and Coke and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D05.21 on Methods of Analysis.

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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. Summary of Test Method

3.1 Sulfate Sulfur:

3.1.1 Sulfate sulfur is extracted from the analysis sample with dilute hydrochloric acid. The sulfate sulfur in the extract is determined gravimetrically. Sulfates are soluble in hydrochloric acid, but pyritic and organic sulfur are not.

3.2 Pyritic Sulfur:

3.2.1 Pyritic sulfur is calculated as a stoichiometric combination with iron.

3.2.2 Methods:

3.2.2.1 *Referee Method*, which can be used in cases of dispute or arbitration. The iron combined in the pyritic state is extracted with dilute nitric acid from the coal residue remaining after sulfate extraction (see Note 1). The iron is determined by atomic absorption techniques (see Note 2).

NOTE 1—The sulfate extraction step also removes hydrochloric acid soluble iron (nonpyritic iron) from the test specimen. A test specimen separate from that used for the sulfate extraction could be used for the nitric acid extraction of iron. In this case, both nonpyritic and pyritic iron are extracted from the test specimen. Since there is evidence that for some coals the extraction of nonpyritic iron by nitric acids falls short of the amount extracted by hydrochloric acid,^{3,4} the use of a separate test specimen for the nitric acid extraction of iron with subsequent correction for the contribution of nonpyritic iron is not included in this test method.

NOTE 2—Round-robin testing of the coal samples used to generate data for the precision statement in this test method indicates that plasma emission techniques give results equivalent to those from atomic absorption analysis for the determination of iron. However, emission analysis is highly susceptible to interferences from other analytes that may be dissolved during the extraction of iron. Selection of a wavelength that is free from interferences and linear over the range of iron anticipated for emission analysis can require a detailed compositional analysis of the coal mineral matter, thus limiting the practicality of this approach.

3.2.2.2 *Alternative Method*, which can be used in routine practice or when the concerned parties agree on this test method. The iron originally combined in the pyritic state can be extracted with dilute hydrochloric acid from the ash obtained by incinerating the coal residue remaining after

³ Edwards, A. H., Daybell, G. N., and Pringle, W. J. S., "An Investigation into Methods for the Determination of Forms of Sulfur in Coal," *Fuel*, Vol 37, 1958, pp. 47–59.

⁴ Burns, M. S., "Determination of Pyritic Sulfur in Australian Coals," *Fuel*, Vol 49, 1970, pp. 126–33.

sulfate extraction. The iron is determined by atomic absorption techniques (see [Note 2](#)).

4. Significance and Use

4.1 This test method provides for a separation of coal-associated sulfur into two commonly recognized forms: pyritic and sulfate. Organic sulfur is calculated by difference. Results obtained by the test method are used to serve a number of interests, including the evaluation of coal preparation and processing operations designed to reduce coal sulfur levels.

5. Analysis Sample

5.1 The analysis sample is that sample which has been pulverized to pass No. 60 (250- μ m) sieve as prepared in accordance with Test Method [D2013](#). Moisture shall be determined in accordance with Test Method [D3173](#) to permit calculations to other than as-analyzed bases.

6. Sulfate Sulfur

6.1 Apparatus:

6.1.1 *Balance*, sensitive to 0.1 mg.

6.1.2 *Crucibles*, porcelain, platinum, alundum, or silica of 10- to 25-mL capacity for ignition of barium sulfate (BaSO_4).

6.1.3 *Hot Plate*, electric or gas-heated with capability for temperature control.

6.1.4 *Muffle Furnace*, electrically heated and capable of regulating the temperature at $800 \pm 25^\circ\text{C}$ for igniting BaSO_4 .

6.2 Reagents and Materials:

6.2.1 *Purity of Reagents*—Reagent grade chemicals shall be used in all tests. Unless otherwise indicated, it is intended that all reagents shall conform to the specifications of the Committee on Analytical Reagents of the American Chemical Society, where such specifications are available.⁵ Other grades may be used, provided that the reagent is of sufficiently high purity to permit its use without lessening the accuracy of the determination.

6.2.2 *Purity of Water*—Unless otherwise indicated, references to water shall be understood to mean reagent water conforming to Specification [D1193](#), Type III.

6.2.3 *Ammonium Hydroxide* (14.9N, sp. gr. 0.90)—concentrated aqueous ammonia.

6.2.4 *Ammonium Hydroxide Solution* 1.5N, (1 + 10)—Mix one volume of concentrated aqueous ammonia with ten volumes of water.

6.2.5 *Barium Chloride Solution* (100 g/L)—Dissolve 100 g of barium chloride ($\text{BaCl}_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$) in water and dilute to 1 L.

6.2.6 *Bromine Water* (saturated)—Add an excess of bromine to 1 L of water. (**Warning**—Store in a dark bottle and keep in a hood.) (Solubility, 42 g/L.)

6.2.7 *Ethanol*, reagent grade, denatured.

6.2.8 *Filter Paper*—Unless otherwise indicated, references to filter paper shall be understood to mean filter paper conforming to Specification [E832](#).

6.2.9 *Hydrochloric Acid*, 12N (sp. gr. 1.19)—Concentrated aqueous hydrochloric acid (HCl).

6.2.10 *Hydrochloric Acid*, 4.8N (2 + 3)—Mix two volumes of concentrated aqueous hydrochloric acid (HCl, sp. gr. 1.19) with three volumes of water.

6.2.11 *Methyl Orange Indicator Solution*, (0.02 g/100 mL)—Dissolve 0.02 g of methyl orange in 100 mL of hot water.

6.2.12 *Silver Nitrate Solution*, (0.43 g/100 mL)—Dissolve 0.43 g of silver nitrate in 100 mL of water. Store in an amber glass bottle.

6.3 Procedure:

6.3.1 *Extraction*—Weigh to the nearest 1 mg a 2- to 5-g test specimen of analysis sample (see [Note 3](#)) and transfer to a 250-mL Erlenmeyer flask or beaker. Add 50-mL HCl (2 + 3) in small increments while stirring to wet the coal thoroughly. A few drops of ethanol added to the coal facilitates the wetting process. Place on a hotplate and boil gently for $\frac{1}{2}$ h. Carefully filter the contents into a 400-mL beaker, using a Type II, Class F filter paper. Wash the filter paper and contents with sufficient small water washings to ensure the transfer of all HCl extract to the beaker. Save the filter paper with extracted residue for subsequent extraction of pyrites.

NOTE 3—It is practical to limit the sample weight to 2 g when the total sulfur level is 2 % or above, to avoid handling an excessive amount of iron in the pyritic extraction.

6.3.2 Add 5 mL of bromine water to the extract and boil for at least 5 min to oxidize iron and expel excess bromide. Cool to room temperature.

6.3.3 Precipitate the iron by slowly adding aqueous ammonium hydroxide (sp. gr. 0.90) until a slight excess is present as measured by pH indicator paper. Add 5 mL more with constant stirring to coagulate the ferric hydroxide. Filter on a Type II, Class E filter paper into a 400-mL or larger beaker. Wash the filter paper several times with hot ammoniacal solution ([6.2.4](#)).

6.3.4 *Precipitation*—Add two or three drops of methyl orange solution and neutralize the filtrate ([6.3.3](#)) by cautiously adding aqueous HCl (sp. gr. 1.19) until the solution turns pink. Add 1 mL in excess. Heat to boiling and, while stirring slowly, add 10 mL of BaCl_2 solution. Continue boiling gently for 10 to 15 min and allow to stand overnight at room temperature or for 4 h between 70 and 100°C covered with a watch glass. Filter through a Type II, Class G filter paper and wash with intermittent small washings of hot water until one drop of silver nitrate solution produces no more than a slight opalescence when added to 8 to 10 mL of the filtrate.

6.3.5 *Sulfate Blank*—Prepare a sulfate blank following the same procedure and using the same amounts of all reagents as described in [6.3.1-6.3.4](#). Save the filter paper from [6.3.1](#) of the blank test for the pyritic iron blank in [7.3.3](#).

6.3.6 *Determination*—Preignite crucibles ([6.1.2](#)) at $800 \pm 25^\circ\text{C}$ for 30 min. Cool in a desiccator and weigh to the nearest 0.1 mg. Place the specimen filter paper from [6.3.4](#) and the blank filter paper from [6.3.5](#) in separate preignited crucibles. Fold the filter papers over loosely to allow free access of air.

⁵ *Reagent Chemicals, American Chemical Society Specifications*, American Chemical Society, Washington, DC. For suggestions on the testing of reagents not listed by the American Chemical Society, see *Analar Standards for Laboratory Chemicals*, BDH Ltd., Poole, Dorset, U.K., and the *United States Pharmacopeia and National Formulary*, U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.