



Designation: B556 – 90(Reapproved 2012)

## Standard Guide for Measurement of Thin Chromium Coatings by Spot Test<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation B556; 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 ( $\epsilon$ ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

### 1. Scope

1.1 This guide covers the use of the spot test for the measurement of thicknesses of electrodeposited chromium coatings over nickel and stainless steel with an accuracy of about  $\pm 20\%$  (Section 9). It is applicable to thicknesses up to  $1.2\ \mu\text{m}$ .<sup>2</sup>

NOTE 1—Although this test can be used for coating thicknesses up to  $1.2\ \mu\text{m}$ , there is evidence that the results obtained by this method are high at thicknesses greater than  $0.5\ \mu\text{m}$ .<sup>3</sup> In addition, for coating thicknesses above  $0.5\ \mu\text{m}$ , it is advisable to use a double drop of acid to prevent depletion of the test solution before completion of the test.

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this 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*:<sup>4</sup>

**B504** Test Method for Measurement of Thickness of Metallic Coatings by the Coulometric Method

**B568** Test Method for Measurement of Coating Thickness by X-Ray Spectrometry

**B588** Test Method for Measurement of Thickness of Transparent or Opaque Coatings by Double-Beam Interference Microscope Technique

### 3. Summary of Guide

3.1 A drop of hydrochloric acid (test solution) is deposited on the surface of the test specimen, and the time required for

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<sup>2</sup> Blum, W., and Olson, W. A., *Proceedings*, Am. Electroplaters Soc., Vol 28, 1940, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> DuRose, A. H., and Pierce, W. J., *Metal Finishing*, Vol 57, March 1959, p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

the hydrochloric acid to penetrate through the chromium coating (penetration time) is measured. The coating thickness is proportional to this time.

### 4. Significance and Use

4.1 The thickness of a decorative chromium coating is often critical to its performance.

4.2 This procedure is useful for an approximate determination when the best possible accuracy is not required. For more reliable determinations, the following methods are available: Methods **B504**, **B568**, and **B588**.

4.3 This test assumes that the rate of dissolution of the chromium by the hydrochloric acid under the specified conditions is always the same.

### 5. Test Solutions

5.1 For chromium on nickel the test solution is reagent grade hydrochloric acid having a specific gravity at  $16^\circ\text{C}$  of  $1.180 \pm 0.002$ . (This corresponds to  $11.5\ \text{N} \pm 0.2\ \text{N}$ , which may be checked by titration.) For chromium on stainless steel the test solution is 20 g/L of antimony trioxide dissolved in reagent grade hydrochloric acid having a specific gravity at  $16^\circ\text{C}$  of 1.160.

NOTE 2—As received, reagent grade hydrochloric acid is normally more concentrated than 11.5 N.

### 6. Preparation of Test Area

6.1 The test area must be free of foreign material. Clean by rubbing the test area with a paste of magnesium oxide, rinse it, and dry it with a clean cloth or filter paper. Draw a ring with a diameter of about 6 mm on the test area with melted paraffin or with a wax pencil.

### 7. Procedure

7.1 Let the test specimen, the test solution, and the dropper stand long enough to reach room temperature, which should be between  $16$  and  $25^\circ\text{C}$ . Temperatures up to  $30^\circ\text{C}$  are permissible, but the measurements become less reliable at the higher temperatures because of increasing sensitivity to temperature. Thin test specimens should be set on a heavy metal plate to avoid a rapid change in temperature which could be produced in such specimens by the heat of reaction.