



Designation: E1852 – 13

Standard Test Method for Determination of Low Levels of Antimony in Carbon and Low-Alloy Steel by Graphite Furnace Atomic Absorption Spectrometry¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E1852; 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 (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the determination of antimony in carbon and low-alloy steel in the 0.0005 % through 0.010 % range.

1.2 If this test method is used to test materials having contents less than 0.001 % antimony, users of different laboratories will experience more than the usual 5 % risk that their results will differ by more than 50 % relative error.

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

[E50 Practices for Apparatus, Reagents, and Safety Considerations for Chemical Analysis of Metals, Ores, and Related Materials](#)

[E135 Terminology Relating to Analytical Chemistry for Metals, Ores, and Related Materials](#)

[E1184 Practice for Determination of Elements by Graphite Furnace Atomic Absorption Spectrometry](#)

[E1601 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Evaluate the Performance of an Analytical Method](#)

[E1770 Practice for Optimization of Electrothermal Atomic Absorption Spectrometric Equipment](#)

[E1806 Practice for Sampling Steel and Iron for Determination of Chemical Composition](#)

2.2 *ISO Standards:*³

[ISO 5725 Precision of Test Methods—Determination of Repeatability and Reproducibility for a Standard Test Method by Inter-Laboratory Tests](#)

[ISO 10698 Steel—Determination of Antimony Content—Electrothermal Atomic Absorption Spectrometric Method](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 For definitions of terms used in this test method, refer to Terminology [E135](#).

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 The sample is dissolved in hydrochloric and nitric acids and diluted to volume. An appropriate aliquot is injected into the graphite furnace atomizer of an atomic absorption spectrometer, which is equipped with a background correction. The sample is dried, pyrolyzed, and atomized. The absorbance of the radiation from the external light source is measured and compared to the absorbance of samples of known composition.

NOTE 1—In general, the deuterium correction system should be able to correct for the broad-band background absorbance up to 0.5 to 0.6 absorbance units. Zeeman systems should compensate for background levels as high as 1.0 to 1.5 absorbance units.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method is utilized for the determination of trace levels of antimony in carbon and low-alloy steel. It is assumed that the procedure will be performed by trained analysts capable of performing common laboratory practices skillfully and safely. It is expected that the work will be performed in a properly equipped laboratory and proper waste disposal procedures will be followed.

6. Hazards

6.1 For precautions to be observed in the use of certain reagents and equipment in this test method, refer to Practices [E50](#).

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E01 on Analytical Chemistry for Metals, Ores, and Related Materials and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E01.01 on Iron, Steel, and Ferroalloys.

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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>.

7. Apparatus

7.1 *Atomic Absorption Spectrometer with Graphite Furnace Atomizer*, equipped with background corrector and appropriate signal output device, such as video display screen, digital computer, printer or strip chart recorder, and autosampler. It is recommended that the instrument meet the following performance requirements after adjusting the instrument and optimizing the furnace heating program as described in Practice E1770.

7.1.1 The characteristic mass determined in accordance with Practice E1770 for antimony shall be less than 25 pg or within the manufacturer's tolerance.

7.1.2 The precision of the most concentrated blank addition solution shall not exceed 10 % of the mean absorbance of the same solution. The precision of the least concentrated blank addition solution (excluding Solution B₀) shall not exceed 4 % of the mean absorbance of the most concentrated blank addition solution when determined in accordance with Practice E1770.

7.1.3 The limit of detection of antimony as described in Practice E1770 shall be less than 20 pg.

7.1.4 Unless the instrument is provided with automatic curve correction circuitry, the graph linearity shall not be less than 0.95 when determined in accordance with Practice E1770.

7.2 *Graphite Tubes*, with pyrolytic coating and grooves for graphite platform, suitable for use with the graphite furnace unit.

7.3 *Graphite Platform*, pyrolytic graphite, L'vov design, to fit graphite tubes specified in 7.2.

7.4 *Labware*—To prevent contamination of the sample(s), all beakers, lids, volumetric flasks, and funnels must be cleaned with hot HNO₃ (1 + 1) before use.

8. Reagents

8.1 *Purity and Concentration of Reagents*—The purity and concentration of common chemical reagents shall conform to Practices E50. It is important that antimony shall not exceed 0.01 µg/mL in each of the reagents and 0.001 µg/mL in the water.

8.2 *Antimony Stock Solution (1 mL = 1 mg Sb)*—Dissolve 0.1000 g ± 0.0001 g high-purity antimony (minimum 99.9 % Sb) in 30 mL HCl + 5 mL HNO₃ in a 100-mL beaker. Boil gently to expel oxides of nitrogen. Cool and transfer the solution into a 100-mL volumetric flask. Dilute to mark with HNO₃ (1 + 1) and mix. Store in polypropylene or high density polyethylene bottle.

8.3 *Antimony Standard Solution (1 mL = 10 µg Sb)*—Transfer 1.0 mL of the antimony stock solution to a 100-mL volumetric flask, dilute to the mark with HNO₃ (1 + 1), and mix. Prepare this solution immediately before use.

9. Sampling and Sample Preparation

9.1 Refer to Practice E1806 for devices and practices to sample liquid and solid steel.

9.2 The sampling procedures shall not involve any steps or operations that can result in the loss of antimony in the sample.

NOTE 2—Arc melting of the sample or induction melting of the sample under vacuum may result in significant loss of several elements that have a low vapor pressure. Arc melting of the sample should be avoided and induction melting should be performed only in an at least partial inert atmosphere.

9.3 The laboratory sample shall be cleaned by first washing in acetone and air drying.

9.4 If brazed alloy tools are used in the preparation of the sample, the sample shall be further cleaned by pickling in diluted nitric acid for a few minutes. The sample shall then be washed several times with water, then several times with acetone and air dried.

10. Procedure

10.1 *Sample Mass*—For samples containing between 0.0005 % and 0.0050 % antimony, the sample mass shall be ≈1.00 g, weighed to the nearest 0.1 mg. For samples containing between 0.0050 % and 0.010 % antimony, the sample shall be ≈0.25 g weighed to the nearest 0.1 mg.

10.2 *Blank*—Simultaneously with the sample, a blank test using the same quantities of all reagents shall be performed. The antimony contents of the blank should be no greater than 10 ng/mL.

10.3 *Test Solution*—Transfer the test portion in accordance with 10.1 into a 250-mL beaker. Add 5 mL HCl and 50 mL HNO₃. Cover the beaker with a watch glass, heat gently until the reaction ceases, and boil for 1 min to remove the oxides of nitrogen.

10.3.1 If sample contains tungsten or niobium, or both, transfer the test portion to a 100-mL beaker and add 1 mL H₃PO₄, 15 mL HCl, and 5 mL HNO₃. Cover beaker with watch glass, and heat gently until reaction ceases. Evaporate the solution to 2 mL to 3 mL; then add 25 mL nitric acid. Boil for 1 min to remove oxides of nitrogen. Conduct a separate blank test corresponding to this procedure.

10.3.2 Allow the solution, which may contain carbides, to cool. Add about 15 mL water, filter through medium texture filter paper, and collect the filtrate in a 200-mL volumetric flask. Wash the filter paper several times with warm water and collect the washings in the flask. Dilute to the mark with water and mix.

10.4 *Test Addition Solutions*—Transfer separate 20.0-mL aliquots of the test solution into a series of five 100-mL volumetric flasks. Using a micropipette, inject the respective volumes of antimony standard solution indicated in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Test Addition Solutions

Name of Solution	Volume of Antimony Standard Solution Added, µL	Concentration of Antimony Added in Test Addition Solutions, ng/mL	Corresponding Mass of Antimony Added, ng	
			Volume Injected, 10 µL	Volume Injected, 50 µL
S ₀	0	0	0.0	0.0
S ₁	100	10	0.1	0.5
S ₂	200	20	0.2	1.0
S ₃	400	40	0.4	2.0
S ₄	500	50	0.5	2.5