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Standard Specification for Dimethyl Ether for Fuel Purposes¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This specification covers dimethyl ether (DME) for use as a fuel in engines specifically designed or modified for DME and for blending with liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). This specification is for use by manufacturers of dimethyl ether, by engine developers of purpose-built engines, in contracts for the purchase of DME for fuel purposes, and for the guidance of consumers of this type of fuel.

NOTE 1—The generation and dissipation of static electricity can create problems in the handling of DME. For more information on the subject, see Guide [D4865](#).

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. Units in parentheses are for information only.

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

- [D1265 Practice for Sampling Liquefied Petroleum \(LP\) Gases, Manual Method](#)
- [D1267 Test Method for Gage Vapor Pressure of Liquefied Petroleum \(LP\) Gases \(LP-Gas Method\)](#)
- [D1838 Test Method for Copper Strip Corrosion by Liquefied Petroleum \(LP\) Gases](#)
- [D2158 Test Method for Residues in Liquefied Petroleum \(LP\) Gases](#)
- [D2163 Test Method for Determination of Hydrocarbons in Liquefied Petroleum \(LP\) Gases and Propane/Propene Mixtures by Gas Chromatography](#)
- [D3700 Practice for Obtaining LPG Samples Using a Floating Piston Cylinder](#)

¹ This specification is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D02](#) on Petroleum Products, Liquid Fuels, and Lubricants and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D02.H0](#) on Liquefied Petroleum Gas.

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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.

- [D4865 Guide for Generation and Dissipation of Static Electricity in Petroleum Fuel Systems](#)
- [D6667 Test Method for Determination of Total Volatile Sulfur in Gaseous Hydrocarbons and Liquefied Petroleum Gases by Ultraviolet Fluorescence](#)
- [D6897 Test Method for Vapor Pressure of Liquefied Petroleum Gases \(LPG\) \(Expansion Method\)](#)
- [D7756 Test Method for Residues in Liquefied Petroleum \(LP\) Gases by Gas Chromatography with Liquid, On-Column Injection](#)
- [D7828 Test Method for Determination of Residue Composition in Liquefied Petroleum Gas \(LPG\) Using Automated Thermal Desorption/Gas Chromatography \(ATD/GC\)](#)

2.2 Other Documents:

- [NFPA 77 Recommended Practice on Static Electricity³](#)
- [ISO/DIS 17196 Dimethyl ether \(DME\) for fuels—Determination of impurities—Gas chromatographic method⁴](#)
- [ISO 17197 Dimethyl ether \(DME\) for fuels—Determination of water content—Karl Fischer titration method⁴](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 Abbreviations:

- 3.1.1 *DME*—dimethyl ether, the chemical compound (CH_3OCH_3).
- 3.1.2 *LPG*—liquefied petroleum gas.

4. Chemical Composition and Other Requirements

4.1 The DME fuel for purpose-built engines and for blending with liquefied petroleum gas shall conform to the requirements prescribed in [Table 1](#).

NOTE 2—Additional information on the physical and chemical properties of dimethyl ether, which are not considered necessary for fuel specification at this point, are in [Appendix X1](#) and are given for information of fuel suppliers, OEMs, and users.

4.2 The properties selected for limitation are those for which indications exist from experience with similar techniques and from initial engine developmental work that they are required for obtaining acceptable engine performance.

³ Available from National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169-7471, <http://www.nfpa.org>.

⁴ Available from International Organization for Standardization (ISO), 1, ch. de la Voie-Creuse, CP 56, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland, <http://www.iso.org>.

TABLE 1 Detailed Requirements for Dimethyl Ether for Fuel Purposes

Property	Test Method	Requirement
Dimethyl Ether, mass %, min. ^A	D2163	98.5
Methanol, mass %, max.	D2163	0.05
Water, mass %, max.	ISO 17197	0.03
Methyl Formate, mass %	D2163	report
Sulfur, mg / kg, max. ^B	D6667	3
Vapor Pressure, kPa (psig), at 37.8 °C (100 °F), max.	D1267, D6897	758 (110)
Corrosion, Copper Strip, at 37.8 °C (100 °F), max.	D1838	No. 1
Residue	D2158	
Residue on evaporation of 100 mL, mL, max.		0.05
Oil stain observation		pass

^AThe required minimum ensures that DME for fuel purposes will have a minimum estimated cetane number of 55.

^BThe sulfur limit does not include the sulfur from an odorant such as ethyl mercaptan that might be required by some regulatory agencies in some fuel applications. Note that addition of 1 pound of ethyl mercaptan per 10 000 US gallons will increase the sulfur content of DME by 14 milligrams sulfur per litre of DME or 21 milligrams sulfur per kilogram of DME.

4.3 The maximum vapor pressure limit shown in **Table 1** is given to limit any high vapor pressure components such as gases [CO and CO₂] and also to ensure that the same containers (tanks, tank cars, and rail cars) designed for LPG can be used for DME.

NOTE 3—It is expected that additional requirements for specifying dimethyl ether for fuel applications could be required as purpose-built engines and other applications develop for DME and DME – LPG blends, and such additional requirements would be balloted for inclusion into this specification, based on need and technical data.

5. Workmanship, Finish, and Appearance

5.1 DME for fuel use in engines designed for DME and for blending with liquefied petroleum gas shall have a colorless appearance and not contain any components or contaminants that would be detrimental to the intended use of the material.

6. Sampling

6.1 Review all intended test methods prior to sampling to understand the importance and effects of sampling technique, proper containers, and special handling required for each test method.

6.2 Samples shall be representative of the batch of product and shall be collected from an appropriate storage container (typically an aboveground storage tank) or pipeline by a suitable sampling procedure such as Practice **D1265** or Practice **D3700**.

6.3 *Sample Size*—A minimum of 1 litre is recommended.

6.3.1 Follow the same safety procedures when sampling DME as when sampling LPG, and leave an ullage space of at least 20 % in a high pressure sampling cylinder.

7. Test Methods

7.1 The requirements of this specification shall be determined in accordance with the methods listed below. The scopes of some of the test methods listed below do not include dimethyl ether. Refer to the listed test methods to determine applicability or required modifications for use with dimethyl ether. The precision of these test methods can differ from the reported precisions when testing dimethyl ether.

7.2 *Composition*—Test Method **D2163**.

7.2.1 Laboratory experience has shown that Test Method **D2163** requires the use of a 150 metre methyl silicone column in order to analyze samples of DME.

7.3 *Water*—ISO 17197.

7.4 *Sulfur*—Test Method **D6667** should be used for sulfur determination.

7.5 *Vapor Pressure*—Test Methods **D1267** and **D6897** may be used for vapor pressure determination. In case of dispute, Test Method **D1267** shall be the referee test method.

7.6 *Corrosion*—Test Method **D1838**.

7.7 *Residue*—Test Method **D2158**.

8. Keywords

8.1 dimethyl ether; DME

APPENDICES

(Nonmandatory Information)

X1. PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL PROPERTIES OF DIMETHYL ETHER

X1.1 A selection of physical and chemical properties of dimethyl ether, as outlined in **Table X1.1**, has been assembled from a variety of sources. These are believed to be the best available data. The table will be updated as new or more reliable data is developed.

X1.2 Additional information on the properties of dimethyl

ether can be found in the “DME Handbook Supplement” [English Edition] [ISBN 978-4-9903839-1-6], published October, 2011.⁵

⁵ Available from Japan DME Forum (JDF), 3F Shinsei Bldg. 6-5-5, Shinbashi, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-0004. Tel: +81-3-5403-0035, Fax: +81-3-5403-0038, Email: info@dmeforum.jp, Website: www.dmeforum.jp/