



Designation: F1307 – 14

# Standard Test Method for Oxygen Transmission Rate Through Dry Packages Using a Coulometric Sensor<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation F1307; 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 reappraisal. A superscript epsilon ( $\epsilon$ ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reappraisal.

## 1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers a procedure for the determination of the steady-state rate of transmission of oxygen gas into packages. More specifically, the method is applicable to packages that in normal use will enclose a dry environment.

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the 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>2</sup>

D1434 Test Method for Determining Gas Permeability Characteristics of Plastic Film and Sheet

D1898 Practice for Sampling of Plastics (Withdrawn 1998)<sup>3</sup>

D3985 Test Method for Oxygen Gas Transmission Rate Through Plastic Film and Sheet Using a Coulometric Sensor

E691 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method

## 3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.1.1 *oxygen gas transmission rate (O<sub>2</sub>GTR)*—as applied to a package, is the quantity of oxygen gas passing through the surface of the package (PKG) per unit of time.

3.1.1.1 *Discussion*—The SI unit of transmission rate is the

mol/s. The test conditions, including temperature, oxygen partial pressure and humidity on both sides of the package, must be stated. A commonly used unit of O<sub>2</sub>GTR is the cm<sup>3</sup>(STP)/(PKG·d), where 1 cm<sup>3</sup> at Standard Temperature and Pressure (STP = 273.15K; 1.013 × 10<sup>5</sup> Pa) is 44.62 × 10<sup>-6</sup> mol and one day is 86 400 s.

3.1.2 *oxygen permeability coefficient (P'O<sub>2</sub>)*—the product of the permeance and thickness of the barrier.

3.1.2.1 *Discussion*—The permeability is meaningful only for homogenous materials, in which case it is a property characteristic of the bulk material. This quantity should not be used unless the relationship between thickness and permeance has been verified in tests using several thicknesses of the material. The SI unit of permeability is the mol/(m·s·Pa). The test conditions must be stated.

3.1.3 *oxygen permeance (PO<sub>2</sub>)*—the ratio of the O<sub>2</sub>GTR to the difference between the partial pressure of O<sub>2</sub> on the two sides of the package wall.

3.1.3.1 *Discussion*—The SI unit of permeance is the mol/(s·Pa). The test conditions (see 4.2) must be stated.

## 4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 This test method employs a coulometric oxygen sensor and associated equipment in an arrangement similar to that described in Test Method D3985. Oxygen gas transmission rate (O<sub>2</sub>GTR) is determined after the package has been mounted on a test fixture and has equilibrated in the test environment.

4.2 The package is mounted in such a way as to provide that the inside of the package is slowly purged by a stream of nitrogen while the outside of the package is exposed to a known concentration of oxygen. The package may be exposed in ambient room air which contains 20.8 % oxygen, or immersed in an atmosphere of 100 % oxygen. As oxygen permeates through the package walls into the nitrogen carrier gas, it is transported to the coulometric detector where it produces an electrical current, the magnitude of which is proportional to the amount of oxygen flowing into the detector per unit of time.

## 5. Significance and Use

5.1 Oxygen gas transmission rate is an important determinant of the protection afforded by barrier materials. It is not, however, the sole determinant, and additional tests, based on

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<sup>2</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.

<sup>3</sup> The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.

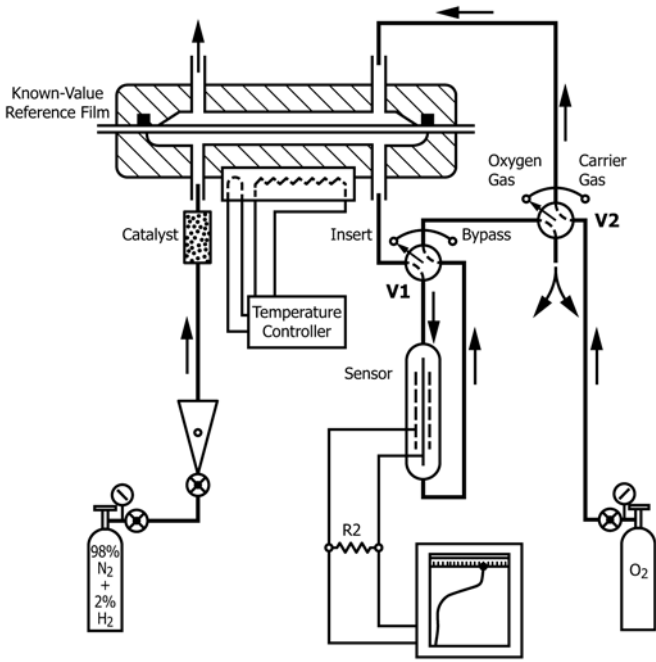


FIG. 1 Arrangement of Components when Reference Film is Used to Calibrate System for Package Testing

experience, must be used to correlate package performance with O<sub>2</sub>GTR. This test method is suitable as a referee method of testing, provided that the user and source have agreed on sampling procedures, standardization procedures, test conditions, and acceptance criteria.

## 6. Interferences

6.1 The presence of certain interfering substances in the carrier gas stream may give rise to unwanted electrical outputs and error factors. Interfering substances include free chlorine and some strong oxidizing agents. Exposure to carbon dioxide should also be minimized to avoid damage to the sensor through reaction with the potassium hydroxide electrolyte.

## 7. Apparatus

7.1 *Oxygen Gas Transmission Apparatus*, as diagrammed in Fig. 1 with the following:

7.1.1 *Package Test Stations*, providing a means for the introduction and exhaust of the nitrogen carrier gas stream without significant loss or leakage.

7.1.1.1 Experience has shown that arrangements using multiple package test stations are a practical way to increase the number of measurements that can be obtained from a coulometric sensor. A valving manifold connects the carrier gas side of each individual test station to the sensor in a predetermined pattern. Carrier gas is continually purging the carrier gas sides of those packages that are not connected to the sensor. Either test gas (100 % oxygen) or normal room air (20.8 % oxygen), whichever is appropriate, contacts the outside of the package.

7.1.2 *Diffusion Cell*, consisting of two metal halves which, when closed upon the film used for system calibration, will accurately define a circular area of that film. Typical diffusion cell areas are 100 cm<sup>2</sup> and 30 cm<sup>2</sup>. The volumes inside the cell

above and below the enclosed film are not critical; they should be small enough to allow for rapid gas exchange, but not so small that an unsupported film which happens to sag or bulge will contact the top or bottom of the cell. Means shall be provided for the measurement of cell temperature.

7.1.2.1 *O-Ring*—An appropriately sized groove, machined into the oxygen (or test gas) side of the diffusion cell, retains a neoprene O-ring. The test area is considered to be the area established by the inside contact diameter of the compressed O-ring when the diffusion cell is clamped shut against the test specimen. The area, A, can be obtained by measuring the inside diameter of the imprint left by the O-ring on the specimen after it has been removed from the diffusion cell.

7.1.2.2 The nitrogen (or carrier gas) side of the diffusion cell shall have a flat raised rim. Since this rim is the sealing surface against which the test specimen is pressed, it must be smooth and flat, without scratches which may promote leakage.

7.1.2.3 *Diffusion Cell Pneumatic Fittings*—Each half of the diffusion cell shall incorporate suitable fittings for the introduction and exhaust of gas without significant loss or leakage.

7.1.2.4 It is desirable to thermostatically control the diffusion cell. A simple resistive heater, attached to the carrier gas side of the cell in such a manner as to ensure good thermal contact, is adequate for this purpose. A thermistor sensor and an appropriate control circuit will serve to regulate the cell temperature unless measurements are being made close to ambient temperature. In this case, it is desirable to provide cooling coils to remove some of the heat.

7.1.3 *Catalyst Bed*, a small metal tube with fittings for attachment to the inlet of the nitrogen gas pneumatic fitting containing 3 to 5 g of 0.5 % platinum or palladium catalyst on alumina to provide an essentially oxygen-free carrier gas to the diffusion cell and to each package test station.

7.1.4 *Flowmeter*, a flowmeter having an operating range of 5 to 100 mL/min is required to monitor the flow rate of nitrogen carrier gas through each test station.

7.1.5 *Flow Switching Valves*—Two or more valves for the switching of the nitrogen and test gas flow streams.

7.1.6 *Oxygen-Sensitive Coulometric Sensor*, operating at an essentially constant efficiency is employed to monitor the quantity of oxygen transmitted.

7.1.7 *Load Resistor*—The current generated by the coulometric cell shall pass through a resistive load across which the output voltage is measured. Typical values for load resistors are such that the values yield a convenient relationship between the output voltage and the oxygen transmission rate as expressed in terms of cm<sup>3</sup>(STP)/PKG-d.

7.1.8 *Voltage Recorder*—The voltage across the load resistor is measured and recorded using a strip-chart potentiometer, data-logger or other suitable device. The instrument or system should be able to measure a full-scale voltage of 50 mV. It should be able to measure voltages as low as 0.10 mV with a resolution of at least 10 μV. An input impedance of 5000 ohm or higher is acceptable.

## 8. Reagents and Materials

8.1 *Nitrogen Carrier Gas*, consisting of a nitrogen and hydrogen mixture in which the percentage of hydrogen shall

fall between 0.5 and 3.0 volume percent. The carrier gas shall be dry and contain not more than 100 ppm of oxygen. A commercially available mixture known as “forming gas” is suitable.

8.2 *Sealing Grease*—A high-viscosity silicone stopcock grease or a high-vacuum grease is required for sealing the calibration film in the diffusion cell.

8.3 *Oxygen Test Gas*—The test gas shall be dry and contain not less than 99.5 % oxygen (except as provided for in 14.8).

## 9. Technical Precautions

9.1 Extended use of the test unit with no moisture in the gas stream may result in a noticeable decrease in output and response time from the sensor (equivalent to an increase in the calibration factor,  $Q$ ). This condition is due to drying out of the sensor.

9.2 Temperature is a critical parameter affecting the measurement of  $O_2$ GTR. Careful temperature control can help to minimize variations due to temperature fluctuations. During testing, monitor and record the temperature, periodically, to the nearest  $0.5^\circ\text{C}$ . Report the average temperature and the range of temperatures found during a test.

9.3 The sensor will require a relatively long time to stabilize at a low reading characteristic of a good barrier after it has been used to test a barrier such as low-density polyethylene. For this reason, materials of comparable gas transmission qualities should be tested together.

9.4 Back diffusion of air into the unit is undesirable. Take care, therefore, to ensure that there is a flow of nitrogen through the system at all times. This flow can be low when the instrument is not being used.

9.5 The gas-permeability characteristics of some barrier materials are altered by exposure to water vapor. If a package is to be exposed and tested in normal laboratory air (20.8 %  $O_2$ ), the ambient relative humidity should be monitored to the nearest 3 %. This may be accomplished using a sling psychrometer or other method of comparable accuracy. Report the average and range of relative humidities measured during the test.

## 10. Sampling

10.1 The sampling units used for the determination of  $O_2$ GTR shall be representative of the quantity of product for which the data are required, in accordance with Practice D1898.

## 11. Test Specimens

11.1 Test packages shall be representative of the population and shall be free of non-typical defects.

## 12. Calibration

12.1 *General Approach*—The oxygen sensor used in this method is a coulometric device that yields a linear output as predicted by Faraday’s Law. Since this sensor has an efficiency of 95 to 98 % it is almost an absolute “yardstick” that does not require calibration. Experience has shown, however, that under

some circumstances the sensor may become depleted or damaged to the extent that efficiency and response are impaired. For this reason, the method incorporates means for periodic system calibration. This calibration is derived from measurements of a known-value “Reference Package.”

12.2 The reference package is essentially the lower-half of a diffusion cell (Fig. 1) in which a sheet of reference film of known  $O_2$ GTR has been sealed and clamped. This creates a “package” into which oxygen will diffuse at a known rate.

12.3 *Assembling the Reference Package*—Ensure the sensor is bypassed to avoid swamping it with air, that is, no flow to the sensor. Unclamp the diffusion cell and open it. Apply a thin layer of sealing grease (see 8.2) around the raised rim of the lower half of the diffusion cell. Insert the reference film in the diffusion cell and place it upon the greased surface, taking care to avoid wrinkles or creases. Lower the upper half of the diffusion cell into place and clamp both halves tightly together.

12.4 *Purging the System*—Start the nitrogen carrier gas flow and purge air from the upper and lower diffusion cell chambers using a flow rate of 50 to 60  $\text{cm}^3/\text{min}$  (as indicated by the flowmeter). After 3 or 4 min, reduce the flow rate to the desired value between 5 and 15  $\text{cm}^3/\text{min}$ . Maintain this configuration for 30 min.

12.5 *Establishing Zero Level of Reference Film*—After the system has been flushed with nitrogen for 30 min, with the sensor bypassed, divert the nitrogen carrier gas flow to the sensor. At this time the sensor output, as displayed on the voltage recorder, will usually increase abruptly, indicating that oxygen is entering the sensor with the carrier gas. The most likely sources of this oxygen are (1) outgassing of the sample, (2) leaks in the system, or (3) a combination of (1) and (2). The operator shall observe the recorder trace until the sensor output current stabilizes at a constant low value with no significant trend in either direction. Note the observed deflection of the strip chart recorder at this time and label it  $E_0$ .

12.6 Once the zero level ( $E_0$ ) has been established, switch to a flow of oxygen on the test gas side of the diffusion cell. Nitrogen will continue to flow on the downstream side of the cell.

12.7 *Establishing a Steady-State  $O_2$ GTR*—The sensor output, as displayed by the strip-chart recorder, should increase and gradually level off, approaching a constant value ( $E_c$ ). Record the observed final steady-state value of  $E_c$ .

12.8 *Temperature of the Reference Film*—It is desirable that system calibration should be conducted at the temperature for which the reference film’s  $O_2$ GTR is cited. Apply an appropriate correction to the rate that the temperature differs from that value. Temperature shall be obtained by monitoring thermometers or thermocouples placed in the thermometer wells on both sides of the reference film. The film temperature may be assumed to be midway between the two values.

12.9 *Standby Procedure*—At the conclusion of system calibration, but when it is expected that package tests will be performed soon, the instrument should be placed in a standby condition by taking the following steps: (1) stop the flow of  $O_2$  test gas to the sensor, and switch to nitrogen carrier gas on the