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Standard Test Method for Total Mercury in Crude Oil Using Combustion and Direct Cold Vapor Atomic Absorption Method with Zeeman Background Correction¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D7622; 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.

^{ε1} NOTE—Added missing “C” variable throughout editorially in November 2010.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the procedure to determine the total mercury content in a sample of crude oil. This test method can be used for total mercury determination in natural and processed liquid and oil products (gasoline, naphtha, etc.).

1.2 This test method may be applied to samples containing between ~~5.05.0 ng/mL~~ to ~~350350 ng/mL~~ ng/mL of mercury. The results may be converted to mass basis.

1.3 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard.

1.4 **WARNING**—Mercury has been designated by many regulatory agencies as a hazardous material that can cause central nervous system, kidney and liver damage. Mercury, or its vapor, may be hazardous to health and corrosive to materials. Caution should be taken when handling mercury and mercury containing products. See the applicable product Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for details and EPA’s website—<http://www.epa.gov/mercury/faq.htm>—for additional information. Users should be aware that selling mercury and/or mercury containing products into your state or country may be prohibited by law.

1.5 *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](#)

[D4057 Practice for Manual Sampling of Petroleum and Petroleum Products](#)

[D4175 Terminology Relating to Petroleum, Petroleum Products, and Lubricants](#)

[D4177 Practice for Automatic Sampling of Petroleum and Petroleum Products](#)

[D6299 Practice for Applying Statistical Quality Assurance and Control Charting Techniques to Evaluate Analytical Measurement System Performance](#)

[D6300 Practice for Determination of Precision and Bias Data for Use in Test Methods for Petroleum Products and Lubricants](#)

[D6792 Practice for Quality System in Petroleum Products and Lubricants Testing Laboratories](#)

[D7482 Practice for Sampling, Storage, and Handling of Hydrocarbons for Mercury Analysis](#)

[D7623 Test Method for Total Mercury in Crude Oil Using Combustion-Gold Amalgamation and Cold Vapor Atomic Absorption Method](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 For definitions of terms used in this test method, refer to Terminology [D4175](#).

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D02](#) on Petroleum Products—Products, Liquid Fuels, and Lubricants and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D02.03](#) on Elemental 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.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Controlled heating following thermal decomposition of the analysis sample in air is used to liberate mercury. The sample is placed into the sample boat, which is inserted in the first chamber of the atomizer, where the sample is heated at controlled temperature at ~~300~~300 °C to ~~500~~500 °C (depending on the selected operation mode). The mercury compounds are evaporated and partially dissociated forming elemental mercury vapor. Mercury and all decomposition products are carried to the second chamber of the atomizer heated to about ~~700~~700 °C to ~~750~~750 °C (mercury reduction takes place on the surface of heating NiCr coil, thus no catalyst is required). Mercury compounds are totally dissociated, and the organic matrix of the sample is burnt out. Continuously flowing air carries mercury and other combustion products through absorbance analytical cell heated up to ~~750~~750 °C positioned in the light path of double-wave cold vapor Zeeman atomic absorption spectrophotometer. The mercury resonance line ~~253.65 nm~~253.65 nm is split to several components, one of those falling within the mercury absorbance line (analytical line) profile and another one lying outside (reference line). Difference between the intensities of these compounds is proportional to number of mercury atoms in the analytical cell. Absorbance peak area or peak height is a function of the mercury concentration.

NOTE 1—Mercury and mercury salts can be volatilized at low temperatures. Precautions against inadvertent mercury loss should be taken when using this test method.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 The emission of mercury during crude oil refining is an environmental concern. The emission of mercury may also contaminate refined products and form amalgams with metals, such as aluminum.

5.2 When representative test portions are analyzed according to this procedure, the total mercury is representative of concentrations in the sample.

6. Apparatus

6.1 General configuration of the instrument shall have the following functional components: temperature controlled sample heating and decomposition furnace, measuring cuvettes, mercury lamp placed in strong magnetic field, polarization modulator to separate analytical and reference lines, and detector. The following requirements are specified for all approved instruments.³

NOTE 2—The approval of an instrument with respect to these functions is paramount to this test method, since such approval tacitly provides approval of both the materials and the procedures used with the system to provide these functions.

6.1.1 *Zeeman Mercury Spectrometer*—Atomic absorption spectrometer with Zeeman background correction, operating with the mercury resonance absorption wavelength of 253.7 nm.

6.1.2 The atomizer shall have a decomposition tube, which shall be operated at a temperature high enough to completely decompose the sample. The suggested operating temperature is at least ~~600~~600 °C.

6.1.3 The heated analytical cell shall be capable to prevent mercury losses due to deposition to cold parts and to prevent mercury recombination with chlorine. The suggested operating temperature of the analytical cell is at least ~~700~~700 °C.

6.1.4 The system may contain a computer for controlling the various operations of the apparatus, for recording data, and for reporting results.

6.2 *Analytical Balance*, with a sensitivity of ~~0.1 mg~~0.1 mg.

6.3 *Sample Boats*, quartz, stainless steel, porcelain, or other material as recommended and convenient size suitable for use in the instrument being used.

6.4 *Micropipetters*, one or more units of variable volume to cover a range from ~~10~~10 μL to ~~250~~250 μL , NIST traceable. Appropriately sized tips should also be available.

6.5 *Ultrasonic Homogenizer*—A bath-type ultrasonic homogenizer is used to dissociate particulate mercury and thoroughly mix the sample.

6.6 *Glassware*, volumetric flasks of various capacities and Class A pipettes of various capacities. All glassware must be thoroughly cleaned with freshly prepared, 10 % nitric acid solution and rinsed with water. It is recommended that dedicated glassware be maintained to minimize cross-contamination.

7. Sample

7.1 Obtain the analysis sample of crude oil in accordance with Practice [D4057](#) or [D4177](#). Crude oil should be collected in a manner that ensures a representative of the bulk container is obtained.

7.2 To prevent loss of mercury during storage and handling of samples, follow Practice [D7482](#). Samples should not be collected in metal containers. Precleaned, glass volatile organic analysis (VOA) vials have been found to be suitable for this purpose.

³ The sole source of supply of the apparatus known to the committee at this time is Lumex model RA 195 available from Ohio Lumex Company, 9263 Ravenna Road, Unit A-3, Twinsburg, OH 44087. If you are aware of alternative suppliers, please provide this information to ASTM International Headquarters. Your comments will receive careful consideration at a meeting of the responsible technical committee,¹ which you may attend.

7.3 Samples should be analyzed as quickly as possible after collection. Sample containers should be kept tightly capped and stored in a cool location.

8. Reagents and Materials

8.1 *Purity of Reagents*—Reagent grade chemicals shall be used in all tests. Unless otherwise indicated, it is intended that all reagents conform to the specifications of the Committee on Analytical Reagents of the American Chemical Society where such specifications are available.⁴ Other grades may be used, provided it is first ascertained that the reagent is of sufficiently high purity to permit use without lessening the accuracy of the determination.

8.2 *Purity of Water*—Unless otherwise indicated, reference to water shall be understood to mean reagent water conforming to Type II of Specification **D1193**. Water must be checked for potential mercury contamination before use.

8.3 A standard sample of mercury ions solution (concentration $C_1 = \cancel{1.0} \underline{1.0} \text{ g/g/L}$).

8.4 *Certified Reference Materials (CRMs)*—Use Certified Reference Material (CRM) crude oils with mercury values for which confidence limits are issued by a recognized certifying agency such as the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

8.5 *Nitric Acid*, concentrated, Trace Metal Grade or better.

8.6 *Combustion Reagents*, activated charcoal, 30 × 50 mesh.

8.7 *Potassium Dichromate Solution, 4 % (mass)*—Place a 4 g portion of potassium dichromate in a volumetric flask (volume of ~~100 mL~~, 100 mL), dissolve in distilled water and dilute with the distilled water up to the mark. The solution is to be stored in a reservoir made of dark glass with a plug stopper. Storage time is ~~3 months~~ 3 months.

8.8 *Dilution Solution*—Place ~~500~~ 500 mL to ~~600 mL~~ 600 mL of distilled water in a heat-resistant glass and pour in carefully ~~50 mL~~ 50 mL of concentrated nitric acid ($d = 1.37 \text{ g/mL}$). Stir constantly while pouring in the acid. Transfer to a volumetric flask of ~~1000 mL~~ 1000 mL volume, add ~~5 mL~~ 5 mL of 4 % potassium dichromate solution and add up with distilled water up to the mark. The solution is to be stored in a reservoir made of dark glass with a plug stopper. Storage time is ~~3 months~~ 3 months.

8.9 All CRMs, reference crude oils, or calibrating agents shall have precision values of less than or equal to method repeatability. Such CRMs, reference crude oils, or calibrating agents must be stable and must be mixed thoroughly before each use.

9. Preparation of Standards

9.1 *Working Standard Set*—Prepare a set of standards that are appropriate to the range settings on the instrument in use. An example of such a set follows:

9.1.1 Place 30 mL of a dilution solution in a volumetric flask (~~100 mL~~ (100 mL volume)). Then place ~~2 mL~~ 2 mL of a standard sample of mercury ions NIST or other standard reference material issuing bodies' traceable standard solution (concentration $C_1 = \cancel{1.0} \underline{1.0} \text{ g/g/L}$). Bring the contents of the volumetric flask up to the mark with the dilution solution and stir thoroughly. This results in a mercury concentration of ~~2020 mg/L~~ 2020 mg/L (C_2). The solution may be stored in a refrigerator during ~~6 months~~ 6 months.

9.1.2 Place 30 mL of a dilution solution in a volumetric flask (~~100 mL~~ (100 mL volume)). Then place ~~10 mL~~ 10 mL of a standard sample of mercury solution $C_2 = \cancel{2020} \underline{2020} \text{ mg/L}$. Bring the contents of the retort up to the mark with the dilution solution and stir thoroughly. This makes a ~~22 mg/L~~ 22 mg/L = ~~2000~~ 2000 $\mu\text{g/L}$ (C_3). The solution may be stored in a refrigerator during 3 months.

9.1.3 Place ~~30 mL~~ 30 mL of a dilution solution in a volumetric flask (~~100 mL~~ (100 mL volume)). Then place ~~10 mL~~ 10 mL of a standard sample of mercury solution $C_3 = \cancel{2.02} \underline{2.02} \text{ mg/L}$. Bring the contents of the retort up to the mark with the dilution solution and stir thoroughly. This makes a ~~200~~ 200 $\mu\text{g/L}$ (C_4). The solution may be stored in a refrigerator during ~~3 months~~ 3 months.

9.1.4 Place ~~30 mL~~ 30 mL of a dilution solution in a volumetric flask (~~100 mL~~ (100 mL volume)). Then place ~~10 mL~~ 10 mL of a standard sample of mercury solution $C_4 = \cancel{200} \underline{200} \mu\text{g/L}$. Bring the contents of the retort up to the mark with the dilution solution and stir thoroughly. This makes a ~~2020~~ 2020 $\mu\text{g/L}$ (C_5). The solution may be stored in a refrigerator during ~~1 month~~ 1 month.

NOTE 3—The standard preparation procedure given in Test Method **D7623** is also acceptable.

10. Instrument Preparation

10.1 Assemble the instrument and check for leaks in the system in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Follow the instrument manufacturer's recommended procedure to optimize the performance of the instrument.

⁴ *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.