



Designation: ~~D3238 – 95 (Reapproved 2010)~~ **D3238 – 95 (Reapproved 2015)**

## Standard Test Method for Calculation of Carbon Distribution and Structural Group Analysis of Petroleum Oils by the n-d-M Method<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D3238; 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 test method covers the calculation of the carbon distribution and ring content (**Note 1**) of olefin-free petroleum oils from measurements of refractive index, density, and molecular weight (n-d-M).<sup>2</sup> This test method should not be applied to oils whose compositions are outside the following ranges:

1.1.1 *In terms of carbon distribution*—up to 75 % carbon atoms in ring structure; percentage in aromatic rings not larger than 1.5 times the percentage in naphthenic rings.

1.1.2 *In terms of ring content*—up to four rings per molecule with not more than half of them aromatic. A correction must be applied for oils containing significant quantities of sulfur.

NOTE 1—The composition of complex petroleum fractions is often expressed in terms of the proportions of aromatic rings ( $R_A$ ), naphthene rings ( $R_N$ ), and paraffin chains ( $C_p$ ) that would comprise a hypothetical mean molecule. Alternatively, the composition may be expressed in terms of a carbon distribution, that is, the percentage of the total number of carbon atoms that are present in aromatic ring structures (%  $C_A$ ), naphthene ring structures (%  $C_N$ ), and paraffin chains (%  $C_p$ ).

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. The values 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:*<sup>3</sup>

[D1218 Test Method for Refractive Index and Refractive Dispersion of Hydrocarbon Liquids](#)

[D1480 Test Method for Density and Relative Density \(Specific Gravity\) of Viscous Materials by Bingham Pycnometer](#)

[D1481 Test Method for Density and Relative Density \(Specific Gravity\) of Viscous Materials by Lipkin Bicapillary Pycnometer](#)

[D1552 Test Method for Sulfur in Petroleum Products by High Temperature Combustion and IR Detection](#)

[D2502 Test Method for Estimation of Mean Relative Molecular Mass of Petroleum Oils from Viscosity Measurements](#)

[D2503 Test Method for Relative Molecular Mass \(Molecular Weight\) of Hydrocarbons by Thermoelectric Measurement of Vapor Pressure](#)

[D2622 Test Method for Sulfur in Petroleum Products by Wavelength Dispersive X-ray Fluorescence Spectrometry](#)

### 3. Summary of Test Method

3.1 The refractive index and density of the oil are determined at ~~20°C~~ 20°C. The molecular weight is determined experimentally or estimated from measurements of viscosity at ~~37.837.8 °C~~ and ~~98.89°C~~ 37.8°C and 98.9°C (~~100°F~~ and ~~210°F~~) 100°F and 210°F). These data are then used to calculate the carbon distribution (%  $C_A$ , %  $C_N$ , %  $C_p$ ) or the ring analysis ( $R_A$ ,  $R_N$ ) using the appropriate set of equations.

### 4. Significance and Use

4.1 The carbon distribution and ring content serve to express the gross composition of the heavier fractions of petroleum. These data can be used as an adjunct to the bulk properties in monitoring the manufacture of lubricating oil base stocks by distillation,

<sup>1</sup> 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 [D02.04.0K](#) on Correlative Methods.

Current edition approved Oct. 1, 2015. Published November 2015. Originally approved in 1973. Last previous edition approved in 2005 ~~2010~~ as ~~D3238-95(2005)~~ D3238-95 (2010). DOI: ~~10.1520/D3238-95R10~~ 10.1520/D3238-95R15.

<sup>2</sup> Van Nes, K., and van Westen, H. A., *Aspects of the Constitution of Mineral Oils*, Elsevier, New York, 1951.

<sup>3</sup> For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org), or contact ASTM Customer Service at [service@astm.org](mailto:service@astm.org). For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.