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## Standard Guide for Interlaboratory Studies for Microbiological Test Methods<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D7847; 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 (ε) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reappraisal.

<sup>ε1</sup> NOTE—Subsection 1.2 and Section 4 were corrected editorially in March 2015.

### INTRODUCTION

Microbiological parameters present a number of unique challenges relative to chemical and physical test methods apropos of the development of precision and bias terms. A number of these challenges are discussed in Guide **E1326**. As a working group (WG) we first grappled directly with some of these issues during the development of Practice **D6974**. The drafts balloted at the D02.14 subcommittee level in February and June 2002, were balloted with the document identified as a Method. Moreover, the proposed Method was drafted as a harmonized document with the Energy Institute's (EI) Method IP 385. When the item was balloted at D02 level, members of D02.94 compelled us to change the title from Method to Practice. The argument was that ASTM Methods list single series of steps that lead to a measurable result (a bit of data; quantitative, semi-quantitative or qualitative). Because **D6974** provides for the selection of different sample volumes (based on the estimated culturable population density) and different growth media (based on the sub-population to be quantified), it would only be accepted as an ASTM Practice; not a Method. This issue of performing interlaboratory studies for culture methods will be discussed below.

Since Practice **D6974** was approved, ~~two~~<sup>four</sup> microbiological ~~Methods~~ test methods have been approved by ASTM: ~~Method **D7463** and Method **D7687**. Although both methods measure adenosine triphosphate (ATP) in fuel and fuel-associated water samples the method of obtaining the sample differs; ASTM **D7463** **D7978** uses a liquid to liquid extraction whereas ASTM **D7687** **D8070** uses filtration.~~

Because these methods measure the concentration of a biomarker ~~molecule~~, molecule or microorganisms, the issues that are relevant to ILS are similar to, but somewhat different than those that affect ILS for culture methods. Beckers<sup>2</sup> investigated microbiological test method ILS; interlaboratory studies, but advised several measures that are either impractical for or not relevant to the methods that have been developed within D02: (1) Freeze inoculated samples after dispensing into portions for shipment to participating labs; (2) Use a single organisms challenge; (3) Add the challenge microbe to a sample matrix in which it is likely to proliferate.

This guide will list key issues that must be addressed when designing ILS for Methods intended to measure the microbial properties of fuels and fuel-associated waters.

### 1. Scope-Scope\*

1.1 Microbiological test methods present challenges that are unique relative to chemical or physical parameters, because microbes proliferate, die off and continue to be metabolically active in samples after those samples have been drawn from their source.

1.1.1 Microbial activity depends on the presence of available water. Consequently, the detection and quantification of microbial contamination in fuels and lubricants is made more complicated by the general absence of available water from these fluids.

<sup>1</sup> This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee **D02** on Petroleum Products, Liquid Fuels, and Lubricants and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee **D02.14** on Stability and Cleanliness of Liquid Fuels.

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<sup>2</sup> Beckers, H. J., "Precision Testing of Standardized Microbiological Methods," *Journal of Testing and Evaluation*, JTEVA, Vol. 14, No. 6, November 1986, pp. 318-320-320.

\*A Summary of Changes section appears at the end of this standard

1.1.2 Detectability depends on the physiological state and taxonomic profile of microbes in samples. These two parameters are affected by various factors that are discussed in this guide, and contribute to microbial data variability.

1.2 This guide addresses the unique considerations that must be accounted for in the design and execution of interlaboratory studies intended to determine the precision of microbiological test methods designed to quantify microbial contamination in fuels, lubricants and similar low water-content (water activity <0.8) fluids.

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.*

1.4 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

## 2. Referenced Documents

### 2.1 ASTM Standards:<sup>3</sup>

**D156** Test Method for Saybolt Color of Petroleum Products (Saybolt Chromometer Method)

**D1129** Terminology Relating to Water

**D4012** Test Method for Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP) Content of Microorganisms in Water

**D4175** Terminology Relating to Petroleum Products, Liquid Fuels, and Lubricants

**D6300** Practice for Determination of Precision and Bias Data for Use in Test Methods for Petroleum Products and Lubricants

**D6469** Guide for Microbial Contamination in Fuels and Fuel Systems

**D6974** Practice for Enumeration of Viable Bacteria and Fungi in Liquid Fuels—Filtration and Culture Procedures

**D7463** Test Method for Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP) Content of Microorganisms in Fuel, Fuel/Water Mixtures, and Fuel Associated Water

**D7464** Practice for Manual Sampling of Liquid Fuels, Associated Materials and Fuel System Components for Microbiological Testing

**D7687** Test Method for Measurement of Cellular Adenosine Triphosphate in Fuel and Fuel-associated Water With Sample Concentration by Filtration

**D7978** Test Method for Determination of the Viable Aerobic Microbial Content of Fuels and Associated Water—Thixotropic Gel Culture Method

**D8070** Test Method for Screening of Fuels and Fuel Associated Aqueous Specimens for Microbial Contamination by Lateral Flow Immunoassay

**E1259** Practice for Evaluation of Antimicrobials in Liquid Fuels Boiling Below 390°C

**E1326** Guide for Evaluating Non-culture Microbiological Tests

**E1601** Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Evaluate the Performance of an Analytical Method

**E2756** Terminology Relating to Antimicrobial and Antiviral Agents

### 2.2 Energy Institute Standard:<sup>4</sup>

**IP 385** Viable aerobic microbial content of fuels and fuel components boiling below 90°C—Filtration and culture method

## 3. Terminology

3.1 For definition of terms used in this guide refer to Terminologies **D1129**, **D4175** and **E2756**, and Guide **D6469**.

### 3.2 Definitions:

3.2.1 *free water, n*—water in excess of that soluble in the sample and appearing in the sample as a haze or cloudiness, as droplets, or as a separated phase or layer. **D156**

3.2.2 *specific concentration, n*—the fraction of a cell constituent as determined on a per cell basis.

<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.

<sup>4</sup> Available from Energy Institute, 61 New Cavendish St., London, W1G 7AR, U.K., <http://www.energyinst.org.uk>.

### 3.2.2.1 Discussion—

The specific concentration can be expressed as weight to weight, weight to volume or volume to volume basis. Enzymes are commonly reported in terms of their activity relative to a reference standard.

### 3.3 Acronyms:

3.3.1 *ATP*—adenosine triphosphate