



International
Standard

ISO 19581

**Measurement of radioactivity —
Gamma emitting radionuclides
— Rapid screening method using
scintillation detector gamma-ray
spectrometry**

*Mesurage de la radioactivité — Radionucléides émetteurs
gamma — Méthode d'essai de dépistage par spectrométrie
gamma utilisant des détecteurs par scintillation*

**Second edition
2025-09**

ISO 19581:2025

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Published in Switzerland

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 85, *Nuclear energy, nuclear technologies, and radiological protection*, Subcommittee SC 2, *Radiological protection*, in collaboration with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Technical Committee CEN/TC 430, *Nuclear energy, nuclear technologies, and radiological protection*, in accordance with the Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement).

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 19581:2017), which has been technically revised. standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/iso/dff355d6-698d-4cfd-a954-79eb2118aca0/iso-19581-2025

The main changes are as follows:

- the updated IAEA Nuclear Safety and Security Glossary was referenced;
- [Annex A](#) has been updated with considering recent technological improvements;
- editorial changes have been made.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

Everyone is exposed to natural radiation. The natural sources of radiation are cosmic rays and naturally occurring radioactive substances which exist in the earth and within the human body. Human activities involving the use of radiation and radioactive substances add to the radiation exposure from this natural exposure. Some of those activities, such as the mining and use of ores containing naturally occurring radioactive materials (NORM) and the production of energy by burning coal that contains such substances, simply enhance the exposure from natural radiation sources. Nuclear power plants and other nuclear installations use radioactive materials and produce radioactive effluent and waste during operation and on their decommissioning. The use of radioactive materials in industry, agriculture and research is expanding around the globe.

All these human activities give rise to radiation exposures that are only a small fraction of the global average level of natural exposure. The medical use of radiation is the largest and a growing human-made source of radiation exposure in developed countries. It includes diagnostic radiology, radiotherapy, nuclear medicine and interventional radiology.

Radiation exposure also occurs as a result of occupational activities. It is incurred by workers in industry, medicine and research using radiation or radioactive substances, as well as by crew during air travel and for astronauts. The average level of occupational exposures is generally similar to the global average level of natural radiation exposure^[1].

As uses of radiation increase, so do the potential health risk and the public's concerns. Thus, all these exposures are regularly assessed in order to

- a) improve the understanding of global levels and temporal trends of public and worker exposure,
- b) evaluate the components of exposure so as to provide a measure of their relative importance, and
- c) identify emerging issues that may warrant more attention and study.

While doses to workers are mostly directly measured, doses to the public are usually assessed by indirect methods using radioactivity measurements results performed on various sources: waste, effluent and/or environmental samples.

To ensure that the data obtained from radioactivity monitoring programmes support their intended use, it is essential that the stakeholders, for example, nuclear site operators, regulatory and local bodies agree on appropriate methods and procedures for obtaining representative samples and then handling, storing, preparing and measuring the test samples. An assessment of the overall measurement uncertainty needs also to be carried out systematically. As reliable, comparable and 'fit for purpose' data are an essential requirement for any public health decision based on radioactivity measurements, International Standards of tested and validated radionuclide test methods are an important tool for the production of such measurement results. The application of standards serves also to guarantee comparability over time of the test results and between different testing laboratories. Laboratories apply them to demonstrate their technical qualifications and to successfully complete proficiency tests during interlaboratory comparison, two prerequisites for obtaining national accreditation. Today, over a hundred International Standards, prepared by Technical Committees of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), including those produced by ISO/TC85, and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), are available for application by testing laboratories to measure the main radionuclides.

Generic standards help testing laboratories to manage the measurement process by setting out the general requirements and methods to calibrate and validate techniques. These standards underpin specific standards which describe the test methods to be performed by staff, for example, for different types of samples. The specific standards cover test methods for:

- Naturally occurring radionuclides (including ^{40}K , ^3H , ^{14}C and those originating from the thorium and uranium decay series, in particular ^{226}Ra , ^{228}Ra , ^{234}U , ^{238}U , ^{210}Pb) which can be found in materials from natural sources or can be released from technological processes involving naturally occurring radioactive materials (e.g. the mining and processing of mineral sands or phosphate fertilizer production and use);