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Solid recovered fuels — Determination of elemental composition by X-ray fluorescence

Combustibles solides de récupération — Détermination de la composition élémentaire par fluorescence de rayons X

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Contents

Page

Foreword

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 300, *Solid recovered materials, including solid recovered fuels*, in collaboration with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Technical Committee CEN/TC 343, *Solid Recovered Fuels*, in accordance with the Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement).

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Introduction

X-ray fluorescence spectrometry can be used as a fast method for a qualitative overview of ash forming elements and impurities. When calibration is based on reference materials or on matrix-matched homogeneous solid recovered fuel samples with known content, X-ray fluorescence spectrometry can be used for a quantitative analysis of the total content of the specified elements within different solid recovered fuels.

The quality of the results obtained depends very closely on the type of instrument used, e.g. bench top or high performance, energy-dispersive or wavelength-dispersive instruments. When selecting a specific instrument, several factors need to be considered, such as the matrices to be analysed, elements to be determined, detection limits required and the measuring time.

Due to the wide range of matrix compositions and the lack of suitable reference materials in the case of solid recovered fuels from various origin, it is generally difficult to set up a calibration with matrix-matched reference materials. Therefore, it is important to use several homogenized solid recovered fuel samples with properties that sufficiently match the matrices of interest and whose content has been derived by independent measurement techniques, for example total digestion of solid recovered fuels and characterization of major and minor elements by measurement of digestion solutions with ICP-MS or ICP-OES, or by other techniques such as elemental analysis using combustion technology on sulfur or by combustion and ion chromatographic determination for chlorine.

This document describes two different procedures:

1) Quantitative analytical procedure for major elements of solid recovered fuels. The calibration is based on different reference materials and solid recovered fuel samples with known content.

   The elements described as major elements of solid recovered fuels are in fact major elements of the fuel ashes more than of the fuels. The determination of these elements can be helpful to predict the melting behaviour and slagging of the ashes. Moreover, contamination of fuel with sand or soil is indicated by high values of several elements.

2) Total element characterization at a semiquantitative level for major and minor elements of solid recovered fuels. The calibration is based on matrix-independent calibration curves, previously set up by the manufacturer.

   In general, the sensitivity of X-ray fluorescence is not sufficient for a determination of the content of minor elements (trace metals) in solid recovered fuels. However, it is possible to use determination of minor elements after calibration with solid recovered fuel samples with known content or at a semiquantitative level based on matrix-independent calibration curves to collect data for higher sample numbers, taking into account lower achievable precision. Therefore, it may be used to reveal excessive contents of minor elements in solid recovered fuels.