



# Standard Test Method for the Determination of Phosphorus in Iron Ores by Phosphomolybdate Coprecipitation and Nitric Acid Titrimetry<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E 278; 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 determination of phosphorus in iron ores, concentrates, and agglomerates.

1.2 This test method covers the determination of phosphorus in the concentration range from 0.01 to 1.00 %.

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:*

D 1193 Specification for Reagent Water<sup>2</sup>

E 50 Practices for Apparatus, Reagents, and Safety Considerations for Chemical Analysis of Metals, Ores, and Related Materials<sup>3</sup>

E 135 Terminology Relating to Analytical Chemistry for Metals, Ores, and Related Materials<sup>3</sup>

E 691 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method<sup>4</sup>

E 877 Practice for Sampling and Sample Preparation of Iron Ores and Related Materials<sup>5</sup>

E 882 Guide for Accountability and Quality Control in the Chemical Analysis Laboratory<sup>5</sup>

## 3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of terms used in this test method, refer to Terminology E 135.

## 4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 The sample is dissolved in hydrochloric and nitric acids. After the addition of perchloric acid, the solution is evaporated to strong fumes to dehydrate the silica. The insoluble residue is

filtered off, ignited, and treated for the recovery of any contained phosphorus. Ammonium molybdate is added to precipitate phosphomolybdate. The precipitate is filtered off and washed free from acid. It is then dissolved in an excess of standard sodium hydroxide solution. The excess sodium hydroxide is titrated with a standard solution of nitric acid using phenolphthalein as an indicator.

## 5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method is intended to be used for compliance with compositional specifications for phosphorus content. It is assumed that all who use these procedures will be trained analysts capable of performing common laboratory procedures skillfully and safely. It is expected that work will be performed in a properly equipped laboratory and that proper waste disposal procedures will be followed. Appropriate quality control practices shall be followed, such as those described in Guide E 882.

## 6. Interferences

6.1 Vanadium and arsenic, elements commonly found in iron ores, coprecipitate with the phosphorus. Provisions for their removal or elimination of their interference are included in this test method.

6.2 Titanium tends to form an insoluble compound with phosphorus and thus may cause low values for phosphorus. Provision for its removal is included in this test method.

## 7. Reagents and Materials

7.1 *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.<sup>6</sup> Other grades may be used, provided it is first ascertained that the reagent is of sufficient high purity to permit its use without lessening the accuracy of the determination.

7.2 *Purity of Water*—Unless otherwise indicated, references to water shall be understood to mean reagent water as defined

<sup>1</sup> This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E01 on Analytical Chemistry for Metals, Ores, and Related Materials and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E01.02 on Ores, Concentrates, and Related Metallurgical Materials.

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<sup>2</sup> *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 11.01.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 03.05.

<sup>4</sup> *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 14.02.

<sup>5</sup> *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 03.06.

<sup>6</sup> "Reagent Chemicals, American Chemical Society Specifications," Am. Chem. Soc., Washington, DC. For suggestions on the testing of reagents not listed by the American Chemical Society, see "Reagent Chemicals and Standards," by Joseph Rosin, D. Nostrand Co., Inc., New York, NY, and the "United States Pharmacopeia."

by Type I of Specification D 1193.

7.3 *Ammonium Molybdate Solution (Acidic)*—

7.3.1 *Solution No. 1*—Transfer 100 g of molybdic acid (85% MoO<sub>3</sub>) to a 600-mL beaker containing 240 mL of water and mix thoroughly. Add 140 mL of NH<sub>4</sub>OH while stirring vigorously. When dissolution is complete, filter through a medium paper, add 60 mL of HNO<sub>3</sub>, and cool.

7.3.2 *Solution No. 2*—Add 400 mL of HNO<sub>3</sub> to 960 mL of water in a 2-L beaker and cool.

7.3.3 Add Solution No. 1 to Solution No. 2 while stirring constantly. Add 0.1 g of ammonium phosphate, dibasic ((NH<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>HPO<sub>4</sub>), and let stand at least 24 h before using. Use only the clear supernatant liquid.

7.4 *Ammonium Nitrate (NH<sub>4</sub>NO<sub>3</sub>)*.

7.5 *Ferric Chloride Solution*—Dissolve 0.3 g of pure iron wire in 25 mL of HCl (1 + 1). Oxidize by adding HNO<sub>3</sub> dropwise to the hot solution. Cool, add 25 mL of HCl, dilute to 1 L and mix.

7.6 *Ferrous Sulfate Solution*—Dissolve 100 g of ferrous sulfate (FeSO<sub>4</sub>·7H<sub>2</sub>O) in 1 L of sulfuric acid (H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, 5 + 95).

7.7 *Hydrobromic Acid (1 + 4)*—Mix 20 mL of concentrated hydrobromic acid (HBr, sp gr 1.49) with 80 mL of water.

7.8 *Hydrochloric Acid (1 + 1)*—Mix equal volumes of concentrated hydrochloric acid (HCl, sp gr 1.19) and water.

7.9 *Hydrofluoric Acid (sp gr 1.15)*—Concentrated hydrofluoric acid (HF).

7.10 *Nitric Acid, Standard (0.15 N)*—Transfer 10 mL of clear and water white concentrated nitric acid (HNO<sub>3</sub>, sp gr 1.42) to a 1-L flask, dilute to the mark, and mix. Standardize this solution against the standard NaOH solution using phenolphthalein as indicator. If desired, this solution may be made equivalent to the standard sodium hydroxide solution by dilution with water.

7.11 *Nitric Acid, Wash Solution (1 + 99)*—Mix 10 mL of concentrated HNO<sub>3</sub>, (sp gr 1.42) with 990 mL of water.

7.12 *Perchloric Acid (70 %) (HClO<sub>4</sub>)*.

7.13 *Phenolphthalein Indicator Solution*—Dissolve 0.2 g of phenolphthalein in 100 mL of ethanol.

7.14 *Potassium Nitrate, Wash Solution (10 g/L)*—Dissolve 10 g of potassium nitrate (KNO<sub>3</sub>) in water, dilute to 1 L, and mix.

7.15 *Potassium Permanganate Solution (25 g/L)*—Dissolve 25 g of potassium permanganate (KMnO<sub>4</sub>) in water and dilute to 1 L.

7.16 *Sodium Carbonate (Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>)*.

7.17 *Sodium Hydroxide, Stock Solution*—Dissolve 300 g of sodium hydroxide (NaOH) in 1 L of water. Add a slight excess of barium hydroxide (Ba(OH)<sub>2</sub>) to precipitate any carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). Allow any precipitate to settle out. Store the solution in a polyethylene container.

7.18 *Sodium Hydroxide, Standard Solution (0.15 N)*—Transfer 20 mL of the clear, supernatant stock solution to a 1-L flask. Dilute to the mark with freshly boiled and cooled water and mix thoroughly. Standardize this solution against potassium acid phthalate. It is convenient to adjust the normality of this standard solution to 0.148 N (1 mL = 0.0002 g P). Confirm the phosphorus value by analyzing a standard of a known phosphorus content, preferably an iron ore of similar compo-

sition. Protect the NaOH solution from CO<sub>2</sub> by means of a soda-lime or soda-asbestos tube.

7.19 *Sulfurous Acid (H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub>)*.

## 8. Hazards

8.1 For precautions to be observed in this test method, refer to Practice E 50.

## 9. Sampling and Sample Preparation

9.1 *Sampling*—The gross sample shall be collected and prepared in accordance with Practice E 877.

9.2 *Sample Preparation*—The laboratory sample shall be pulverized to pass a No. 100 (150-μm) sieve.

NOTE 1—Some ores, such as specular hematites, may require finer grinding to pass a No. 200 (75-μm) sieve.

9.3 *Sample Weight*—Weigh approximately (within ±25 mg) an amount of sample specified as follows:

Content of Phosphorus, %	Weight of Sample, g
0.01 to 0.10	2.0
0.11 to 0.50	1.0
0.51 to 1.00	0.5

## 10. Procedure

10.1 Transfer the test sample to a small dry weighing bottle and place in a drying oven. After drying at 105 to 110°C for 1 h, cap the bottle, and cool to room temperature in a desiccator. Momentarily release the cap to equalize pressure and weigh the capped bottle to the nearest 0.1 mg. Repeat the drying and weighing until there is no further weight loss. Transfer the test sample to a 400-mL beaker and reweigh the capped bottle to the nearest 0.1 mg. The difference between the two weights is the weight of the test sample.

10.2 Moisten the test sample with a few milliliters of water and add 25 mL of HCl for each gram of test sample. Cover and digest below the boiling point until all soluble minerals are in solution. Add 5 mL of HNO<sub>3</sub> and 20 mL of HClO<sub>4</sub> and evaporate to strong fumes to dehydrate the silica. Cool, add 50 mL of water, and warm until soluble salts are in solution. Filter and collect the filtrate in a 300-mL Erlenmeyer flask. Wash the residue with HNO<sub>3</sub> (1 + 99), and finally with hot water until free from perchlorates. Evaporate the filtrate using a low heat.

10.3 Ignite the paper and residue in a platinum crucible. Cool, moisten with several drops of water and add 2 mL of HClO<sub>4</sub> and 5 mL of HF, and evaporate to complete dryness. Fuse the residue with 3 g of Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>. Place the crucible in a 250-mL beaker and add 100 mL of water. Heat to disintegrate the melt and to dissolve all soluble salts. Remove, wash, and police the crucible. Filter the alkaline solution through a medium-texture paper and collect the filtrate in the 400-mL beaker. Wash the residue with hot water and discard. Acidify the filtrate with HCl, add 5 mL of the FeCl<sub>3</sub> solution, and render the solution alkaline to litmus with NH<sub>4</sub>OH. Boil for 1 min to coagulate the precipitate. Filter and wash the residue with hot water. Discard the filtrate. Place the flask containing the evaporated filtrate from 10.2 underneath the funnel. Dissolve the residue through the paper with 10 mL of warm HCl (1 + 1) and wash with hot water. Discard the paper and evaporate the solution to fumes of HClO<sub>4</sub>.

NOTE 2—If the test sample is high in manganese, manganese dioxide ( $\text{MnO}_2$ ) may precipitate when the solution is evaporated to perchloric acid fumes. If this occurs, the  $\text{MnO}_2$  can be redissolved by the addition of a crystal of sodium nitrite ( $\text{NaNO}_2$ ) when the perchlorates are dissolved in water.

NOTE 3—If arsenic is known to be present, concentrate the solution in the Erlenmeyer flask to approximately 75 mL, add 20 mL of  $\text{HBr}$  (1 + 4), and evaporate to strong fumes. Cool, wash down the sides of the flask with 20 mL of water and again evaporate to fumes.

10.4 Cool, add 50 mL of water, and warm to dissolve the salts. Add an excess of several drops of  $\text{KMnO}_4$  solution and boil the solution for several minutes. Add, dropwise, enough of a solution of  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_3$  to reduce any  $\text{KMnO}_4$  or precipitated  $\text{MnO}_2$ . Boil to expel the  $\text{SO}_2$ , cool, and add  $\text{NH}_4\text{OH}$  until a small precipitate of ferric hydroxide ( $\text{Fe}(\text{OH})_3$ ) persists on shaking or stirring. Add  $\text{HNO}_3$  until the precipitate just dissolves on shaking, then 3 to 5 mL in excess. Add 10 g of  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  and shake to dissolve the salts.

10.5 *Absence of Vanadium*—Adjust the volume to 150 mL and the temperature to  $20^\circ\text{C}$  and add 50 mL of the ammonium molybdate solution. Shake vigorously for 5 min and let stand 20 min or until the yellow precipitate has settled.

NOTE 4—If the precipitate is small it is advisable to allow it to stand 4 h or overnight.

**TABLE 1 Statistical Summary<sup>A</sup>**

Average Concentration, <i>B</i> %	Standard Deviation		Reproducibility, <i>R</i> <sup>C</sup>	Number of Participating Laboratories
	Within-Laboratory	Between-Laboratories		
0.009	0.0007	0.0008	0.0021	5
0.028	0.0008	0.0008	0.0024	7
0.031	0.0012	0.0016	0.0045	7
0.044	0.0017	0.0018	0.0051	7
0.086	0.0014	0.0027	0.0075	7
0.596	0.0106	0.0106 <sup>D</sup>	0.0300	7

<sup>A</sup> Calculations based on Practice E 691.

<sup>B</sup> Each concentration represents a different kind of iron ore.

<sup>C</sup> Reproducibility factor, *R*, obtained by multiplying the between-laboratory standard deviation by  $2\sqrt{2}$ .

<sup>D</sup> Provisional calculation of between-laboratories standard deviation was 0.0089.

10.6 *Presence of Vanadium*—Adjust the volume of the solution to 100 mL, cool to  $15^\circ\text{C}$ , add 5 mL of the  $\text{FeSO}_4$  solution and swirl the flask to reduce the vanadium. Add 50 mL of the ammonium molybdate solution, shake vigorously for 10 min, and let stand for 1 h or until the yellow precipitate has settled (Note 4).

10.7 Filter the precipitate obtained in accordance with 10.5 or 10.6 on a close textured paper (Note 5). Wash the flask and precipitate three times with 5-mL portions of the  $\text{HNO}_3$  wash solution, and then with the  $\text{KNO}_3$  wash solution until free from acid, as indicated by a litmus paper test. Since the yellow

precipitate tends to climb, direct the jet of the wash solution around the edge of the paper and spirally down.

NOTE 5—A filtering crucible or smooth funnel plus perforated disk with a macerated paper pulp pad may be used if desired.

10.8 Return the paper and precipitate to the Erlenmeyer flask, add 25 mL of water ( $\text{CO}_2$ -free), and an excess of 5 mL of 0.15 *N*  $\text{NaOH}$  solution. Shake or stir to break up the paper and to dissolve the precipitate. Wash down the sides of the flask, add 3 drops of the phenolphthalein indicator solution, and titrate the excess  $\text{NaOH}$  with the 0.15 *N*  $\text{HNO}_3$ .

10.9 *Blank*—Carry along with the test sample a reagent blank through all the steps of the procedure using the same amounts of all reagents.

## 11. Calculation

11.1 Calculate the percent of phosphorus as follows:

$$\text{Phosphorus, \%} = 100 \frac{[(A - BC) - (D - EC)]F}{G} \quad (1)$$

where:

*A* = standard  $\text{NaOH}$  solution used, mL,

*B* = standard  $\text{HNO}_3$  required for titration of the excess of  $\text{NaOH}$  in the test sample, mL,

*C* = standard  $\text{NaOH}$  solution equivalent to 1 mL of the standard  $\text{HNO}_3$ , mL,

*D* = standard  $\text{NaOH}$  solution required for blank determination, mL,

*E* = standard  $\text{HNO}_3$  required for titration of the excess  $\text{NaOH}$  in blank determination, mL,

*F* = phosphorus equivalent of the standard  $\text{NaOH}$  solution, g/mL, and

*G* = weight of test sample used.

## 12. Precision and Bias<sup>7</sup>

12.1 *Precision*—Table 1 indicates the precision of the test method as determined by Practice E 691. To interpolate for reproducibility factors, *R*, between 0.009 and 0.60 % phosphorus (*P*), the following relationship may be used:

$$R = 0.013 + 0.0781(\% P) - 0.0504(\% P)^2 \quad (2)$$

12.2 *Bias*—There was no significant bias in the determinations made for an NIST certified reference material, NBS 27d, certified at 0.028 % phosphorus. An additional CRM, NBS 27c, certified as having 0.042 % phosphorus, was analyzed by two laboratories as having 0.038 or 0.041 % phosphorus.

## 13. Keywords

13.1 agglomerates; concentrates; iron ore; phosphorus; related materials; titrimetric phosphorus

<sup>7</sup> Supporting data giving the results of cooperative testing have been filed at ASTM International Headquarters. Request RR:E 16-174.



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