



Standard Test Method for Determining the Relative Degree of Oxidation in Bituminous Coal by Alkali Extraction¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This colorimetric method describes the determination of the relative degree of oxidation by alkali extraction of coals that are high volatile A bituminous to low volatile bituminous in rank.

1.2 This test cannot be sensitive to thermally oxidized coal. It is intended for coals that may be oxidized as a result of weathering.

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 The values stated in SI units shall be regarded as standard.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:

D 1193 Specification for Reagent Water²

D 4621 Guide for Quality Management in an Organization that Samples or Tests Coal and Coke³

3. Terminology

3.1 There are no terms in this standard that require new or other than dictionary definitions.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Humic acids, which are present in oxidized coals, are extracted from the coal with sodium hydroxide solution. The degree of oxidation is determined by colorimetrically measuring the transmittance of the alkali extract solution at 520 nm. The intensity of the color produced by the humic acids is a function of the degree of oxidation.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method is a relative measure of the degree of oxidation present in coal. It does not determine the quantitative amount of oxidized coal present. It is only intended to serve as a guide to the supplier, buyer, and user for selecting coals for metallurgical use.

NOTE 1—The values shown in Table 1 are based on the transmittance obtained using the original procedure⁴ (wavelength at 520 nm, 17-mm light path, 2- to 3-min boiling time, dilution of the extract to 80 mL). At these conditions, coals that had transmittance values greater than 90 % were considered to be unoxidized, coals less than 80 % were considered to be oxidized, and coals between 80 and 90 % were considered suspect. As this procedure becomes accepted as the standard and more experimental data are gathered, modifications to these cutoff values are expected. Note that lower rank bituminous coals are more easily extracted than higher rank coal.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Transmission Spectrophotometer*—Single-beam, grating spectrophotometer having a wavelength range of 340 to 900 nm.

6.2 *Glass Test Tubes/Cuvettes*, with light paths ranging from 10 to 17 mm may be used. Test tubes with an inside diameter of 17 ± 0.3 mm are commonly used.

6.3 *Analytical Balance*, sensitive to 0.001 g.

6.4 *Hot Plate*, capable of bringing aqueous solutions to a boil.

6.5 *Thermometer*, capable of measuring up to 100°C with a sensitivity of $\pm 0.5^\circ\text{C}$.

6.6 *Filter Papers*, Type II, Class F and G.⁵

6.7 *Timer*, capable of measuring 30 min to the nearest second.

6.8 *Graduated Cylinder*, 100-mL capacity.

6.9 *Beakers*, 400-mL capacity.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D05 on Coal and Coke and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D05.15 on Metallurgical Properties of Coal and Coke.

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² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 11.01.

³ *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 05.06.

⁴ Lowenhaupt, D. E., and Gray, R. J., *International Journal of Coal Geology*, 1980, Vol 1, pp. 63–73.

⁵ Whatman Grade Nos. 40 and 42 filter papers, or equivalent, have been found suitable for this purpose.

TABLE 1 Guidelines for General Acceptance/Rejection Levels of Oxidized Coal

Percent Transmittance at 520 nm, 17-mm Light Path	Interpretation of Results
>90	Coal is not oxidized. Suitable for metallurgical usage.
80 to 90	Coal may be oxidized. If it is being used metallurgically, it should be monitored closely for further changes in oxidation.
<80	Coal is oxidized. Coal at this level may cause coke quality and coke plant operating problems.

7. Reagents

7.1 *Sodium Hydroxide Solution* (certified 1N).

7.2 *Octylphenoxypolyethoxyethanol Nonionic Surfactant*—Wetting agent.⁶

7.2.1 Wetting agent shall not be diluted (100 % concentration).

8. Calibration and Standardization

8.1 Optical light filters with known absorbance/transmission shall be used to check wavelength accuracy and linearity of the spectrophotometer. Solutions with accurate absorbance values can be found in published literature.⁷

8.2 A blank solution consisting of 100 mL of 1N sodium hydroxide is prepared by following the procedure outlined in Section 9, except coal is not used.

9. Procedure

9.1 Activate the spectrophotometer and set at 520-nm wavelength; allow sufficient time for the instrument to stabilize (30 min).

9.2 Weigh out 1 g (± 0.01 g) of the -250- μ m (No. 60 U.S. Standard Sieve Series) coal sample.

9.3 Transfer the coal to a standard 400-mL beaker.

9.4 Add 100 mL of NaOH solution and one drop of wetting agent (100 % concentration) to the coal. Place a glass stirring rod into the beaker.

9.5 Place beaker(s) onto a preheated hot plate and place a thermometer in the beaker.

9.6 Bring temperature of the contents to 98°C (208°F). It shall take 3 to 4 min to reach a boil, depending on the number of beakers on the hot plate. When measuring the temperature of the blank solution or test solution, or both, suspend the thermometer in a manner such that the temperature of the solution and not the temperature of the beaker resting on top of the hot plate is being measured.

9.7 At the time the blank solution or test solution, or both, in the beakers reaches the temperature of 98°C (208°F), set the timer for 3 min. Allow the solution to boil for 3 min, stirring the contents for at least 5 s for each 1-min interval.

9.8 After the 3-min boil, carefully remove hot beakers and allow to cool under ambient conditions for 30 min. This is also determined by using a timer.

9.9 Filter (by gravity) the entire blank solution or test solution, or both, on a stack of one Type II Class F filter paper on top of one Type II Glass G filter paper. Filter the slurry into a 100-mL graduated cylinder, making sure funnel and graduated cylinder are dry before each test. After filtration, add deionized (distilled) water (Type II, Specification D 1193) to the cylinder to bring the solution to 80 mL and stir with a glass rod.

NOTE 2—The beaker should not be rinsed onto the filter paper. It is not significant if some coal remains in the beaker.

9.10 Adjust the 0 and 100 % transmittance levels of the spectrophotometer.

9.10.1 Adjust the spectrophotometer to read zero by closing the lid of the sample/tube holder assembly of the instrument.

9.10.2 Fill cuvette/test tube with the blank solution and insert into the spectrophotometer.

9.10.3 Adjust the spectrophotometer to read 100 % transmittance by inserting the blank solution (see 8.2).

9.11 Place the cuvette/test tube containing the test solution into the spectrophotometer; measure and record the percent transmittance of each test solution.

NOTE 3—Use only cuvette/test tubes for the test solution that yield the same transmittance values as the cuvettes/test tubes used with the blank solutions.

NOTE 4—Periodically during the analysis, check the span (0 and 100 % transmittance) to be sure that the instrument has not drifted.

10. Calculation

10.1 Since the light path is a variable in this test, results must be adjusted to a common basis to make comparisons. A 17-mm light path will be used. Thus, if the test was performed using any other light path than 17 mm, the result must be adjusted to the 17-mm light path using Beer's law.

10.2 Adjust results as follows:

$$A_x = \text{Log} \left(\frac{T_x}{100} \right) \quad (1)$$

$$A_{17} = A_x (17 \text{ mm}/b_x) \quad (2)$$

$$T_{17} = (10^{-A_{17}}) \times 100 \quad (3)$$

where:

T_x = transmittance obtained by analysis, %;

A_x = absorbance corresponding to T_x ;

b_x = test light path, mm;

A_{17} = absorbance at 17-mm light path; and

T_{17} = transmittance (calculated) at 17-mm light path.

11. Report

11.1 Report the value T_{17} (obtained in Section 9).

11.2 All accountability and quality control aspects of Guide D 4621 apply to this test method.

12. Precision and Bias

12.1 *Precision*—The relative precision of this test method for the determination of the degree of oxidation of bituminous coal covers the range (percent transmittance) from 55 to 98 %.

12.1.1 *Repeatability*—The difference in absolute values between two consecutive tests conducted on the same sample in the same laboratory by the same operator using the same

⁶ Triton X-100, or equivalent wetting agent, has been found suitable for this purpose.

⁷ Mellon, M. G., *Analytical Absorption Spectroscopy*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1950, pp. 258–265.

apparatus should not exceed the repeatability interval $I (r)$ more than 5 % of such paired values (95 % confidence level). When such a difference is found to exceed the repeatability interval, there is reason to question one or more of the test results. The repeatability interval for this test method is 3.0 % transmittance at the standard 17-mm light path.

NOTE 5—Duplicate determinations are not required by this test method. The repeatability of the test has been determined for informational purposes and for those that require this information for internal quality control. Most internal quality control programs require a known acceptance value for duplicate determinations.

12.1.2 *Reproducibility*—The difference in absolute value of replicate determinations, conducted in different laboratories on representative samples prepared from the same bulk sample

after the last stage of reduction, should not exceed the reproducibility interval $I (R)$ more than 5 % of such paired values (95 % confidence level). When such a difference is found to exceed the reproducibility interval, there is reason to question one or both of the test results. The reproducibility interval for this test method is 7.6 % transmittance at the standard 17-mm light path.

12.2 *Bias*—Since there is no accepted reference material suitable for determining the bias for the procedure in this test method for measuring oxidation of coal, bias has not been determined.

13. Keywords

13.1 absorbance; alkali extraction; colorimetric; humic acids; oxidation (weathering); transmittance

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