



Designation: D5917 – 15 (Reapproved 2019)

Standard Test Method for Trace Impurities in Monocyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons by Gas Chromatography and External Calibration¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D5917; 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 (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the determination of the total nonaromatic hydrocarbons and trace monocyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in toluene, mixed xylenes, and *p*-xylene by gas chromatography. The purity of toluene, mixed xylenes, or *p*-xylene can also be calculated. Calibration of the gas chromatographic system is done by the external standard calibration technique. A similar test method, using the internal standard calibration technique, is Test Method D2360.

1.2 Total aliphatic hydrocarbons containing 1 through 10 carbon atoms (methane through decanes) can be detected by this test method at concentrations ranging from 0.001 to 2.500 weight %.

1.2.1 A small amount of benzene in mixed xylenes or *p*-xylenes may not be distinguished from the nonaromatics and the concentrations are determined as a composite (see 6.1).

1.3 Monocyclic aromatic hydrocarbon impurities containing 6 through 10 carbon atoms (benzene through C₁₀ aromatics) can be detected by this test method at individual concentrations ranging from 0.001 to 1.000 weight %.

1.4 In determining the conformance of the test results to applicable specifications, results shall be rounded off in accordance with the rounding-off method of Practice E29.

1.5 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard.

1.6 *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, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.* For specific hazard statement, see Section 9.

1.7 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standard-*

ization 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:²

- D841 Specification for Nitration Grade Toluene
- D2360 Test Method for Trace Impurities in Monocyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons by Gas Chromatography (Withdrawn 2016)³
- D3437 Practice for Sampling and Handling Liquid Cyclic Products
- D4052 Test Method for Density, Relative Density, and API Gravity of Liquids by Digital Density Meter
- D4307 Practice for Preparation of Liquid Blends for Use as Analytical Standards
- D4790 Terminology of Aromatic Hydrocarbons and Related Chemicals
- D5136 Specification for High Purity *p*-Xylene
- D5211 Specification for Xylenes for *p*-Xylene Feedstock
- D6526 Test Method for Analysis of Toluene by Capillary Column Gas Chromatography (Withdrawn 2018)³
- D6563 Test Method for Benzene, Toluene, Xylene (BTX) Concentrates Analysis by Gas Chromatography (Withdrawn 2018)³
- D6809 Guide for Quality Control and Quality Assurance Procedures for Aromatic Hydrocarbons and Related Materials
- E29 Practice for Using Significant Digits in Test Data to Determine Conformance with Specifications
- E260 Practice for Packed Column Gas Chromatography
- E355 Practice for Gas Chromatography Terms and Relationships
- E691 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D16 on Aromatic, Industrial, Specialty and Related Chemicals and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D16.01 on Benzene, Toluene, Xylenes, Cyclohexane and Their Derivatives.

Current edition approved June 1, 2019. Published June 2019. Originally approved in 1996. Last previous edition approved in 2015 as D5917 – 15^{e1}. DOI: 10.1520/D5917-15R19.

² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

³ The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.

E1510 Practice for Installing Fused Silica Open Tubular Capillary Columns in Gas Chromatographs

2.2 *Other Document:*

OSHA Regulations, 29 CFR paragraphs 1910.1000 and 1910.1200⁴

3. Terminology

3.1 See Terminology **D4790** for definitions of terms used in this test method.

3.2 Mixed xylenes are a mixture of C₈ aromatics including *m*-xylene, *o*-xylene, and *p*-xylene. Industry convention includes ethylbenzene as a ‘mixed xylene’ though ethylbenzene is not technically a xylene. Styrene is excluded.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 A repeatable volume of the specimen to be analyzed is precisely injected into a gas chromatograph equipped with a flame ionization detector (FID). The peak area of each impurity is measured. Concentration of each impurity is determined from the linear calibration curve of peak area versus concentration. Purity by gas chromatography (GC) is calculated by subtracting the sum of the impurities found from 100.00. Results are reported in weight percent.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Determining the type and amount of hydrocarbon impurities remaining from the manufacture of toluene, mixed xylenes, and *p*-xylenes used as chemical intermediates and solvents is often required. This test method is suitable for setting specifications and for use as an internal quality control tool where these products are produced or are used. Typical impurities are: alkanes containing 1 to 10 carbons atoms, benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene (EB), xylenes, and aromatic hydrocarbons containing nine carbon atoms.

5.2 Purity is commonly reported by subtracting the determined expected impurities from 100.00. However, a gas chromatographic analysis cannot determine absolute purity if unknown or undetected components are contained within the material being examined.

5.3 This test method is similar to Test Method **D2360**, however, interlaboratory testing has indicated a bias may exist between the two methods. Therefore the user is cautioned that the two methods may not give comparable results.

6. Interferences

6.1 In some cases for mixed xylenes and *p*-xylene, it may be difficult to resolve benzene from the nonaromatic hydrocar-

bons. Therefore the concentrations are determined as a composite. In the event that the benzene concentration must be determined, an alternate method such as Test Method **D6526** must be selected to ensure an accurate assessment of the benzene concentration.

6.2 Complete separation of ethylbenzene and *m*-xylene from *p*-xylene is difficult and can be considered adequate if the distance from baseline to valley between peaks is not greater than 50 % of the peak height of the impurity.

7. Apparatus

7.1 *Gas Chromatograph*—Any instrument having a flame ionization detector that can be operated at the conditions given in **Table 1**. The system shall have sufficient sensitivity to obtain a minimum peak height response for 0.001 weight % impurity of twice the height of the background noise.

7.2 *Columns*—The choice of column is based on resolution requirements. Any column may be used that is capable of resolving all significant impurities from the major component. The column and conditions described in **Table 1** have been used successfully and shall be used as a referee in cases of dispute.

7.3 *Recorder*—Electronic integration is recommended.

7.4 *Injector*—The specimen must be precisely and repeatedly injected into the gas chromatograph. An automatic sample injection device is highly recommended although manual injection can be employed if the criteria in **12.7** can be satisfied.

7.5 *Volumetric Flask*, 100-mL capacity.

7.6 *Syringe*, 100 µL.

TABLE 1 Recommended Operating Conditions

Inlet	Split
Temperature, °C	270
Column:	
Tubing	fused silica
Length, m	60
Internal diameter, mm	0.32
Stationary phase	crosslinked polyethylene glycol
Film thickness, µm	0.25
Column temperature program	
Initial temperature, °C	60
Initial time, min	10
Programming rate, °C/min	5
Final, °C	150
Time 2, min	10
Carrier gas	Helium or Hydrogen
Linear velocity, cm/s at 145°C	20 Helium or 45 Hydrogen
Split ratio	100:1
Sample size, µL	1.0
Detector:	flame ionization
Temperature, °C	300
Analysis time, min	30

⁴ Available from U.S. Government Printing Office Superintendent of Documents, 732 N. Capitol St., NW, Mail Stop: SDE, Washington, DC 20401, <http://www.access.gpo.gov>.

8. Reagents

8.1 *Purity of Reagent*—Reagent grade chemicals shall be used in all tests. Unless otherwise indicated, it is intended that all reagents shall conform to the specifications of the Committee on Analytical Reagents of the American Chemical Society,⁵ where such specifications are available.

8.2 *Carrier Gas*—Chromatographic grade helium or hydrogen, 99.999 % is recommended. Purify carrier, fuel and makeup gases by adding traps to reduce the concentration of any remaining oxygen, water, and hydrocarbons. Purify air by adding traps to reduce the concentration of any remaining hydrocarbons and water.

8.3 *Air*; Chromatographic grade, containing less than 0.1 ppm THC.

8.4 *High Purity p-Xylene*, 99.999 weight % or greater purity.

8.4.1 Most *p*-xylene is available commercially at a purity less than 99.9 % and can be purified by recrystallization. To prepare 1.9 L of high purity *p*-xylene, begin with approximately 3.8 L of material and cool in a flammable storage freezer at $-10 \pm 5^\circ\text{C}$ until approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the *p*-xylene has frozen. This should require about 5 h. Remove the sample and decant the liquid portion. The solid portion is the purified *p*-xylene. Allow the *p*-xylene to thaw and repeat the crystallization procedure on the remaining sample until the *p*-xylene is free of contamination as indicated by gas chromatography.

8.5 Pure compounds for calibration, shall include *n*-nonane, benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, *o*-xylene, *m*-xylene, and cumene. If applicable, the calibration may include paradiethylbenzene (PDEB). The purity of all reagents should be >99 weight %. If the purity is less than 99 %, the concentration and identification of impurities must be known so that the composition of the standard can be adjusted for the presence of the impurities.

⁵ *Reagent Chemicals, American Chemical Society Specifications*, American Chemical Society, Washington, DC. For suggestions on the testing of reagents not listed by the American Chemical Society, see *Analar Standards for Laboratory Chemicals*, BDH Ltd., Poole, Dorset, U.K., and the *United States Pharmacopeia and National Formulary*, U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.

9. Hazards

9.1 Consult current OSHA regulations, supplier's Safety Data Sheets, and local regulations for all materials used in this test method.

10. Sampling

10.1 Sample the material in accordance with Practice **D3437**.

11. Preparation of Apparatus

11.1 Follow manufacturer's instructions for mounting and conditioning the column into the chromatograph and adjusting the instrument to the conditions described in **Table 1**, allowing sufficient time for the equipment to reach equilibrium. See Practices **E260**, **E355**, and **E1510** for additional information on gas chromatography practices and terminology.

12. Calibration

12.1 Prepare a synthetic mixture of high purity *p*-xylene containing impurities at concentrations representative of those expected in the samples to be analyzed. The volume of each hydrocarbon impurity must be measured to the nearest 1 μL and all liquid reference compounds must be brought to the same temperature before mixing. Refer to **Table 2** for an example of a calibration blend. *n*-Nonane will represent the nonaromatic fraction, *o*-xylene the *o*-xylene fraction, *m*-xylene the *m*-xylene fraction. Cumene will represent the aromatic hydrocarbons containing nine carbon atoms or greater, with exception of PDEB. If PDEB is included in the calibration, PDEB will represent PDEB.

12.1.1 Prior to preparing the calibration standard, all reference compounds and any samples to be analyzed must be brought to the same temperature, preferably ambient or 20°C.

12.2 Using the exact volumes and densities in **Table 2**, calculate the weight % concentration for each impurity in the calibration blend as follows:

$$C_i = 100 D_i V_i / (V_i D_p) \quad (1)$$

where:

D_i = density of impurity *i* from **Table 2**,

V_i = volume of impurity *i*, mL,

D_p = density of *p*-xylene from **Table 2**,

TABLE 2 Preparation of Calibration Blend

Compound	Density ^A	Recommended Vol, μL	Resulting Concentration (including PDEB)		Resulting Concentration (excluding PDEB)	
			Volume %	Weight %	Volume %	Weight %
<i>p</i> -Xylene	0.861	99.60-99.62 ml	99.60	99.60	99.62	99.62
Benzene	0.879	20	0.020	0.020	0.020	0.020
Toluene	0.867	20	0.020	0.020	0.020	0.020
Ethylbenzene	0.867	100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100
<i>o</i> -Xylene	0.880	100	0.100	0.102	0.100	0.102
Cumene	0.862	20	0.020	0.020	0.020	0.020
<i>n</i> -Nonane	0.718	20	0.020	0.017	0.020	0.017
<i>m</i> -Xylene	0.864	100	0.100	0.101	0.100	0.101
PDEB	0.866	20	0.020	0.020	n/a	n/a

^ADensity at 20°C. Values obtained from "Physical Constants of Hydrocarbons C_1 to C_{10} ," ASTM Publication DS 4A, 1971.