



Designation: D4052 – 16

Standard Test Method for Density, Relative Density, and API Gravity of Liquids by Digital Density Meter¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D4052; 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.

This standard has been approved for use by agencies of the U.S. Department of Defense.

1. Scope*

1.1 This test method covers the determination of the density, relative density, and API Gravity of petroleum distillates and viscous oils that can be handled in a normal fashion as liquids at the temperature of test, utilizing either manual or automated sample injection equipment. Its application is restricted to liquids with total vapor pressures (see Test Method [D5191](#)) typically below 100 kPa and viscosities (see Test Method [D445](#) or [D7042](#)) typically below about 15 000 mm²/s at the temperature of test. The total vapor pressure limitation however can be extended to >100 kPa provided that it is first ascertained that no bubbles form in the U-shaped, oscillating tube, which can affect the density determination. Some examples of products that may be tested by this procedure include: gasoline and gasoline-oxygenate blends, diesel, jet, basestocks, waxes, and lubricating oils.

1.1.1 Waxes and highly viscous samples were not included in the 1999 interlaboratory study (ILS) sample set that was used to determine the current precision statements of the method, since all samples evaluated at the time were analyzed at a test temperature of 15 °C. Wax and highly viscous samples require a temperature cell operated at elevated temperatures necessary to ensure a liquid test specimen is introduced for analysis. Consult instrument manufacturer instructions for appropriate guidance and precautions when attempting to analyze wax or highly viscous samples. Refer to the Precision and Bias section of the method and [Note 8](#) for more detailed information about the 1999 ILS that was conducted.

1.2 In cases of dispute, the referee method is the one where samples are introduced manually as in [6.3](#) or [6.4](#), as appropriate for sample type.

1.3 When testing opaque samples, and when not using equipment that is capable of automatic bubble detection, proper procedure shall be established so that the absence of air

bubbles in the sample cell can be established with certainty. For the determination of density in crude oil samples use Test Method [D5002](#).

1.4 The values stated in SI units are regarded as the standard, unless stated otherwise. The accepted units of measure for density are grams per millilitre (g/mL) or kilograms per cubic metre (kg/m³).

1.5 *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. For specific warning statements, see [7.4](#), [7.5](#), and [10.3](#).*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

- [D287](#) Test Method for API Gravity of Crude Petroleum and Petroleum Products (Hydrometer Method)
- [D445](#) Test Method for Kinematic Viscosity of Transparent and Opaque Liquids (and Calculation of Dynamic Viscosity)
- [D1193](#) Specification for Reagent Water
- [D1250](#) Guide for Use of the Petroleum Measurement Tables
- [D1298](#) Test Method for Density, Relative Density, or API Gravity of Crude Petroleum and Liquid Petroleum Products by Hydrometer Method
- [D4057](#) Practice for Manual Sampling of Petroleum and Petroleum Products
- [D4177](#) Practice for Automatic Sampling of Petroleum and Petroleum Products
- [D4377](#) Test Method for Water in Crude Oils by Potentiometric Karl Fischer Titration
- [D5002](#) Test Method for Density and Relative Density of Crude Oils by Digital Density Analyzer
- [D5191](#) Test Method for Vapor Pressure of Petroleum Products (Mini Method)

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D02](#) on Petroleum Products, Liquid Fuels, and Lubricants and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D02.04.0D](#) on Physical and Chemical Methods.

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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.

*A Summary of Changes section appears at the end of this standard

D7042 Test Method for Dynamic Viscosity and Density of Liquids by Stabinger Viscometer (and the Calculation of Kinematic Viscosity)

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *density, n* —mass per unit volume at a specified temperature.

3.1.2 *relative density, n* —the ratio of the density of a material at a stated temperature to the density of water at a stated temperature.

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 *adjustment, v* —the operation of bringing the instrument to a state of performance suitable for its use, by setting or adjusting the density meter constants.

3.2.1.1 *Discussion*—On some digital density analyzer instruments, an adjustment may be made rather than calibrating the instrument. The adjustment procedure uses air and freshly boiled reagent water (**Warning**—Handling water at boiling or near boiling temperature can present a safety hazard. Wear appropriate personal protective equipment.) as standards to establish the linearity of measurements over a range of operating temperatures.

3.2.2 *calibration, v* —set of operations that establishes the relationship between the reference density of standards and the corresponding density reading of the instrument.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 A small volume, approximately 1 mL to 2 mL, of liquid sample is introduced into an oscillating sample tube and the change in oscillating frequency caused by the change in the mass of the tube is used in conjunction with calibration data to determine the density, relative density, or API Gravity of the sample. Both manual and automated injection techniques are described.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Density is a fundamental physical property that can be used in conjunction with other properties to characterize both the light and heavy fractions of petroleum and petroleum products.

5.2 Determination of the density or relative density of petroleum and its products is necessary for the conversion of measured volumes to volumes at the standard temperature of 15 °C.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Digital Density Analyzer*—A digital analyzer consisting of a U-shaped, oscillating sample tube and a system for electronic excitation, frequency counting, and display. The analyzer shall accommodate the accurate measurement of the sample temperature during measurement or shall control the sample temperature as described in 6.2. The instrument shall be capable of meeting the precision requirements described in this test method.

6.2 *Circulating Constant-Temperature Bath*, (optional), capable of maintaining the temperature of the circulating liquid

constant to ± 0.05 °C in the desired range. Temperature control can be maintained as part of the density analyzer instrument package.

6.3 *Syringes*, for use primarily in manual injections, at least 2 mL in volume with a tip or an adapter tip that will fit the opening of the oscillating tube.

6.4 *Flow-Through or Pressure Adapter*, for use as an alternative means of introducing the sample into the density analyzer either by a pump, by pressure, or by vacuum.

NOTE 1—It is highly recommended that a vacuum not be applied to samples prone to light-end loss, as it can easily lead to the formation of bubbles. It is recommended to fabricate a special cap or stopper for sample containers so that air, such as from a squeeze pump, is used to displace a test specimen to the U-tube measuring cell by the flow-through method.

6.5 *Autosampler*, required for use in automated injection analyses. The autosampler shall be designed to ensure the integrity of the test specimen prior to and during the analysis and be equipped to transfer a representative portion of test specimen to the digital density analyzer.

6.6 *Temperature Sensing Device (TSD)*, capable of monitoring the observed test temperature to within an accuracy of ± 0.05 °C. If a liquid-in-glass thermometer is used as the TSD, it shall be calibrated and graduated to 0.1 °C, and have a holder that can be attached to the instrument for setting and observing the test temperature. In calibrating the thermometer, the ice point and bore connections should be estimated to the nearest 0.05 °C. For non-mercurial thermometers, the TSD device shall be calibrated at least annually against a certified and traceable standard.

6.7 *Ultrasonic Bath, Unheated*, (optional), of suitable dimensions to hold container(s) placed inside of bath, for use in effectively dissipating and removing air or gas bubbles that may be entrained in viscous sample types prior to analysis.

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 shall conform to the specifications of the Committee on Analytical Reagents of the American Chemical Society, where such specifications are available.³ Other grades may be used, provided it is first ascertained that the reagent is of sufficiently 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 by Type II of Specification D1193 or higher.

7.3 *Water*, reagent water, freshly boiled to remove dissolved gasses, for use as primary calibration standard. (**Warning**—Handling water at boiling or near boiling temperature can present a safety hazard. Wear appropriate personal protective equipment.)

³ *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. Pharmaceutical Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.

7.4 *Cleaning Solvent*, such as petroleum naphtha⁴ (**Warning**—Petroleum naphtha is extremely flammable), or other materials that are capable of flushing and removing samples entirely from the sample tube.

7.5 *Acetone*, for flushing and drying the sample tube. (**Warning**—Extremely flammable.)

7.6 *Dry Air*, for drying the oscillator tube.

8. Sampling, Test Specimens, and Test Units

8.1 Sampling is defined as all the steps required to obtain an aliquot of the contents of any pipe, tank, or other system, and to place the sample into the laboratory test container. The laboratory test container and sample volume shall be of sufficient capacity to mix the sample and obtain a homogeneous sample for analysis.

8.2 *Laboratory Sample*—Use only representative samples obtained as specified in Practices **D4057** or **D4177** for this test method.

8.3 *Test Specimen*—A portion or volume of sample obtained from the laboratory sample and delivered to the density analyzer sample tube. The test specimen is obtained as follows:

8.3.1 Mix the sample if required to homogenize, taking care to avoid the introduction of air bubbles. The mixing may be accomplished as described in Practice **D4177** or Test Method **D4377**. Mixing at room temperature in an open container can result in the loss of volatile material from certain sample types (for example, gasoline samples), so mixing in closed, pressurized containers or at least 10 °C below ambient temperature is required for such sample types where loss of volatile material is a potential concern. For some sample types, such as viscous lube oils that are prone to having entrained air or gas bubbles present in the sample, the use of an ultrasonic bath (see **6.7**) without the heater turned on (if so equipped), has been found effective in dissipating bubbles typically within 10 min.

NOTE 2—When mixing samples with volatile components, consider the sample properties in relation to both ambient temperature and pressure.

8.3.2 For manual injections, draw the test specimen from a properly mixed laboratory sample using an appropriate syringe. If the proper density analyzer attachments and connecting tubes are used, as described in **6.4**, then the test specimen can be delivered directly to the analyzer's sample tube from the mixing container. For automated injections, it is necessary to first transfer a portion of sample by appropriate means from a properly mixed laboratory sample to the autosampler vials, and take the necessary steps to ensure the integrity of the test specimen prior to and during the analysis. Sample vials for the autosampler shall be sealed immediately after filling up to 80 % ± 5 % and shall be kept closed until the auto sampler transfers the test specimen into the measuring cell. For highly volatile samples, cool the sample prior to measurement. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

NOTE 3—Overfilled sample vials can result in cross-contamination between sample vials.

⁴ Suitable solvent naphthas are marketed under various designations such as "Petroleum Ether," "Ligroine," or "Precipitation Naphtha."

9. Preparation of Apparatus

9.1 Set up the density analyzer (including the constant temperature bath and related attachments, if necessary) following the manufacturer's instructions. Adjust the bath or internal temperature control so that the desired test temperature is established and maintained in the sample compartment of the analyzer. Calibrate the instrument at the same temperature at which the density or relative density of the sample is to be measured or perform an adjustment (see **3.2.1**—Discussion) in preparation of analyzing samples. (**Warning**—Precise setting and control of the test temperature in the sample tube is extremely important. An error of 0.1 °C can result in a change in density of one in the fourth decimal when measuring in units of grams per millilitre.)

10. Calibration of Apparatus

10.1 As a minimum requirement, calibration of the instrument is required when first set up, whenever the test temperature is changed (unless the instrument is capable of performing an adjustment; see **3.2.1** Discussion), or as dictated by quality control (QC) sample results (see **11.1**).

10.2 When calibration of the instrument is required, it is necessary to calculate the values of the constants *A* and *B* from the periods of oscillation (*T*) observed when the sample cell contains air and freshly boiled (**Warning**—Handling water at boiling or near boiling temperature can present a safety hazard. Wear appropriate personal protective equipment.) reagent water. Other calibrating materials such as *n*-nonane, *n*-tridecane, cyclohexane, and *n*-hexadecane (for high temperature applications) can also be used as appropriate, provided the reference materials have density values that are certified and traceable to national standards.

NOTE 4—On certain newer, commercially available instruments, a viscosity correction feature may be available and utilized in density determinations to minimize potential biases. Refer to information in the Section **15** for more specifics.

10.2.1 While monitoring the oscillator period, *T*, flush the sample tube with cleaning solvent, followed with an acetone flush and dry with dry air. Contaminated or humid air can affect the calibration. When these conditions exist in the laboratory, pass the air used for calibration through a suitable purification and drying train. In addition, the inlet and outlet ports for the U-tube must be plugged during measurement of the calibration air to prevent ingress of moist air.

10.2.2 Allow the dry air in the U-tube to come to thermal equilibrium with the test temperature and record the *T*-value for air.

10.2.3 Introduce a small volume, about 1 mL to 2 mL, of freshly boiled (**Warning**—Handling water at boiling or near boiling temperature can present a safety hazard. Wear appropriate personal protective equipment.) reagent water into the sample tube using a suitable syringe or alternate, as described in **6.4** and **6.5**. The test portion must be homogeneous and free of even the smallest air or gas bubbles. Allow the display to reach a steady reading and record the *T*-value for water.

10.2.4 Calculate the density of air at the temperature of test using the following equation: