



Standard Test Methods for Chemical, Mass Spectrometric, Spectrochemical, Nuclear, and Radiochemical Analysis of Nuclear-Grade Plutonium Nitrate Solutions¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation C 759; 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 These test methods cover procedures for the chemical, mass spectrometric, spectrochemical, nuclear, and radiochemical analysis of nuclear-grade plutonium nitrate solutions to determine compliance with specifications.

1.2 The analytical procedures appear in the following order:

	Sections
Plutonium by Controlled-Potential Coulometry	2
Plutonium by Amperometric Titration with Iron(II)	2
Plutonium by Diode Array Spectrophotometry	
Free Acid by Titration in an Oxalate Solution	8 to 15
Free Acid by Iodate Precipitation-Potentiometric Titration Test Method	16 to 22
Uranium by Arsenazo I Spectrophotometric Test Method	23 to 33
Thorium by Thorin Spectrophotometric Test Method	34 to 42
Iron by 1,10-Phenanthroline Spectrophotometric Test Method	43 to 50
Impurities by ICP-AES	
Chloride by Thiocyanate Spectrophotometric Test Method	51 to 58
Fluoride by Distillation-Spectrophotometric Test Method	59 to 66
Sulfate by Barium Sulfate Turbidimetric Test Method	67 to 74
Isotopic Composition by Mass Spectrometry	75 to 76
Plutonium — ²³⁸ Isotopic Abundance by Alpha Spectrometry	
Americium-241 by Extraction and Gamma Counting	77 to 85
Americium-241 by Gamma Counting	86 to 94
Gamma-Emitting Fission Products, Uranium, and Thorium by Gamma-Ray Spectroscopy	94 to 102
Rare Earths by Copper Spark Spectrochemical Test Method	103 to 105
Tungsten, Niobium (Columbium), and Tantalum by Spectrochemical Test Method	106 to 114
Sample Preparation for Spectrographic Analysis for General Impurities	123 to 126

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.* For specific safeguard and safety hazard statements, see Section 6.

¹ These test methods are under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee C26 on Nuclear Fuel Cycle and are the direct responsibility of Subcommittee C26.05 on Methods of Test.

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² Discontinued as of November 15, 1992.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*³

- C 697 Test Methods for Chemical, Mass Spectrometric, and Spectrochemical Analysis of Nuclear-Grade Plutonium Dioxide Powders and Pellets
- C 852 Guide for Design Criteria for Plutonium Gloveboxes
- C 1009 Guide for Establishing a Quality Assurance Program for Analytical Chemistry Laboratories Within the Nuclear Industry
- C 1068 Guide for Qualification of Measurement Methods by a Laboratory Within the Nuclear Industry
- C 1108 Test Method for Plutonium by Controlled-Potential Coulometry
- C 1128 Guide for Preparation of Working Reference Materials for Use in the Analysis of Nuclear Fuel Cycle Materials
- C 1156 Guide for Establishing Calibration for a Measurement Method Used to Analyze Nuclear Fuel Cycle Materials
- C 1165 Test Method for Determining Plutonium by Controlled Potential Coulometry in H₂SO₄ at a Platinum Working Electrode
- C 1206 Test Method for Plutonium by Iron (II)/Chromium (VI) Amperometric Titration
- C 1210 Guide for Establishing a Measurement System Quality Control Program for Analytical Chemistry Laboratories Within the Nuclear Industry
- C 1235 Test Method for Plutonium by Titanium(III)/Cerium(IV) Titration
- C 1268 Test Method for Quantitative Determination of Americium 241 in Plutonium by Gamma-Ray Spectrometry
- C 1297 Guide for Qualification of Laboratory Analysts for the Analysis of Nuclear Fuel Cycle Materials

³ 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.

- C 1307 Test Method for Plutonium Assay by Plutonium(III) Diode Array Spectrophotometry
- C 1415 Test Method for ²³⁸Pu Isotopic Abundance by Alpha Spectrometry
- C 1432 Test Method for Determination of Impurities in Plutonium: Acid Dissolution, Ion Exchange matrix Separation, and Inductively Coupled Plasma-Atomic Emission Spectroscopic (ICP/AES) Analysis
- D 1193 Specification for Reagent Water
- E 50 Practices for Apparatus, Reagents, and Safety Precautions for Chemical Analysis of Metals
- E 115 Practice for Photographic Processing in Optical Emission Spectrographic Analysis
- E 116 Practice for Photographic Photometry in Spectrochemical Analysis

3. Significance and Use

3.1 These test methods are designed to show whether a given material meets the purchaser's specifications.

3.1.1 An assay is performed to determine whether the material has the specified plutonium content.

3.1.2 Determination of the isotopic content of the plutonium in the plutonium-nitrate solution is made to establish whether the effective fissile content is in compliance with the purchaser's specifications.

3.1.3 Impurity content is determined by a variety of methods to ensure that the maximum concentration limit of specified impurities is not exceeded. Determination of impurities is also required for calculation of the equivalent boron content (EBC).

4. Committee C-26 Safeguards Statement⁴

4.1 The material (plutonium nitrate) to which these test methods apply is subject to nuclear safeguards regulations governing its possession and use. The following analytical procedures in these test methods have been designated as technically acceptable for generating safeguards accountability measurement data: Plutonium by Controlled-Potential Coulometry; Plutonium by Amperometric Titration with Iron(II); Plutonium by Diode Array Spectrophotometry and Isotopic Composition by Mass Spectrometry.

4.2 When used in conjunction with appropriate Certified Reference Materials (CRMs), these procedures can demonstrate traceability to the national measurement base. However, adherence to these procedures does not automatically guarantee regulatory acceptance of the resulting safeguards measurements. It remains the sole responsibility of the user of these test methods to assure that their application to safeguards has the approval of the proper regulatory authorities.

5. Reagents and Materials

5.1 *Purity of Reagents*—Reagent grade chemicals shall be used in all test methods. Unless otherwise indicated, it is intended that all reagents shall conform to the specifications of the Committee on Analytical Reagents of the American Chemi-

cal Society, where such specifications are available.⁵ 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.

5.2 *Purity of Water*—Unless otherwise indicated, reference to water shall be understood to mean reagent water conforming to Specification D 1193.

6. Safety Hazards

6.1 Since plutonium bearing materials are radioactive and toxic, adequate laboratory facilities, gloved boxes, fume hoods, etc., along with safe techniques, must be used in handling samples containing these materials. A detailed discussion of all the precautions necessary is beyond the scope of these test methods; however, personnel who handle these materials should be familiar with such safe handling practices as are given in Guide C 852 and in Refs (1) through (3).⁶

7. Sampling

7.1 A sample representative of the lot shall be taken from each lot into a container or multiple containers that are of such composition that corrosion, chemical change, radiolytic decomposition products, and method of loading or sealing will not disturb the chemical or physical properties of the sample. (A flame-sealed quartz vial that is suitable for accommodating pressure resulting from radiolytic decomposition is generally considered to be an acceptable sample container.)

7.2 Sample size shall be sufficient to perform the following:

7.2.1 Assay and acceptance tests at the seller's plant,

7.2.2 Assay and acceptance tests at the purchaser's plant, and

7.2.3 Referee tests in the event they become necessary.

7.3 All samples shall be identified clearly, including the seller's lot number.

7.3.1 A lot is defined as any quantity of aqueous plutonium nitrate solution that is uniform in isotopic, chemical, and physical characteristics by virtue of having been mixed in such a manner as to be thoroughly homogeneous.

7.3.2 All containers used for a lot shall be identified positively as containing material from a particular homogeneous solution.

PLUTONIUM BY CONTROLLED-POTENTIAL COULOMETRY

(This test method was discontinued in 1992 and replaced by Test Method C 1165.)

PLUTONIUM BY CONTROLLED-POTENTIAL COULOMETRY

(With appropriate sample preparation, controlled-potential coulometric measurement as described in Test Method C 1108 may be used for plutonium determination.)

⁴ Based upon Committee C-26 Safeguards Matrix (C 1009, C 1068, C 1128, C 1156, C 1210, C 1297.).

⁵ "Reagent Chemicals, American Chemical Society Specifications," Am. Chemical 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. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., New York, NY, and the "United States Pharmacopeia."

⁶ The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to the list of references at the end of these test methods.

PLUTONIUM BY AMPEROMETRIC TITRATION WITH IRON(II)

(This test method was discontinued in 1992 and replaced by Test Method C 1206.)

TEST METHOD FOR PLUTONIUM ASSAY BY PLUTONIUM(III) DIODE ARRAY SPECTROPHOTOMETRY

(With appropriate sample preparation, the measurement described in Test Method C 1307 may be used for plutonium determination.)

FREE ACID BY TITRATION IN AN OXALATE SOLUTION

8. Scope

8.1 This test method covers the determination of free acid in plutonium nitrate solutions (4, 5).

9. Summary of Test Method

9.1 Free acid is determined by titrating an aliquot of sample, which contains an excess of ammonium oxalate added to complex the plutonium, back to the original pH of the ammonium oxalate solution with standard sodium hydroxide solution. Micropipets and microburets are required to measure the small volume of sample and titrant used.

10. Interferences

10.1 Any metal ions not complexed by oxalate which form precipitates at the pH of the end point of the titration will cause interference in this test method.

NOTE 1—A “rule of thumb” is that 1 mL of saturated ammonium oxalate solution will complex 6.4 mg of plutonium.

11. Apparatus

- 11.1 *Magnetic Stirrer.*
- 11.2 *Microburet.*
- 11.3 *Micropipets.*
- 11.4 *pH Meter.*

12. Reagents and Materials

12.1 *Ammonium Oxalate Solution*, saturated.

12.2 *Nitric Acid* (3.50 N)—Prepare solution by diluting concentrated nitric acid (HNO₃, sp gr 1.42) with water. Standardize by titrating 0.500-mL aliquots with 0.100 N NaOH solution.

12.3 *Sodium Hydroxide Solution* (0.100 N)—Prepare and standardize in accordance with Practices E 50.

13. Procedure

13.1 Transfer 1.0 mL of saturated ammonium oxalate solution to a small vial and dilute to about 2 mL with water.

13.2 Add a stirring bar and insert the electrodes and start stirrer. When the pH value becomes stable, record the value as the pH of reagent.

NOTE 2—Normally, the pH value for the saturated solution is approximately 6.4.

13.3 Add 20 μL of sample to the vial, rinse the pipet thoroughly with water, and stir the solution for 1 min.

13.4 Titrate with 0.100 N NaOH solution to within one pH unit of the end point; then, by adding successively smaller increments, titrate to the pH of the ammonium oxalate reagent and record the volume of titrant.

NOTE 3—Allow time for the pH reading to stabilize between additions of titrant as the end point is approached.

13.5 Make a daily check of the system by adding 20 μL of 3.50 N HNO₃ to a sample that has already been titrated to the end point and titrate with standard 0.100 N NaOH solution back to the same pH.

14. Calculation

14.1 Calculate the free acid (H⁺, N) as follows:

$$H^+, N = (A \times N)/V \quad (1)$$

where:

A = microlitres of standard NaOH solution required to titrate sample,

N = normality of NaOH standard solution, and

V = volume of sample, μL.

15. Precision and Bias

15.1 *Precision*—Of individual results, ± 5 % at the 95 % confidence level.

15.2 *Bias*—99.4 %.

FREE ACID BY IODATE PRECIPITATION- POTENTIOMETRIC TITRATION TEST METHOD

16. Scope

16.1 This test method covers the determination of free acid in strong acid solutions of plutonium nitrate.

17. Summary of Test Method

17.1 Free acid is determined by potentiometric titration with standard sodium hydroxide solution after precipitation and subsequent removal of plutonium (up to 50 mg) as plutonium iodate.

18. Interferences

18.1 Any hydrolyzable ions that are not precipitated with iodate will interfere.

19. Reagents and Materials

19.1 *Hydrochloric Acid* (sp gr 1.19)—Concentrated hydrochloric acid (HCl).

19.2 *Nitric Acid* (1 + 14)—Dilute 14 volumes of water with 1 volume of concentrated nitric acid (HNO₃, sp gr 1.42).

19.3 *Potassium Iodate* (0.3 M)—Dissolve 64.2 g of potassium iodate (KIO₃) in 900 mL of water, adjust the pH to 4.3 by adding HNO₃ (1 + 14), and dilute to 1 L with water.

19.4 *Sodium Hydroxide* (0.3 M)—Prepare and standardize in accordance with Practices E 50 after making the following alterations: Use 15 mL of the NaOH solution (50 g/50 mL), and in step 42.2, transfer 1.200 g of National Institute for Standards