



Standard Practice for Sampling, Storage, and Handling of Hydrocarbons for Mercury Analysis¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers the types of and preparation of containers found most suitable for the handling of hydrocarbon samples for the determination of total mercury.

1.2 This practice was developed for sampling streams where the mercury speciation is predominantly Hg(0) present as a mixture of dissolved Hg(0) atoms, adsorbed Hg(0) on particulates (for example, carbonaceous or mineral fines and Fe₂O₃) and suspended droplets of metallic mercury.

1.3 The presence of suspended droplets of metallic mercury (often called “colloidal” mercury, since the droplet size can be very small) can make obtaining a representative sample very difficult for a variety of reasons (for example, non-isokinetic sampling of the liquid can result in over- or under-collection of suspended droplets and collection of mercury that has accumulated in dense larger drops and pools on the bottom of piping and in sample taps). Pay strict attention to the detailed procedure (Section 7) to ensure representative samples are collected.

1.4 When representative test portions are collected and analyzed in accordance with acceptable procedures, the total mercury is representative of concentrations in the sample.

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 **Warning**—Mercury has been designated by EPA and many state agencies as a hazardous material that can cause central nervous system, kidney, and liver damage. Mercury, or its vapor, may be hazardous to health and corrosive to materials. Caution should be taken when handling mercury and mercury-containing products. See the applicable product Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for details and EPA’s website (<http://www.epa.gov/mercury/faq.htm>) for additional information. Users should be aware that selling mercury or mercury-containing products, or both, in your state may be prohibited by state law.

1.7 *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*:²

D 4175 Terminology Relating to Petroleum, Petroleum Products, and Lubricants

2.2 *EPA Standard*:³

EPA Method 1669 Sampling Ambient Water for Trace Metals at EPA Water Quality Criteria Levels; July 1996; US Environmental Protection Agency

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of terms used in this standard, refer to Terminology **D 4175**.

3.2 *Abbreviations*:

3.2.1 *VOA*—Volatile Organic Analysis

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 This practice describes the sampling, storage, transport, and handling of hydrocarbon samples used for determining mercury, and the precautions that need to be taken to prevent sample contamination and loss of analyte.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This practice is intended for use in sampling liquid hydrocarbons including crude oils, condensates, refinery process intermediates, and refined products. Generally these samples are expected to contain mercury from the parts per billion (10⁻⁹ mass) to parts per million (10⁻⁶ mass) range.

5.2 This practice is not intended for use when sampling aqueous systems where the concentrations of mercury are often in the parts per trillion (10⁻¹² mass) range. These samples are often better addressed by using the rigorously clean techniques from the **EPA Method 1669** “clean hands, dirty hands” sampling procedures.

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 Available from United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Ariel Rios Bldg., 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20460 (www.epa.gov).

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D02 on Petroleum Products and Lubricants and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D02.03 on Elemental Analysis.

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5.3 This practice is not intended for use for liquefied samples, for which special containers may be required for pressurized samples.

5.4 The presence of mercury during crude oil production, transport, and refining can be an environmental and industrial hygiene concern.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Clear or Amber Borosilicate Glass*, 40-mL or less in volume; pre-cleaned by acid-washing; with PTFE (polytetrafluoroethylene)-lined septum caps. These are commonly referred to as VOA vials and are used for many water samples using EPA methods.

6.1.1 The use of 30-mL or smaller VOA vials may allow shipment of multiple sample vials as “excepted quantities” under IATA (International Air Transport Association) regulations. Determine specific shipping requirements with the appropriate knowledgeable personnel.

6.2 *Alternate Containers—Quartz*. Epoxy-lined, tin-lined, or steel cans for direct or sub-sample may not be acceptable because, in some cases, these types of containers show a significant depletion of mercury (see 9.1 and 9.2).

6.2.1 Tin-lined steel cans, direct or sub-sample, are not acceptable.

6.3 *Chain of Custody Forms*.

6.4 *Permanent Marking Pens*.

6.5 *Resealable Bags*—Clear, plastic, 1-L capacity.

7. Sampling Procedure

7.1 Employ the normal hydrocarbon sampling procedures necessary to obtain discrete and homogeneous samples. Either grab samples or composites from auto-samplers are allowed. Grab samples are preferred. When expecting particulates with adsorbed mercury or mercury droplets, iso-kinetic sampling is greatly preferred.

7.2 Wash the VOA vials with nitric acid, rinse with water, and dry.

7.3 A sample “set” is defined as three VOA glass vials. Each vial is individually wrapped with a plastic bag, and then the set of three vials are overpacked in an appropriate container for transport or shipping. A set of three individually bagged sample vials may be bundled together and placed in a larger bag to separate them from other sample sets included in the same shipment. Adsorbant material may be packed around the bagged vials to further protect against damage during shipping and release of one or more of the sample vials if it ruptures.

7.4 One sample set is required for each sampling event. Fill three sample vials for each oil sampled as close to the same point in time as possible.

7.5 Sampling shall be done directly into the VOA vials if possible. If it is necessary to sample into one container and then transfer into the VOA vial, record the details of the original container and sampling method, as well as the details of the transfer. Auto-samplers are acceptable, but the container and plumbing materials and transfer details shall be documented in the notebook or Chain of Custody (COC) form.

7.6 Purge sample taps sufficiently immediately prior to sampling to remove any elemental mercury droplets that have accumulated in the piping, valve, or crevices. In some cases,

significant amounts of elemental mercury have been found to accumulate in sample taps. Proper collection or recycling of the purge is important to prevent release of mercury and worker exposure.

7.7 It is imperative that persons conducting or supervising the sampling procedure understand the conditions that cause evaporative or other loss of mercury. While bulk mercury droplets are not highly volatile (vapor pressure <1 mmHg at 20°C) in many hydrocarbons, the dissolved mercury readily evaporates with an apparent vapor pressure similar to butane or pentane. Also, mercury can readily adsorb on many metal surfaces. Sample taps shall not contain process-contact materials composed of copper, zinc, tin, aluminum, brass, bronze, Monel or other alloys containing these metals.

7.8 To avoid loss of mercury vapor from the samples, proceed as follows:

7.8.1 Fill the vial as quickly as possible, filling the vial with, at most, 1-mL remaining.

7.8.2 Cap the vials immediately to minimize time of exposure to the open atmosphere.

7.8.3 In some cases, recapping the vial under a slow stream of nitrogen back in a laboratory hood has been valuable in preventing oxidation of elemental mercury during shipping.

7.9 *COC Form*—The COC form will accompany samples delivered to the laboratory. Record sample containers and plumbing materials information (especially for auto-samplers) in the permanent record or on the COC form. Note sampling details in the permanent record (notebook) and on the COC form, or both. At a minimum, record the following sample data on a permanent record and on the COC form, or both:

7.9.1 Description of the sample point (sample point number, process stream name, physical location, stream temperature and pressure, and the like).

7.9.2 Names and roles of persons in drawing the samples.

7.9.3 Description of the sampling procedure, including:

7.9.3.1 Exact start and end times.

7.9.3.2 Approximate time to fill individual vials.

7.9.3.3 Any subsampling or auto-sampling procedure notes.

7.9.3.4 Ambient conditions (like temperature and precipitation).

7.9.3.5 Physical appearance of the sample when taken and after cooling (for example, clear and bright, or cloudy, or presence of solids or visible mercury droplets).

7.9.3.6 Any problems encountered.

7.10 Allow samples to cool to ambient conditions prior to packing and shipping. Hydrocarbon samples for mercury analysis need not be cooled below ambient temperature. After the samples are at ambient temperature, examine the cap and septum. If cooling has produced a major distortion of the septum, loosen the cap to allow the head-space vacuum (or pressure) to equilibrate. Allow a minimum amount of air (or a slow sweep of nitrogen) ingress to eliminate the vacuum, then tighten the cap thoroughly.

7.11 Affix labels to each sample vial either before or after sampling each set. Clean the vial exterior to remove any oil. Labels shall include sample identification details and date of sampling, as well as the identity of the person responsible for collecting the sample.