



Standard Test Method for Analysis of Phenol by Capillary Gas Chromatography¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 6142; 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 known impurities in phenol by gas chromatography (GC). It is generally meant for the analysis of phenol of 99.9 % or greater purity.

1.2 The following applies to all specified limits in this test method: for purposes of determining conformance with this test method, an observed value or calculated value shall be rounded off “to the nearest unit” in the last right-hand digit used in expressing the specification limit in accordance with the rounding-off method of Practice E 29. Precision data is based on impurity concentrations of 15 to 70 mg/kg. Users of this test method believe it is linear over a wider range.

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 hazard statements, see Section 9.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:

D 3852 Practice for Sampling and Handling Phenol, Cresols, and Cresylic Acid²

D 4790 Terminology of Aromatic Hydrocarbons and Related Chemicals²

E 29 Practice for Using Significant Digits in Test Data to Determine Conformance with Specifications³

E 355 Practice for Gas Chromatography Terms and Relationships⁴

E 691 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method³

E 1510 Practice for Installing Fused Silica Open Tubular Capillary Columns in Gas Chromatographs⁴

2.2 Other Document:

OSHA Regulations, 29 CFR, paragraphs 1910.1000 and 1910.1200⁵

3. Terminology

3.1 See Terminology D 4790 for definition of terms used in this method.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 A known amount of an internal standard is added to a sample of phenol. The prepared sample is mixed and analyzed by a gas chromatograph equipped with a flame ionization detector (FID). The peak area of each impurity and the internal standard is measured. The amount of each impurity is calculated from the ratio of the peak area of the internal standard versus the peak area of the impurity. Results are reported in milligrams per kilogram.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method is suitable for setting specifications on phenol and for use as an internal quality control tool where phenol is produced or is used in a manufacturing process. It may also be used in development or research work involving phenol. It is generally applied to determining those commonly occurring impurities such as mesityl oxide, cumene, hydroxyacetone, acetone, alpha-methylstyrene, 2-methylbenzofuran, acetophenone, o-cresol, and m & p-cresol.

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 components are contained within the material being examined.

6. Interferences

6.1 The internal standard chosen must be sufficiently resolved from any impurity and the phenol peak.

¹This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D16 on Aromatic Hydrocarbons and Related Chemicals and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D16.02 on Oxygenated Aromatics.

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²Annual Book of ASTM Standards, Vol 06.04.

³Annual Book of ASTM Standards, Vol 14.02.

⁴Annual Book of ASTM Standards, Vol 03.06.

⁵ Available from U.S. Government Printing Office Superintendent of Documents, 732 N. Capitol St., NW, Mail Stop: SDE, Washington, DC 20401.

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

TABLE 1 Instrument Conditions for Phenol Analysis

	To use for identification of all but cresols	To use for identification of all components
Column:	fused silica	fused silica
Tubing	polyethylene glycol-acid modified	(5 % Phenyl)-methylpolysiloxane
Stationary phase	crosslinked	bonded and crosslinked
Solid support	0.5	1.0
Film thickness, μ	50	60
Length, m	0.32	0.32
Inside diameter, m	1.3	1.3
Flow rate mL/min		
Temperature, °C		
Injector	180	200
Detector	230	220
Oven		
Initial, °C	110 for 6 min	165 for 10 min
Rate, °C	12 per min	10 per min
Final, °C	210 for 90 min	250 for 90 min
Internal Standard	<i>sec</i> -butyl alcohol	<i>sec</i>

6.2 Any solvent used must also be sufficiently resolved from any impurity, the internal standard, and the phenol peak.

7. Apparatus

7.1 *Gas Chromatograph*—Any chromatograph having a flame ionization detector that can be operated at the conditions given in [Table 1](#). The system should have sufficient sensitivity to obtain a minimum peak height response for a 2-mg/kg impurity twice the height of the signal background noise.

7.2 *Columns*—Different columns have been found satisfactory, depending on the impurities of interest.

7.2.1 The column must give satisfactory resolution of the internal standard from phenol and the impurity peaks. [Table 1](#) contains a description of two columns that have been found to be satisfactory, polyethylene glycol-acid modified for all impurities except cresols, and 5 % phenyl-methylpolysiloxane for all impurity species.

7.3 *Recorder*—Electronic integration is recommended.

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, where such specifications are available.⁶ 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.

8.2 *High Purity Phenol*, (99.99 % or greater purity).

8.3 *Carrier Gas*, chromatographic grade nitrogen or helium.

8.4 *Pure Compounds for Calibration*, shall include mesityl oxide, cumene, hydroxyacetone, acetone, alpha-methylstyrene, 2-methylbenzofuran, and acetophenone. The purity of all reagents should be 99.9 % or greater. 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.

⁶ *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., Dorset, U.K., and the *United States Pharmacopeia and National Formulary*, U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.

8.4.1 *Internal Standard*—*sec*-Butylalcohol is one possible internal standard. However, other compounds may be found acceptable provided they meet the criteria as defined in [Section 6](#) and [8.4](#).

9. Hazards

9.1 Consult current [OSHA regulations](#), supplier's Material Safety Data Sheets, and local regulations for all materials used in this test method.

10. Sampling

10.1 Refer to [Practice D 3852](#) for proper sampling and handling of phenol analyzed by this test method.

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](#). Allow sufficient time for the equipment to reach equilibrium. See [Practices E 355](#) and [E 1510](#) for additional information on gas chromatography practices and terminology.

12. Calibration

12.1 Prepare synthetic mixtures of phenol with representative impurities on a weight basis. Weigh each impurity to the nearest 0.0001 g.

NOTE 1—Phenol will freeze at room temperature. The sample and syringe must be kept warm to prevent freezing. An alternative is to add about 10 % by weight of a solvent such as methanol that will not be an interference in the chromatogram.

12.2 Using the exact weight, or alternatively exact volumes and densities (see [Table 2](#)), calculate the mg/kg concentration for each impurity in each calibration blend of [12.1](#).

12.3 To a known weight of synthetic mixture, add a measured weight of *sec*-butyl alcohol as the internal standard. Calculate the concentration of internal standard in mg/kg (25 to 50 mg/kg is reasonable). Mix well.

12.4 Inject the resulting solution from [12.3](#) into the chromatograph. A typical chromatogram for each column is illustrated in [Fig. 1](#) and [Fig. 2](#).

12.5 Determine the response factor for each impurity relative to *sec*-butyl alcohol by measuring the area under each peak and calculate as follows: