



Standard Test Methods for Phosphorus in Lubricating Oils and Additives¹

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

1. Scope

1.1 These test methods cover the determination of phosphorus in unused lubricating oils and lubricating oil additives and their concentrates. The test methods are not restricted with respect to the type of phosphorus compounds that may be present—for example, trivalent or pentavalent phosphorus compounds, phosphines, phosphates, phosphonates, phosphorus sulfides, and so forth—since all are quantitatively converted to an aqueous solution of orthophosphate ion by oxidation of the sample during the course of analysis.

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

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.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards*:²

[D1193 Specification for Reagent Water](#)

[D4057 Practice for Manual Sampling of Petroleum and Petroleum Products](#)

[D4177 Practice for Automatic Sampling of Petroleum and Petroleum Products](#)

[D6299 Practice for Applying Statistical Quality Assurance and Control Charting Techniques to Evaluate Analytical Measurement System Performance](#)

¹ These test methods are under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D02 on Petroleum Products, Liquid Fuels, and Lubricants and are the responsibility of Subcommittee D02.03 on Elemental Analysis.

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This test method has been adopted for use by government agencies to replace Method 5661 of Federal Test Method Standard No. 791b.

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. Summary of Test Method

3.1 Organic material in the sample is removed and the phosphorus is converted to phosphate ion by oxidation with sulfuric acid, nitric acid, and hydrogen peroxide. One of these procedures is then followed:

	Sections
Oxidation of the Sample	7 – 11
Photometric (Molybdenado) Method	12 – 18
Gravimetric Method	19 – 25

3.2 The photometric method is used where the phosphorus content is estimated to be under 2 %, and the gravimetric method is used for phosphorus contents of 2 % or over.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 Knowledge of the phosphorus content, and thus the phosphorus-containing additives, in a lubricating oil or additive can be used to predict performance characteristics. This test method is suitable for most applications requiring the determination of phosphorus.

5. Purity of Reagents

5.1 *Purity of Reagents*—Reagent grade chemicals shall be used in all tests. Unless otherwise indicated, it is intended that all reagents 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.

5.2 *Purity of Water*—Unless otherwise indicated, references to water shall be understood to mean reagent water as defined by Type II or Type III of Specification [D1193](#).

6. Sampling

6.1 Obtain samples in accordance with the instructions in Practices [D4057](#) or [D4177](#).

³ *Reagent Chemicals, American Chemical Society Specifications*, American Chemical Society, Washington, D.C. 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.

6.2 Take care that the test specimen is thoroughly representative of the material to be tested and that the portion of the sample is thoroughly representative of the test unit.

OXIDATION OF THE SAMPLE

7. Scope

7.1 This test method covers a procedure for removal of organic material and subsequent conversion of phosphorus to phosphate ion in samples of unused lubricating oils, lubricating oil additives, and their concentrates.

8. Summary of Test Method

8.1 Organic material in the sample is destroyed and the phosphorus is converted to phosphate ion by oxidation with sulfuric acid, nitric acid, and hydrogen peroxide. The residual hydrogen peroxide is removed by diluting with water and evaporating several times to dense white fumes.

9. Apparatus

9.1 *Digestion Flasks*, Kjeldahl flasks, 300 mL, ground-glass stoppered.

9.2 *Digestion Rack*—A digestion rack constructed to hold one or more 300 mL Kjeldahl flasks at an angle of approximately 45° in such a fashion that direct heat is applied only to the bottom of the flask and such that the body and neck of the flask are insulated from the source of heat. Approximately three-fourths of the neck of the flask should be cooled by air at atmospheric temperature, preferably by directing an air stream against the neck of the flask. A Bunsen flame or high capacity electric heater are suitable heat sources.

10. Reagents

10.1 *Hydrogen Peroxide (30 %)*, concentrated hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂) (**Warning**—Concentrated solutions are highly toxic and strong oxidants.) containing no more than 0.0002 % phosphorus.

10.2 *Nitric Acid (sp gr 1.42)*, concentrated nitric acid (HNO₃).

10.3 *Sulfuric Acid (sp gr 1.84)*, concentrated sulfuric acid (H₂SO₄).

10.4 *White Oil*, phosphorus-free.

10.5 *Quality Control (QC) Samples*, preferably, portions of one or more liquid petroleum materials that are stable and representative of the samples of interest. These QC samples can be used to check the validity of the testing process, as described in Section 26.

11. Procedure

11.1 Weigh out a portion of the material to be analyzed, in accordance with **Table 1**, into a 300 mL Kjeldahl flask. Any convenient method of transferring the test specimen may be used as long as care is taken to avoid getting the test specimen on the neck of the flask (see **Note 1**). Add H₂SO₄ (3 mL for the photometric procedure, or 10 mL for the gravimetric procedure) and a 6-mm glass bead (see **Note 2**), and swirl the flask to mix the contents.

TABLE 1 Sample Size

Phosphorus Content, %	Approximate Weight of Sample, g	Precision of Weighing, plus or minus, g
		Photometric (Molybdivanado) Method
0.002 to 0.2	2	0.004
0.2 to 2	0.2	0.0004
Gravimetric Method		
2 to 5	2	0.004
5 to 10	1	0.003
10 to 15	0.7	0.002
15 to 25	0.4	0.001

11.2 To obtain satisfactory accuracy with the small amounts of phosphorus involved, it is necessary to take extensive precautions in handling. The usual precautions of cleanliness, careful manipulation, and avoidance of contamination should be scrupulously observed; also, all glassware should be cleaned before use, with cleaning acid or by some procedure that does not involve use of commercial detergents. These compounds often contain alkali phosphates, which are strongly absorbed by glass surfaces and are not removed by ordinary rinsing. It is desirable to segregate a special stock of glassware for use only in the determination of phosphorus.

NOTE 1—The volume occupied by the glass bead (0.1 mL) can be ignored for ordinary work. Excessive bumping is encountered occasionally in the digestion of some organic phosphorus compounds. This bumping can be minimized by using a glass bead. Some difficulty can be experienced when using commercial boiling aids in obtaining a solution clear enough for photometric measurement of phosphorus (see Sections 12 – 18) even after centrifuging, due to the attrition of these boiling aids under the vigorous digestion procedure.

11.3 Make a blank determination following the same procedure and using the same amounts of all reagents and a similar size sample of phosphorus-free white oil. This blank is for use in the photometric method (see Sections 12 – 18).

11.4 Place the flask on the digestion rack under a hood and warm gently with a micro burner until the test specimen is charred, while cooling the neck of the flask, preferably by use of an air stream (see **Note 2**). Continue heating until dense white fumes appear (see **Note 3**). While boiling, continuously add 1 mL of HNO₃ dropwise (see **Note 4**) to oxidize the organic material. When the HNO₃ has boiled off and dense white fumes reappear, repeat the treatment with an additional 1 mL of HNO₃ (see **Note 5**). Continue the addition of HNO₃ in 1 mL increments until the digestion mixture is no darker than a straw color, indicating that almost all the organic matter has been oxidized.

NOTE 2—The amount of air used to cool the neck of the flask will at times have to be reduced or even shut off to allow vapors and fumes to leave the flask and to allow sample to come to dense white fumes. However, this should not be done until the test specimen is in a well-decomposed state; the air stream should be turned on again each time before the addition of the HNO₃ or H₂O₂ (see 11.4).

NOTE 3—Excessive evaporation of H₂SO₄ should be avoided to minimize any loss of phosphorus that may occur. Care should be exercised to avoid heating above the liquid level. Since there is some indication that with test specimens containing inorganic compounds (that is, barium or lead salts) there can be losses of phosphorus due to sintering or fusion of the phosphate and sulfate to the glass, it is well to examine the dried vessel after use to detect any opaque film of fused material.

NOTE 4—Unless the HNO₃ is added dropwise, it can force excessive

amounts of vapor from the flask and lead to loss of phosphorus containing fumes.

NOTE 5—To minimize the loss of H_2SO_4 in the digestion process, it is advisable not to prolong the dense white fumes stage between addition of HNO_3 .

11.5 Cool the flask slightly and add 10 drops (0.5 mL) of H_2O_2 . Heat until dense white fumes appear, and while boiling, cautiously add 1 mL of HNO_3 dropwise. When the HNO_3 has boiled off and dense white fumes reappear, repeat the treatment with H_2O_2 and HNO_3 until the digestion mixture is colorless, at which time the organic material will be completely oxidized. Four treatments will usually suffice. The total amount of H_2O_2 used should be noted, and the same amount used for each test specimen and the blank.

11.6 When oxidation is complete, allow the flask to cool, wash down the mouth and neck with a minimum amount of water (5 mL), and mix the contents. Return the flask to the digestion rack and continue heating to the appearance of dense white fumes. Repeat the process of the addition of water and heating to dense fumes several times. This will remove all traces of H_2O_2 . (**Warning**—Use extreme care in fuming, in accordance with 11.5, to remove all traces of H_2O_2 so that no color interference will be experienced when phosphorus is to be determined photometrically, as described in Sections 12 – 18.)

PHOTOMETRIC (MOLYBDIVANADO) METHOD

12. Scope

12.1 This test method covers determination of total phosphorus in concentrations of less than two mass % (see Note 6), calculated on the basis of the original test specimen, in samples treated by the acid-oxidation procedure described in Sections 7 – 11.

NOTE 6—For phosphorus concentrations greater than or equal to two mass %, see Sections 19 – 25.

13. Summary of Test Method

13.1 After oxidation of organic material in the test specimen and quantitative conversion of the phosphorus to phosphate ion, the acidity of the digestion mixture is adjusted and the mixture diluted to suitable volume. Solutions of ammonium vanadate and ammonium molybdate are added in the order named. The addition of the molybdate solution to the acid vanadate-phosphate mixture results in the formation of a heteropoly acid, molybdivanadophosphoric acid, which is yellow in color. Although the exact composition of molybdivanadophosphoric acid is uncertain, solutions of this compound, when formed in accordance with carefully prescribed conditions, have been found to conform to the Beer-Lambert law for optical transmittance measurements made at 420 nm to 470 nm as a function of phosphorus content.

14. Apparatus

14.1 *Photoelectric Photometer*—A spectrophotometer capable of isolating a 5 nm spectral band at 430 nm and 460 nm is a suitable instrument for use in this determination. The instrument should be equipped with auxiliary facilities for handling 1 cm, 2 cm, and 5 cm cells, and a supply of these

should be available. Other instruments such as photoelectric filter photometers may also be used.

NOTE 7—While not as desirable as photometers, visual color comparators can also be used, if necessary.

15. Reagents

15.1 *Ammonium Molybdate Solution*—Dissolve 50 g of ammonium molybdate ($(\text{NH}_4)_6\text{Mo}_7\text{O}_{24}\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$) in warm water and dilute to 1 L. Filter before using.

15.2 *Ammonium Vanadate Solution*—Dissolve 2.5 g of ammonium vanadate (NH_4VO_3) in 500 mL of hot water, add 20 mL of concentrated nitric acid (HNO_3 relative density 1.42), and dilute to 1 L.

15.3 *Phosphate, Standard Solution (1 mL = 0.1 mg P)*—Dissolve 0.4393 g of potassium dihydrogen phosphate (KH_2PO_4) in water and dilute to 1 L. For best work, the salt should be twice recrystallized and vacuum-dried before use.

15.4 *Sulfuric Acid (relative density 1.84)*, concentrated sulfuric acid (H_2SO_4).

15.5 *QC Samples*, preferably, portions of one or more liquid petroleum materials that are stable and representative of the samples of interest. These QC samples can be used to check the validity of the testing process, as described in Section 26.

16. Calibration and Standardization

16.1 Introduce 0 mL, 0.4 mL, 0.8 mL, 1.6 mL, 2.4 mL, 4.0 mL, 4.8 mL, 8.0 mL, 16 mL, 24 mL, and 32 mL of standard phosphate solution into 100 mL ground-glass-stoppered volumetric flasks. Add sufficient H_2SO_4 of any convenient concentration such that the final acid concentration after dilution to 100 mL will be 0.5 N. Dilute to 55 mL to 60 mL, and add 10 mL of ammonium vanadate solution and ammonium molybdate solution, in the order named, with adequate mixing between additions. Dilute to 100 mL, close with a ground-glass stopper, and mix thoroughly. Allow to stand at least 45 min but no longer than 60 min to develop the color.

16.2 Using the 1 cm cell and with the wave length set at 460 nm, adjust the photometer to read 100.0 % transmittance with the zero phosphate (reagent blank) standard. Although absorption cells are usually very closely matched, for best work it is recommended that two cells be used and that one be reserved for the blank and the other for the standard or sample solutions. Obtain transmittance measurements on solutions containing 0.4 mg, 0.8 mg, 1.6 mg, 2.4 mg, and 3.2 mg of phosphorus. These standards should give measurements falling between 90 % and 20 % respectively. After making a measurement, return to the reagent blank cell. This should check the 100.0 % setting within 0.2 %. Repeat the reading of the standard and return to the blank. Obtain three readings in all of each standard solution. Using semilog graph paper, plot the average transmittance as a function of phosphorus content. The resultant curve should be a straight line.

16.3 In a similar manner, prepare calibration curves at 460 nm for the 2 cm and 5 cm cells, selecting concentrations from the series of standards that give readings between 20 % and 90 %.