



# Standard Test Method for Determining Concentration of Airborne Single-Crystal Ceramic Whiskers in the Workplace Environment by Phase Contrast Microscopy<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D6057; 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 ( $\epsilon$ ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

## 1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the sampling methods and analysis techniques used to assess the airborne concentration of single-crystal ceramic whiskers (SCCW), such as silicon carbide and silicon nitride, which may occur in and around the workplace where these materials are manufactured, processed, transported, or used. This test method is based on the collection of fibers by filtration of a known quantity of air through a filter. The filter is subsequently evaluated with a phase contrast microscope (PCM) for the number of fibers meeting appropriately selected counting criteria. This test method cannot distinguish among different types of fibers. This test method may be appropriate for other man-made mineral fibers (MMMMF).

1.2 This test method is applicable to the quantitation of fibers on a collection filter that are greater than 5  $\mu\text{m}$  in length, less than 3  $\mu\text{m}$  in width, and have an aspect ratio equal to or greater than 5:1. The data are directly convertible to a statement of concentration per unit volume of air sampled. This test method is limited by the diameter of the fibers visible by PCM (typically greater than 0.25  $\mu\text{m}$  in width) and the amount and type of coincident interference particles.

1.3 A more definitive analysis may be necessary to confirm the identity and dimensions of the fibers located with the PCM, especially where other fiber types may be present. Such techniques may include scanning electron microscopy (SEM) or transmission electron microscopy (TEM). The use of these test methods for the identification and size determination of SCCW is described in Practice [D6058](#) and Test Methods [D6059](#) and [D6056](#).

1.4 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. The values given in parentheses are for information only.

<sup>1</sup> This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D22](#) on Air Quality and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D22.04](#) on Workplace Air Quality.

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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.*

## 2. Referenced Documents

### 2.1 ASTM Standards:<sup>2</sup>

- [D1193](#) Specification for Reagent Water
- [D1356](#) Terminology Relating to Sampling and Analysis of Atmospheres
- [D4532](#) Test Method for Respirable Dust in Workplace Atmospheres Using Cyclone Samplers
- [D6056](#) Test Method for Determining Concentration of Airborne Single-Crystal Ceramic Whiskers in the Workplace Environment by Transmission Electron Microscopy
- [D6058](#) Practice for Determining Concentration of Airborne Single-Crystal Ceramic Whiskers in the Workplace Environment
- [D6059](#) Test Method for Determining Concentration of Airborne Single-Crystal Ceramic Whiskers in the Workplace Environment by Scanning Electron Microscopy
- [E691](#) Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method

## 3. Terminology

### 3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *analytical sensitivity, n*—airborne fiber concentration represented by a single fiber counted in the PCM.

3.1.1.1 *Discussion*—Although the terms *fiber* and *whisker* are, for convenience, used interchangeably in this test method, whisker is correctly applied only to single-crystal fibers whereas a fiber may be single- or poly-crystalline or may be noncrystalline.

3.1.2 *aspect ratio, n*—the ratio of the length of a fiber to its width.

<sup>2</sup> For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org), or contact ASTM Customer Service at [service@astm.org](mailto:service@astm.org). For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

3.1.3 *fiber, n*—for the purpose of this test method, an elongated particle having a length greater than 5  $\mu\text{m}$ , a width less than 3  $\mu\text{m}$ , and an aspect ratio equal to or greater than 5:1.

3.1.4 *man-made mineral fiber, n*—any inorganic fibrous material produced by chemical or physical processes.

3.1.5 *single-crystal ceramic whisker, n*— a man-made mineral fiber that has a single-crystal structure.

3.2 For definitions of other terms used in this test method, see Terminology **D1356**.

#### 4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 The sample is collected on a mixed cellulose ester (MCE) filter by drawing air, using a sampling pump, through an open-face 25-mm electrically conductive sampling cassette assembly **(1,2)**.<sup>3</sup> A section of the opaque filter is converted into an optically transparent homogeneous specimen using an acetone vaporizer. The fibers are counted by PCM at a magnification of approximately 400 $\times$  using the criteria discussed in Section **11**. Results are expressed as a fiber concentration per unit volume of air and a fiber loading per unit area of filter. The airborne concentration is expressed as fibers per millilitre (f/mL) and the fiber loading is expressed as fibers per square millimetre (f/mm<sup>2</sup>).

#### 5. Significance and Use

5.1 The SCCW may be present in the workplace atmosphere where these materials are manufactured, processed, transported, or used. This test method can be used to monitor airborne concentrations of fibers in these environments. It may be employed as part of a personal or area monitoring strategy.

5.2 This test method is based on dimensional considerations only. As such, it does not provide a positive identification of the fibers counted. Analysis by SEM or TEM is required when additional fiber identification information is needed.

NOTE 1—This test method assumes that the analyst is familiar with the operation of PCM instrumentation and the interpretation of data obtained using this technique.

5.3 This test method is not appropriate for measurement of fibers with diameters less than approximately 0.25  $\mu\text{m}$  due to visibility limitations associated with PCM. The SEM or TEM methods may be used to provide additional size information of SCCW if needed (refer to Practice **D6058** for additional information on the use of these methods).

5.4 Results from the use of this test method shall be reported along with 95 % confidence limits for the samples being studied. Individual laboratories shall determine their intralaboratory coefficient of variation and use it for reporting 95 % confidence limits **(1,3,4)**.

#### 6. Interferences

6.1 All fibers meeting the dimensional criteria in Section **3** are not necessarily of the same composition. Since the PCM method does not differentiate based on chemistry or

<sup>3</sup> The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to a list of references at the end of this test method.

morphology, all fibers in accordance with the definitions in Section **3** shall be counted.

6.1.1 This test method has been designed to filter air for the determination of fiber concentration. However, filtration of air also involves collection of extraneous particles. Extraneous particles may obscure fibers by overlay or by discoloration of the filter. This situation can be managed by regulating the air volume sampled and thus the filter loading. Fibers should appear separated from other particles to ensure an adequate opportunity for their recognition as separate entities in the PCM and accurate counting. Some coincident particulate agglomeration does occur even with these guidelines. Analyze an alternate filter with a reduced loading if the obscuring condition appears to exceed 15 % of the filter area **(5)**. Redeposition of a portion of an overloaded filter is permitted only in circumstances where an alternate filter is not available and cannot be obtained through resampling (see **10.1.9**).

#### 7. Apparatus and Reagents

7.1 *Sampling Cassette*—Use a 25-mm, electrically conductive cassette assembly such as a three-piece cassette with an extension cowl or retainer ring, or both, containing a 0.45- $\mu\text{m}$  pore size MCE filter and a support pad. Seal the cassette assembly with shrink tape. Reloading of used cassettes is not permitted.

7.2 *Personal Sampling Pump*—Use a portable battery-operated pump for personal sampling. Each pump must be capable of operating within the range from 0.5 to 4 L/min and continuously over the chosen sampling period **(1)**. The flow must be free from pulsation. All pumps shall be calibrated prior to use **(6)**.

7.3 *Area Sampling Pump*—Use a personal sampling pump or a non-portable high-volume pump for area sampling. Each pump shall be capable of operating within the range from 0.5 to 16 L/min and continuously over the chosen sampling period **(1)**. The flow shall be free from pulsation. All pumps shall be calibrated prior to use **(6)**.

7.4 *Vinyl Tubing*, or equivalent.

7.5 *Microscope*—Positive phase contrast light, with green or blue filter, 8 to 10 $\times$  eyepiece, and 40 to 45 $\times$  phase objective (total magnification approximately 400 $\times$ ); numerical aperture = 0.65 to 0.75.

7.6 *Acetone Vaporizer*—A device used to clear the MCE filter by exposure to a small amount of vaporized acetone.

7.7 *Graticule*, with standardized 100- $\mu\text{m}$  diameter circular field at the specimen plane (calibrated area  $\approx 7.8 \times 10^{-3} \text{ mm}^2$ ), with the capability to compare diameters and lengths at 3 and 5  $\mu\text{m}$ , respectively, within the field of view.

NOTE 2—The graticule is custom-made for each microscope. Specify disk diameter needed to exactly fit the ocular of the microscope and the diameter (millimetres) of the circular counting area (see section **12.2.1**). The Walton-Beckett Type G-24 graticule or other equivalent graticules are recommended. Graticules designed for the NIOSH 7400 A rules, such as the Walton-Beckett Type G-22, are not recommended.

NOTE 3—In some microscopes, adjustments of the interocular distance will change the tube length and hence magnification of the microscope. Each analyst shall separately measure the diameter of his or her field of view and this value shall be used in all calculations.

7.8 *Phase Shift Test Slide equivalent to HSE/NPL*.<sup>4</sup>

7.9 *Telescope*, (ocular phase-ring centering) or Bertrand lens.

7.10 *Stage Micrometer*, (0.01-mm divisions).

7.11 *Tweezers*.

7.12 *Scalpel Blades*.

7.13 *MCE Filters*, 25 mm, 0.45 μm and 0.22 μm.

7.14 *Funnel/Filter Assembly*, 25 mm.

7.15 *Triacetin* (glycerol triacetate).

7.16 *Acetone*. (**Warning**—Acetone is a flammable liquid and requires precaution not to ignite it accidentally.)

7.17 *ASTM D1193 Type II Water* (particle free).

7.18 *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.<sup>5</sup> 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. Sample Collection

8.1 Collect samples of airborne SCCW on MCE filters using sampling cassettes and pumps in accordance with Section 7.

8.2 Remove the outlet plug from the sampling cassette and connect it to a sampling pump by means of flexible, constriction-proof tubing.

8.3 Perform a leak check of the sampling system by activating the pump with the closed cassette and rotameter (or other flow measurement device) in line. Any flow indicates a leak that must be eliminated before starting the sampling operation.

8.4 Remove the inlet plug from the sampling cassette to eliminate any vacuum that may have accumulated during the leak test; then remove the entire inlet cap.

8.5 Conduct personal and area sampling as follows:

8.5.1 For personal sampling, fasten the sampling cassette to the worker's lapel in the worker's breathing zone and orient it face down. Adjust the calibrated flow rate to a value between 0.5 and 4 L/min (1). Typically, a sampling rate between 0.5 and 2.5 L/min is selected (2-5,7). Also see Test Method D4532.

8.5.2 Place area samples on an extension rod facing down at a 45° angle. Adjust the calibrated flow rate to a value between 0.5 and 16 L/min (1). Typically, a sampling rate between 1 and 10 L/min is selected (8).

8.5.3 Set the sampling flow rate and time to produce an optimum fiber loading between 100 and 1300 f/mm<sup>2</sup> (1,2). The time of sampling can be estimated by using the following equation:

$$t = \frac{(A_c)(F_L)}{(Q)(C_e)10^3} \quad (1)$$

where:

$A_c$  = active filter collection area (~385 mm<sup>2</sup> for 25-mm filter),<sup>6</sup>

$t$  = time, min,

$F_L$  = fiber loading, f/mm<sup>2</sup>,

$Q$  = sampling flow rate, L/min,

$C_e$  = estimated concentration of SCCW, f/mL, and

$10^3$  = conversion factor.

NOTE 4—While the desired minimum loading is 100 f/mm<sup>2</sup>, the minimum loading that has statistical significance is 7 f/mm<sup>2</sup> after blank correction (1).

NOTE 5—Experience has shown that the fiber loading should not exceed 1300 f/mm<sup>2</sup> (12 fibers/graticule area, average value for all counted fields) for the majority of sampling situations (1).

8.5.4 At a minimum, check the flow rate before and after sampling. If the difference is greater than 10 % from the initial flow rate, the sample shall be rejected. Also see Test Method D4532.

8.6 Carefully remove the cassette from the tubing at the end of the sampling period (ensure that the cassette is positioned upright before interrupting the pump flow). Replace the inlet cap and inlet and outlet plugs, and store the cassette.

NOTE 6—Deactivate the sampling pump prior to disconnecting the cassette from the tubing.

8.7 Submit at least one field blank (or a number equal to 10 % of the total samples, whichever is greater) for each set of samples. Remove the cap of the field blank briefly (approximately 30 s) at the sampling site, then replace it. The field blank is used to monitor field sampling procedures. Field blanks shall be representative of filters used in sample collection (for example, same filter lot number).

8.8 Submit at least one unused and unopened sealed blank which is used to monitor the supplies purchased as well as procedures used in the laboratory. The sealed blank shall be representative of filters used in sample collection (for example, same filter lot number).

## 9. Transport of Samples

9.1 Ship the samples in a rigid container with sufficient packing material to prevent jostling or damage. Care shall be taken to minimize vibrations and cassette movement.

NOTE 7—Do not use shipping material that may develop electrostatic forces or generate dust.

NOTE 8—Shipping containers for 25-mm sampling cassettes are commercially available and their use is recommended.

9.2 Include in the container a list of samples, their descriptions, and all other pertinent information.

<sup>4</sup> The HSE/NPL Phase Shift Test Slide, Mark II.

<sup>5</sup> *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. Pharmacopeial Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.

<sup>6</sup> The active collection area ( $A_c$ ) should be measured periodically, especially if different types of cassettes are used.