



# Standard Test Method for Particle Count in Mineral Insulating Oil Using Automatic Optical Particle Counters<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D6786; 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 determination of particle concentration and particle size distribution in mineral insulating oil. It is suitable for testing oils having a viscosity of 6 to 20 mm<sup>2</sup>/s at 40°C. The test method is specific to liquid automatic particle analyzers that use the light extinction principle.

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:*<sup>2</sup>

[D923 Practices for Sampling Electrical Insulating Liquids](#)

2.2 *ISO Standards:*

[4406:1999 Hydraulic Fluid Power—Fluids—Method for Coding the Level of Contamination by Solid Particles](#)<sup>3</sup>

[11171:2010 Hydraulic Fluid Power—Calibration of Automatic Particle Counters for Liquids](#)<sup>3</sup>

## 3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions:*

3.1.1 *coincidence*—the presence of more than one particle in the sensing zone of a particle analyzer at the same time, causing mis-sizing and mis-counting of the particle present.

<sup>1</sup> This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D27 on Electrical Insulating Liquids and Gases and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D27.07 on Physical Test.

Current edition approved Oct. 1, 2015. Published October 2015. Originally approved in 2002. Last previous edition approved in 2008 as D6786–08. DOI: 10.1520/D6786-15.

<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.

<sup>3</sup> Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036, <http://www.ansi.org>.

The coincidence limit of the counter is determined by the maximum acceptable concentration of particles in the sensing zone and is supplied by the instrument manufacturer.

3.1.2 *concentration limit*—a direct function of coincidence and electronic saturation. The concentration limit of the system is determined by the maximum acceptable concentration of particles in the given sample and is supplied by the instrument manufacturer.

3.1.3 *electronic saturation level*—particle concentration at which the electronic circuitry of the analyzer ceases to function properly due to excessive counting rates.

3.1.4 *light extinction*—the reduction in intensity of a light beam passing through the sensing zone of a particle analyzer, caused by the absorption and/or scattering of the light by particles. Synonyms: light obscuration, light interruption, light blockage.

## 4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Samples are taken in particle-clean bottles that are suitable for particle analysis. The sample bottle is agitated to redistribute particles in the oil, then the oil is placed in an automatic particle counter, where the number of particles and their size distribution are determined by the light extinction principle.

4.2 As particles pass through the sensing zone of the instrument, the quantity of light reaching the detector is obscured. This signal is translated to an equivalent projected area diameter based on calibration with a NIST-traceable fluid (ISO Medium Test Dust suspension).

## 5. Significance and Use

5.1 Particles in insulating oil can have a detrimental effect on the dielectric properties of the fluid, depending on the size, concentration, and nature of the particles. The source of these particles can be external contaminants, oil degradation by-products, or internal materials such as metals, carbon, or cellulose fibers.

5.2 Particle counts provide a general degree of contamination level and may be useful in assessing the condition of specific types of electrical equipment. Particle counts can also be used to determine filtering effectiveness when processing oil.