



# Standard Test Method for API Gravity of Crude Petroleum and Petroleum Products (Hydrometer Method)<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D287; 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.

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

## 1. Scope\*

1.1 This test method covers the determination by means of a glass hydrometer in conjunction with a series of calculations of the API gravity of crude petroleum and petroleum products normally handled as liquids and having a Reid vapor pressure (Test Method [D323](#)) of 101.325 kPa (14.696 psi) or less. Gravities are determined at 60°F (15.56°C), or converted to values at 60°F, by means of Adjunct to [D1250](#) Guide for Petroleum Measurement Tables (API *MPMS* Chapter 11.1). These tables are not applicable to nonhydrocarbons or essentially pure hydrocarbons such as the aromatics.

1.2 The initial values obtained are uncorrected hydrometer readings and not density measurements. Values are measured on a hydrometer at either the reference temperature or at another convenient temperature, and readings corrected for the meniscus effect, the thermal glass expansion effect, alternate calibration temperature effects and to the reference temperature by means of volume correction tables.

1.3 The hydrometer readings determined shall be recorded before performing any calculations. Then the calculations required in Section 9 shall be performed and documented before using the final result in a subsequent calculation procedure (measurement ticket calculation, meter factor calculation, or base prover volume determination).

1.4 The values stated in inch-pound units are to be regarded as standard. The values given in parentheses are mathematical conversions to SI units that are provided for information only and are not considered standard.

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 applica-*

*bility of regulatory limitations prior to use. For specific warning statement, see [8.3](#).*

## 2. Referenced Documents

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

[D323](#) Test Method for Vapor Pressure of Petroleum Products (Reid Method)

[D1250](#) Guide for Use of the Petroleum Measurement Tables

[D1298](#) Test Method for Density, Relative Density, or API Gravity of Crude Petroleum and Liquid Petroleum Products by Hydrometer Method

[D6822](#) Test Method for Density, Relative Density, and API Gravity of Crude Petroleum and Liquid Petroleum Products by Thermohydrometer Method

[E1](#) Specification for ASTM Liquid-in-Glass Thermometers

[E100](#) Specification for ASTM Hydrometers

### 2.2 EI Standards:<sup>3</sup>

[Specifications for IP Standard Thermometers](#)

[IP Specifications for Petroleum Hydrometers](#)

### 2.3 API Standards:<sup>4</sup>

[MPMS Chapter 9.1](#) Test Method for Density, Relative Density, or API Gravity of Crude Petroleum and Liquid Petroleum Products by Hydrometer Method (ASTM Test Method [D1298](#))

[MPMS Chapter 9.3](#) Test Method for Density, Relative Density, and API Gravity of Crude Petroleum and Liquid Petroleum Products by Thermohydrometer Method (ASTM Test Method [D6822](#))

[MPMS Chapter 11.1](#) Temperature and Pressure Volume Correction Factors for Generalized Crude Oils, Refined Products, and Lubricating Oils (Adjunct to ASTM [D1250](#))

<sup>1</sup> This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D02](#) on Petroleum Products, Liquid Fuels, and Lubricants and the API Committee on Petroleum Measurement, and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D02.02](#) /COMQ, the joint ASTM-API Committee on Hydrocarbon Measurement for Custody Transfer (Joint ASTM-API).

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<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 Energy Institute, 61 New Cavendish St., London, WIG 7AR, U.K., <http://www.energyinst.org>.

<sup>4</sup> Available from American Petroleum Institute (API), 1220 L. St., NW, Washington, DC 20005-4070, <http://www.api.org>.

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

## 2.4 ASTM Adjuncts:

Adjunct to **D1250** Guide for Petroleum Measurement Tables (API MPMS Chapter 11.1)<sup>5</sup>

## 3. Terminology

### 3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *API gravity, n*—a special function of relative density 60/60°F (15.56/15.56°C), represented by:

$$^{\circ}\text{API} = [141.5/(\text{relative density } 60/60^{\circ}\text{F})] - 131.5 \quad (1)$$

No statement of reference temperature is required, since 60°F is included in the definition.

3.1.2 *hydrometer reading, n*—the point on the hydrometer scale at which the surface of the liquid cuts the scale.

3.1.2.1 *Discussion*—In practice for transparent fluids this can be readily determined by aligning the surface of the liquid on both sides of the hydrometer and reading the Hydrometer scale where these surface readings cut the scale (Hydrometer Reading – Observed). For nontransparent fluids the point at which the liquid surface cuts the Hydrometer scale cannot be determined directly and requires a correction (Meniscus Correction). The value represented by the point (Meniscus Reading) at which the liquid sample rises above the main surface of the liquid subtracted from the value represented by where the main surface of the liquid cuts the Hydrometer scale is the amount of the correction or Meniscus correction. This meniscus correction is documented and then subtracted from the value represented by the Meniscus Reading to yield the Hydrometer Reading corrected for the Meniscus (Hydrometer Reading – Observed, Meniscus Corrected).

3.1.3 *specific gravity, n*—historical term, no longer used, which has been replaced by *relative density*.

## 4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 This test method is based on the principle that the gravity of a liquid varies directly with the depth of immersion of a body floating in it. The floating body, which is graduated by API gravity units in this test method, is called an API hydrometer.

4.2 The API gravity is read by observing the freely floating API hydrometer and noting the graduation nearest to the apparent intersection of the horizontal plane surface of the liquid with the vertical scale of the hydrometer, after temperature equilibrium has been reached. The temperature of the sample is read from a separate accurate ASTM thermometer in the sample.

4.3 The observed hydrometer reading is corrected for the meniscus effect, the thermal glass expansion effect, alternate calibration temperature effects and reduced to the reference temperature by means of the volume correction tables. If necessary, the hydrometer cylinder and its contents are placed in a constant temperature bath to avoid excessive temperature variation during the test.

## 5. Significance and Use

5.1 Accurate determination of the gravity of petroleum and its products is necessary for the conversion of measured volumes to volumes at the standard temperature of 60°F (15.56°C).

5.2 This procedure is most suitable for determining the API gravity of low viscosity transparent liquids. This test method can also be used for viscous liquids by allowing sufficient time for the hydrometer to reach temperature equilibrium, and for opaque liquids by employing a suitable meniscus correction. Additionally for both transparent and opaque fluids the readings shall be corrected for the thermal glass expansion effect before correcting to the reference temperature.

5.3 When used in connection with bulk oil measurements, volume correction errors are minimized by observing the hydrometer reading at a temperature as close to reference temperature as feasible.

5.4 Gravity is a factor governing the quality of crude oils. However, the gravity of a petroleum product is an uncertain indication of its quality. Correlated with other properties, gravity can be used to give approximate hydrocarbon composition and heat of combustion.

5.5 Gravity is an important quality indicator for automotive, aviation and marine fuels, where it affects storage, handling and combustion.

## 6. Apparatus

6.1 *Hydrometers*, of glass, graduated in degrees API as listed in **Table 1** and conforming to Specification **E100**.

6.1.1 The user should ascertain that the instruments used for this method conform to the requirements set out above with respect to materials, dimensions, and scale errors. In cases where the instrument is provided with a calibration certificate issued by a recognized standardizing body, the instrument is classed as certified and the appropriate corrections for the meniscus effect, the thermal glass expansion effect, and alternative calibration temperature effects shall be applied to the observed readings prior to corrections. Instruments that satisfy the requirements of this test method, but are not provided with a recognized calibration certificate, are classed as uncertified.

6.2 *Thermometers*, having a range from –5 to +215°F and conforming to the requirements for Thermometer 12F as prescribed in Specification **E1** or Thermometer 64F of the Specification for IP Standard Thermometers.

6.2.1 Alternate measuring devices or systems may be used, provided that the total uncertainty of the calibrated system is no

**TABLE 1 Available Hydrometers Scaled, Degrees API**

Designation	Type	API Range, deg		Scale	
		Series Total	Each Unit	Division	Error
1H to 10H	long plain	–1 to 101	12	0.1	0.1
21H to 40H	short plain	0 to 101	6	0.1	0.2
51H to 60H	thermo	–1 to 101	12	0.1	0.1
71H to 74H	thermo	–1 to 41	12	0.1	0.1
<sup>A</sup>	thermo	15 to 51	8		

<sup>A</sup> Eight-degree range thermohydrometers are available.

<sup>5</sup> Available from ASTM International Headquarters. Order Adjunct No. **ADJD1250**. Original adjunct produced in 1983.