



Standard Test Method for Salts in Crude Oil (Electrometric Method)¹

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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 of the approximate chloride (salts) concentration in crude oil. The range of concentration covered is 0 to 500 mg/kg or 0 to 150 lb/1000 bbl as chloride concentration/volume of crude oil.

1.2 This test method measures conductivity in the crude oil due to the presence of common chlorides, such as sodium, calcium, and magnesium. Other conductive materials may also be present in the crude oil.

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

1.3.1 *Exception*—Acceptable concentration units are g/m³ or PTB (lb/1000 bbl).

1.4 *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 warning statements, see 7.3, 7.4, and 7.11.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

D381 Test Method for Gum Content in Fuels by Jet Evaporation

D1193 Specification for Reagent Water

D4928 Test Method for Water in Crude Oils by Coulometric Karl Fischer Titration

D5002 Test Method for Density and Relative Density of Crude Oils by Digital Density Analyzer

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D02 on Petroleum Products, Liquid Fuels, and Lubricants and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D02.03 on Elemental Analysis.

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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. Terminology

3.1 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.1.1 *PTB*—lb/1000 bbl.

3.1.2 *salts in crude oil*—commonly, chlorides of sodium, calcium, and magnesium dissolved in crude oil. Other inorganic chlorides may also be present.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 This test method measures the conductivity of a solution of crude oil in a mixed alcohol solvent when subjected to an electrical stress. This test method measures conductivity due to the presence of inorganic chlorides, and other conductive material, in the crude oil. A homogenized test specimen is dissolved in a mixed alcohol solvent and placed in a test cell consisting of a beaker and a set of electrodes. A voltage is impressed on the electrodes, and the resulting current flow is measured. The chloride (salt) content is obtained by reference to a calibration curve of current versus chloride concentration of known mixtures. Calibration curves are based on standards prepared to approximate the type and concentration of chlorides in the crude oils being tested.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method is used to determine the approximate chloride content of crude oils, a knowledge of which is important in deciding whether or not the crude oil needs desalting. The efficiency of the process desalter can also be evaluated.

5.2 Excessive chloride left in the crude oil frequently results in higher corrosion rates in refining units and also has detrimental effects on catalysts used in these units.

5.3 This test method provides a rapid and convenient means of determining the approximate content of chlorides in crude oil and is useful to crude oil processors.

6. Apparatus

6.1 The apparatus (see [Annex A1](#)) shall consist of a control unit capable of producing and displaying several voltage levels for applying stress to a set of electrodes suspended in a test beaker containing a test solution. The apparatus shall be

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

capable of measuring and displaying the current (mA) conducted through the test solution between the electrodes at each voltage level.

NOTE 1—Some apparatus are capable of measuring voltage and current internally and, after comparison to internal calibration curves, of displaying the resultant concentration.

6.2 *Test Beaker*—See **Annex A1**.

6.3 *Pipet, 10 mL (total delivery)*, shall be used in **10.3** and **11.1** when the viscosity of the crude oil material being analyzed is suitable to transfer the required volume for use in the test (see **6.3.1**). The type of pipet to use is one that is able to be rinsed to ensure the entire volume of the material is contained in the intended volume.

6.3.1 In some cases, the viscosity of the crude oil makes it difficult and impractical to transfer 10 mL of sample using a pipet. In such cases, it is permissible to use a 10-mL graduated cylinder in place of the pipet to transfer the neutral oil (**10.3**) and crude oil sample (**11.1**) to ensure consistency. The current precision statements are based on the use of 10-mL pipets only.

6.4 *Cylinders, 100 mL*, stoppered.

6.5 *Other volumetric and graduated pipets and volumetric flasks*.

7. Reagents and Materials

7.1 *Purity of Reagents*—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 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.

7.2 *Purity of Water*—Unless otherwise indicated, references to water shall be understood to mean reagent water as defined by Type II in Specification **D1193**.

7.3 *Mixed Alcohol Solvent*—Mix 63 volumes of 1-butanol and 37 volumes of absolute methyl alcohol (anhydrous). To each litre of this mixture, add 3 mL of water. (**Warning**—Flammable. Liquid causes eye burns. Vapor harmful. May be fatal or cause blindness if swallowed or inhaled.)

NOTE 2—The mixed alcohol solvent is suitable for use if its conductivity is less than 0.25 mA at 125 V ac (or 2 microsiemens). High conductivity can be due to excess water in the solvent and can indicate that the methyl alcohol used is not anhydrous.

7.4 *Hexanes, Reagent Grade*, (**Warning**—Extremely flammable, harmful if inhaled.)

NOTE 3—Hexanes solvent is sometimes referred to or sold by other names, such as petroleum naphtha, petroleum ether, ligroine, petroleum benzin, and industrial naphtha. One should confirm that it meets the requirements of **7.4**.

³ *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 *Annual 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.

7.5 *Calcium Chloride (CaCl₂) Solution (10 g/L)*—Transfer 1.00 ± 0.01 g of CaCl₂, or the equivalent weight of a hydrated salt, into a 100 mL volumetric flask and dissolve in 25 mL of water. Dilute to the mark with mixed alcohol solvent.

7.6 *Magnesium Chloride (MgCl₂) Solution (10 g/L)*—Transfer 1.00 ± 0.01 g of MgCl₂, or the equivalent weight of a hydrated salt, into 100 mL volumetric flask and dissolve in 25 mL of water. Dilute to the mark with mixed alcohol solvent.

7.7 *Sodium Chloride (NaCl) Solution (10 g/L)*—Transfer 1.00 ± 0.01 g of NaCl into a 100 mL volumetric flask and dissolve in 25 mL of water. Dilute to the mark with mixed alcohol solvent.

7.8 *Oil, Refined Neutral*—Any refined chloride-free oil of approximately 20 mm²/sec (cSt) viscosity at 40°C and free of additive.

7.9 *Salts, Mixed Solution (Concentrated Solution)*—Combine 10.0 mL of the CaCl₂ solution, 20.0 mL of the MgCl₂ solution, and 70.0 mL of the NaCl solution, and mix thoroughly.

NOTE 4—The 10:20:70 proportions are representative of the chlorides present in a number of common crude oils. When the relative proportions of calcium, magnesium, and sodium chlorides are known for a given crude oil, such proportions should be used for most the accurate results.

7.10 *Salts, Mixed Solution (Dilute Solution)*—Transfer 10 mL of the concentrated mixed chlorides solution into a 1000 mL volumetric flask, and dilute to the mark with mixed alcohol solvent.

7.11 *Xylene*, reagent grade, minimum purity. (**Warning**—Flammable. Vapor harmful.)

8. Sampling

8.1 Obtain a sample and test specimen in accordance with Test Method **D4928**. Ensure that the sample is completely homogenized with a suitable mixer. See Test Method **D4928** for suitable apparatus and proving.

8.2 Samples of very viscous materials may be warmed until they are reasonably fluid before they are sampled; however, no sample shall be heated more than is necessary to lower the viscosity to a manageable level.

8.3 Samples of crude oil contain water and sediment and are inhomogeneous by nature. The presence of water and sediment will influence the conductivity of the sample. The utmost care shall be taken in obtaining homogenized representative samples.

9. Preparation of Apparatus

9.1 Support the apparatus on a level, steady surface, such as a table.

9.2 Prepare the apparatus for operation in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions for calibrating, checking, and operating the equipment. (**Warning**—The voltage applied to the electrodes can be as great as 250 V ac, and hazardous.)

9.3 Thoroughly clean and dry all parts of the test beaker, the electrodes, and its accessories before starting the test, being sure to remove any solvent that had been used to clean the apparatus.

10. Calibration

10.1 The conductivity of solutions is affected by the temperature of the specimen when measurements are made. The temperature of the test specimen at the time of measurement shall be within 3°C of the temperature at which the calibration curves were made.

10.2 Establish a blank measurement by following the procedure in 10.3 and 10.4, omitting the mixed salts solution. When the indicated electrode current is greater than 0.25 mA at 125 V ac, water or another conductive impurity is present and its source must be found and eliminated before calibration can be completed. Determine a blank measurement each time fresh xylene or mixed solvent is used.

10.3 Into a dry, 100 mL graduated, glass-stoppered mixing cylinder, add 15 mL of xylene. From a 10 mL pipet (total delivery, see 6.3), or 10 mL graduated cylinder (see 6.3.1) when applicable, add 10 mL of neutral oil. Rinse the 10 mL pipet or 10 mL graduated cylinder with xylene until free of oil. Make up to 50 mL with xylene. Stopper and shake the cylinder vigorously for approximately 60 s to effect solution. Add a quantity of dilute mixed salts solution, in accordance with Table 1, that is appropriate to the range of salt contents to be measured. Dilute to 100 mL with mixed alcohol solvent. Again shake the cylinder vigorously for approximately 30 s to effect solution, and allow the solution to stand approximately 5 min. Pour the solution into a dry test beaker.

10.4 Immediately place the electrodes into the solution in the beaker, making sure that the upper edge of the electrode plates are below the surface of the solution. Adjust the indicated electrode voltage to a series of values, for example 25, 50, 125, 200, and 250 V ac. At each voltage, note the current reading and record the voltage displayed and the current to the nearest 0.01 mA. Remove the electrodes from the solution, rinse with xylene followed by naphtha, and allow them to dry.

NOTE 5—With some apparatus, the detailed settings will not be required since the electronics are built-in for auto-ranging. Determination of the blank and the calibration standard responses are the same.

10.5 Repeat the procedure in 10.3, using other volumes of mixed salts solution (dilute solution) as needed to cover the range of chloride contents of interest.

TABLE 1 Standard Samples

Salt, g/m ³ of Crude Oil	Salt, lb/1000 bbl of Crude Oil	Mixed Salts Solution (dilute), mL
3	1.0	0.3
9	3.0	1.0
15	5.0	1.5
30	10.0	3.0
45	16.0	4.5
60	21.0	6.0
75	26.0	8.0
90	31.0	9.5
115	40.0	12.0
145	51.0	15.0
190	66.0	20.0
215	75.0	22.5
245	86.00	25.5
290	101.0	30.5
430	151.0	45.0

10.6 Subtract the value obtained for the blank measurement from the indicated current readings of each standard sample, and plot the chloride content (ordinate) against net current (mA) readings (abscissa) for each voltage on 3 by 3 cycle log-log paper, or other suitable format.

NOTE 6—Some apparatus are capable of internally recording the current readings, standard concentration, and blank, and they provide an output in direct concentration units. Alternatively, some apparatus are also capable of internally converting and displaying the measured currents into conductivity units of microsiemens, μS , although the precision of such instruments was not evaluated in the 1997 interlaboratory study identified in Section 14, Precision and Bias.

NOTE 7—The apparatus are calibrated against standard solutions of neutral oil and mixed chloride solutions in xylene because of the extreme difficulties in keeping crude oil-brine mixtures homogeneous. The calibration may be confirmed, if desired, by careful replicate analysis of crude-oil samples by exhaustive extraction of salts with hot water, followed by titration of the chlorides in the extract.

NOTE 8—In calibrating over a wide range of chloride concentrations, it may be necessary to apply several voltages to obtain current readings within the limit of the apparatus current level display (0 to 10 mA). Higher voltages are applied for low concentrations and lower voltages are applied for high concentrations.

11. Procedure

11.1 To a dry, 100 mL graduated, glass-stoppered cylinder, add 15 mL of xylene and, using the same type of volume transferring device used in 10.3 (that is, either a 10 mL pipet (total delivery, see 6.3), or 10 mL graduated cylinder (see 6.3.1) when applicable), transfer 10 mL of the crude oil sample into the 100 mL graduated, glass-stoppered cylinder. Rinse the 10 mL pipet or 10 mL graduated cylinder with xylene until free of oil. Make up to 50 mL with xylene. Stopper and shake the cylinder vigorously for approximately 60 s. Dilute to 100 mL with mixed alcohol solvent, and again shake vigorously for approximately 30 s. After allowing the solution to stand for approximately 5 min, pour it into the dry test beaker.

11.2 Follow the procedure in 10.4 to obtain voltage and current readings. Record the indicated electrode current to the nearest 0.01 mA and the nearest voltage (see Note 6).

11.3 Remove the electrodes from the sample solution, and clean the apparatus.

12. Calculation

12.1 Subtract the value obtained for the blank measurement from the value obtained from the specimen measurement to obtain the net current reading. From the calibration graph, read the indicated salt concentration corresponding to the net current (mA) reading of the sample (see Note 6).

12.2 Calculate the concentration in mg/kg by using the appropriate equation given below:

$$\text{Salt, mg/kg} = \frac{1000X}{d} \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Salt, mg/kg} = 2853 Y/d \quad (2)$$

where:

X = measured salt concentration in g/m³,
 Y = measured salt concentration in PTB, and
 d = specimen density at 15 C in kg/m³.

NOTE 9—The density of the specimen can be determined by various