



Standard Test Method for Determination of Total Hydrocarbons in Hydrogen by FID- Based Total Hydrocarbon (THC) Analyzer¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D7675; 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 (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method describes a procedure for total hydrocarbons (THC) measurement in hydrogen intended as a fuel for fuel cells on a methane (C1) basis. The determination of total hydrocarbons on a C1 basis is an analytical technique where all of the hydrocarbons are assumed to have the same response as methane. Sensitivity from 0.1 part per million (ppm(v), $\mu\text{mole/mole}$) up to 1000 parts per million (ppm(v), $\mu\text{mole/mole}$) concentration are achievable. Higher concentrations can be analyzed using appropriate dilution techniques. This test method can be applied to other gaseous samples requiring analysis of trace constituents provided an assessment of potential interferences has been accomplished.

1.2 This test method is an FID-based hydrocarbon analysis method without the use of separation columns. Therefore, this method does not provide speciation of individual hydrocarbons. Several varieties of instruments are manufactured and can be used for this method.

1.2.1 This method provides a measure of total hydrocarbons “as methane,” because all hydrocarbon species are quantified the same as methane response, which is the sole species used for calibration. Magnitude of the FID response to an atom of carbon is dependent on the chemical environment of this atom in the molecule. This method provides the total hydrocarbon result as if all carbon atoms are from aliphatic, aromatic, olefinic, or acetylenic compounds, where the detector response caused by these atoms are approximately relative to the number of carbon atoms present in the molecule. Other types of molecules, including those containing oxygen or chlorine atoms will respond differently and usually much lower than the corresponding aliphatic hydrocarbon. Therefore other methods (Test Methods [D7653](#), [D7892](#), or equivalent) must be utilized to determine the exact constituents of the total hydrocarbon response determined by this method.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D03](#) on Gaseous Fuels and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D03.14](#) on Hydrogen and Fuel Cells.

Current edition approved Nov. 1, 2015. Published December 2015. Originally approved in 2011. Last previous edition approved in 2011 as D7675-11. DOI: 10.1520/D7675-15.

1.3 The proper handling of compressed gas cylinders containing air, nitrogen, hydrogen, or helium requires the use of gas regulators to preclude over-pressurization of any instrument component

1.4 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this 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 applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

[D7653](#) Test Method for Determination of Trace Gaseous Contaminants in Hydrogen Fuel by Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) Spectroscopy

[D7606](#) Practice for Sampling of High Pressure Hydrogen and Related Fuel Cell Feed Gases

[D7892](#) Test Method for Determination of Total Organic Halides, Total Non-Methane Hydrocarbons, and Formaldehyde in Hydrogen Fuel by Gas Chromatography/Mass Spectrometry

2.2 EPA Standards:³

[EPA 40 CRF Part 136 Appendix B: Definition and Procedure for the Determination of the Method Detection Limit](#)

2.3 SAE Standards:⁴

[SAE J2719](#) Hydrogen Quality Guideline for Fuel Cell Vehicles

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

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 Available from United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), William Jefferson Clinton Bldg., 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20460, <http://www.epa.gov>.

⁴ Available from SAE International (SAE), 400 Commonwealth Dr., Warrendale, PA 15096-0001, <http://www.sae.org>.

3.1.1 *C1 Hydrocarbon, n*—a hydrocarbon carbon content expressed in terms of methane.

3.1.2 *C2 Hydrocarbon, n*—a hydrocarbon carbon content expressed in terms of ethane.

3.1.3 *contaminant, n*—impurity or foreign material that makes a product less suitable or even unsuitable for the intended use or that adversely affects the components within the processing, storage, or distribution systems.

3.1.4 *dynamic calibration, n*—calibration of an analytical system using calibration gas standard concentrations generated by diluting known concentration compressed gas standards with purified inert gas.

3.1.5 *gaseous fuel, n*—hydrogen used as a fuel source for the operation of the flame ionization detector.

3.1.6 *gauge pressure, n*—pressure measured above ambient atmospheric pressure. Zero gauge pressure is equal to ambient atmospheric (barometric) pressure.

3.1.7 *pressurized sampling, n*—collection of a sample in a container with a (final) container pressure above atmospheric pressure.

3.1.8 *Shewart Control Chart, n*—statistical tool for monitoring and improving quality, originated by Walter Shewart in 1924.

3.1.9 *static calibration, n*—calibration of an analytical system using standards in a matrix, state, or manner different than the samples to be analyzed.

3.1.10 *student t-test, n*—a *t*-test is any statistical hypothesis test in which the test statistic follows a student's *t* distribution if the null hypothesis is supported.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 A hydrogen gas sample is analyzed via appropriate gas inlet system by a total hydrocarbon analyzer and compared to a reference standard mixture of known composition.

4.2 The total hydrocarbon analyzer utilizes the flame ionization method of detection. The sensor is a burner in which a regulated flow of sample gas passes through a flame sustained by regulated flows of air and a fuel gas (hydrogen or a hydrogen/diluent mixture). Within the flame, the hydrocarbon components of the sample stream undergo a complex ionization that produces electrons and positive ions. Polarized electrodes collect these ions, causing current to flow through electronic measuring circuitry. The ionization current is proportional to the rate at which carbon atoms enter the burner, and is therefore a measure of the concentration of hydrocarbons in the original sample, present as methane. The analyzer provides a readout on a front panel digital display and a selectable output for an accessory recorder.

4.3 To ensure stable, drift-free operation, particularly in high-sensitivity applications, an internal temperature controller maintains the analyzer interior at a constant temperature. A temperature of $50 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ is appropriate. This feature minimizes temperature-dependent variations in electronic current measuring circuitry and adsorption/desorption equilibrium of background hydrocarbons within the internal flow system.

4.4 To minimize system response time, an internal sample bypass feature provides high velocity sample flow through the analyzer.

4.5 This test method determines total carbon, and all of the hydrocarbons are assumed to have the same response as methane. Therefore, if the THC result is 1 ppm(v) and the hydrocarbon was methane (CH_4) there would be 1 μmole of methane/mole of hydrogen. However, if the THC result is 1 ppm(v) and as an example, the hydrocarbon was propane (C_3H_8), there would be 0.36 μmole of propane per mole of hydrogen.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Low operating temperature fuel cells such as proton exchange membrane fuel cells (PEM-FC) require high purity hydrogen for maximum material performance and lifetime. Analysis to 0.1 part per million (ppm(v)) concentration of total hydrocarbons (measured as methane) in hydrogen is necessary for ensuring a feed gas of sufficient purity to satisfy fuel cell system needs as defined in SAE J2719 or as specified in regulatory codes.

5.2 Dynamic dilution techniques using highly accurate mass flow controllers can be used with test samples that have total hydrocarbon content exceeding the upper limit of the instrument's linear range, without the need to recalibrate the instrument using higher levels of calibration standards. The sample can be diluted with a high purity grade of hydrogen (99.999 %, so long as it contains < 0.1 ppm(v) total hydrocarbons) to achieve a result of the total hydrocarbon content by applying the appropriate dilution factor to the result. Samples that contain total hydrocarbon concentrations greater than 1000 ppm(v) may be determined, although results will likely be achieved with reduced precision and should be analyzed by the dilution method.

5.3 Although not intended for application to gases other than hydrogen, techniques within this test method can be applied to other non-hydrocarbon gas samples requiring total hydrocarbon content determination. This can be achieved by using a zero gas and a calibration gas that consist of the same background gas as the actual sample. As an example, for the total hydrocarbon determination of nitrogen, the instrument zero point must be determined with a high purity grade of nitrogen (99.999 % and < 0.1 ppm(v) total hydrocarbons) and the instrument calibration must be done with a certified standard of methane in nitrogen in the appropriate range. This will correct for any interferences caused by the background gas.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Instrument*—Any instrument of standard manufacture, with hardware necessary for interfacing to a pressurized hydrogen sample and containing all the features necessary for the intended application(s) can be used.

6.1.1 This method uses a Flame Ionization Detector (FID). The principle components of the burner are the manifold, burner jet, and the collector. Streams of sample, fuel, and air delivered by the analyzer flow system are routed through internal passages in the manifold and into the interior of the