



Standard Test Method for Thermal Conductivity, Thermal Diffusivity and Volumetric Heat Capacity of Engine Coolants and Related Fluids by Transient Hot Wire Liquid Thermal Conductivity Method¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D7896; 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 covers the use of a transient hot wire liquid thermal conductivity method and associated equipment (the System) for the determination of thermal conductivity, thermal diffusivity and volumetric heat capacity of aqueous engine coolants, non-aqueous engine coolants, and related fluids. The System is intended for use in a laboratory.

1.2 The System directly measures thermal conductivity and thermal diffusivity without the requirement to input any additional properties. Volumetric heat capacity is calculated by dividing the thermal conductivity by the thermal diffusivity of the sample measured.

1.3 This test method can be applied to any aqueous or non-aqueous engine coolants or related fluid with thermal conductivity in the range of 0.1 to 1.0 W/m·K.

1.4 This test method excludes fluids that react with platinum.

1.5 The range of temperatures applicable to this test method is -20 to 100°C .

1.6 This test method requires a sample of approximately 40 mL.

1.7 The System may be used without external pressurization for any fluid having a vapor pressure of 33.8 kPa (4.9 psia) or less at the test temperature.

1.8 For a fluid having a vapor pressure greater than 33.8 kPa (4.9 psia) at the test temperature, external pressurization is required (see [Annex A2](#)).

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

1.9.1 *Exception*—Inch-pound units are provided in [1.7](#), [1.8](#), [4.1](#), [7.8](#), and [A2.1](#) for information.

1.10 *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

- [D1176 Practice for Sampling and Preparing Aqueous Solutions of Engine Coolants or Antirusts for Testing Purposes](#)
- [E691 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions of Thermal Related Units:

3.1.1 *density* (ρ), *n*—the mass per unit volume of a substance under specific conditions of pressure and temperature. Unit: kg/m^3 .

3.1.2 *specific heat capacity* (C_p), *n*—the amount of heat required to raise the temperature of a unit mass of material by 1°C . See [Annex A1](#). Unit: $\text{J}/(\text{kg}\cdot\text{K})$.

3.1.3 *thermal conductivity* (λ), *n*—rate of heat flow under steady conditions through unit area, per unit temperature gradient in the direction perpendicular to the area. Unit: $\text{W}/\text{m}\cdot\text{K}$.

3.1.4 *thermal diffusivity* (α), *n*—a measure of the ability of a substance to transmit a difference in temperature. Unit: m^2/s .

3.1.5 *volumetric heat capacity* (VHC), *n*—the amount of heat required to raise the temperature of a unit volume of material by 1°C . Volumetric heat capacity is the thermal conductivity of a material divided by its thermal diffusivity. Unit: $\text{J}/\text{m}^3\cdot\text{K}$.

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 *transient hot wire method*, *n*—a method for measurement of thermal properties wherein a thin wire is immersed in

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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.



Shown are the controller connected to the platinum-wire sensor with the sensor residing in the sampling cell, along with the liquid specimen. For non-ambient temperature readings, the sampling cell inserts into a temperature control peripheral (not shown). The computer downloads data from the controller for storage and for the creation of spreadsheets and reports.

FIG. 1 Transient Hot Wire Liquid Thermal Conductivity Apparatus

a liquid specimen that is contained in a sampling cell. An instant of current is sent through the wire, heating both the wire and specimen. Immediately afterward, the resistance of the wire is measured with respect to time, while the wire cools. A temperature-time profile of the specimen is produced and from this profile, thermal properties are determined.

3.2.1.1 *dry bath, n*—a temperature control peripheral with a central heating well that receives the sampling cell containing the liquid specimen for providing temperatures above ambient.

3.2.1.2 *heat exchanger and circulator, n*—a temperature control peripheral consisting of a refrigerated/heated circulator for heating and cooling that is connected to a heat exchanger. The heat exchanger has a central well that receives the sampling cell containing the liquid specimen, for providing temperatures above and below ambient.

3.2.1.3 *liquid, n*—refers to the engine coolant or related fluid sample.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 A fluid to be tested is placed inside the sampling cell assembly that is part of the System apparatus. The temperature within the sampling cell assembly is regulated by the use of a temperature control peripheral. Regardless of the test temperature, the sample and the System sensor are allowed to equilibrate to approximately the same temperature. The sampling cell assembly may be pressurized by up to a gauge pressure of 241 kPa (35 psig). The sensor, a thin platinum wire, is immersed in the liquid test sample. A current is introduced into the wire over the short test time of 0.8 s that heats both the wire and the liquid sample. The temperature of the wire and the resistance of the wire decay rapidly once the current is removed. The resistance of the wire is measured with respect to time and a temperature versus time profile for the liquid sample is created. From the temperature versus time profile, the thermal conductivity and thermal diffusivity of the liquid specimen are determined. Volumetric heat capacity is determined by dividing the measured thermal conductivity by the measured thermal diffusivity of the specimen.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method covers the measurement of thermal properties for engine coolants (aqueous or non-aqueous) and related fluids.

5.2 With each single measurement, the thermal conductivity (λ) and thermal diffusivity (α) are measured directly, and volumetric heat capacity (VHC) is determined by the relationship:

$$\text{VHC} = \lambda/\alpha \quad (1)$$

5.3 The test method is transient and requires only a small amount of specimen and a short duration of time (0.8 s) to run a measurement. These attributes minimize heat convection in the liquid.

5.4 The brief application of current to the sensor wire adds very little heat to the test specimen and ten repetitive tests may be applied at 30-s intervals without causing any significant convection or temperature drift.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Transient Hotwire Liquid Thermal Conductivity Measurement System:*

NOTE 1—The descriptions and instructions contained herein are based upon familiarity with the ThermTest, Inc. THW Lambda Transient Hot Wire Liquid Thermal Conductivity Meter.³ Other equivalent systems may be suitable for this application.

6.1.1 The apparatus for the test method (Fig. 1) consists of a sampling cell assembly with platinum wire sensor inserted, and a controller containing a microprocessor. Unless the measurements are to be made at ambient temperature, the apparatus also includes a temperature control peripheral (either a dry bath or heat exchanger and circulator type). In a typical implementation of the System, a personal computer is used for convenience and greater flexibility in operation, and software supplied by the manufacturer provides the user interface, control of test sequencing, data acquisition, and options for

³ <http://www.thermtest.com>.