



Designation: E1568 – 21

Standard Test Method for Determination of Gold in Activated Carbon by Fire Assay Gravimetry¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the determination of gold in activated carbon by fire assay collection and gravimetric measurement. It covers the range of 15 $\mu\text{g/g}$ to 5000 $\mu\text{g/g}$ gold.

1.2 *Units*—The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the 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, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.* For specific hazards statements, see Section 9, 11.2.3 – 11.2.5, and 11.3.4.

1.4 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

D2862 Test Method for Particle Size Distribution of Granular Activated Carbon

D2866 Test Method for Total Ash Content of Activated Carbon

D2867 Test Methods for Moisture in Activated Carbon

E29 Practice for Using Significant Digits in Test Data to Determine Conformance with Specifications

E50 Practices for Apparatus, Reagents, and Safety Considerations for Chemical Analysis of Metals, Ores, and Related Materials

E135 Terminology Relating to Analytical Chemistry for Metals, Ores, and Related Materials

E173 Practice for Conducting Interlaboratory Studies of Methods for Chemical Analysis of Metals (Withdrawn 1998)³

E276 Test Method for Particle Size or Screen Analysis at 4.75 mm (No. 4) Sieve and Finer for Metal-Bearing Ores and Related Materials

E300 Practice for Sampling Industrial Chemicals

E882 Guide for Accountability and Quality Control in the Chemical Analysis Laboratory

E1601 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Evaluate the Performance of an Analytical Method

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of terms used in this test method, refer to Terminology E135.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 The weighed test sample is ignited and fused with fire assay flux in a clay crucible. The lead metal from the fusion is separated and the precious metals concentrated by oxidation and adsorption of the lead on a cupel. The gold is annealed and the silver is parted with nitric acid. The mass is determined on a semi-microbalance.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 In the primary metallurgical processes used by the mineral processing industry for gold bearing ores, gold is extracted with alkaline cyanide solutions and adsorbed onto activated carbon for recovery of the metal. Metallurgical accounting, process control, and ore evaluation procedures for this type of mineral processing plant depend on accurate, precise, and prompt measurements of gold concentrations in the activated carbon.

5.2 This test method for gold in activated carbon is intended primarily as a referee method to test such materials for metal

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E01 on Analytical Chemistry for Metals, Ores, and Related Materials and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E01.02 on Ores, Concentrates, and Related Metallurgical Materials.

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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 The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.

content. It is assumed that those who use these procedures will be trained analysts capable of performing common laboratory procedures skillfully and safely. It is expected that work will be performed in a properly equipped laboratory and that proper waste disposal procedures will be followed. Appropriate quality control practices must be followed, such as those described in Guide [E882](#).

6. Interferences

6.1 Elements normally found in ore processing activated carbon do not interfere. When present, platinum group metals may be reported as gold in gravimetric fire assay determinations and must be less than 0.1 mg in the final gold bead.

7. Apparatus

- 7.1 *Analytical Balance*, capable of weighing to 0.1 g.
- 7.2 *Assay Mold*, 100 mL capacity.
- 7.3 *Cupel*, magnesite, 30 g lead capacity.
- 7.4 *Drying Oven*, having forced air circulation, with temperature control between 145 °C and 155 °C.
- 7.5 *Fire Clay Crucible*, 30 g sample capacity.
- 7.6 *Hot Plate*, having variable temperature control, used with ventilation control for acid fumes.
- 7.7 *Jeweler's Rolls*, capable of flattening doré beads.
- 7.8 *Muffle Furnace*, having air circulation with draft controls, capable of temperatures to 1100 °C, accurate to ± 10 °C, used with ventilation controls for lead fumes.
- 7.9 *Roasting Dish*, 15 g sample capacity.
- 7.10 *Semi-Microbalance*, capable of weighing to 0.01 mg.

8. Reagents

8.1 *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 Committee on Analytical Reagents of the American Chemical Society, where such specifications are available.⁴ 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.

8.2 *Ammonia Wash Solution, NH₄OH (1 + 17)*—Add 100 mL NH₄OH to 1700 mL of water.

8.3 *Borax (Na₂B₄O₇)*—Sodium borate powder, with gold content less than 0.001 µg/g.

8.4 *Fire Assay Flux Mixture*—Mix 575 g of litharge (PbO) with 275 g of soda ash (Na₂CO₃), 75 g of borax (Na₂B₄O₇), 75 g of silicon dioxide (SiO₂), and 30 g of baking flour.

8.5 *Lead Foil*—99.9 % minimum, with gold content less than 0.001 µg/g.

8.6 *Litharge (PbO)*—Lead oxide powder, with gold content less than 0.001 µg/g.

8.7 *Silicon Dioxide (SiO₂)*—Silicon dioxide powder, with gold content less than 0.001 µg/g.

8.8 *Silver Foil*—99.9 % minimum, with gold content less than 0.001 µg/g.

8.9 *Sodium Carbonate (Na₂CO₃)*—Sodium carbonate powder, with gold content less than 0.001 µg/g.

8.10 *Strong HNO₃ (1 + 2) Parting Solution*—Add 330 mL HNO₃ to 660 mL of water.

8.11 *Weak HNO₃ (1 + 4) Parting Solution*—Add 200 mL HNO₃ to 800 mL water.

9. Hazards

9.1 Refer to Practices [E50](#) for precautions to be observed in this test method.

9.2 Use care when handling hot crucibles and operating furnaces in order to avoid personal injury by either burn or electrical shock.

9.3 Lead and litharge are toxic materials and are volatile at relatively low temperatures. Use accepted safety procedures to avoid inhalation, ingestion, or skin contact.

9.4 Refer to **Warnings** in [11.2.3 – 11.2.5](#), and [11.3.4](#).

10. Sampling

10.1 Collect the sample in accordance with Practice [E300](#). Samples must be free of any extraneous materials such as sand, rocks, and wood.

10.2 *Sample Preparation*—Dry the sample, in accordance with the Oven-Drying Method of Test Methods [D2867](#), to constant weight at 150 °C. If the analysis of a particular particle size range is desired, separate fractions in accordance with Test Method [D2862](#).

10.3 *Test Sample*—Pulverize the gross sample so that at least 90 % passes a 150 µm (No. 100 or 100 mesh, Tyler) sieve, in accordance with Test Method [E276](#). Mix the gross sample. Determine the mass of duplicate test samples of 15.0 g ± 1.0 g, and record the test sample masses.

11. Procedure

11.1 Ignition:

11.1.1 Spread 5 g of silicon dioxide in the bottom of a preheated roasting dish.

11.1.2 Transfer the test sample to the top of the silica bed in the roasting dish.

11.1.3 Ash at 650 °C in a muffle furnace in accordance with Test Method [D2866](#). Cool.

11.2 Fusion:

11.2.1 Transfer calcine and silicon dioxide to a clay crucible containing 50 g of fire assay flux.

11.2.2 Cover with another 50 g of fire assay flux. Mix. Cover the mixture of 5 g of litharge.

11.2.3 Place the crucible in a muffle furnace at 1050 °C for 1 h. (**Warning**—Fire assay products produce toxic lead oxide

⁴ *Reagent Chemicals, American Chemical Society Specifications*, American Chemical Society, Washington, DC, www.chemistry.org. For suggestions on the testing of reagents not listed by the American Chemical Society, see the *United States Pharmacopeia and National Formulary*, U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD, <http://www.usp.org>.