



Standard Practice for Measuring the Concentration of Toxic Gases or Vapors Using Length-of-Stain Dosimeters¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This practice describes the detection and measurement of time weighted average (TWA) concentrations of toxic gases or vapors using length-of-stain colorimetric dosimeter tubes. A list of some of the gases and vapors that can be detected by this practice is provided in **Annex A1**. This list is given as a guide and should be considered neither absolute nor complete.

1.2 Length-of-stain colorimetric dosimeters work by diffusional sampling. The results are immediately available by visual observation; thus no auxiliary sampling, test nor analysis equipment are needed. The dosimeters, therefore, are extremely simple to use and very cost effective.

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 and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

D 1356 Terminology Relating to Sampling and Analysis of Atmospheres

2.2 *Other Document:*

Federal Occupational Safety and Health Standard—Title 29 1910.1000 Subpart Z³

3. Terminology

3.1 For definitions of terms used in this practice, refer to Terminology **D 1356**.

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D22 on Air Quality and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D22.04 on Workplace Atmospheres.

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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 Code of Federal Regulations, available from U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 Length-of-stain colorimetric dosimeters consist of a sealed glass tube containing a detector inside the tube **(1-5)**.⁴ The detector is a length of granulated material impregnated with a reactive chemical that is sensitive to the particular gas for which the dosimeter is designed. To use the tube, one end is opened. The gas, if present, diffuses into the tube and reacts with the chemical reagent on the carrier material, causing the latter to change color. Each lot of dosimeters is individually calibrated so that by measuring the length of stain and the time of exposure, the TWA concentration to which the dosimeter has been exposed can be determined directly and immediately.

4.2 Information on the correct use of length of stain dosimeter tubes is presented.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 The **Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration in 29 CFR 1910.1000** Subpart Z designates that certain gases and vapors present in work place atmospheres must be controlled so that their concentrations do not exceed specified limits.

5.2 This practice will provide a means for the determination of airborne concentrations of certain gases and vapors listed in 29 CFR 1910.1000.

5.3 A partial list of chemicals for which this practice is applicable is presented in **Annex A1** with current Threshold Limit Values (TLV) **(2)** and typical measurement ranges for the selected chemicals as obtained from various manufacturer's specifications.

5.4 This practice may be used for either personal or area monitoring.

6. Interferences

6.1 The instructions may provide correction factors to be applied when certain interferences are present. Some common

⁴ The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to the list of references appended to this practice.

interfering gases or vapors for each dosimeter are listed in the instruction sheets for the dosimeter provided by the manufacturers

7. Apparatus

7.1 Dosimeter Tube:

7.1.1 General Description—A length-of-stain dosimeter tube consists of a glass tube containing an inert granular material impregnated with a chemical system that reacts with the gas or vapor of interest. As a result of this reaction, the impregnated chemical changes color. The granular material is held in place within the glass tube by porous plugs of a suitable inert material. To protect the contents during storage, the ends of the glass tube are flame sealed. The calibration scale is printed on the tube to make it easy to read the length of stain of reacted chemical.

7.1.2 Stability on Storage—Stability on storage may vary depending on manufacturer and type of dosimeter, but most dosimeter tubes can be stored for at least 24 months with no deleterious effects.

7.2 Tube Holders—During use, the dosimeter tube is held in a lightweight, plastic holder. The tube holder protects the dosimeter during use and also helps to minimize effects of air currents on performance. The holder has a clip that allows it to be fastened to a collar or pocket during personal sampling or to some appropriate object during area sampling.

8. Reagents

8.1 The reagents used to impregnate the granular material in the dosimeters are specific for each tube, and, to detect a specific gas or vapor, may vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. The instruction sheets supplied by the manufacturers usually give the principal chemical reaction(s) that occur(s) in the tube.

9. Diffusional Sampling Theory

9.1 Fick's First Law of Diffusion states that the mass (m) of material that diffuses is directly proportional to the diffusion coefficient (D) of the material, the diffusional cross sectional area (A), the concentration gradient (Δc) and the time (t), and inversely proportional to the length of the diffusion path (l). These parameters are linked by Fick's First Law of Diffusion as follows:

$$\frac{dm}{dt} = \frac{DA\Delta c}{l} \quad (1)$$

The molecules of the contaminant reach the granular reagent layer. At this point the chemical conversion to a colored reaction product takes place. The increase in length of the color zone dl is proportional to the converted mass of contaminant dm (Eq 1).

$$dl = \frac{dm}{kA} \quad (2)$$

where:

k = absorption capacity of a layer element, ng/cm³, and
 A = cross-sectional area of the reagent layer, cm² assumed constant.

This process, called chemisorption, has the following effects on the remaining measuring process:

9.1.1 Since the gas molecules to be measured are bound chemically, they are practically no longer present in the atmosphere directly above the granular carrier material. Thus, additional sample molecules are able to flow into the detector tube according to Fick's First Law of Diffusion, since the concentration gradient Δc is maintained.

9.1.2 The effect of the color zone formed in the process is that the subsequent contaminant molecules must cover a longer diffusion path, l , until they reach the unused reagent layer. This means that the diffusion path, l , as defined in the diffusion law, is not constant, but becomes greater with progressive exposure. The transport rate dm/dt of the sample molecules decreases in the process. The slowdown in mass transport has a direct effect on the shape of the calibration curves of the indicating tubes. The mathematical correlation can be traced to Formulas 1 and 2. Eliminating the contaminant mass, dm , from Eq 1 and 2 and integrating yields:

$$c_{TWA} \equiv \frac{1}{t} \int_0^t \Delta c dt = \left(\frac{k}{2Dt} \right) \times l^2 \quad (3)$$

where c_{TWA} is the time-weighted average of the time-dependent concentration, Δc . Calibration curves described by this equation are not linear, but have the shape of a parabola when c_{TWA} is plotted versus l . Accounting for an air gap between tube entrance and sorbent, and also transverse analyte flow (if present), modifies Eq 3 through an additive constant and also a term proportional to the stain length, l (5).

9.1.3 The correlation of Eq 3 is confirmed by actual calibration curves of diffusion tubes. The influence of the product resulting from the concentration c and the measuring duration t on the detector tube indication l is shown in Fig. 1. A linear correlation is obtained between the square of the detector tube indication and the product resulting from the concentration and increasing time as shown by Fig. 2.

9.2 **Measurement Range**—The measurement range of the various length-of-stain dosimeters is shown in Annex A1.

9.3 **Air Velocity**—The sampling rate of the dosimeter tubes is very slow (of the order of 0.1 cm³/min); thus the "starving" effect in static air is not significant for these devices, so that air velocity is not critical. However, a stream of high velocity air should not be permitted to flow directly into the open end of the tube (parallel to the axis of the tube). The tube holder provides additional protection from turbulence within the dosimeter.

10. Sampling with Length-Of-Stain Dosimeter Tubes

10.1 **General**—Since these dosimeters work by diffusion, the procedure for using them is very simple. All that is necessary is to open one end of the dosimeter properly, place the opened tube into its holder, and fasten the holder to an object at a point where the sampling is to be done. Follow the instruction sheet of the manufacturer for the proper use of each dosimeter tube. The sampling starting time and ending time must be recorded so that the sampling time is known. This is needed to estimate the average concentration (TWA) over the sampling time.

10.2 **Determining the Concentration from the Dosimeter Tube**—The dosimeter tubes are calibrated in units of concentration \times time, typically [ppm(v) \times hours]. The average gas concentration can be determined by the following formula: