



Standard Test Method for Volatile Matter in the Analysis Sample of Coal and Coke¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 3175; 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 determines the percentage of gaseous products, exclusive of moisture vapor, in the analysis sample which are released under the specific conditions of the test.

1.2 This test method for determination of volatile matter is empirical; because of its empirical nature, strict adherence to basic principals and permissible procedures is required to obtain valid results.

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.*

1.4 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:

D 346 Practice for Collection and Preparation of Coke Samples for Laboratory Analysis²

D 2013 Method of Preparing Coal Samples for Analysis²

D 3173 Test Method for Moisture in the Analysis Sample of Coal and Coke²

3. Terminology

3.1 Definition:

3.1.1 *sparking fuels*—within the context of this test method, fuels that do not yield a coherent cake as residue in the volatile matter determination but do evolve gaseous products at a rate sufficient to mechanically carry solid particles out of the crucible when heated at the standard rate. Such coals normally include all low-rank noncaking coals and lignites but may also include those anthracites, semianthracites, bituminous, chars and cokes that lose solid particles as described above. These

are defined as sparking fuels because particles escaping at the higher temperatures may become incandescent and spark as they are emitted.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Volatile matter is determined by establishing the loss in weight resulting from heating a coal or coke under rigidly controlled conditions. The measured weight loss, corrected for moisture as determined in Test Method D 3173 establishes the volatile matter content. Two procedures are described to permit conformity with differences in sample behavior.

4.2 In this empirical test method, the use of platinum crucibles shall be considered the standard reference method for volatile matter. Platinum crucibles shall be used in determining the volatile matter of coke and volatile matter determined for classification of coals by rank. Volatile matter determinations by some laboratories using alternate nickel-chromium alloy crucibles having the physical dimensions specified in 6.1 have been shown to differ from those obtained using platinum crucibles. A laboratory utilizing nickel-chromium crucibles shall first determine if a relative bias exists between the use of nickel-chromium and platinum crucibles on the coals is being tested. Where a relative bias is shown to exist, the volatile matter determined using nickel-chromium crucibles shall be corrected by a factor determined through comparison of volatile matter results from both crucible types on coals being tested or analysis of samples of known proximate analysis.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Volatile matter, when determined as herein described, may be used to establish the rank of coals, to indicate coke yield on carbonization process, to provide the basis for purchasing and selling, or to establish burning characteristics.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Platinum Crucible*, with closely fitting cover, for coal. The crucible shall be of not less than 10 or more than 20-mL capacity, not less than 25 or more than 35 mm in diameter, and not less than 30 or more than 35 mm in height.

6.2 *Platinum Crucible*, with closely fitting cover, for coke. The crucible shall be of 10-mL capacity, with capsule cover having thin flexible sides fitting down into crucible. Or the

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² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 05.05.

7. Procedure

7.1 The sample shall be the material pulverized to No. 60 (250- μ m) sieve in accordance with Method D 2013 or Method D 346.

7.2 Procedure for Nonsparking Coals and Cokes:

7.2.1 Weigh 1 g of the sample in a weighed platinum crucible, close with a cover which fits closely enough so that the carbon deposit from bituminous, subbituminous, and lignite coals does not burn away from the underside, place on platinum or Nichrome-wire supports and insert directly into the furnace chamber, which shall be maintained at a temperature of $950 \pm 20^\circ\text{C}$, and lower immediately to the 950°C zone. Regulation of the temperature to within the prescribed limits is critical. After the more rapid discharge of volatile matter has subsided, as shown by the disappearance of the luminous flame, or in the case of coke, after 2 or 3 min, inspect the crucible (see Note 1) to verify that the lid is still properly sealed. If necessary, reseal the lid to guard against the admission of air into the crucible. Do this as rapidly as possible by raising the crucible to the top of the furnace chamber, reposition the lid to more perfectly seal the crucible, then lower the crucible immediately back to the 950°C zone. After heating for a total of exactly 7 min, remove the crucible from the furnace and without disturbing the cover, allow it to cool. Coke should be cooled in a desiccator. Weigh as soon as cold. The percentage loss of weight minus the percentage moisture equals the volatile matter. With some strongly caking low-volatile and medium-volatile bituminous coals, the coke button may be broken with explosive violence due to the liberation of volatile matter within the button. This is usually designated as popping. Such popping may blow the lid off the crucible and cause mechanical losses of the coked material. When such popping is observed, the determination shall be rejected and the test repeated until popping does not occur.

NOTE 1—Inspection of the crucible may be aided by the use of a mirror held above the furnace well.

7.3 Modified Procedure for All Sparking Fuels:

7.3.1 Fuels that do not cake or cake weakly when volatile matter is determined shall be watched closely for sparking during the heating period (see Note 2); also, at the end of the test the crucible cover shall be inspected for ash deposits, and the presence of such deposits shall be considered as evidence of sparking.

7.3.2 All fuels that spark when the volatile matter is determined by the methods described in 7.1 shall be treated as follows: The sample shall be given a preliminary gradual heating such that a temperature of $600 \pm 50^\circ\text{C}$ is reached in 6 min (Note 2). After this preliminary heating the sample shall be heated for exactly 6 min at $950 \pm 20^\circ\text{C}$. If sparking is then observed, the determination shall be rejected and the test repeated until no sparking occurs either during the preliminary heating or during the 6-min period at 950°C . Remove the crucible from the furnace, cool on a metal cooling block, and weigh. To ensure uniformity of results, keep the cooling period constant and do not prolong beyond 15 min. The percentage loss in weight minus the percent moisture in accordance with

Test Method D 3173, is the volatile matter. All analyses by this test method shall be so marked when reported to indicate that the modified procedure was used.

NOTE 2—If a tubular furnace of the Fieldner type (Fig. 1) is used for the determination of volatile matter, the preliminary gradual heating may be accomplished by moving the crucible to predetermined positions in the cooler top zone of the furnace. Due to variations in the heating characteristics of the furnace, the operator must predetermine by thermocouple the proper positions to meet a preliminary heating rate as specified in 7.3.2. A mechanical device to lower the crucible into the furnace may be used to facilitate control of the lowering operation.

8. Calculation

8.1 Calculate the weight loss percent as follows:

$$\text{Weight loss, \%} = [(A - B)/A] \times 100 \quad (1)$$

where:

A = weight of sample used, g, and

B = weight of sample after heating, g.

8.2 Calculate the volatile matter percent in the analysis samples as follows:

$$\text{Volatile matter in analysis sample, \%} = C - D \quad (2)$$

where:

C = weight loss, %, and

D = moisture, %.

9. Precision and Bias

9.1 The precision of this test method for the determination of Volatile Matter in Coal are shown in Table 1. Repeatability and Reproducibility limits for this test method were determined using only platinum crucibles. Repeatability and Reproducibility limits for nickel-chromium crucibles have not been determined.

9.1.1 *Repeatability Limit (r)*—The value below which the absolute difference between two test results of separate and consecutive test determinations, carried out on the same sample, in the same laboratory, by the same operator, using the same apparatus on samples taken at random from a single quality of homogeneous material, may be expected to occur with a probability of approximately 95 %.

9.1.2 *Reproducibility Limit (R)*—The value below which the absolute difference between two test results carried out in different laboratories, using samples taken at random from a single quantity of material that is as homogeneous as possible, may be expected to occur with a probability of approximately 95 %.

TABLE 1 Concentrations Range and Limits for Repeatability and Reproducibility of Volatile Matter in Coal

Rank, %	Repeatability Limit, r	Reproducibility Limit, R
High-temperature coke	0.2	0.4
Anthracite	0.3	0.6
Semianthracite, bituminous, low-temperature coke, and chars	0.5	1.0
Subbituminous	0.7	1.4
Lignite and peat	1.0	2.0

9.2 *Bias*—Since this is an empirical test method when utilizing platinum crucibles, the degree of absolute bias can not be determined. Bias between the use of platinum and nickel-

chromium crucibles shall be determined in the laboratory on coal being tested.

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