



Standard Test Method for Sulfide Ion in Water¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 4658; 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 approval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope*

1.1 This test method uses an ion-selective electrode to determine sulfide ion in water. The test method is applicable in the range from 0.04 to 4000 mg/L of sulfide.

1.2 Precision data presented in this test method were obtained using reagent water only. It is the user's responsibility to ensure the validity of this test method for untested types of water.

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.* Sulfide samples, when acidified, can release highly toxic hydrogen sulfide gas. For a specific precautionary statement, see Note 2.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:

D 1129 Terminology Relating to Water²

D 1193 Specification for Reagent Water²

D 2777 Practice for Determination of Precision and Bias of Applicable Test Methods of Committee D-19 on Water²

D 3370 Practices for Sampling Water from Closed Conduits²

D 4127 Terminology Used with Ion-Selective Electrodes²

D 5810 Guide for Spiking into Aqueous Samples²

D 5847 Practice for the Writing Quality Control Specifications for Standard Test Methods for Water Analysis²

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions:* For definitions of terms used in this test method, refer to Terminology D 1129.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.2.1 For definitions of terms specific to this test method, refer to Terminology D 4127.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Sulfide ion is measured potentiometrically using a sulfide ion-selective electrode in conjunction with a double-junction sleeve type reference electrode. Potentials are read using a pH meter having an expanded millivolt scale capable of being read to the nearest 0.1 mV, or a specific ion meter having a direct concentration scale for sulfide ion.

4.2 Samples are treated prior to analysis with sulfide anti-oxidant buffer (SAOB). This buffer fixes the solution pH at a highly alkaline level and contains ascorbic acid to retard air oxidation of sulfide ion in solution. This ensures that the sulfide present occurs chiefly as S^{2-} ion rather than as complexed HS^{1-} or H_2S that are present at lower pH values.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Sulfide ion is found in ground waters and wastewater, causing odor and corrosion problems. If acidified, these waters can release hydrogen sulfide, which is extremely toxic even at low levels. This test method provides a means for interference-free measurement of free sulfide ion.

NOTE 1—Sulfide forms complexes with hydrogen ions (HS^{1-} and H_2S). In addition, sulfide ion forms soluble complexes with elemental sulfur (S_2^{2-} , S_3^{2-} , S_4^{2-} , etc.), tin, antimony, and arsenic ions.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *pH Meter*, with expanded millivolt scale, or a specific ion meter having a direct concentration scale for sulfide ion.

6.2 *Sulfide Ion-Selective Electrode*.

6.3 *Reference Electrode*, double-junction sleeve type with 1.0 M potassium nitrate solution, pH adjusted to 13.5 with 1.0 M sodium hydroxide in the outer sleeve.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D19 on Water and are the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D 19.05 on Inorganic Constituents in Water.

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² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 11.01.

*A Summary of Changes section appears at the end of this standard.

7. Reagents

7.1 *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.³ 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.

7.2 *Purity of Water*—Unless otherwise indicated, reference to water shall be understood to mean reagent water conforming to Specification D 1193, Type I. Other reagent water types may be used provided it is first ascertained that the water is of sufficiently high purity to permit its use without adversely affecting the bias and precision of the test method. Type III water was specified at the time of round robin testing of this method.

7.3 *Cadmium Nitrate Solution (0.1 M)*—Place 12.84 g of cadmium oxide into a 125-mL beaker. Add 12 to 14 mL of concentrated nitric acid (sp gr 1.42), stir with a glass stirring rod, and add about 10 mL of water. Stir thoroughly, add an additional 40 to 50 mL of water, washing off the glass stirring rod with part of the water. Transfer to a 1-L volumetric flask and dilute to 1000 mL with water.

7.4 *Lead Perchlorate Solution (0.1 M)*—Commercially available. Alternatively, it can be prepared using lead perchlorate and water. Dissolve 46.02 g of the salt in water using a 1-L volumetric flask and dilute to 1000 mL with water.

7.5 *Sodium Sulfide Solution, Stock*—Prepare sodium sulfide stock solution from sodium sulfide hydrate ($\text{Na}_2 \cdot 9\text{H}_2\text{O}$).

NOTE 2—**Warning:** All sulfide solution preparation and measurement must be performed in a hood to avoid breathing noxious fumes.

7.5.1 Precise standards cannot be prepared by weighing the salt because of the large and variable water of hydration. Instead, prepare a saturated sodium sulfide solution by adding approximately 100 g of the $\text{Na}_2\text{S} \cdot 9\text{H}_2\text{O}$ to approximately 100 mL of water, shake well, stopper securely, and allow it to stand, at least overnight.

7.5.2 To prepare the sodium sulfide stock solution, pipette 1 mL of the saturated solution described above into 50 mL of SAOB (7.6), and dilute to 100 mL with water.

7.6 *Sulfide Anti-Oxidant Buffer (SAOB)*—In a 1000-mL beaker containing approximately 600 mL of water, add 200 mL of 10 M sodium hydroxide (or 80 g pellets), 35 g of ascorbic acid, and 67 g of disodium EDTA. Stir until everything dissolves and transfer the solution to a 1000-mL volumetric flask. Dilute to the mark with water. The solution composition is as follows; 2 M NaOH; 0.2 M ascorbic acid, and 0.2 M disodium EDTA (dihydrate).

NOTE 3—Freshly prepared SAOB, when stored in a tightly stoppered bottle, has a shelf life of approximately two weeks, if opened frequently. When oxidized, the solution turns dark brown and should be discarded.

³ *Reagent Chemicals, American Chemical Society Specifications*, American Chemical Society, Washington, DC. For suggestions on the testing of reagents not listed by the American Chemical Society, see *Analar Standards for Laboratory Chemicals*, BDH Ltd., Poole, Dorset, U.K., and the *United States Pharmacopeia and National Formulary*, U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.

7.7 *Zinc Acetate Solution (2.0 M)*—Dissolve 43.90 g of zinc acetate [$\text{Zn}(\text{C}_2\text{H}_3\text{O}_2)_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$] in water, using a 100 mL volumetric flask, and dilute to 100 mL with water.

8. Sampling and Storage

8.1 Collect samples in accordance with Practices D 3370.

8.2 Samples should be taken with a minimum of aeration to avoid air oxidation of sulfide or loss of volatile hydrogen sulfide from the sample. Preserve samples by adding 0.2 mL (4 drops) of 2 M zinc acetate (equivalent to 128 mg/L $\text{S}^{=2-}$) and 0.05 mL (1 drop) of 6 M sodium hydroxide to a 100-mL bottle. Fill the bottle completely with the sample and stopper it. There should be no air bubbles trapped under the stopper. If the concentration of sulfide is greater than approximately 100 mg/L, the amounts of both reagents should be increased.

8.3 Sulfide in samples that have been “preserved” with zinc acetate can be determined without special treatment, since SAOB contains EDTA to redissolve the zinc and free the sulfide. The entire sample is used for analysis, and since the results will be given in milligrams sulfide per litre, the sample volume must be known.

9. Calibration

9.1 Prepare four calibration standards each day using 100-mL volumetric flasks as follows:

9.1.1 *Standard A*—5.00 mL of sodium sulfide stock solution, 45 mL of SAOB (use a graduated cylinder), and dilute to 100 mL with water.

9.1.2 *Standard B*—1.00 mL of sodium sulfide stock solution, 50 mL of SAOB (use a graduated cylinder), and dilute to 100 mL with water.

9.1.3 *Standard C*—2.00 mL of calibration standard A, 50 mL of SAOB (use a graduated cylinder), and dilute to 100 mL with water.

9.1.4 *Standard D*—1.00 mL of calibration standard A, 50 mL of SAOB (use a graduated cylinder), and dilute to 100 mL with water.

9.2 The concentrations of the calibration standards, in milligrams per litre, are calculated from the concentration, *S*, of the sodium sulfide stock solution as determined by titration:

$$\begin{aligned} A &= 0.05S \\ B &= 0.01S \\ C &= 0.001S \\ D &= 0.0005S \end{aligned}$$

9.3 Prepare a calibration curve by immersing the electrode pair in each of the calibration standards, beginning with the most dilute, and record the stable electrode potential millivolt reading developed in each. Construct a graph using this data, using semilog paper. Record the sulfide ion concentrations on the logarithmic scale and the millivolt readings on the linear scale (Fig. 1).

10. Standardization

10.1 The concentration of the sodium sulfide stock solution must be determined by potentiometric titration before proceeding with the calibration.

10.2 Take 50 mL of sodium sulfide stock solution, and add to it 25 mL of SAOB and 25 mL of water. Titrate using the

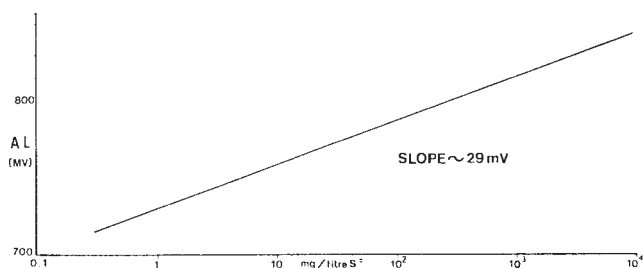


FIG. 1 Typical Electrode Response to Sulfide Ion

sulfide and double-junction reference electrodes as the endpoint indicator, and either the lead perchlorate or cadmium nitrate solution as the titrant.

10.3 Calculate the concentration (S) of sodium sulfide stock solution in mg/L as follows:

$$S = (\text{mL of } 0.1 \text{ M lead perchlorate or cadmium nitrate}) \times 64.12$$

11. Procedure

11.1 Pipette a sample into an equal volume of SAOB, stir thoroughly without vortex, and allow it to stand for 3 to 5 min. Place the electrodes in the solution, record the stable electrode potential, and determine the sulfide ion concentration of the sample from the calibration curve.

11.2 Between samples, rinse the electrodes with water, blot dry, and immerse in a “blank” solution of 50 mL SAOB plus 50 mL water.

11.3 To measure the next sample, blot the electrodes dry and repeat 11.1.

12. Precision and Bias ⁴

12.1 The instability of sulfide ion in the presence of oxygen makes conventional round robin testing (the distribution of “unknowns” to a number of laboratories) an impossibility. For that reason, and with the concurrence and advice of the Results Advisor, this test method was tested as described here, so that users of this test method might have some guidance as to the validity of their results.

12.2 On each of three days, operators in each of six laboratories standardized a sodium sulfide stock solution as described in Section 10. Full calibration, using four standards prepared by dilution of the standardized stock solution, was carried out five times on each day by each operator, and the potential values were recorded.

12.3 The five replicates at each level were averaged and standard deviations were calculated. By averaging the standard deviation values in segments of the concentration range, Table 1 was developed. Since the sodium sulfide stock solutions varied from day to day, this approach was chosen to provide the most useful information. The data show the average standard deviation in millivolts (from which concentration variations may be calculated) that an average user may expect at the concentrations indicated.

12.4 An additional, rather unusual, treatment of the data is shown in Fig. 2. Each of the nominal concentration values is plotted against the average of five potential values obtained for it (72 points), as if all had been obtained by one laboratory. Letters are used to indicate which data came from which laboratory. The straight line combines data taken by six different operators using six different electrode pairs on three different days at 72 different concentrations, with all laboratories using the same procedure. It is intended only to provide a potential user of this test method with a practical, if not completely statistically valid, estimate of the kinds of results which can be expected.

12.5 The testing described was carried out using reagent water only. It is the user’s responsibility to ensure the validity of this test method for untested types of water.

12.6 This precision statement has been reviewed and approved by the Results Advisor, with the concurrence of the Technical Operations Section of Executive Subcommittee D19.90 at their meeting on November 5, 1985 for conformance to Section 1.4 of Practice D 2777 – 98.

13. Quality Control

13.1 In order to be certain that analytical values obtained using these test methods are valid and accurate within the confidence limits of the test, the following QC procedures must be followed when analyzing sulfide ion.

13.2 Calibration and Calibration Verification:

13.2.1 Analyze at least three working standards containing concentrations of sulfide ion that bracket the expected sample concentration, prior to analysis of samples, to calibrate the instrument. The calibration correlation coefficient shall be equal to or greater than 0.990. In addition to the initial calibration blank, a calibration blank shall be analyzed at the end of the batch run to ensure contamination was not a problem during the batch analysis.

13.2.2 Verify instrument calibration after standardization by analyzing a standard at the concentration of one of the calibration standards. The concentration of a mid-range standard should fall within $\pm 15\%$ of the known concentration.

13.2.3 If calibration cannot be verified, recalibrate the instrument.

13.3 Initial Demonstration of Laboratory Capability:

13.3.1 If a laboratory has not performed the test before, or if there has been a major change in the measurement system, for example, new analyst, new instrument, etc., a precision and bias study must be performed to demonstrate laboratory capability.

13.3.2 Analyze seven replicates of a standard solution prepared from an Independent Reference Material containing a mid-range concentration of sulfide ion. The matrix and chemistry of the solution should be equivalent to the solution used in the collaborative study. Each replicate must be taken through the complete analytical test method including any sample preservation and pretreatment steps. The replicates may be interspersed with samples.

13.3.3 Calculate the mean and standard deviation of the seven values and compare to the acceptable ranges of bias in Table 1. This study should be repeated until the recoveries are within the limits given in Table 1. If a concentration other than

⁴ Supporting data are available from ASTM Headquarters. Request RR: D19-1127.

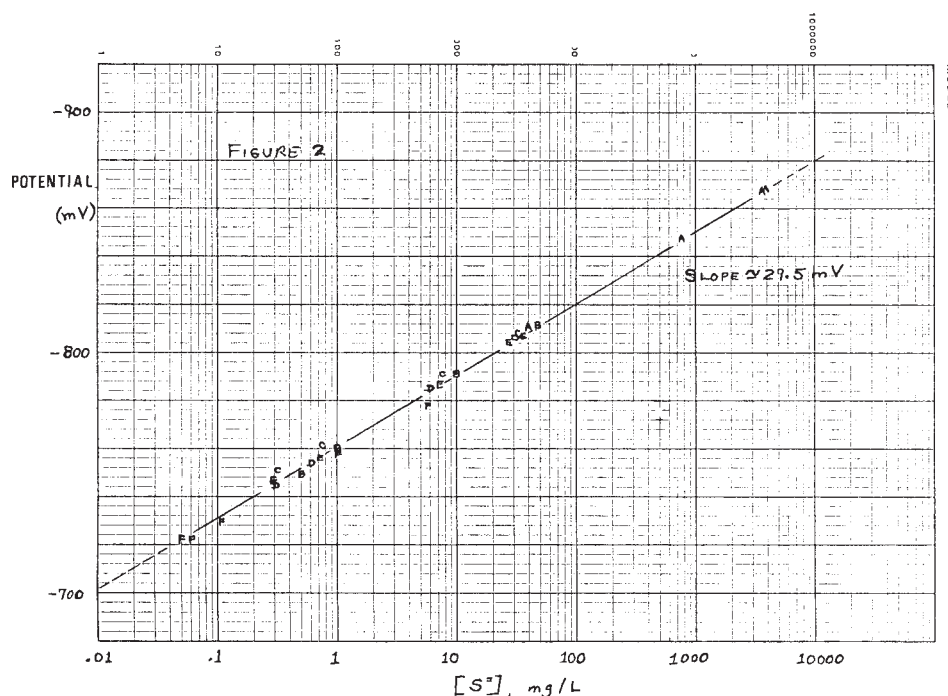


FIG. 2 Sulfide Data Plotted as if Obtained by Only One Laboratory

TABLE 1 Estimated Single Operator Precision for Sulfide (See 12.3)

Concentration Range, mg/L	Average Standard Deviation, \pm mV	Concentration Variation, \pm %
0.05–1.0 (33 pts.)	0.75	6.5
1.0–100 (39 pts.)	0.42	2.6
100–4000 (9 pts.)	0.33	2.0

the recommended concentration is used, refer to Practice D 5847 for information on applying the *F* test and *t* test in evaluating the acceptability of the mean and standard deviation.

13.4 Laboratory Control Sample (LCS):

13.4.1 To ensure that the test method is in control, analyze a LCS containing a known concentration of sulfide ion with each batch or 10 samples. If large numbers of samples are analyzed in the batch, analyze the LCS after every 10 samples. The laboratory control samples for a large batch should cover the analytical range when possible. The LCS must be taken through all of the steps of the analytical method including sample preservation and pretreatment. The result obtained for a mid-range LCS shall fall within $\pm 15\%$ of the known concentration.

13.4.2 If the result is not within these limits, analysis of samples is halted until the problem is corrected, and either all the samples in the batch must be reanalyzed, or the results must be qualified with an indication that they do not fall within the performance criteria of the test method.

13.5 Method Blank:

13.5.1 Analyze a reagent water test blank with each batch. The concentration of sulfide ion found in the blank should be less than 0.5 times the lowest calibration standard. If the concentration of sulfide ion is found above this level, analysis

of samples is halted until the contamination is eliminated, and a blank shows no contamination at or above this level, or the results must be qualified with an indication that they do not fall within the performance criteria of the test method.

13.6 Matrix Spike (MS):

13.6.1 To check for interferences in the specific matrix being tested, perform a MS on at least one sample from each batch by spiking an aliquot of the sample with a known concentration of sulfide ion and taking it through the analytical method. If a MS is not applicable, analyze more duplicate samples per batch.

13.6.2 The spike concentration plus the background concentration of sulfide ion must not exceed the high calibration standard. The spike must produce a concentration in the spiked sample that is 2 to 5 times the analyte concentration in the unspiked sample, or 10 to 50 times the detection limit of the test method, whichever is greater.

13.6.3 Calculate the percent recovery of the spike (*P*) using the following formula:

$$P = 100 [A(V_s + V) - B V_s] / C V \quad (1)$$

where:

- A = analyte concentration (mg/L) in spiked sample,
- B = analyte concentration (mg/L) in unspiked sample,
- C = concentration (mg/L) of analyte in spiking solution,
- V_s = volume (mL) of sample used, and
- V = volume (mL) added with spike.

13.6.4 The percent recovery of the spike shall fall within the limits, based on the analyte concentration, listed in Guide D 5810, Table 1. If the percent recovery is not within these limits, a matrix interference may be present in the sample selected for spiking. Under these circumstances, one of the following remedies must be employed: the matrix interference must be removed, all samples in the batch must be analyzed by

a test method not affected by the matrix interference, or the results must be qualified with an indication that they do not fall within the performance criteria of the test method.

NOTE 4—Acceptable spike recoveries are dependent on the concentration of the component of interest. See Guide D 5810 for additional information.

13.7 Duplicate:

13.7.1 To check the precision of sample analyses, analyze a sample in duplicate with each batch. If the concentration of the analyte is less than five times the detection limit for the analyte, a matrix spike duplicate (MSD) should be used.

13.7.2 Calculate the standard deviation of the duplicate values and compare to the precision in the collaborative study using an F test. Refer to 6.4.4 of Practice D 5847 for information on applying the F test.

13.7.3 If the result exceeds the precision limit, the batch must be reanalyzed or the results must be qualified with an indication that they do not fall within the performance criteria of the test method.

13.8 Independent Reference Material (IRM):

13.8.1 In order to verify the quantitative value produced by the test method, analyze an Independent Reference Material (IRM) submitted as a regular sample (if practical) to the laboratory at least once per quarter. The concentration of the IRM should be in the concentration mid-range for the method chosen. The value obtained must fall within the control limits established by the laboratory.

14. Keywords

14.1 electrode; potentiometric; sulfide; water

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This section identifies the location of selected changes to these test methods that have been incorporated since the last issue. For the convenience of the user, Committee D19 has highlighted those changes that may impact the use of these test methods. This section may also include descriptions of the changes or reasons for the changes, or both.

(1) The QC section was added to the test method.

(2) Section 12.6 was modified.

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