



Standard Test Methods for Separation of Asphalt into Four Fractions¹

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1. Scope

1.1 These test methods cover the separation of four defined fractions from petroleum asphalts. The four fractions are defined as saturates, naphthene aromatics, polar aromatics, and *n*C₇-asphaltenes. These methods can also be used to isolate saturates, naphthene aromatics, and polar aromatics from distillate products such as vacuum gas oils, lubricating oils, and cycle stocks. These distillate products usually do not contain asphaltenes.

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the 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 and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.* Specific precautionary statements are given in Section 8 and 15.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:

C 670 Practice for Preparing Precision and Bias Statements for Test Methods for Construction Materials²

C 802 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Test Program to Determine the Precision of Test Methods for Construction Materials²

D 140 Practice for Sampling Bituminous Materials³

D 3279 Test Method for *n*-Heptane Insolubles³

2.2 Other Documents:

Manual on Hydrocarbon Analysis⁴

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.1.1 *asphaltenes or n-heptane insolubles*—insoluble matter that can be separated from asphalt following digestion of the asphalt in *n*-heptane under the specified conditions in these test methods.

3.1.2 *naphthene aromatics*—material that is adsorbed on calcined CG-20 alumina in the presence of *n*-heptane, and desorbed by toluene, after removal of the saturates under the conditions specified.

3.1.3 *petrolenes*—the *n*-heptane-soluble matter recovered following separation of the asphaltenes from the digested mixture under the specified conditions in these test methods.

3.1.4 *polar aromatics*—material desorbed from calcined CG-20 alumina absorbent, after the saturates and naphthene aromatics have been removed, using toluene and trichloroethylene eluants under the conditions specified.

3.1.5 *saturates*—material that, on percolation in a *n*-heptane eluant, is not absorbed on calcined CG-20 alumina absorbent under the conditions specified.

METHOD A

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 The sample containing the four defined fractions is first separated into *n*-heptane-insoluble asphaltenes and the *n*-heptane-soluble petrolenes. Petrolenes are then adsorbed on calcined CG-20 alumina and further fractionated into the saturate, naphthene aromatic and polar aromatic fractions by downward solvent elution in a glass chromatographic column. Eluted fractions are recovered by solvent removal prior to final weighing. The three eluted fractions plus the *n*-heptane-precipitated (*n*C₇) asphaltenes comprise the four fractions defined in Section 3.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method separates asphalts into four well-defined fractions. Analysis of these fractions can be used to evaluate asphalt composition. For example, one can compare the ratios of the fractions with other asphalt systems to evaluate processing and aging parameters that relate to performance properties of the asphalt.

6. Apparatus and Materials

6.1 *Glass Chromatographic Column*,⁵ 1000 mm long and 31 mm in inside diameter with features as specified in Fig. 1.

6.2 *Utilities*—Steam bath, vacuum source, nitrogen source, and drying oven (Rotavapor solvent stripper and electric heating mantles optional).

⁵ Can be custom-made by any professional glassblower.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D04 on Road and Paving Materials and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D04.47 in Miscellaneous Asphalt Tests.

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² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 04.02.

³ *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 04.03.

⁴ Available from ASTM as PCN 03-332030-12.