



Designation: D5231 – 92 (Reapproved 2024)

Standard Test Method for Determination of the Composition of Unprocessed Municipal Solid Waste¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D5231; 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 describes procedures for measuring the composition of unprocessed municipal solid waste (MSW) by employing manual sorting. This test method applies to determination of the mean composition of MSW based on the collection and manual sorting of a number of samples of waste over a selected time period covering a minimum of one week.

1.2 This test method includes procedures for the collection of a representative sorting sample of unprocessed waste, manual sorting of the waste into individual waste components, data reduction, and reporting of the results.

1.3 This test method may be applied at landfill sites, waste processing and conversion facilities, and transfer stations.

1.4 The values stated in inch-pound units are to be regarded as the standard. The values given in parentheses are for information only.

1.5 *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 hazard statements, see Section 6.*

1.6 *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. Terminology

2.1 Definitions:

2.1.1 *composite item*—an object in the waste composed of multiple waste components or dissimilar materials, such as

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disposable diapers, bi-metal beverage containers, electrical conductors composed of metallic wire encased in plastic insulation, etc.

2.1.2 *solid waste composition or waste composition*—the characterization of solid waste as represented by a breakdown of the mixture into specified waste components on the basis of mass fraction or of weight percent.

2.1.3 *sorting sample*—a 200 to 300 lb (91 to 136 kg) portion deemed to represent the characteristics of a vehicle load of MSW.

2.1.4 *unprocessed municipal solid waste*—solid waste in its discarded form, that is, waste that has not been size reduced or otherwise processed.

2.1.5 *waste component*—a category of solid waste, composed of materials of similar physical properties and chemical composition, which is used to define the composition of solid waste, for example, ferrous, glass, newsprint, yard waste, aluminum, etc.

3. Summary of Test Method

3.1 The number of samples to be sorted is calculated based on statistical criteria selected by the investigators.

3.2 Vehicle loads of waste are designated for sampling, and a sorting sample is collected from the discharged vehicle load.

3.3 The sample is sorted manually into waste components. The weight fraction of each component in the sorting sample is calculated from the weights of the components.

3.4 The mean waste composition is calculated using the results of the composition of each of the sorting samples.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 Waste composition information has widespread applications and can be used for activities such as solid waste planning, designing waste management facilities, and establishing a reference waste composition for use as a baseline standard in both facility contracts and acceptance test plans.

4.2 The method can be used to define and report the composition of MSW through the selection and manual sorting of waste samples. Where applicable, care should be taken to consider the source and seasonal variation of waste.