



Designation: D7503 – 18

Standard Test Method for Measuring the Exchange Complex and Cation Exchange Capacity of Inorganic Fine-Grained Soils¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D7503; 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 the procedures for measuring the soluble and bound cations as well as the cation exchange capacity (CEC) of fine-grained inorganic soils. Clay minerals in fine-grained soils carry a negative surface charge that is balanced by bound cations near the mineral surface. These bound cations can be exchanged by other cations in the pore water, which are referred to as soluble cations. The cation exchange capacity is a measure of the negative surface charge on the mineral surface. The CEC generally is satisfied by calcium (Ca), sodium (Na), magnesium (Mg), and potassium (K), although other cations may be present depending on the environment in which the soil exists. This test method was developed from concepts described previously in Lavkulich (1981) (1)² and Rhoades (1982) (2). In soils with appreciable gypsum or calcite, dissolution of these minerals will release Ca in solution that may affect the measurement.

1.2 In this test method, the soluble salts from the mineral surface are washed off with de-ionized water and then the concentration of soluble salts within the extract is measured. The bound cations of the clay are measured by using a solution containing an index ion that forces the existing cations in the bound layer into solution. The total concentrations of bound and soluble cations in this solution are measured. The CEC is measured by displacing the index ion with another salt solution and measuring the amount of the displaced index ion.

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

1.4 All observed and calculated values shall conform to the guide for significant digits and rounding established in Practice D6026. The procedures in Practice D6026 that are used to

specify how data are collected, recorded, and calculated are regarded as the industry standard. In addition, they are representative of the significant digits that should generally be retained. The procedures do not consider material variation, purpose for obtaining the data, special purpose studies, or any considerations for the objectives of the user. Increasing or reducing the significant digits of reported data to be commensurate with these considerations is common practice. Consideration of the significant digits to be used in analysis methods for engineering design is beyond the scope of this standard.

1.5 *Units*—The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard. Reporting of test results in units other than SI shall not be regarded as nonconformance with this test method.

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. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:³

- D653 Terminology Relating to Soil, Rock, and Contained Fluids
- D1193 Specification for Reagent Water
- D2216 Test Methods for Laboratory Determination of Water (Moisture) Content of Soil and Rock by Mass
- D3740 Practice for Minimum Requirements for Agencies Engaged in Testing and/or Inspection of Soil and Rock as Used in Engineering Design and Construction
- D4753 Guide for Evaluating, Selecting, and Specifying Balances and Standard Masses for Use in Soil, Rock, and Construction Materials Testing
- D6026 Practice for Using Significant Digits in Geotechnical Data
- E145 Specification for Gravity-Convection and Forced-Ventilation Ovens

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D18 on Soil and Rock and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D18.04 on Hydrologic Properties and Hydraulic Barriers.

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² The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to a list of references at the end of this standard.

³ 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.

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