



Standard Test Method for Determination of Thermogravimetric (TGA) Air Reactivity of Baked Carbon Anodes and Cathode Blocks¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D6559; 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.

^{ε1} NOTE—SI units formatting was corrected editorially in May 2016.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the thermogravimetric (TGA) determination of air reactivity and dusting of shaped carbon anodes and cathode blocks used in the aluminum reduction industry. The apparatus selection covers a significant variety of types with various thermal conditions, sample size capability, materials of construction, and procedures for determining the mass loss and subsequent rate of reaction. This test method standardizes the variables of sample dimensions, reaction temperature, gas velocity over the exposed surfaces, and reaction time such that results obtained on different apparatuses are correlatable.

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this 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.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

[D6353 Guide for Sampling Plan and Core Sampling for Prebaked Anodes Used in Aluminum Production](#)

[D6354 Guide for Sampling Plan and Core Sampling of Carbon Cathode Blocks Used in Aluminum Production](#)

[E691 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method](#)

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D02 on Petroleum Products, Liquid Fuels, and Lubricants and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D02.05 on Properties of Fuels, Petroleum Coke and Carbon Material.

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² 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.

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.1.1 *dusting, n*—the quantity of carbon that falls off the carbon artifact while in the reaction chamber and is collected in the container at the bottom of the reaction chamber.

3.1.2 *final air reactivity, n*—the mass loss of the carbon artifact during the final 30 min of exposure to air in the reaction chamber divided by the initial geometric (right cylindrical) exposed surface area of the sample, expressed as milligrams per centimetre squared per hour.

3.1.3 *initial air reactivity, n*—the mass loss of the carbon artifact during the first 30 min of exposure to air in the reaction chamber divided by the initial geometric (right cylindrical) exposed surface area of the sample, expressed as milligrams per centimetre squared per hour.

3.1.4 *total air reactivity, n*—the total mass loss of the carbon artifact (including dusting) during the total time that the sample is exposed to air (180 min) in the reaction chamber divided by the initial geometric (right cylindrical) exposed surface area of the sample, expressed as milligrams per centimetre squared per hour.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Initial, final, and total air reactivity and dusting are determined by passing air at flow rates, giving a standard velocity of reactant gas around cylindrically shaped carbon artifacts under nearly isothermal conditions for a specified length of time. The reactivity is determined by continuously monitoring the sample mass loss. The dusting term is determined by collecting and determining the mass of carbon particles that fall off the sample during reaction.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 The air reactivity rates are used to quantify the tendency of a carbon artifact to react with air. Carbon consumed by this unwanted side reaction is unavailable for the primary reactions of reducing alumina to the primary metal. Air reactivity dusting rate is used by some companies to quantify the tendency of the coke aggregate or binder coke of a carbon artifact to selectively react with these gases. Preferential attack of the binder coke or

coke aggregate of a carbon artifact by these gases causes some carbon to fall off or *dust*, making the carbon unavailable for the primary reaction of reducing alumina and, more importantly, reducing the efficiency of the aluminum reduction cell.

5.2 Comparison of air reactivity and dusting rates is useful in selecting raw materials for the manufacture of commercial anodes for specific smelting technologies in the aluminum reduction industry.

5.3 Air reactivity rates are used for evaluating effectiveness and beneficiation processes or for research purposes.

6. Apparatus

6.1 The apparatus to be used should be as simple as possible and be commensurate with what is to be achieved, the principal criteria being that the reaction rate is to be determined under isothermal conditions and unaffected by physical and chemical properties inherent to the apparatus (such as gas diffusion patterns, gas temperature, exposed sample surface area, and so forth). A typical apparatus that has been found to be suitable is illustrated in Fig. 1.

6.1.1 *Furnace and Controller*, capable of maintaining constant temperature within ± 2 °C in the 100 mm region centered on the specimen. The example apparatus of Fig. 1 employs a three zone heating element and associated controls to accomplish this, but other methods such as tapered windings or long linear heaters are also suitable. The control thermocouple is a grounded type and shall be located within the reaction chamber near the surface of the test sample to allow the furnace

controller to adjust to the exothermic reaction that occurs during the air reactivity test. The control thermocouple shall be positioned $4\text{ mm} \pm 1\text{ mm}$ from the side sample surface and centered vertically within 5 mm of the center. The furnace shall be large enough to accept the reaction chamber.

6.1.2 *Reaction Chamber*, consisting of a vertical tube constructed of a material capable of withstanding the temperature of the reaction with sufficient inside diameter (ID) to accept the sample and sample holder while not affecting the gas flow to and from the sample ($100\text{ mm} \pm 25\text{ mm}$ ID is recommended). The reaction chamber is to be constructed with a dust collection cup at the bottom, which is removable and capable of capturing all the dust that falls off the sample during the test. The most common materials of construction are quartz and Inconel.

6.1.3 *Sample Holders*, capable of supporting the sample in the reaction chamber for the duration of the test and should be capable of being reusable. The sample holder shall not change in mass during the test, affect the diffusion pattern of the gases to or from the sample, limit the gas accessible surface area of the test sample, or interfere with the free fall of dust from the sample. A typical sample holder is illustrated in Fig. 2.

6.1.4 *Gas Preheat Tube*, extending into the first heat zone of the reaction chamber to preheat the gases prior to entering the reaction chamber. The length and diameter of the tube can vary as long as the gases exiting the tube are the same temperature as the reaction chamber. The inlet gas shall exit the preheat

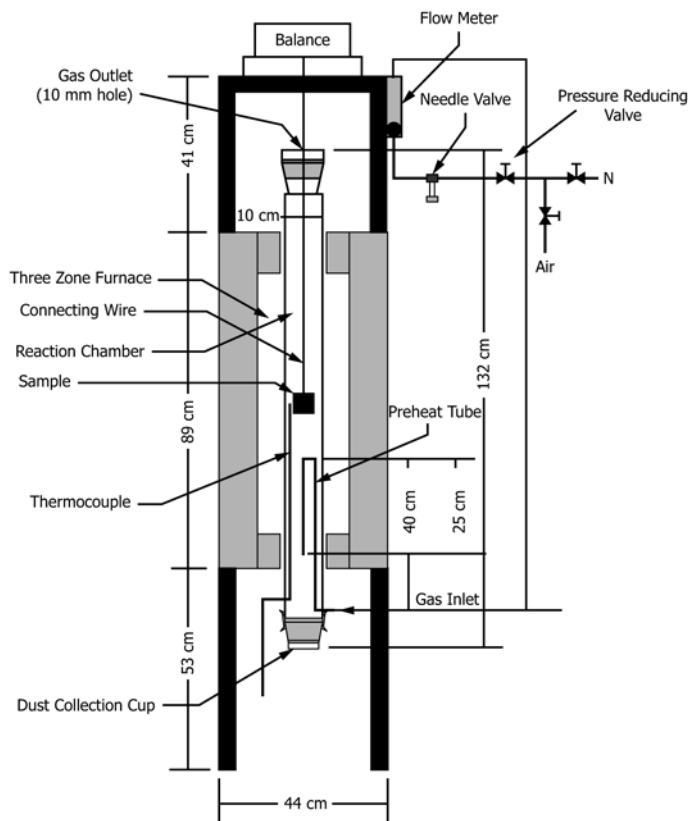


FIG. 1 Typical Air Reactivity Apparatus

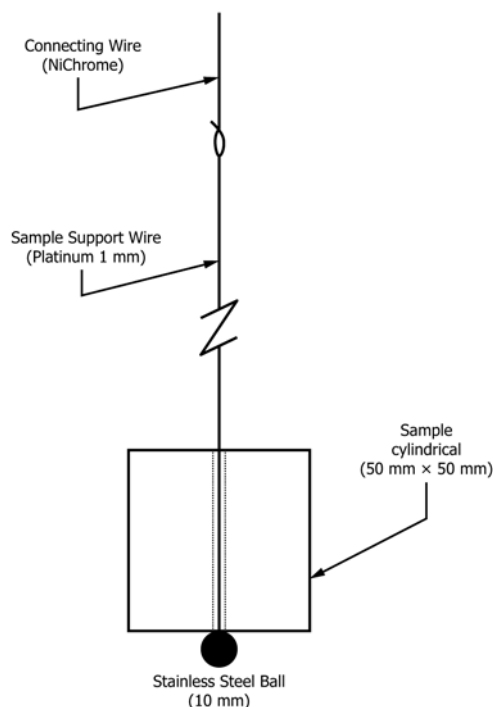


FIG. 2 Typical Sample Holder

tube downward to prevent channeling of the gas through the reaction chamber and to prevent plugging of the preheat tube with carbon dust.

6.1.5 *Balance*, capable of measuring the weight of the sample and sample holder (approximately 200 g maximum) continuously throughout the duration of the test to the nearest 0.01 g.

6.1.6 *Gas Flow Meter*, capable of monitoring the gas flow rate into the reaction chamber. All gas flow rates are to be maintained at the rate determined for the particular test apparatus.

6.1.7 *Needle Valve*, to make fine adjustments to the gas flow rate.

6.1.8 *Pressure Reducing Valve*, to reduce the pressure of the compressed gases to near atmospheric pressure prior to entering the gas flow meter through the needle valve.

6.1.9 *Thermocouple(s)*, inserted into the reaction chamber to calibrate the furnace zone controllers. An optional thermocouple may be used to monitor reaction temperatures. Some users find continuous temperature measurement of the internal reaction chamber to be of value.

6.1.10 *Calipers*, or other suitable device, capable of measuring to within 0.01 mm for determining the sample diameter and height to calculate geometric surface area exposed to the test gases.

6.1.11 *Optional Equipment*, including but not limited to, automatic control devices, multichannel line selector, and personal computer to automate data gathering, manipulation, reporting, and storage.

7. Reagents

7.1 *Purity of Reagents*—Reagent grade conforming to the specifications of the Committee on Analytical Reagents of the American Chemical Society.

7.1.1 *Nitrogen*—99.95 %.

7.1.2 *Air*—less than 0.1 % moisture.

8. Sampling

8.1 Shape the carbon specimen by coring and cutting or machining to a right cylindrical geometry, 50 mm \pm 1.0 mm in length and 50 mm \pm 1.0 mm in diameter. Most sample holders require a hole of about 3 mm diameter to be drilled vertically through the center of the cylinder to accommodate a hanger. The shaped specimen is to be smooth and free of visible cracks and gouges. Sampling plans for anodes and cathode blocks given in Guides D6353 and D6354 may be used if desired.

8.2 Dry the shaped specimen in an oven at 105 °C \pm 5 °C to constant weight.

8.3 The sample shall be made free of loose carbon dust and impurities from the shaping process by blowing with dry air.

9. Calibration

9.1 The purpose of this procedure is to establish a relationship between the controller settings for three zone furnaces and the actual temperatures inside the reaction chamber in the region of the specimen. The length to be calibrated is a 100 mm (4 in.) zone.

NOTE 1—For single zone furnaces, the calibration probe shall be placed in center of where sample will be placed and confirm that the 100 mm zone is within \pm 2 °C.

9.1.1 Insert a multiprobe thermocouple (for example, three couples in same sheath with probes located at the tip and at 50 mm and 100 mm (2 in. and 4 in.) above the tip, or a packet of thermocouples with tips located at similar known distances) into the zone where the sample will be located. The multiprobe thermocouple center probe shall be located where the center of the sample will be located.

9.1.2 The center thermocouple is connected to the main controller setting, that is, 525 °C for air reactivity.

9.1.3 Connect the other two (2) thermocouples to any temperature indicating device. For determining actual temperature profile, a recording temperature indicator is required.

9.1.4 Allow 4 h for furnace to reach equilibrium under nitrogen purge (rate per 9.2).

9.1.5 Adjust zones until all three (3) temperature indicators are \pm 2 °C.

9.2 *Gas Flow Rates*, for this test are based on 250 L/h \pm 5 L/h (ambient temperature) for a sample diameter of 50 mm and a reaction tube with an ID of 100 mm. Reactivities determined with this test method are affected by the gas velocity sweeping the reaction surfaces during the test. This requires gas flow rates to be such that the velocity through the annular space between the sample and reaction tube wall is constant for various size reaction tubes. The proper flow rate for other geometries is determined by multiplying the reference flow rate (250 L/h) by the ratio of annular area of the system

to the annular area of the reference system. For example, a 75 mm ID tube with 50.8 mm samples would have a flow rate calculated by:

$$\text{Ratio} = \quad (1)$$

$$\left[\frac{\text{Tube ID}^2 - \text{Sample OD}^2}{\text{Ref Tube ID}^2 - \text{Ref Sample OD}^2} \right] = \left[\frac{75^2 - 50.8^2}{100^2 - 50^2} \right] = \frac{3044}{7500} = 0.406$$

$$\text{Flow Rate} = [250 \text{ L/h}] \cdot [0.406] = 102 \text{ L/h} \quad (2)$$

10. Procedure

10.1 Preheat the reactor tube to $525 \text{ }^\circ\text{C} \pm 2 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ for air reactivity.

10.2 Purge the reaction chamber with nitrogen at the flow rate determined in 9.2.

10.3 Weigh and record the mass of the sample to the nearest 0.01 g as W_i .

10.4 Measure the sample diameter (d_s), sample height (h), and diameter of the center hole (d_h) to ± 0.01 mm to calculate geometric surface area for the reaction as given in 11.1.

10.5 Insert the sample into the reaction chamber by placing the sample in the sample holder and suspending the sample holder from the balance.

10.6 Preheat the sample under nitrogen purge for 30 min.

10.7 Tare the balance in accordance with the balance manufacturer's instructions.

10.8 Switch the gas introduced to the reaction chamber from nitrogen to air after 30 min in the nitrogen preheat, and maintain the flow rate as determined in 9.2.

10.9 Record the weight of the sample every minute for the duration of the test. The test duration for air reactivity is 3 h (180 min).

10.10 Remove the sample from the reaction chamber as soon as possible after the test time has expired as the dusting parameter will be affected. Exercise care so that the sample does not strike the sides of the reaction chamber upon removal, which could result in dislodging particles and adding to the mass of dust.

10.11 Remove the dust collection cup from the bottom of the reaction chamber, and place in a desiccator until cool.

10.12 Weigh the dust collected in the dust collection cup, and record as W_d .

11. Calculation

11.1 Calculate exposed surface area of the shaped sample as follows:

$$A = \text{Area of} \quad (3)$$

(circumference + top and bottom (surfaces – center hole)), or

$$A = \left\{ \pi d_s h + \frac{2\pi}{4} (d_s^2 - d_h^2) \right\} / 100 \quad (4)$$

where:

A = exposed surface area, cm^2 ,

d_s = sample diameter, mm,

d_h = diameter of central hole (if any), mm, and

h = sample height, mm.

11.2 Calculate total air reactivity rate (TR_a) as follows:

$$TR_a = \frac{1000(W_i - W_f)}{3A} \quad (5)$$

where:

TR_a = total air reactivity rate, $\text{mg}/\text{cm}^2\text{-h}$,

W_i = initial sample weight, g, and

W_f = final sample weight, g.

11.3 Calculate initial air reactivity rate (IR_a) as follows:

$$IR_a = \frac{2000(W_i - W_{30})}{A} \quad (6)$$

where:

IR_a = initial air reactivity rate, $\text{mg}/\text{cm}^2\text{-h}$, and

W_{30} = sample weight after 30 min of test, g.

11.4 Calculate final air reactivity rate (FR_a) as follows:

$$FR_a = \frac{2000(W_{150} - W_f)}{A} \quad (7)$$

where:

FR_a = final air reactivity rate, $\text{mg}/\text{cm}^2\text{-h}$, and

W_{150} = sample weight after 150 min of test, g.

11.5 Calculate air dusting rate (DR_a) as follows:

$$DR_a = \frac{1000W_d}{3A} \quad (8)$$

where:

DR_a = dusting rate during 3 h test, $\text{mg}/\text{cm}^2\text{-h}$, and

W_d = weight of dust collected during test, g.

12. Report

12.1 Report reactivity results to the nearest $0.1 \text{ mg}/\text{cm}^2\text{-h}$.

13. Precision and Bias³

13.1 *Precision*—The precision was determined by an inter-laboratory study conducted in accordance with Practice E691. Six laboratories tested nine materials (seven anodes and two cathodes). It was found, by linear regression, that the repeatability and reproducibility are dependent on the average value of the measured rate. Consequently, the regression equation is used in the precision statements. Based on this study, the criteria in 13.1.1 and 13.1.2 shall be used for judging the acceptability of results (95 % probability):

13.1.1 *Repeatability Limits*—Duplicate values (milligrams per centimetre squared per hour) by the same operator using the same equipment shall not be considered suspect unless the determined values differ by more than the r value given by the following equations:

13.1.1.1 *Total Air Reactivity Rate*: $r = (0.2032 \times x) + 8.0231$ x = average of duplicate total air reactivity rate values [Applicable between $13 \text{ mg}/\text{cm}^2\text{-h}$ and $62 \text{ mg}/\text{cm}^2\text{-h}$ total air reactivity rate]

³ Supporting data have been filed at ASTM International Headquarters and may be obtained by requesting Research Report RR:D02-1495.

13.1.1.2 *Initial Air Reactivity Rate*: $r = (0.7381 \times x) + 1.2643$ x = average of duplicate initial air reactivity rate values [Applicable between 4 mg/cm²-h and 16 mg/cm²-h initial air reactivity rate]

13.1.1.3 *Final Air Reactivity Rate*: $r = (0.1771 \times x) + 6.5809$ x = average of duplicate final air reactivity rate values [Applicable between 21 mg/cm²-h and 89 mg/cm²-h final air reactivity rate]

13.1.1.4 *Air Dusting Rate*: $r = (1.2216 \times x) + 0.9913$ x = average of duplicate air dusting rate values [Applicable between 0 mg/cm²-h and 2.5 mg/cm²-h air dusting rate]

13.1.2 *Reproducibility Limits*—The values (milligrams per centimetre squared per hour) reported by each of two laboratories, representing the arithmetic average of duplicate determinations, shall not be considered suspect unless the reported values differ by more than the R value given by the following equations:

13.1.2.1 *Total Air Reactivity Rate*: $R = (0.5207 \times x) + 1.7242$ x = average of duplicate total air reactivity rate values [Applicable between 13 mg/cm²-h and 62 mg/cm²-h total air reactivity rate]

13.1.2.2 *Initial Air Reactivity Rate*: $R = (0.7007 \times x) + 4.1762$ x = average of duplicate initial air reactivity rate values [Applicable between 4 mg/cm²-h and 16 mg/cm²-h initial air reactivity rate]

13.1.2.3 *Final Air Reactivity Rate*: $R = (0.6694 \times x) + 3.7154$ x = average of duplicate final air reactivity rate values [Applicable between 21 mg/cm²-h and 89 mg/cm²-h final air reactivity rate]

13.1.2.4 *Air Dusting Rate*: $R = (2.812 \times x) + 0.6906$ x = average of duplicate air dusting rate values [Applicable between 0 mg/cm²-h and 2.5 mg/cm²-h air dusting rate]

13.2 *Bias*—This procedure has no bias because the values of air reactivity are defined in terms of this test method.

14. Keywords

14.1 air reactivity; anode; cathode block; dusting

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