METALS

(Atomic Absorption Methods)

1. Scope and Application

1.1 Metals in solution may be readily determined by atomic absorption spectroscopy. The method is simple, rapid, and applicable to a large number of metals in drinking, surface, and saline waters, and domestic and industrial wastes. While drinking waters free of particulate matter may be analyzed directly, domestic and industrial wastes require processing to solubilize :suspended material. Sludges, sediments and other solid type samples may also be analyzed after proper pretreatment.

1.2 Detection limits, sensitivity and optimum ranges of the metals will vary with the various makes and models of satisfactory atomic absorption spectrophotometers. The data shown in Table 1, however, provide some indication of the actual concentration ranges measurable by direct aspiration and using furnace techniques. In the majority of instances the concentration range shown in the table by direct aspiration may be extended much lower with scale expansion and conversely extended upwards by using a less sensitive wavelength or by rotating the burners head. Detection limits by direct aspiration may also be extended through concentration of the sample and/or through solvent extraction techniques. Lower concentrations may also be determined using the furnace techniques. The concentration ranges given in Table I are somewhat dependent on equipment such. as the type of spectrophotometer and furnace accessory, the energy source and the degree of electrical expansion of the output signal. When using furnace techniques, however, the., analyst should be cautioned as to possible chemical reactions occurring at elevated temperatures which may result in either suppression or enhancement of the analysis element. To insure valid data with furnace techniques, the analyst must examine each matrix for interference effects (see 5.2. 1) and if detected, treat accordingly using either successive dilution, matrix modification or method of standard additions (see 8.5).

1.3 Where direct aspiration atomic absorption techniques do not provide adequate sensitivity, in addition to the furnace procedure, reference is made to specialized procedures such as the gaseous hydride method for arsenic and selenium, the cold vapor technique for mercury, and the chelation-extraction procedure for selected metals. Reference to approved colormetric methods is also made.

1.4 Atomic absorption procedures are provided as the methods of choice, however, other instrumental methods have also been shown to be capable of producing precise and accurate analytical data. These instrumental techniques include emission spectroscopy, X-ray fluorescence, spark source mass spectroscopy, and anodic stripping to name but a few. The analyst should be cautioned that these methods are highly specialized techniques requiring a high degree of skill to interpret results and obtain valid data.

These above mentioned techniques are presently considered as alternate test procedures and approval must be obtained prior to their use.

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2. Summary of Method

2.1 In direct aspiration atomic absorption spectroscopy a sample is aspirated and atomized in a flame. A light beam from a hollow cathode lamp whose cathode is made of the element to be determined is directed through the flame into a monochromator, and onto a detector that measures the amount of light absorbed. Absorption depends upon the presence of free unexcited ground state atoms in the flame. Since the wavelength of the light beam is characteristic of only the metal being determined, the light energy absorbed by the flame is a measure of the concentration of that metal in the sample. This principle is the basis of atomic absorption spectroscopy.

2.2 Although methods have been reported for the analysis of solids by atomic absorption spectroscopy (Spectrochim Acta, *24B* 53, 1969) the technique generally is limited to metals in solution or solubilized through some form of sample processing.

2.2.1 Preliminary treatment of wastewater and/or industrial effluents is usually necessary because of the complexity and variability of the sample matrix. Suspended material must be subjected to a solubilization process before analysis. This process may vary because of the metals to be determined and the nature of the sample being analyzed. When the breakdown of organic material is necessitated, the process should include a wet digestion with nitric acid.

2.2.2 In those instances where complete characterization of a sample is desired, the suspended material must be analyzed separately. This may be accomplished by filtration and acid digestion of the suspended material. Metallic constituents in this acid digest are subsequently determined and the sum of the dissolved plus suspended concentrations will then provide the total concentrations present. The sample should be filtered as soon as possible after collection and the filtrate acidified immediately.

2.2.3 The total sample may also be treated with acid without prior filtration to measure what may be termed “total recoverable” concentrations.

2.3 When using the furnace technique in conjunction with an atomic absorption spectrophotometer, a representative aliquot of a sample is placed in the graphite tube in the furnace, evaporated to dryness, chaffed, and atomized. As a greater percentage of available analyte atoms are vaporized and dissociated for absorption in the tube than the flame, the use of small sample volumes or detection of low concentrations of elements is possible. The principle is essentially the same as with direct aspiration atomic absorption except a furnace, rather than a flame, is used to atomize the sample. Radiation from a given excited element is passed through the vapor containing ground state atoms of that element. The intensity of the transmitted radiation decreases in proportion to the amount of the ground state element in the vapor.

The metal atoms to be measured are placed in the beam of radiation by increasing the temperature of the furnace thereby causing the injected specimen to be volatilized. A monochromator isolates the characteristic radiation from the hollow cathode lamp and a photosensitive device measures the attenuated transmitted radiation.

3. Definition of Terms

3.1 Optimum Concentration Range: A range, defined by limits expressed in concentration. below which scale expansion must be used and above which curve

TABLE 1

Atomic Absorption Concentration Ranges[1]

	Direct Aspiration				Furnace Procedure[4,5]			
Metal	Detection Limit mg/l	Sensitivity mg/l	Optimum Concentration Range mg/l		Detection Limit ug/l	Optimum Concentration Range ug/l		
Aluminum	0.1	1	5	- 50	3	20	-	200
Antimony	0.2	0.5	1	- 40	3	20	-	300
Arsenic[2]	0.002	-	0.002	- 0.02	1	5	-	100
Barium(p)	0.1	0.4	1	- 20	2	10	-	200
Beryllium	0.005	0.025	0.05	- 2	0.2	1	-	30
Cadmium	0.005	0.025	0.05	- 2	0.1	0.5	-	10
Calcium	0.01	0.08	0.2	- 7	-	-		-
Chromium	0.05	0.25	0.5	- 10	1	5	-	100
Cobalt	0.05	0.2	0.5	- 5	1	5	-	100
Copper	0.02	0.1	0.2	- 5	1	5	-	100
Gold	0.1	0.25	0.5	- 20	1	5	-	100
Iridium(p)	3	8	20	- 300	30	100	-	1500
Iron	0.03	0.12	0.3	- 5	1	5	-	100
Lead	0.1	0.5	1	- 20	1	5	-	100
Magnesium	0.001	0.007	0.02	- 0.5	-	-		-
Manganese	0.01	0.05	0.1	- 3	0.2	1	-	30
Mercury[3]	0.0002	-	0.0002	- 0.01	-	-		-
Molybdenum(p)	0.1	0.4	1	- 40	1	3	-	60
Nickel(p)	0.04	0.15	0.3	- 5	1	5	-	50
Osmium	0.3	1	2	- 100	20	50	-	500
Palladium(p)	0.1	0.25	0.5	- 15	5	20	-	400
Platinum(p)	0.2	2	5	- 75	20	100	-	2000
Potassium	0.01	0.04	0.1	- 2	-	-		
Rhenium(p)	5	15	50	- 1000	200	500	-	5000
Rhodium(p)	0.05	0.3	1	- 30	5	20	-	400
Ruthenium	0.2	0.5	1	- 50	20	100	-	2000
Selenium[2]	0.002	-	0.002	- 0.02	2	5	-	100
Silver	0.01	0.06	0.1	- 4	0.2	1	-	25
Sodium	0.002	0.015	0.03	- 1	-	-		-
Thallium	0.1	0.5	1	- 20	1	5	-	100
Tin	0.8	4	10	- 300	5	20	-	300
Titanium (p)	0.4	2	5	- 100	10	50	-	500
Vanadium (p)	0.2	0.8	2	- 100	4	10	-	200
Zinc	0.005	0.02	0.05	- 1	0.05	0.2	-	4

(1) The concentrations shown are not contrived values and should be obtainable with any satisfactory atomic absorption spectrophotometer.

(2) Gaseous hydride method.

(3) Cold vapor technique.

(4) For furnace sensitivity values consult instrument operating manual.

(5) The listed furnace values are those expected when using a 20 ul injection and normal gas flow except in the case of arsenic and selenium where gas interrupt is used. The symbol (p) indicates the use of pyrolytic graphite with the furnace procedure.

correction should be considered. This range will vary with the sensitivity of the instrument and the operating condition employed.

3.2 Sensitivity: The concentration in milligrams of metal per liter that produces an absorption of 1%.

3.3 Detection Limit: Detection limits can be expressed as either an instrumental or method parameter. The limiting factor of the former using acid water standards would be the signal to noise ratio and degree of scale expansion used, while the latter would be more affected by the sample matrix and preparation procedure used. The Scientific Apparatus Makers Association (SAMA) has approved the following definition for detection limit: that concentration of an element which would yield an absorbance equal to twice the standard deviation of a series of measurements of a solution, the concentration of which is distinctly detectable above, but close to blank absorbance measurement. The detection limit values listed in Table I and on the individual analysis sheets are to be considered minimum working limits achievable with the procedures given in this manual. These values may differ from the optimum detection limit reported by the various instrument manufacturers.

3.4 Dissolved Metals: Those constituents (metals) which will pass through a 0.45 µ membrane filter.

3.5 Suspended Metals: Those constituents, (metals) which are retained by a 0.45 µ membrane filter.

3.6 Total Metals: The concentration of metals determined on an unfiltered sample following vigorous digestion (Section 4.1.3), or the sum of the concentrations of metals in both the dissolved and suspended fractions.

3.7 Total Recoverable Metals: The concentration of metals in an unfiltered sample following treatment with hot dilute mineral acid (Section 4.1.4).

4. Sample Handling and Preservation

4.1 For the determination of trace metals, contamination and loss are of prime concern. Dust in the laboratory environment, impurities in reagents and impurities on laboratory apparatus which the sample contacts are all sources of potential contamination. For liquid samples, containers can introduce either positive or negative errors in the measurement of trace metals by (a) contributing contaminants through leaching or surface desorption and (b) by depleting concentrations through absorption. Thus the collection and treatment of the sample prior to analysis requires particular attention. The sample bottle whether borosilicate glass, polyethylene polypropylene or Teflon should be thoroughly washed with detergent and tap water; rinsed with 1:1 nitric acid, tap water, 1:1 hydrochloric acid, tap water and finally deionized distilled water in that order.

NOTE 1: Chromic acid may be useful to remove organic deposits from glassware, however, the analyst should be cautioned that the glassware must be thoroughly rinsed with water to remove the last traces of chromium. This is especially important if chromium is to be included in the analytical scheme. A commercial product—-NOCHROMIX—available from Godax Laboratories, 6 Varick St., New York, N.Y. 10013, may be used in place of chromic acid. [Chromic acid should not be used with plastic bottles.]

NOTE 2: If it can be documented through an active analytical quality control program using spiked samples, reagent and sample blanks, that certain steps in the cleaning procedure are not required for routine samples, those steps may be eliminated from the procedure.

Before collection of the sample a decision must be made as to the type of data desired, i.e., dissolved, suspended, total or total recoverable. For container preference, maximum holding time and sample preservation at time of collection see Table I in the front part of this manual. Drinking water samples containing suspended and setteable material should be prepared using the total recoverable metal procedure (Section 4.1.4).

4.1.1 For the determination of dissolved constituents the sample must be filtered through a 0.45 µ membrane filter as soon as practical after collection. (Glass or plastic filtering apparatus using plain, non-grid marked. membrane filters are recommended to avoid possible contamination.) Use the first 50-100 ml to rinse the filter flask. Discard this portion and collect the required volume of filtrate. Acidify the filtrate with 1:1 redistilled HNO_3 to a pH of < 2. Normally, 3 ml of (1:1) acid per liter should be sufficient to preserve the sample (See Note 3). If hexavalent chromium is to be included in the analytical scheme, a portion of the filtrate should be transferred before acidification to a separate container and analyzed as soon as possible using Method 218.4. Analyses performed on a sample so treated shall be reported as "dissolved" concentrations.

NOTE 3: If a precipitate is formed upon acidification, the filtrate should be digested using 4.1.3. Also, it has been suggested (International Biological Program. Symposium on Analytical Methods, Amsterdam. Oct. 1966) that additional acid as much as 25 ml of conc. HCI/liter, may be required to stabilize certain types of highly buffered samples if they are to be stored for any length of time. Therefore, special precautions should be observed for preservation and storage of unusual samples intended for metal analysis.

4.1.2 For the determination of suspended metals a representative volume of unpreserved sample must be filtered through a 0.45 µ membrane filter. When considerable suspended material is present, as little as 100 ml of a well mixed sample is filtered. Record the volume filtered and transfer the membrane filter containing the insoluble material to a 250 ml Griffin beaker and add 3 ml conc. redistilled HNO_3. Cover the beaker with a watch glass and heat gently. The warm acid will soon dissolve the membrane. Increase the temperature of the hot plate and digest the material. When the acid has nearly evaporated, cool the beaker and watch glass and add another 3 ml of conc. redistilled HNO_3. Cover and continue heating until the digestion is complete, generally indicated by a light colored digestate. Evaporate to near dryness (DO NOT BAKE), add 5 ml distilled HCI (1:1) and warm in the beaker gently to dissolve any soluble material. (If the sample is to be analyzed by the furnace procedure, 1 ml of 1:1 distilled HNO_3 per 100 ml dilution should be substituted for the distilled 1:1 HCI.) Wash down the watch glass and beaker walls with deionized distilled water and filter the sample to remove silicates and other insoluble material that could clog the atomizer. Adjust the volume to some predetermined value based on the expected concentrations of metals present. This volume will vary depending on the metal to be determined. The sample is now ready for analysis. Concentrations so determined shall be reported as "suspended" (See Note 4.)

NOTE 4: Certain metals such as antimony arsenic, gold, iridium, mercury, osmium, palladium, platinium, rhenium, rhodium, ruthenium, selenium,

silver, thallium, tin and titanium require modification of the digestion procedure and the individual sheets for these metals should be consulted.

4.1.3 For the determination of total metals the sample is acidified with 1:1 redistilled HNO_3 to a pH of less than 2 at the time of collection. The sample is not filtered before processing. Choose a volume of sample appropriate for the expected level of metals. If much suspended material is present, as little as 50-100 ml of well mixed sample will most probably be sufficient. (The sample volume required may also vary proportionally with the number of metals to be determined.)

Transfer a representative aliquot of the well mixed sample to a Griffin beaker and add 3 ml of conc. redistilled HNO_3. Place the beaker on a hot plate and evaporate to near dryness cautiously, making certain that the sample does not boil. (DO NOT BAKE.) Cool the beaker and add another 3 ml portion of conc. redistilled HNO_3. Cover the beaker with a watch glass and return to the hot plate. Increase the temperature of the hot plate so that a gentle reflux action occurs. Continue heating, adding additional acid as necessary, until the digestion is complete (generally indicated when the digestate is light in color or does not change in appearance with continued refluxing). Again, evaporate to near dryness and cool the beaker. Add a small quantity of redistilled 1:1 HCI (5 ml/ 100 ml of final solution) and warm the beaker to dissolve any precipitate or residue resulting from evaporation. (If the sample is to be analyzed by the furnace procedure, substitute distilled HNO_3 for 1:1 HCI so that the final dilution contains 0.5% (v/v) HNO_3.) ash down the beaker walls and watch glass with distilled water and filter the sample to remove silicate and other insoluble material that could clog the atomizer. Adjust the volume to some predetermined value based on the expected metal concentrations. The sample is now ready for analysis. Concentrations so determined shall be reported as "total" (See Note 4).

4.1.4 To determine total recoverable metals, acidify the entire sample at the time of collection with conc. redistilled HNO_3, 5 ml/1. At the time of analysis a 100 ml aliquot of well mixed sample is transferred to a beaker or flask. Five ml of distilled HCI (1:1) is added and the sample heated on a steam bath or hot plate until the volume has been reduced to 15-20 ml making certain the samples do not boil. (If the sample is being prepared for furnace analysis, the same process should be followed except HCI should be omitted.) After this treatment the sample is filtered to remove silicates and other insoluble material that could clog the atomizer and the volume adjusted to 100 ml. The sample is then ready for analysis.

Concentrations so determined shall be reported as "total." (See Notes 4, 5. and 6.)

NOTE 5: The analyst should be cautioned that this digestion procedure may not be sufficiently vigorous to destroy certain metal complexes if a calorimetric procedure is to be employed for the final determination. When this is suspect. the more vigorous digestion given in 4.1.3 should be followed.

NOTE 6: For drinking water analyses by direct aspiration, the final volume may be reduced to effect up to a 10X concentration of the sample, provided the total dissolved solids in the original sample do not exceed 500 mg/1, the

determination is corrected for any non-specific absorbance and there is no loss by precipitation.

5. Interferences

5.1 Direct Aspiration

5.1.1 The most troublesome type of interference in atomic absorption spectrophotometry is usually termed “chemical” and is caused by lack of absorption of atoms bound in molecular combination in the flame. This phenomenon can occur when the flame is not sufficiently hot to dissociate the molecule, as in the case of phosphate interference with magnesium, or because the dissociated atom is immediately oxidized to a compound that will not dissociate further at the temperature of the flame. The addition of lanthanum will overcome the phosphate interference in the magnesium, calcium and barium determinations. Similarly, silica interference in the determination of manganese can be eliminated by the addition of calcium.

5.1.2 Chemical interferences may also be eliminated by separating the metal from the interfering material. While complexing agents are primarily employed to increase the sensitivity of the analysis, they may also be used to eliminate or reduce interferences.

5.1.3 The presence of high dissolved solids in the sample may result in an interference from non-atomic absorbance such as light scattering. If background correction is not available, a non-absorbing wavelength should be checked. Preferably, high solids type samples should be extracted (see 5. 1.1 and 9.2).

5.1.4 Ionization interferences occur where the flame temperature is sufficiently high to generate the removal of an electron from a neutral atom, giving a positive charged ion. This type of interference can generally be controlled by the addition, to both standard and sample solutions. of a large excess of an easily ionized element.

5.1.5 Although quite rare, spectral interference can occur when an absorbing wavelength of an element present in the sample but not being determined falls within the width of the absorption line of the element of interest. The results of the determination will then be erroneously high due to the contribution of the interfering element to the atomic absorption signal. Also, interference can occur when resonant energy from another element in a multi-element lamp or a metal impurity in the lamp cathode falls within the bandpass of the slit setting and that metal is present in the sample. This type of interference may sometimes be reduced by narrowing the slit width.

5.2 Flameless Atomization

5.2.1 Although the problem of oxide formation is greatly reduced with furnace procedures because atomization occurs in an inert atmosphere, the technique is still subject to chemical and matrix interferences. The composition of the sample matrix can have a major effect on the analysis. It is those effects which must be determined and taken into consideration in the analysis of each different matrix encountered. To help verify the absence of matrix or chemical interference use the following procedure. Withdraw from the sample two equal aliquots. To one of the aliquots add a known amount of analyte and dilute both aliquots to the same predetermined volume. [The dilution volume should be based on the analysis of the undiluted sample.

Preferably, the dilution should be 1:4 while keeping in mind the optimum concentration range of the analysis. Under no circumstances should the dilution be less than 1:1.] The diluted aliquots should then be analyzed and the unspiked results multiplied by the dilution factor should be compared to the original determination. Agreement of the results (within ± 10%) indicates the absence of interference. Comparison of the actual signal from the spike to the expected response from the analyte in an aqueous standard should help confirm the from the dilution analysis. Those samples which indicate the presence of interference, should be treated in one or more of the following ways.

a. The samples should be successively diluted and reanalyzed to determine if the interference can be eliminated.

b. The matrix of the sample should be modified in the furnace. Examples are the addition of ammonium nitrate to remove alkali chlorides, ammonium phosphate to retain cadmium, and nickel nitrate for arsenic and selenium analyses [ATOMIC ABSORPTION NEWSLETTER Vol. 14, No. *5,* p 127, Sept-Oct 1975]. The mixing of hydrogen with the inert purge gas has also been used to suppress chemical interference. The hydrogen acts as a reducing agent and aids in molecular dissociation.

c. Analyze the sample by method of standard additions while noting the precautions and limitations of its use (See 8.5).

5.2.2 Gases generated in the furnace during atomization may have molecular absorption bands encompassing the analytical wavelength. When this occurs, either the use of background correction or choosing an alternate wavelength outside the absorption band should eliminate this interference. Non-specific broad band absorption interference can also be compensated for with background correction.

5.2.3 Interference from a smoke-producing sample matrix can sometimes be reduced by extending the charring time at a higher temperature or utilizing an ashing cycle in the presence of air. Care must be taken, however, to prevent loss of the analysis element.

5.2.4 Samples containing large amounts of organic materials should be oxidized by conventional acid digestion prior to being placed in the furnace. In this way broad band absorption will be minimized.

5.2.5 From anion interference studies in the graphite furnace it is generally accepted that nitrate is the preferred anion. Therefore nitric acid is preferable for any digestion or solution step. If another acid in addition to HNO_3 is required a minimum amount should be used. This applies particularly to hydrochloric and to a lesser extent to sulfuric and phosphoric acids.

5.2.6 Carbide formation resulting from the chemical environment of the furnace has been observed with certain elements that form carbides at high temperatures. Molybdenum may be cited as an example. When this takes place, the metal will be released very slowly from the carbide as atomization continues. For molybdenum, one may be required to atomize for 30 seconds or more before the signal returns

to baseline levels. This problem is greatly reduced and the sensitivity increased with the use of pyrolytically-coated graphite.

5.2.7 Ionization interferences have to date not been reported with furnace techniques.

5.2.8 For comments on spectral interference see Section 5.1.5.

5.2.9 Contamination of the sample can be a major source of error because of the extreme sensitivities achieved with the furnace. The sample preparation work area should be kept scrupulously clean. All glassware should be cleaned as directed in part 6.9 of the Atomic Absorption Methods section of this manual. Pipet tips have been known to be a source of contamination. If suspected, they should be acid soaked with 1:5 HNO_3 and rinsed thoroughly with tap and deionized water. The use of a better grade pipet tip can greatly reduce this problem. It is very important that special attention be given to reagent blanks in both analysis and the correction of analytical results. Lastly, pyrolytic graphite because of the production process and handling can become contaminated. As many as five to possibly ten high temperature burns may be required to clean the tube before use.

6. Apparatus

6.1 Atomic absorption spectrophotometer: Single or dual channel, single-or double-beam instrument having a grating monochromator, photomultiplier detector, adjustable slits, a wavelength range of 190 to 800 nm, and provisions for interfacing with a strip chart recorder.

6.2 Burner: The burner recommended by the particular instrument manufacturer should be used. For certain elements the nitrous oxide burner is required.

6.3 Hollow cathode lamps: Single element lamps are to be preferred but multi-element lamps may be used. Electrodeless discharge lamps may also be used when available.

6.4 Graphite furnace: Any furnace device capable of reaching the specified temperatures is satisfactory.

6.5 Strip chart recorder: A recorder is strongly recommended for furnace work so that there will be a permanent record and any problems with the analysis such as drift, incomplete atomization, losses during charring, changes in sensitivity, etc., can be easily recognized.

6.6 Pipets: Microliter with disposable tips. Sizes can range from 5 to 100 microliters as required. NOTE 7: Pipet tips which are white in color, do not contain CdS, and have been found suitable for research work are available from Ulster Scientific, Inc., 53 Main St., Highland, NY 12528 (914) 691-7500.

6.7 Pressure-reducing valves: The supplies of fuel and oxidant shall be maintained at pressures somewhat higher than the controlled operating pressure of the instrument by suitable valves.

6.8 Separatory flasks: 250 ml, or larger, for extraction with organic solvents.

6.9 Glassware: All glassware, linear polyethylene, polyproplyene or Teflon containers, including sample bottles, should be washed with detergent, rinsed with tap water, 1:1 nitric acid, tap water, 1:1 hydrochloric acid, tap water and delonized distilled water in that order. (See Notes I and 2 under (4. 1) concerning the use of chromic acid and the cleaning procedure.]

6.10 Borosilicate glass distillation apparatus.

7. Reagents

7.1 Deionized distilled water: Prepare by passing distilled water through a mixed bed of cation and anion exchange resins. Use delonized distilled water for the preparation of all reagents, calibration standards, and as dilution water.

7.2 Nitric acid (conc.): If metal impurities are found to be present, distill reagent grade nitric acid in a borosilicate glass distillation apparatus or use a spectrograde acid.
Caution: Distillation should be performed in hood with protective sash in place.

7.2.1 Nitric Acid (1:1): Prepare a 1:1 dilution with deionized, distilled water by adding the conc. acid to an equal volume of water.

7.3 Hydrochloric acid (1:1): Prepare a 1:1 solution of reagent grade hydrochloric acid and deionized distilled water. If metal impurities are found to be present, distill this mixture from a borosilicate glass distillation apparatus or use a spectrograde acid.

7.4 Stock standard metal solutions: Prepare as directed in (8.1) and under the individual metal procedures. Commercially available stock standard solutions may also be used.

7.5 Calibration standards: Prepare a series of standards of the metal by dilution of the appropriate stock metal solution to cover the concentration range desired.

7.6 Fuel and oxidant: Commercial grade acetylene is generally acceptable. Air may be supplied from a compressed air line, a laboratory compressor, or from a cylinder of compressed air. Reagent grade nitrous oxide is also required for certain determinations. Standard, commercially available argon and nitrogen are required for furnace work.

7.7 Special reagents for the extraction procedure.

7.7.1 Pyrrolidine dithiocarbamic acid (PDCA[1]): Prepare by adding 18 ml of analytical reagent grade pyrrolidine to 500 ml of chloroform in a liter flask. (See Note 8) Cool and add 15 ml of carbon disulfide in small portions and with swirling. Dilute to 1 liter with chloroform. The solution can be used for several months if stored in a brown bottle in a refrigerator.

NOTE 8: An acceptable grade of pyrrolidine may be obtained from the Aldrich Chemical Co., 940 West St. Paul Ave., Milwaukee, WI. 53233 (414-273-3850).

7.7.2 Ammonium hydroxide, 2N: Dilute 1.3 ml conc. NH_4OH to 100 ml with deionized distilled water.

7.7.3 Bromophenol blue indicator (I g/liter): Dissolve 0.1g bromophenol blue in 100 ml of 50 percent ethanol or isopropanol.

7.7.4 HCI, 2.5% v/v: Dilute 2 ml redistilled HCI (6N) to 40 ml with delonized distilled water.

8. Preparation of Standards and Calibration

8.1 Stock standard solutions are prepared from high purity metals, oxides or nonhygroscopic reagent grade salts using deionized distilled water and redistilled nitric or hydrochloric acids. (See individual analysis sheets for specific instruction.) Sulfuric or phosphoric acids should be avoided as they produce an adverse effect on many elements. The stock solutions are prepared at concentrations of 1000 mg of the metal per liter. Commercially available standard solutions may also be used.

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[1] The name pyrrolidine dithiocarbamic acid (PDCA), although commonly referenced in the scientific literature is ambiguous. From the chemical reaction of pyrrolidine and carbon disulfide a more proper name would be 1-pyrrolidine carbodithioic acid, PCDA (CAS Registry No. 25769-03-3).

8.2 Calibration standards are prepared by diluting the stock metal solutions at the time of analysis. For best results, calibration standards should be prepared fresh each time an analysis is to be made and discarded after use. Prepare a blank and at least four calibration standards in graduated amounts in the appropriate range. The calibration standards should be prepared using the same type of acid or combination of acids and at the same concentration as will result in the samples following processing. As filtered water samples are preserved with 1:1 redistilled HNO_3 (3 ml per liter), calibration standards for these analyses should be similarly prepared with HNO_3. Beginning with the blank and working toward the highest standard, aspirate the solutions and record the reading. Repeat the operation with both the calibration standards and the samples a sufficient number of times to secure a reliable average reading for each solution. Calibration standards for furnace procedures should be prepared as described on the individual sheets for that metal.

8.3 Where the sample matrix is so complex that viscosity, surface tension and components cannot be accurately matched with standards, the method of standard addition must be used. This technique relies an the addition of small known amounts of the analysis element to portions of the sample—the absorbance difference between those and the original solution giving the slope of the calibration curve. The method of standard addition is described in greater detail in (8.5).

8.4 For those instruments which do not read out directly in concentration, a calibration curve is prepared to cover the appropriate concentration range. Usually, this means the preparation of standards which produce an absorption of 0 to 80 percent. The correct method is to convert the percent absorption readings to absorbance and plot that value against concentration. The following relationship is used to convert absorption values to absorbance:

$$\text{absorbance} = \log (100/\%T) = 2 - \log \% T$$
$$\text{where } \% T = 100 - \% \text{ absorption}$$

As the curves are frequently nonlinear, especially at high absorption values, the number of standards should be increased in that portion of the curve.

8.5 Method of Standard Additions: In this method, equal volumes of sample are added to a deionized distilled water blank and to three standards containing different known amounts of the test element. The volume of the blank and the standards must be the same. The absorbance of each solution is determined and then plotted on the vertical axis of a graph, with the concentrations of the known standards plotted on the horizontal axis. When the resulting line is extrapolated back to zero absorbance, the point of interception of the abscissa is the concentration of the unknown. The abscissa on the left of the ordinate is scaled the same as on the right side, but in the opposite direction from the ordinate. An example of a plot so obtained is shown in Fig. 1.

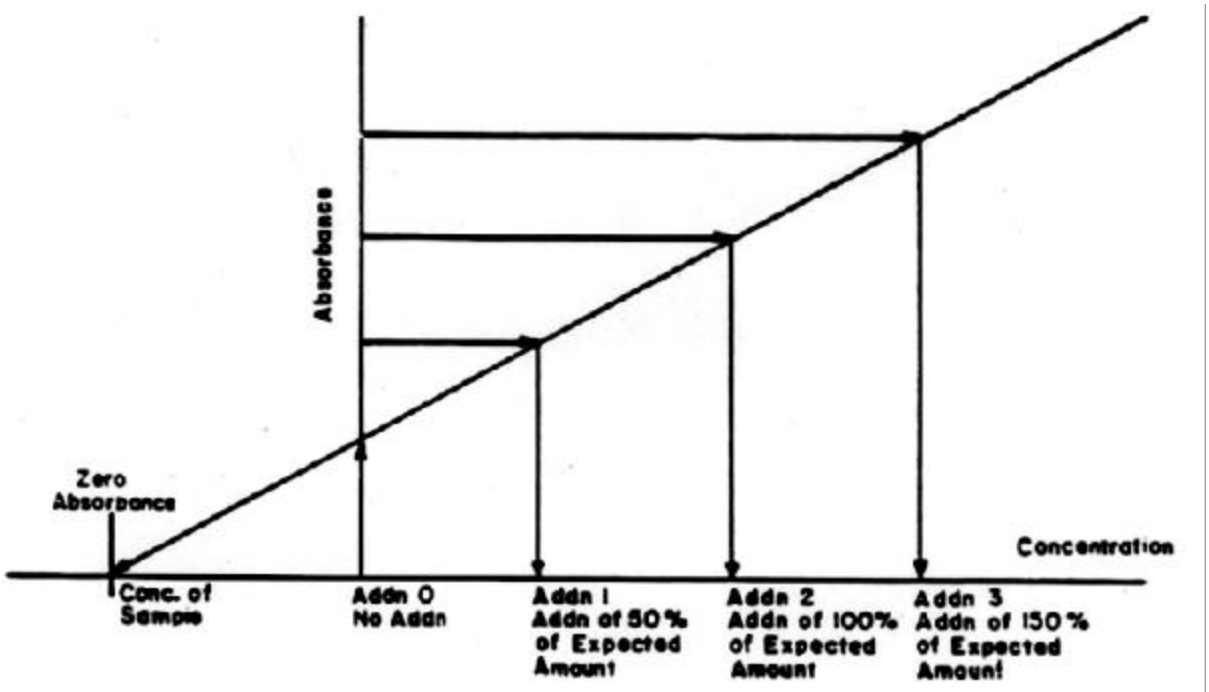

FIGURE 1. STANDARD ADDITION PLOT

The method of standard additions can be very useful. however, for the results to be valid the following limitations must be taken into consideration:

a) the absorbance plot of sample and standards must be linear over the concentration range of concern. For best results the slope of the plot should be nearly the same as the slope of the aqueous standard curve. If the slope is significantly different (more than 20%) caution should be exercised.

b) the effect of the interference should not vary as the ratio of analyte concentration to sample matrix changes and the standard addition should respond in a similar manner as the analyte.

c) the determination must be free of spectral interference and corrected for nonspecific background interference.

9. General Procedure for Analysis by Atomic Absorption

9.1 Direct Aspiration: Differences between the various makes and models of satisfactory atomic absorption spectrophotometers prevent the formulation of detailed instructions applicable to every instrument. The analyst should follow the manufacturer's operating instructions for his particular instrument. In general, after choosing the proper hollow cathode lamp for the analysis the lamp should be allowed to warm up for a minimum of 15 minutes unless operated in a double beam mode. During this period, align the instrument, position the monochromator at the correct wavelength, select the proper monochromator slit width, and adjust the hollow cathode current according to the manufacturer's recommendation. Subsequently, light the flame and regulate the flow of
fuel and oxidant, adjust the burners and flow rate for maximum percent absorption and stability, and balance the photometer. Run a series of standards of the element

under analysis and construct a calibration curve by plotting the concentrations of the standards against the absorbance. For those instruments which read directly in concentration set the curve corrector to read out the proper concentration. Aspirate the samples and determine the concentrations either directly or from the calibration curve. Standards must be run each time a sample or series of samples are run.

9.1.1 Calculation - Direct determination of liquid samples: Read the metal value in mg/l from the calibration curve or directly from the readout system of the instrument.

9.1.1.1 If dilution of sample was required:

$$\text{mg/l metal in sample} = A \quad \frac{(C + B)}{C}$$

where:

A = mg/1 of metal indiluted aliquot from calibration curve
B = ml of deionized distilled water used for dilution
C = ml of sample aliquot

9.1.2 For samples containing particulates:

$$\text{mg/l metal in sample} = A \left(\frac{V}{C} \right)$$

where:

A = mg/1 of metal in processed sample from calibration curve
V = final volume of the processed sample in ml
C = ml of sample aliquot processed

9.1.3 For solid samples: report all concentrations as mg/kg dry weight

9.1.3.1 Dry sample:

$$\text{mg metal/kg sample} = \frac{A \times V}{D}$$

where:

A = mg/I of metal in processed sample from calibration curve
V = final volume of the processed sample in ml
D = weight of dry sample in grams

9.1.3.2 Wet sample:

$$\text{mg metal/kg sample} = \frac{A \times V}{W \times P}$$

where:

A = mg/1 of metal in processed sample from calibration curve
V = final volume of the processed sample in ml
W = weight of wet sample in grams
P = % solids

9.2 Special Extraction Procedure: When the concentration of the metal is not sufficiently high to determine directly, or when considerable dissolved solids are present in the sample, certain metals may be chelated and extracted with organic solvents. Ammonium pyrroildine dithiocarbamate (APDC[2]) in methyl isobutyl ketone (MIBK) is widely used for this purpose and is particularly useful for zinc. cadmium, iron, manganese. copper, silver, lead and chromium. Tri-valent chromium does, not react with APDC unless it has first been converted to the hexavalent form (Atomic Absorption Newsletter 6, p 128 (1967)]. This procedure is described under method 218.3.

Aluminum beryllium, barium and strontium also do not react with APDC. While the APDC-LMMK chelating-solvent system can be used satisfactorily, it is possible to experience difficulties. (See Note 9.)

NOTE 9: Certain metal chelates, manganese-APDC in particular, are not stable in MIBK and will redissolve into the aqueous phase on standing. The extraction of other metals is sensitive to both shaking rate and time. As with cadmium, prolonged extraction beyond 1 minute, will reduce the extraction efficiency, whereas 3 minutes of vigorous shaking is required for chromium.

Also, when multiple metals are to be determined either larger sample volumes must be extracted or individual extractions made for each metal being determined. The acid form of APDC-pyrrolidine dithiocarbamic acid prepared directly in chloroform as described by Lakanen, [Atomic Absorption Newsletter 5, p 17 (1966)], (see 7.7. 1) has been found to be most advantageous. In this procedure the more dense chloroform layer allows for easy combination of multiple extractions which are carried out over a broader pH range favorable to multielement extractions. Pyrrolidine dithiocarbamic acid in chloroform is very stable and may be stored in a brown bottle in the refrigerator for months. Because chloroform is used as the solvent it may not be aspirated into the flame. The following procedure is suggested.

9.2.1 Extraction procedure with pyrrolidine dithiocarbamic acid (PDCA) in chloroform.

9.2.1.1 Transfer 200 ml of sample into a 250 ml separatory funnel, add 2 drops bromphenor blue indicator solution (7.7.3) and mix.

9.2.1.2 Prepare a blank and sufficient standards in the same manner and adjust the volume of each to approximately 200 ml with deionized distilled water. All of the metals to be determined may be combined into single solutions at the appropriate concentration levels.

9.2.1.3 Adjust the pH by addition of 2N NH_4OH solution (7.7.2) until a blue color persists. Add HCI (7.7.4) dropwise until the blue color just disappears; then add 2.0 ml HCI (7.7.4) in excess. The pH at this point should be 2.3. (The pH adjustment may be made with a pH meter instead of using indicator.)

9.2.1.4 Add 5 ml of PDCA-chloroform reagent (7.7.1) and shake vigorously for 2 minutes. Allow the phases to separate and drain the chloroform layer into a 100 ml beaker. (See NOTE 10.)

NOTE 10: If hexavalent chromium is to be extracted the aqueous phase must be readjusted back to a pH of 2.3 after the addition of

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[2] The name ammonium pyrrolidine dithiocarbamate (APDC) is somewhat ambiguous and should more properly be called ammonium, 1-pyrrolidine carbodithioate (APCD), CAS Registry No. 5108-96-3.

PDCA-chloroform and maintained at that pH throughout the extraction. For multielement extraction, the pH may adjusted upward after the chromium has been extracted.

9.2.1.5 Add a second portion of 5 ml PDCA-chloroform reagent (7.7.1) and shake vigorously for 2 minutes. Allow the phases to separate and combine the chloroform phase with that obtained in step (9.2.1.4).

9.2.1.6 Determine the pH of the aqueous phase and adjust to 4.5.

9.2.1.7 Repeat step (9.2.1.4) again combining the solvent extracts.

9.2.1.8 Readjust the pH to 5.5. and extract a fourth time. Combine all extracts and evaporate to dryness on a steam bath.

9.2.1.9 Hold the beaker at a 45 degree angle, and slowly add 2 ml of conc. distilled nitric acid, rotating the beaker to effect thorough contact of the acid with the residue.

9.2.1.10 Place the beaker on a low temperature hotplate or steam bath and evaporate just to dryness.

9.2.1.11 Add 2 ml of nitric acid (1:1) to the beaker and heat for 1 minute. Cool quantitatively transfer the solution to a 10 ml volumetric flask and bring to volume with distilled water. The sample is now ready for analysis.

9.2.2 Prepare a calibration curve by plotting absorbance versus the concentration of the metal standard (µg/l) in the 200 ml extracted standard solution. To calculate sample concentration read the metal value in µg/l from the calibration curve or directly from the readout system of the instrument. If dilution of the sample was required use the following equation:

$$\text{mg/l metal in sample} = Z \quad \frac{(C + B)}{C}$$

where:

Z = µg/l of metal in diluted aliquot from calibration curve
B = ml of deionized distilled water used for dilution
C = ml of sample aliquot

9.3 Furnace Procedure: Furnace devices (flameless atomization) are a most useful means of extending detection limits. Because of differences between various makes and models of satisfactory instruments, no detailed operating instructions can be given for each instrument. Instead, the analyst should follow the instructions provided by the manufacturer of his particular instrument and use as a guide the temperature settings and other instrument conditions listed on the individual analysis sheets which are recommended for the Perkin-Elmer HGA-2100. In addition, the following points may be helpful.

9.3.1 With flameless atomization, background correction becomes of high importance especially below 350 nm. This is because certain samples. when atomized. may absorb or scatter light from the hollow cathode lamp. It can be caused by the presence of gaseous molecular species, salt particules, or smoke in the sample beam. If no correction is made, sample absorbance will be greater than it should be, and the analytical result will be erroneously high.

9.3.2 If during atomization all the analyte is not volatilized and removed from the furnace, memory effects will occur. This condition is dependent on several

factors such as the volatility of the element and its chemical form, whether pyrolytic graphite is used, the rate of atomization and furnace design. If this situation is detected through blank burns, the tube should be cleaned by operating the furnace at full power for the required time period as needed at regular intervals in the analytical scheme.

9.3.3 Some of the smaller size furnace devices, or newer furnaces equipped with feedback temperature control (Instrumentation Laboratories MODEL 555, Perkin-Elmer MODELS HGA 2200 and HGA 76B, and Varian MODEL CRA-90) employing faster rates of atomization, can be operated using lower atomization temperatures for shorter time periods than those listed in this manual.

9.3.4 Although prior digestion of the sample in many cases is not required providing a representative aliquot of sample can be pipeted into the furnace, it will provide for a more uniform matrix and possibly lessen matrix effects.

9.3.5 Inject a measured microliter aliquot of sample into the furnace and atomize. If the concentration found is greater than the highest standard, the sample should be diluted in the same acid matrix and reanalyzed. The use of multiple injections can improve accuracy and help detect furnace pipetting errors.

9.3.6 To verify the absence interference, follow the procedure as given in part 5.2.1.

9.3.7 A check standard should be run approximately after every 10 sample injections. Standards are run in part to monitor the life and performance of the graphite tube. Lack of reproducibility or significant change in the signal for the standard indicates that the tube should be replaced. Even though tube life depends on sample matrix and atomization temperature. a conservative estimate would be that a tube will last at least 50 firings. A pyrolytic-coating would extend that estimate by a factor of 3.

9.3.8 Calculation—For determination of metal concentration by the furnace: Read the metal value in µg/1 from the calibration curve or directly from the readout system of the instrument.

9.3.8.1 If different size furnace injection volumes are used for samples than for standards:

$$\mu g/1 \text{ of metal in sample} = Z \left(\frac{S}{U}\right)$$

where:

Z = µg/1 of metal read from calibration curve or readout system
S = ul volume standard injected into furnace for calibration curve
U = ul volume of sample injected for analysis

9.3.8.2 If dilution of sample was required but sample injection volume same as for standard:

$$\mu g/l \text{ of metal in sample} = Z \left(\frac{C + B}{C}\right)$$

where:

Z = µg/l metal in diluted aliquot from calibration curve
B = ml of delonized distilled water used for dilution
C = ml of sample aliquot

9.3.9 For sample containing particulates.

$$\mu g/l \text{ of metal in sample} = Z \left(\frac{V}{C}\right)$$

where:

Z = µg/l of metal in processed sample from calibration curve (See 9.3.8.1)
V = final volume of processed sample in ml
C = ml of sample aliquot processed

9.3.10 For solid samples: Report all concentrations as mg/kg dry weight

9.3.10.1 Dry sample:

$$\text{mg metal/kg sample} = \frac{\left(\frac{Z}{1{,}000}\right) V}{D}$$

where:

Z = µg/1 of metal in processed sample from calibration curve (See 9.3.8. 1)
V = final volume of processed sample in ml
D = weight of dry sample in grams

9.3.10.2 Wet sample:

$$\text{mg metal/kg sample} = \frac{\left(\frac{Z}{1{,}000}\right) V}{W \times P}$$

where:

Z = µg/1 of metal in processed sample from calibration curve (See 9.3.8. 1)
V = final volume of processed sample in ml
W = weight of wet sample in grams
P = % solids

10 Quality Control For Drinking Water Analysis

10.1 Minimum requirements

10.1.1 All quality control data should be maintained and available for easy reference or inspection.

10.1.2 An unknown performance sample (when available) must be analyzed once per year for the metals measured. Results must be within the control limit established by EPA. If problems arise, they should be corrected, and a follow-up performance sample should be analyzed.

10.2 Minimum Daily control

10.2.1 After a calibration curve composed of a minimum of a reagent blank and three standards has been prepared, subsequent calibration curves must be verified by use of at least a reagent blank and one standard at or near the MCL. Daily checks must be within ± 10 percent of original curve.

10.2.2 If 20 or more samples per day are analyzed, the working standard curve must be verified by running an additional standard at or near the MCL every 20 samples. Checks must be within ± 10 percent of original curve.

10.3 Optional Requirements

10.3.1 A current service contract should be in effect on balances and the atomic absorption spectrophotometer.

10.3.2 Class S weights should be available to make periodic checks on balances.

10.3.3 Chemicals should be dated upon receipt of shipment and replaced as needed or before shelf life has been exceeded.

10.3.4 A known reference sample (when available) should be analyzed once per quarter for the metals measured. The measured value should be within the control limits established by EPA.

10.3.5 At least one duplicate sample should be run every 10 samples, or with each set of samples to verify precision of the method. Checks should be within the control limit established by EPA.

10.3.6 Standard deviation should be obtained and documented for all measurements being conducted.

10.3.7 Quality Control charts or a tabulation of mean and standard deviation should be used to document validity of data on a daily basis.