



Standard Practice for Collection of a Gross Sample of Coal¹

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INTRODUCTION

Data obtained from coal samples are used in establishing price, controlling mine and cleaning plant operations, allocating production costs, and determining plant or component efficiency. The task of obtaining a sample of reasonable weight to represent an entire lot presents a number of problems and emphasizes the necessity for using standard sampling procedures.

Coal is one of the most difficult of materials to sample, varying in composition from noncombustible particles to those which can be burned completely, with all gradations in between. The task is further complicated by the use of the analytical results, the sampling equipment available, the quantity to be represented by the sample, and the degree of precision required.

This practice gives the overall requirements for the collection of coal samples. The wide varieties of coal-handling facilities preclude the publication of detailed procedures for every sampling situation. The proper collection of the sample involves an understanding and consideration of the physical character of the coal, the number and weight of increments, and the overall precision required.

1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers procedures for the collection of a sample under various conditions of sampling. The sample is to be crushed and further prepared for analysis in accordance with Practice [D2013](#). However, the procedures for dividing large samples before any crushing are given in this practice. For the sampling of coal using mechanical sampling systems see [D7430](#) Practice for the Mechanical Sampling of Coal.

1.2 This practice describes general and special purpose sampling procedures for coals (1) by size and condition of preparation (for example, mechanically cleaned coal or raw coal) and (2) by sampling characteristics.

1.3 The values stated in either SI units or inch-pound units are to be regarded separately as standard. The values stated in each system may not be exact equivalents; therefore, each system shall be used independently of the other. Combining values from the two systems may result in non-conformance with the standard.

1.4 *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

[D2013](#) Practice for Preparing Coal Samples for Analysis

[D7430](#) Practice for Mechanical Sampling of Coal

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.1.1 *accuracy:*

3.1.1.1 *generally*—a term used to indicate the reliability of a sample, a measurement, or an observation.

3.1.1.2 *specifically*—a measure of closeness of agreement between an experimental result and the true value. Example: the observed and true sulfur content of a coal consignment. This measure is affected by chance errors as well as by bias.

3.1.2 *gross sample*—a sample representing one lot of coal and composed of a number of increments on which neither reduction nor division has been performed.

3.1.3 *increment*—a small portion of the lot collected by one operation of a sampling device and normally combined with other increments from the lot to make a gross sample.

3.1.4 *probability sample*—a sample collected using a sampling process such that at each stage of the process, a specified non-zero probability of being selected for the sample can be

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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.

attached to every sampling unit in the lot to be sampled. Given adequate information about the sample results obtained using probability sampling, the probability distribution of sampling errors can be estimated.

3.1.5 *sample*—a quantity of material taken from a larger quantity for the purpose of estimating properties or composition of the larger quantity.

3.1.6 *size consist*—the particle size distribution of a coal.

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 The general-purpose sampling procedures are intended to provide, in 19 of 20 cases, dry ash results that are within an interval of $\pm 1/10$ of the average dry ash results that would be obtained in hypothetical repeated sampling.

4.2 Special-purpose sampling procedures apply to the sampling of coal when other precision limits are required, or when other constituents are used to specify precision, or for performance tests.

4.3 For coals of known size and condition of preparation, tables are given for the determination of the number and weight of increments required for a gross sample for both general and special-purpose sampling.

4.4 The procedures appear in the following order:

Test Method	Section
Sampling of Coals Based on Size and Condition of Preparation	8.1
General-Purpose Sampling Procedure	8.1.1
Number and Weight of Increments	8.1.1.2
Number of Gross Samples	8.1.1.4
Special-Purpose Sampling	8.1.2
Number and Weight of Increments	8.1.2.2
Number of Gross Samples	8.1.2.3
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Sampling of Coal for Total Moisture Determination	8.3
Types of Moisture Samples	8.3.1
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Special Precautions	8.3.2
Weight of Increments	8.3.3
Number of Increments	8.3.4
Moisture Sampling Based Only on Size	8.3.4.1

5. Significance and Use

5.1 It is intended that this practice be used to provide a sample representative of the coal from which it is collected. Because of the variability of coal and the wide variety of sampling equipment, caution should be used in all stages of sampling from system specifications and equipment procurement to equipment acceptance testing and actually taking the final sample.

5.2 After further processing (Practice D2013), the sample may be analyzed for a number of different parameters. These parameters may affect the lot's value, its ability to meet specifications, its environmental impact, as well as other properties.

6. Increment Collection Classification

6.1 The type of selection, the conditions under which individual increments are collected, and the method of spacing of increments from the coal consignment or lot are classified according to the following descriptions and Table 1. These designations are to be used for sampling specifications and for descriptions of sampling programs and sampling equipment.

6.2 *Types of Increments*—The types of selection of increments are based on whether or not there is human discretion in the selection of the pieces of coal or portions of the coal stream.

6.2.1 *Type I*, in which specific pieces or portions are not subject to selection on a discretionary basis. This includes that in which the increment is collected in precise accord with previously assigned rules on timing or location that are free of any bias. Type I selection increments generally yield more accurate results.

6.2.2 *Type II*, in which some measure of human discretion is exercised in the selection of specific pieces of coal or of specific portions of the stream, pile, or shipment.

6.3 *Conditions of Increment Collection*—The conditions under which individual increments are collected are the conditions of the main body of coal relative to the portion withdrawn. Four conditions are recognized:

6.3.1 *Condition A (Stopped-Belt Cut)*, in which a loaded conveyor belt is stopped and a full cross-section cut with parallel sides is removed from the coal stream. The distance between the parallel faces shall not be less than three times the normal top size of the coal.

6.3.2 *Condition B (Full-Stream Cut)*, in which a full cross-section cut is removed from a moving stream of coal.

6.3.3 *Condition C (Part-Stream Cut)*, in which a portion, not a full cross section, is removed from a moving stream of coal.

6.3.4 *Condition D (Stationary Coal Sampling)*, in which a portion of coal is collected from a pile, a rail car, a barge, or a shiphold.

6.4 *Spacing of Increments*—The spacing of increments pertains to the kind of intervals between increments. Two

TABLE 1 Increment Types, Conditions, and Spacing

Condition of Increment Collection from the Main Body of Coal	Types of Increment			
	Type I No Human Discretion Is Used		Type II Human Discretion Is Used	
	Spacing of Increments		Spacing of Increments	
	1. Systematic	2. Random	1. Systematic	2. Random
Condition A, stopped belt cut	I-A-1	I-A-2	II-A-1	II-A-2
Condition B, full-stream cut	I-B-1	I-B-2	II-B-1	II-B-2
Condition C, part-stream cut	I-C-1	I-C-2	II-C-1	II-C-2
Condition D, stationary sampling	I-D-1	I-D-2	II-D-1	II-D-2



spacing methods are recognized: systematic and random. Systematic spacing is usually preferable.

6.4.1 *Systematic Spacing 1*, in which the movements of individual increment collection are spaced evenly in time or in position over the lot.

6.4.2 *Random Spacing 2*, in which the increments are spaced at random in time or in position over the lot.

7. Organization and Planning of Sampling Operations

7.1 This practice provides definitive procedures for the collection of a gross sample. Parties claiming to use this practice must adhere to the procedures as set out in this standard. If the sampling is not done in accordance with the procedures set out in this practice then that sample may not be suitable for comparison with a sample collected by the procedures described in this practice. Since it may be impracticable or impossible to take another sample of a given lot of coal it is essential that parties agree on sampling procedures prior to undertaking sampling.

7.2 *Selection of Appropriate Sampling Procedure*—Variations in coal-handling facilities make it impossible to publish rigid rules covering every sampling situation in complete and exact details. Proper sampling involves an understanding and proper consideration of the minimum number and weight of increments, the size consist of the coal, the condition of preparation of the coal, the variability of the constituent sought, and the degree of precision required.

7.2.1 *Number and Weight of Increments*—The number and weight of increments required for a given degree of precision depends upon the variability of the coal. This variability increases with an increase in free impurity. A coal high in inherent impurity and with comparatively little free impurity may exhibit much less variability than a coal with a low inherent impurity and a relatively high proportion of free impurity. For most practical purposes, an increase in the ash content of a given coal usually indicates an increase in variability. It is imperative that not less than the minimum specified number of increments of not less than the minimum specified weight be collected from the lot. For Condition D, the increments shall be of equal weight.

7.2.2 *Increment Collection Method to Be Used*—To obtain complete representation of all sizes, it is most desirable that the sample increments be withdrawn from the full cross section of the stream. The best possible increment is a full cross-section cut removed from a stopped belt, Classification I-A-1 in [Table 1](#). The best possible increment from a flowing stream of coal is one obtained by moving a cutter device entirely across the stream at a uniform speed, the same for each increment, into one side of the stream and out of the other, without allowing the receptacle to overflow (Classification I-B-1 in [Table 1](#)). For the sampling of coal under Classification I-B-I see [D7430](#) Practice for the Mechanical Sampling of Coal. Classification methods given in [Table 1](#) are listed in order of decreasing reliability. The highest possible classification method, wherever feasible, should be used. Details of sampling procedures should be agreed upon in advance by all parties concerned. Whenever circumstances dictate utilization of increment collection classifications “Condition C” or “Condition D” or

“Type II,” details of sampling procedure shall be agreed upon in advance by all parties concerned.

7.3 *Distribution of Increments*—It is essential that the increments be distributed throughout the lot to be sampled. This distribution is related to the entire volume of the lot, not merely its surface or any linear direction through it or over it. If circumstances prevent the sampler from applying this principle, the lot is sampled only in part, and the gross sample is representative only of this part. The spacing of the increments shall be varied if the possibility exists that increment collection may get “in phase” with the sequence of coal variability. Example: routine sampling of commercial coal from a continuous stream (conveyor belt) in which increment collection is automatic and its sequence coincides with the “highs” or “lows” in the content of fines.

7.4 *Dimensions of Sampling Device*—The opening of the sampling device shall be no less than 2.5 times the nominal top size of the coal and no less than 30 mm [1.25 in.]. The sampling device shall be of sufficient capacity to completely retain or entirely pass the increment without spillage at the maximum rate of coal flow.

7.5 *Characteristics and Movement of Sampling Device*—In sampling from moving streams of coal, the sampling device shall be designed to collect each increment with no selective rejection of material by size and with no contamination by nonsample material.

7.6 *Relative Location of Sampling and Weighing*—It is preferable that coal be weighed and sampled at the same time. If there is a lapse in time between these two events, consideration should be given by both the purchaser and the seller to changes in moisture during this interval and the consequent shift in relationship of moisture to the true quality of the coal at the instant when ownership of the coal transfers from one to the other.

7.7 *Preservation of Moisture*—The increments obtained during the sampling period shall be protected from changes in composition as a result of exposure to rain, snow, wind, sun, contact with absorbent materials, and extremes of temperature. The circulation of air through equipment must be reduced to a minimum to prevent both loss of fines and moisture. Samples in which moisture content is important shall be protected from excessive air flow and then shall be stored in moisture-tight containers. Metal cans with airtight lids, or heavy vapor-imperious bags, properly sealed, are satisfactory for this purpose.

7.8 *Contamination*—The sampling arrangement shall be planned so that contamination of the increments with foreign material or unrelated coal does not create bias of practical consequence.

7.9 *Personnel*—Because of the many variations in the conditions under which coal must be sampled, and in the nature of the material being sampled, it is essential that the samples be collected under the direct supervision of a person qualified by training and experience for this responsibility.

8. Procedures

8.1 *Sampling of Coals Based on Size and Condition of Preparation:*

8.1.1 *General-Purpose Sampling:*



8.1.1.1 Where probability sampling is employed, the general-purpose sampling procedures are intended to provide, in 19 of 20 cases, dry ash results that are within the interval of $\pm 1/10$ of the average dry ash results that would be obtained in hypothetical repeated sampling.

NOTE 1—Neither samples collected using part-stream increment collection nor samples collected from stationary coal are probability samples because in each case there are portions of the lot that have no chance of being selected for the sample.

8.1.1.2 *Number and Weight of Increments*—Obtain the number and weight of increments as specified in **Table 2** except as provided in 8.1.1.5 (b). Determine the minimum number of increments from the condition of preparation, and determine the minimum weight of each increment from the top size of the coal. Classify the coals to be sampled according to the general purpose procedure into three groups by top size. Further classify each of these groups into two subgroups in accordance with the condition of preparation. These classifications are shown in **Table 2**.

8.1.1.3 Variations in construction of the sampling device and flow, structure, or size consist of the coal may make it impracticable to collect increments as small as the minimum weight specified in **Table 2**. In such cases, collect an increment of greater weight. However, do not reduce the minimum number of increments, regardless of large excesses of individual increment weights. **Table 2** lists the absolute minimum number of increments for general-purpose sampling which may not be reduced except as specified in 8.1.1.5 (b). Other considerations may make it advisable or necessary to increase this number of increments.

8.1.1.4 *Number of Gross Samples*—Under the general-purpose sampling procedure, for quantities up to approximately 1000 Mg [1000 tons] it is recommended that one gross sample represent the lot. Take this gross sample in accordance with the requirements prescribed in **Table 2**.

8.1.1.5 For quantities over 1000 Mg [1000 tons], use any of the following alternatives:

(a) Take one gross sample for the lot and analyze it to represent the quality of the lot. Collect the number of increments N calculated from Eq 1 below:

$$N = K \sqrt{\frac{L}{1000}} \quad (1)$$

where:

L = the number of Mg [tons], and

K = 15 for mechanically cleaned coal or 35 for raw coal (see **Table 2**).

(b) Divide the lot into sub-lots and take a separate gross sample from each sub-lot. Use Eq 1 to determine the minimum number of increments for each sub-lot, with L being the sub-lot quantity. Weight-average the analyses of the sub-lot samples to represent the quality of the original lot.

8.1.1.6 The maximum lot size shall be chosen by mutual agreement between the seller and the buyer of the coal, with each party taking into account the risks associated with the choice. Potential consequences include:

(a) Large samples requiring excessive off-line preparation steps can result in sampling moisture losses.

(b) No quality information is obtained on within lot variability. Lot sizes generally should not exceed quantities for which critical quality levels apply in use of the coal.

(c) When a given quantity of coal that might be represented by a single lot is divided into multiple sub-lots, the imprecision of the reported quality for that given quantity is reduced. For a given quantity, the component of imprecision due to sample preparation and analysis is reduced by $1/\sqrt{m}$ where m is the number of sub-lots.

8.1.2 *Special-Purpose Sampling:*

8.1.2.1 This special-purpose sampling procedure shall apply to the sampling of coal when increased precision is required, and the only knowledge of the coal is its top size and conditions of preparation.

8.1.2.2 *Number and Weight of Increments*—Take the same number and weight of increments per gross sample as specified in **Table 2**, or as specified in 8.1.1.5(b).

8.1.2.3 *Number of Gross Samples*—To obtain increased precision for the final result for a given consignment, increase the number of gross samples collected from that consignment and analyze each gross sample separately, reporting the average of results. To reduce errors to one half, that is, to “double” the precision, take four times as many gross samples. Similarly, to reduce errors to one third, to “triple” the precision, take nine times as many gross samples.

8.1.3 *Sampling for Total Moisture Only:*

8.1.3.1 The increments as established in **Table 2** for mechanically cleaned coal are deemed adequate for general purpose sampling for total moisture.

TABLE 2 Number and Weight of Increments for General Purpose Sampling Procedure^A

Top Size	5/8 in. [16 mm]	2 in. [50 mm]	6 in. [150 mm] ^B
Mechanically Cleaned Coal ^C			
Minimum number of increments	15	15	15
Minimum weight of increments, lbs	2	6	15
Minimum weight of increments, kg	1	3	7
Raw (Uncleaned Coal) ^C			
Minimum number of increments	35	35	35
Minimum weight of increments, lbs	2	6	15
Minimum weight of increments, kg	1	3	7

^A Under Conditions C and D, see 7.2.1 and 7.2.2.

^B For coals above 6-in. [150-mm] top size, the sampling procedure should be mutually agreed upon in advance by all parties concerned.

^C If there is any doubt as to the condition of preparation of the coal (for example, mechanically cleaned coal or raw coal), the number of increments for raw coal shall apply. Similarly, although a coal has been mechanically cleaned, it may still show great variation because of being a blend of two different portions of one seam or a blend of two different seams. In such cases, the number of increments should be as specified for raw (uncleaned) coal.



8.2 *Division of the Gross Sample Before Crushing:*

8.2.1 In the case of very large and unwieldy gross samples, it is permissible to divide the gross sample to reduce its weight, provided the following conditions are fulfilled:

8.2.1.1 If the entire gross sample is mixed in a suitable blender (double-cone or twin-shell tumbler) it is permissible to divide the sample using the schedule of **Table 2**. Test the divided sample for bias.

8.2.1.2 If each very large increment is divided in quantity by secondary sampling, take at least six secondary increments from each primary increment. The method of collection of secondary increments must be proved to be free from bias. In no case shall the weight of a secondary increment be less than shown in the schedule of **Table 2**.

8.3 *Sampling of Coal for Total Moisture Determinations:*

8.3.1 *Types of Moisture Samples*—Moisture determinations as specified in the method to be used are to be made on the following kinds of samples.

8.3.1.1 *Entire Gross Sample*—For referee tests, air dry the entire gross sample and measure the weight loss from the entire gross sample during this drying. This procedure can be carried out on the entire gross sample as a single batch or on groups of primary increments or as separate operations on the individual primary increments; obtain, by one of these means, the total weight loss from the entire gross sample. After this air drying, the sample can be crushed or divided, or both, as required by the referee test for moisture.

8.3.1.2 *Special Moisture Subsample*—For moisture testing, a special subsample can be taken from a gross sample before any operations of air drying or crushing. Take this subsample from the gross sample in accordance with the requirements of **8.2**.

8.3.1.3 *Other Subsamples for Moisture Testing*—For moisture testing, a subsample can be used that is collected after the initial crushing and dividing of a gross sample. The procedures

for the crushing and dividing, and for this subsequent subsampling for moisture, are given in Practice **D2013**.

8.3.2 *Special Precautions*—Collect samples and subsamples for moisture in such a manner that there is no unmeasured loss of moisture of significant amount. Make adequate weighings before and after drying or other operations to measure all significant weight losses.

8.3.3 *Weight of Increments*—The minimum weight of each increment must be that which is sufficient as to be free of bias. This depends on the top size of the coal in the stream being sampled, the dimensions of the collection device, and other factors of the withdrawal of the increment. Since much of the moisture tends to be distributed uniformly across the surface, moisture bias is present when the size consist of the sample is not the same as the size consist of the lot sampled. In addition, when there is no knowledge of the sampling characteristics for moisture, each increment shall not weigh less than the values in **Table 2**.

8.3.4 *Number of Increments*—The number of increments required for a given degree of precision depends on the weight of the increments, the distribution of the moisture, and the total amount of moisture. The distribution of moisture, however, is not easily evaluated independent of total moisture; consequently, the combined effects can be measured by determining the sampling characteristics for moisture.

8.3.4.1 *Moisture Sampling Based Only on Size*—When there is no knowledge of the sampling characteristics for moisture, collect at least the number of increments from the lot of coal as those given in **Table 2**. When a special moisture subsample is taken from the gross sample before any drying or crushing operations, collect the number of increments for the subsample as specified in **8.2**.

9. Precision and Bias

9.1 The precision of the general-purpose sampling procedure, based on size and condition of preparation, is stated in **8.1.1.1**. If a different precision is required, see **8.1.2**.

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