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Standard Test Method for Obtaining Char Density Profile of Ablative Materials by Machining and Weighing¹

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INTRODUCTION

The ablation characteristics of charring materials must be well known in order to design the material for a specific set of environmental conditions. The char density profile and the environmental conditions under which it was formed can provide useful information about the ablation performance.

A method of obtaining the char density profile from a charred sample of material is described in the following sections. Some chars are very friable and are easily broken before they can be measured. Other chars are relatively strong and can be handled with ease. The type of char density profile measurement described in this method is applicable if the char is strong enough to be machined without breaking.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the determination of the char density profile of a charred ablator that can be used with the following limitations:

1.1.1 The local surface imperfections must be removed, and the char must be able to be machined off in a plane parallel to the char-virgin material interface before the density profiles can be determined.

1.1.2 The char must be strong enough to withstand the machining and handling techniques employed.

1.1.3 The material should have orderly density variations. The total thickness of the char and degradation zone must be larger than the machining thicknesses required.

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

1.2.1 *Exception*—Certain inch-pound equivalent units are included in parentheses for information only.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

1.4 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standard-*

ization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.

2. Summary of Test Method

2.1 Density variation throughout a charred ablator material is determined by successively measuring, machining, and weighing a sample of known size to obtain the density of the material removed by machining.

3. Apparatus

3.1 The apparatus required for this method includes a laboratory balance capable of measuring to the nearest 0.0001 g, and a machining technique capable of removing material in increments as small as 0.025 mm (0.001 in.). For example, flat specimens can be machined with a surface grinder using a medium fine grit ceramic grinding wheel of a soft grade dressed to the proper contour. Cylindrical specimens can be mounted in a lathe and the char can be removed with a sharp carbide or diamond tip tool.

4. Sampling

4.1 The charred sample selected for machining and weighing should be taken from a representative section of the ablated specimen where the environmental conditions are well known, and where the surface is parallel to the char-virgin material interface. Where large sections are available, this condition is usually met. For small samples which have been exposed to varying environmental conditions along the length of the sample, the sample size will be smaller.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E21 on Space Simulation and Applications of Space Technology and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E21.08 on Thermal Protection.

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