METHOD 7742

SELENIUM (ATOMIC ABSORPTION, BOROHYDRIDE REDUCTION)

1.0 SCOPE AND APPLICATION

1.1 Method 7742 is an atomic absorption procedure for determining 3 µg/L to 750 µg/L concentrations of selenium in wastes, mobility procedure extracts, soils, and ground water. Method 7742 is approved for sample matrices that contain a total of up to 1000 mg/L concentrations of cobalt, copper, iron, mercury, and nickel. A solid sample can contain up to 10% by weight of the interferents before exceeding 1000 mg/L in a digested sample. All samples including aqueous matrices must be subjected to an appropriate dissolution step prior to analysis. Spiked samples and relevant standard reference materials are employed to determine the applicability of the method to a given waste.

2.0 SUMMARY OF METHOD

2.1 Samples are prepared according to the nitric acid digestion procedure described in Method 3010 for aqueous and extract samples and the nitric/peroxide/hydrochloric acid digestion procedure described in Method 3050 (furnace AA option) for sediments, soils, and sludges. Excess peroxide is removed by evaporating samples to near-dryness at the end of the digestion followed by dilution to volume and degassing the samples upon addition of urea. The selenium is converted to the +4 oxidation state during digestion in HCl. After a 1:10 dilution, selenium is then converted to its volatile hydride using hydrogen produced from the reaction of the acidified sample with sodium borohydride in a continuous-flow hydride generator.

2.2 The volatile hydrides are swept into, and decompose in, a heated quartz absorption cell located in the optical path of an atomic absorption spectrophotometer. The resulting absorption of the lamp radiation is proportional to the selenium concentration.

2.3 The typical detection limit for this method is 3 µg/L.

3.0 INTERFERENCES

3.1 Very high (>1000 mg/L) concentrations of cobalt, copper, iron, mercury, and, nickel can cause analytical interferences through precipitation as reduced metals and associated blockage of transfer lines and fittings.

3.2 Traces of peroxides left following the sample work-up can result in analytical interferences. Peroxides must be removed by evaporating each sample to near-dryness followed by reacting each sample with urea and allowing sufficient time for degassing before analysis (see Sections 7.1 and 7.2).

3.3 Even after acid digestion, flame gases and organic compounds may remain in the sample. Flame gases and organic compounds can absorb at the analytical wavelengths and background correction should be used.

4.0 APPARATUS AND MATERIALS

4.1 Electric hot plate: Large enough to hold at least several 100 mL Pyrex digestion beakers.

4.2 A continuous-flow hydride generator: A commercially available continuous-flow sodium borohydride/HCl hydride generator or a generator constructed similarly to that shown in Figure 1 (P. S. Analytical or equivalent).

4.2.1 Peristaltic Pump: A four-channel, variable-speed peristaltic pump to permit regulation of liquid-stream flow rates (Ismatec Reglo-100 or equivalent). Pump speed and tubing diameters should be adjusted to provide the following flow rates: sample/blank flow = 4.2 mL/min; borohydride flow = 2.1 mL/min.

4.2.2 Sampling Valve (optional): A sampling valve (found in the P. S. Analytical Hydride Generation System or equivalent) that allows switching between samples and blanks (rinse solution) without introduction of air into the system will provide more signal stability.

4.2.3 Transfer Tubing and Connectors: Transfer tubing (1 mm I.D.), mixing T's, and connectors are made of fluorocarbon (PFA or TFM) and are of compatible sizes to form tight, leak-proof connections (Latchat, Technicon, etc. flow injection apparatus accessories or equivalent).

4.2.4 Mixing Coil: A 20-turn coil made by wrapping transfer tubing around a 1-cm diameter by 5-cm long plastic or glass rod (see Figure 1).

4.2.5 Mixing Coil Heater, if appropriate: A 250-mL Erlenmeyer flask containing 100 mL of water heated to boiling on a dedicated one-beaker hotplate (Corning PC-35 or equivalent). The mixing coil in 4.2.4 is immersed in the boiling water to speed kinetics of the hydride forming reactions and increase solubility of interfering reduced metal precipitates.

4.2.6 Gas-Liquid Separator: A glass apparatus for collecting and separating liquid and gaseous products (P. S. Analytical accessory or equivalent) which allows the liquid fraction to drain to waste and gaseous products above the liquid to be swept by a regulated carrier gas (argon) out of the cell for analysis. To avoid undue carrier gas dilution, the gas volume above the liquid should not exceed 20 mL. See Figure 1 for an acceptable separator shape.

4.2.7 Condensor: Moisture picked up by the carrier gas must be removed before encountering the hot absorbance cell. The moist carrier gas with the hydrides is dried by passing the gasses through a small (< 25

mL) volume condensor coil (Ace Glass Model 6020-02 or equivalent) that is cooled to 5°C by a water chiller (Neslab RTE-110 or equivalent). Cool tap-water in place of a chiller is acceptable.

4.2.8 Flow Meter/Regulator: A meter capable of regulating up to 1 L/min of argon carrier gas is recommended.

4.3 Absorbance Cell: A 17-cm or longer quartz tube T-cell (windowless is strongly suggested) is recommended, as shown in Figure 1 (Varian Model VGA-76 accessory or equivalent). The cell is held in place by a holder that positions the cell about 1 cm over a conventional AA air-acetylene burner head. In operation, the cell is heated to around 900°C.

4.4 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 an appropriate recording device.

4.5 Burner: As recommended by the particular instrument manufacturer for an air-acetylene flame. An appropriate mounting bracket attached to the burner that suspends the quartz absorbance cell between 1 and 2 cm above the burner slot is required.

4.6 Selenium hollow cathode lamp or selenium electrodeless discharge lamp and power supply. Super-charged hollow-cathode lamps or EDL lamps are recommended for maximum sensitivity.

4.7 Strip-chart recorder (optional): Connect to output of spectrophotometer.

5.0 REAGENTS

5.1 Reagent water : Water must be monitored for impurities. Refer to Chapter 1 for definition of Reagent water.

5.2 Concentrated nitric acid (HNO_3): Acid must be analyzed to determine levels of impurities. If a method blank is <MDL, the acid can be used.

5.3 30% Hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2): Peroxide must be a tin-free grade.

5.4 Concentrated hydrochloric acid (HCl): Acid must be analyzed to determine levels of impurities. If a method blank is <MDL, the acid can be used.

5.5 Diluent solution: A 3% HCl solution in reagent water must be prepared as a diluent solution if excessive levels of analytes or interfering metals are found in the undiluted samples.

5.6 Urea (H_2NCONH_2): A 5.00-g portion of reagent grade urea must be added to a 25-mL aliquot of each sample for removal of excess peroxide through degassing (see Section 7.2).

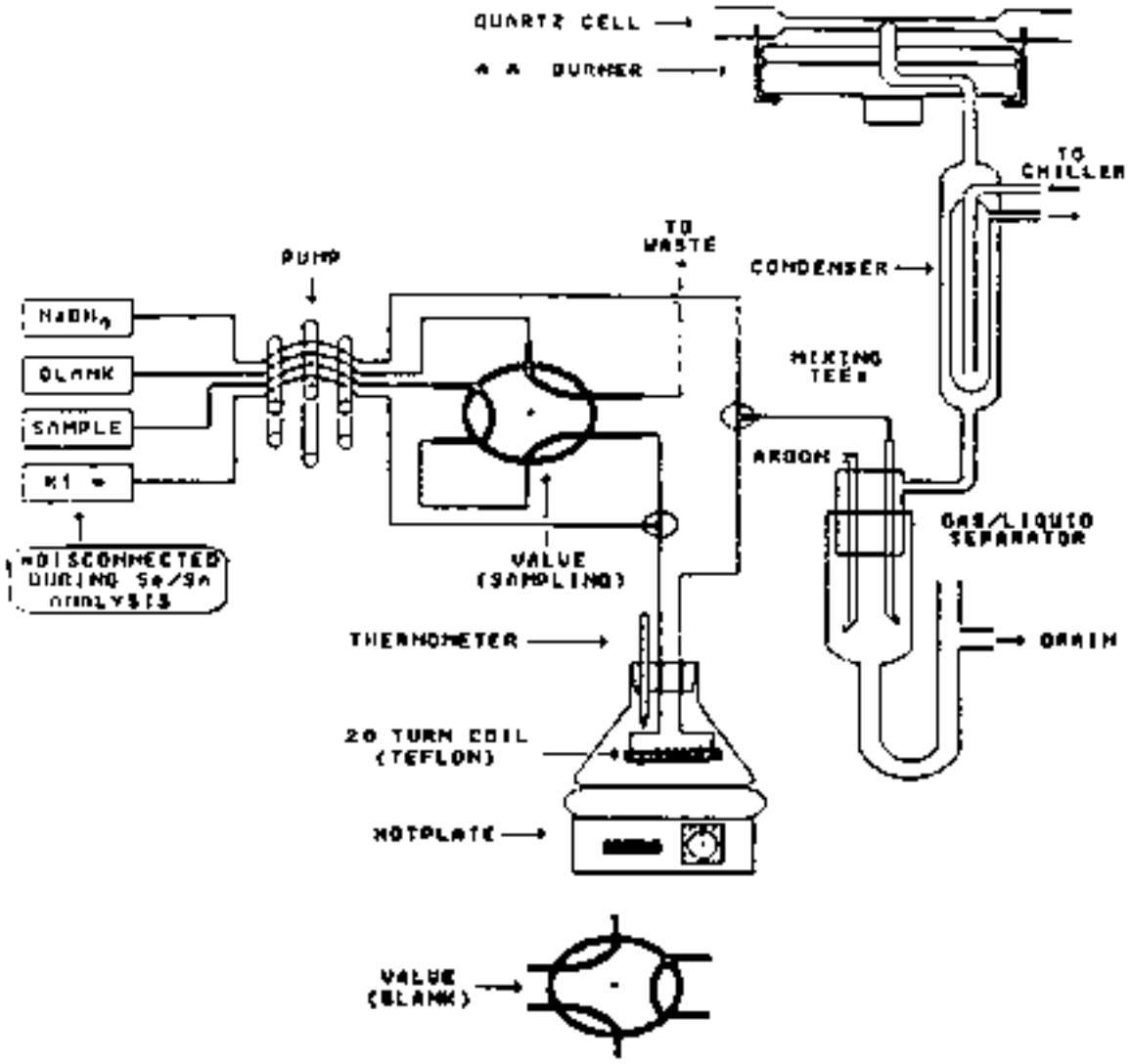


Figure 1. Continuous-flow sodium borohydride/hydride generator apparatus setup and an AAS sample introduction system

5.7 4% Sodium Borohydride ($NaBH_4$): A 4 % sodium borohydride solution (20 g reagent-grade $NaBH_4$ plus 2 g sodium hydroxide dissolved in 500 mL of reagent water) must be prepared for conversion of the selenium to its hydride.

5.8 Selenium solutions:

5.8.1 **Selenium standard stock solution** (1,000 mg/L): Either procure certified aqueous standards from a supplier and verify by comparison with a second standard, or dissolve 0.3453 g of selenious acid (assay 96.6% of H_2SeO_3) in 200 mL of reagent water (1 mL = 1 mg Se).

5.8.2 **Selenium working stock solution:** Pipet 1 mL selenium standard stock solution into a 1 L volumetric flask and bring to volume with reagent water containing 1.5 mL concentrated HNO_3/liter. The concentration of this solution is 1 mg Se/L (1 mL = 1 µg Se).

6.0 SAMPLE COLLECTION, PRESERVATION, AND HANDLING

6.1 All samples must have been collected using a sampling plan that addresses the considerations discussed in Chapter Nine of this manual.

6.2 All sample containers must be prewashed with detergents, acids, and reagent water. Plastic and glass containers are both suitable.

6.3 Special containers (e.g., containers used for volatile organic analysis) may have to be used if very volatile selenium compounds are suspected to be present in the samples.

6.4 Aqueous samples must be acidified to a pH of <2 with nitric acid.

6.5 Nonaqueous samples shall be refrigerated, when possible, and analyzed as soon as possible.

7.0 PROCEDURE

7.1 Place a 100-mL portion of an aqueous sample or extract or 1.000 g of a dried solid sample in a 250-mL digestion beaker. Digest aqueous samples and extracts according to Method 3010. Digest solid samples according to Method 3050 (furnace AA option) with the following modifications: add 5 mL of concentrated hydrochloric acid just prior to the final volume reduction stage to aid in conversion of selenium to its plus four state; the final volume reduction should be to less than 5 mL but not to dryness to adequately remove excess hydrogen peroxide (see note). After dilution to volume, further dilution with diluent may be necessary if the analyte is known to exceed 750 µg/L or if interferents are expected to exceed a total of 1000 mg/L in the digestate.

Note: For solid digestions, the volume reduction stage is critical to obtain accurate data. Close monitoring of each sample is necessary when this critical stage in the digestion is reached.

7.2 Prepare samples for hydride analysis by adding 1.00 g urea, and 20 mL concentrated HCl to a 5.00 mL aliquot of digested sample in a 50-mL volumetric flask. Heat in a water bath to dissolve salts and reduce selenium (at least 30 minutes is suggested). Bring flask to volume with reagent water before analyzing. A ten-fold dilution correction must be made in the final concentration calculations.

7.3 Prepare working standards from the standard stock selenium solution. Transfer 0, 0.5, 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, and 2.5 mL of standard to 100-mL volumetric flasks and bring to volume with diluent. These concentrations will be 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25 µg Se/L.

7.4 If EP extracts (Method 1310) are being analyzed for selenium, the method of standard additions must be used. Spike appropriate amounts of working standard selenium solution to three 25 mL aliquots of each unknown. Spiking volumes should be kept less than 0.250 mL to avoid excessive spiking dilution errors.

7.5 Set up instrumentation and hydride generation apparatus and fill reagent containers. The sample and blank flows should be set around 4.2 mL/min, and the borohydride flow around 2.1 mL/min. The argon carrier gas flow is adjusted to about 200 mL/min. For the AA, use the 196.0-nm wavelength and 2.0-nm slit width (or manufacturer's recommended slit-width) with background correction. Begin all flows and allow the instrument to warm-up according to the instrument manufacturer's instructions.

7.6 Place sample feed line into a prepared sample solution and start pump to begin hydride generation. Wait for a maximum steady-state signal on the strip-chart recorder. Switch to blank sample and watch for signal to decline to baseline before switching to the next sample and beginning the next analysis. Run standards first (low to high), then unknowns. Include appropriate QA/QC solutions, as required. Prepare calibration curves and convert absorbances to concentration. See following analytical flowchart.

CAUTION: The hydride of selenium is very toxic. Precautions must be taken to avoid inhaling the gas.

7.7 If the method of standard additions was employed, plot the measured concentration of the spiked samples and unspiked sample versus the spiked concentrations. The spiked concentration axis intercept will be the method of standard additions concentration. If the plot does not result in a straight line, a nonlinear interference is present. This problem can sometimes be overcome by dilution or addition of other reagents if there is some knowledge about the waste. If the method of standard additions was not required, then the concentration is determined from a standard calibration curve.

8.0 QUALITY CONTROL

8.1 Refer to Section 8.0 of Method 7000.

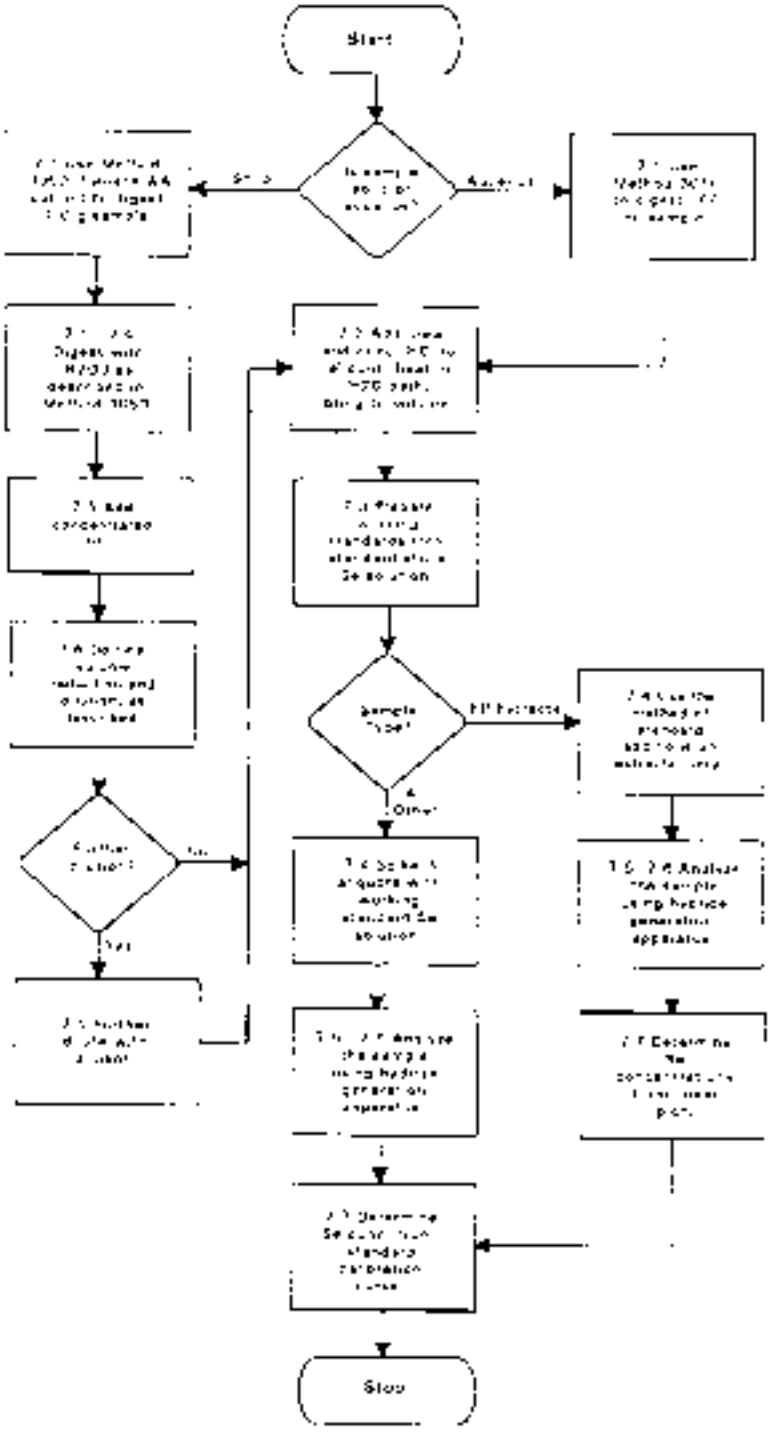
9.0 METHOD PERFORMANCE

9.1 The relative standard deviation obtained by a single laboratory for 7 replicates of a contaminated soil was 18% for selenium at 8.2 ug/L in solution. The average percent recovery of the analysis of an 2 µg/L spike on ten different samples is 100.5% for selenium.

10.0 REFERENCES

1. Methods for Chemical Analysis of Water and Wastes, EPA-600/4-82-055, December 1982, Method 206.3.

2. "Evaluation of Hydride Atomic Absorption Methods for Antimony, Arsenic, Selenium, and Tin", an EMSL-LV internal report under Contract 68-03-3249, Job Order 70.16, prepared for T. A. Hinners by D. E. Dobb, and J. D. Lindner of Lockheed Engineering and Sciences Co., and L. V. Beach of the Varian Corporation.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