

# Elemental Analysis: CHNS/O characterization of carbon black compliance with ASTM D5373 Method

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## Goal

Demonstrate the performance of the Thermo Scientific FlashSmart Elemental Analyzer for carbon black samples according to ASTM D5373 Method.

## Introduction

Carbon black is a side-material produced by the incomplete combustion of heavy petroleum products such as coal or ethylene cracking tar, and in some cases vegetable oil. Carbon black is widely used as a model compound for diesel soot for diesel oxidation experiments. Other uses are as a reinforcing filler in tyres and other rubber products, while in plastics, paints, and inks carbon black is used as a color pigment.

In a typical production process of carbon black, the elemental content is periodically monitored and tested for quality control, in particular, carbon quantification. The amount of the total carbon content is a requirement for the calculation of carbon dioxide emissions and it can also be used in calculations to estimate yield of the process. According to ASTM D5373 Method for carbon, nitrogen and hydrogen determination for coal and coke samples can be performed with combustion analysis.

As the demand for improved sample throughput and reduction of operational costs increases, an automated technique, allowing fast analysis with an excellent reproducibility, is the key for efficient elemental analysis.

The Thermo Scientific™ FlashSmart™ Elemental Analyzer (Figure 1), which operates with dynamic combustion of the samples (modified Dumas method), enables fast quantitative determination of the elements in large concentrations with no need for sample digestion and provides important advantages in terms of analysis time and automation over traditional methods. The FlashSmart EA, provides automated and simultaneous CHNS determination in a single analysis run and it provides oxygen determination by pyrolysis in a consequent run. From the CHNS/O data obtained, the dedicated Thermo Scientific™ EagerSmart™ Data Handling Software calculates the heat value GHV and NHV (Gross Heat Value and Net Heat Value, both expressed in kcal/kg) and the CO<sub>2</sub> Emission Trade data.

## Methods

For CHNS determination, the FlashSmart EA operates with the dynamic flash combustion of the sample. Samples are weighed in tin containers and introduced into the combustion reactor via the Thermo Scientific™ MAS Plus Autosampler with oxygen. After the combustion the analyte gases are carried in a helium flow to a layer containing copper, then swept through a GC column which provides the separation of the combustion gases and. Finally they are detected by a Thermal Conductivity Detector (TCD). Total run time is less than 10 minutes (Figure 2).

For the determination of oxygen, the system operates in pyrolysis mode. Samples are weighed in silver containers and introduced into the pyrolysis chamber via the MAS Plus Autosampler. The reactor contains nickel coated carbon at 1060 °C. When the oxygen in the sample is combined with carbon, it forms carbon monoxide which is then chromatographically separated from other products and detected by the TCD Detector (Figure 2). A report is generated by the EagerSmart Data Handling Software.

## Results

Different types of carbon black samples were analyzed on the basis of the different elemental contents to demonstrate the performance of the system according to the ASTM D5373 Method and to show the repeatability obtained.



Figure 1. FlashSmart Elemental Analyzer.

To verify the complete combustion of high containing carbon samples, carbon determination was evaluated in a carbon mesoporous reference material. The analyzer was calibrated with 2–3 mg of BBOT\* standard using K factor as calibration. CHNS/O configuration. method while the sample was weighted at about 2 mg. Table 1 shows the data obtained. The repeatability and the average fall within the expected value, indicating complete oxidation of the sample. Three samples were then analyzed to verify the repeatability of carbon determination.

\*BBOT: 2,5-Bis (5-tert-butyl-benzoxazol-2-yl) thiophene

Table 1. Carbon determination.

Sample	C%	Average C%	RSD%
Carbon Mesoporous Reference Material	99.91	99.71	0.143
	99.58		
	99.86		
	99.71		
	99.68		
	99.69		
	99.82		
	99.72		
	99.69		
	99.41		
HPG AR - 2029	99.79	99.75	0.081
	99.85		
	99.68		
	99.66		
	99.70		
Thermal Black	99.26	99.26	0.055
	99.16		
	99.16		
	99.16		
	99.26		
Soft Black (carcass)	97.63	97.61	0.119
	97.33		
	97.53		
	97.50		
	97.59		

Table 2 shows the repeatability of CHNS determination of carbon black samples. The Elemental Analyzer was calibrated with 2–3 mg of BBOT standard using K factor as calibration method while the sample was weighed at 2–2.5 mg..

Table 3 shows the repeatability of CHNS determination of other carbon black samples. Table 4 shows the oxygen data and the heat values GHV and NHV (Gross Heat Value and Net Heat Value, both expressed in kcal/kg), and the CO<sub>2</sub> Emission Trade data calculated automatically by the EagerSmart Data Handling Software.

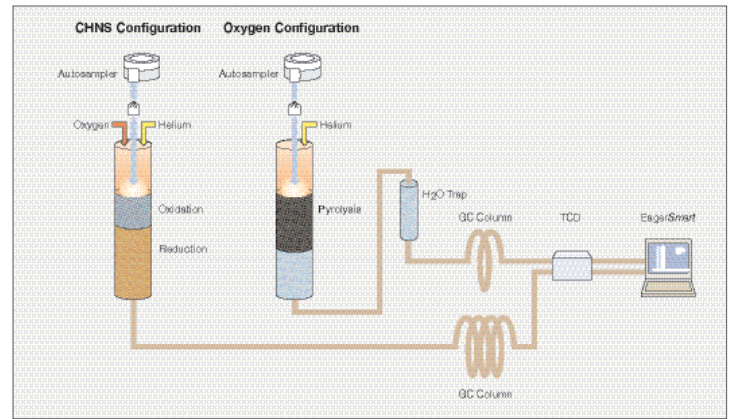


Figure 2. CHNS/O configuration.

Table 2. CHNS data of carbon black samples.

Sample	N%	RSD%	C%	RSD%	H%	RSD%	S%	RSD%
1	0.131	2.493	95.609	0.124	0.384	3.861	1.433	0.649
	0.137		95.542		0.361		1.452	
	0.133		95.773		0.359		1.443	
2	0.136	2.156	96.329	0.046	0.420	1.496	0.711	0.505
	0.134		96.242		0.412		0.704	
	0.140		96.301		0.408		0.709	
3	0.172	0.331	94.592	0.458	0.520	0.458	1.741	0.841
	0.171		94.512		0.520		1.728	
	0.172		94.642		0.524		1.757	
4	0.089	3.179	99.365	0.080	0.322	0.452	–	–
	0.084		99.498		0.319		–	
	0.088		99.506		0.321		–	
5	0.189	1.968	95.693	0.182	0.321	0.811	0.296	2.075
	0.186		95.629		0.324		0.289	
	0.186		95.825		0.322		0.292	
	0.181		95.835		0.319		0.280	
	0.180		96.082		0.317		0.290	

Table 3. CHNS data of carbon black samples.

Sample	N%	RSD%	C%	RSD%	H%	RSD%	S%	RSD%
A	0.188	0.676	96.559	0.111	0.300	1.843	0.829	2.193
	0.185		96.734		0.295		0.848	
	0.186		96.817		0.304		0.868	
	0.186		96.706		0.308		0.868	
B	0.273	0.810	96.178	0.159	0.267	12.086	0.823	0.493
	0.277		95.899		0.280		0.814	
	0.272		95.351		0.272		0.815	
	0.273		96.079		0.277		0.817	
C	0.239	2.155	95.768	0.196	0.343	2.697	1.016	0.311
	0.229		96.126		0.350		1.020	
	0.239		95.826		0.341		1.019	
	0.232		95.700		0.328		1.013	
D	0.148	1.681	97.073	0.076	0.282	1.465	1.273	0.583
	0.146		97.066		0.285		1.267	
	0.149		96.966		0.292		1.256	
	0.152		97.146		0.286		1.261	

**Table 4. Oxygen data, Heat Values and CO<sub>2</sub> value of carbon black samples.**

Sample	O%	RSD%	GHV (kcal/kg)	RSD%	NHV (kcal/kg)	RSD%	CO <sub>2</sub> E.T.	RSD%
A	1.149	0.397	8005.53	0.003	7990.03	0.003	105.96	0.000
	1.158		8005.13		7989.63		105.96	
	1.152		8005.42		7989.93		105.96	
B	1.661	0.623	7915.43	0.006	7901.37	0.006	106.37	0.005
	1.679		7915.64		7900.58		106.38	
	1.661		7915.44		7901.38		106.37	
C	1.597	0.181	7933.81	0.002	7916.36	0.002	106.00	0.005
	1.597		7933.82		7916.37		106.00	
	1.602		7933.59		7916.14		106.01	
D	0.624	0.990	8062.31	0.003	8047.63	0.003	105.59	0.006
	0.612		8062.85		8048.17		105.58	
	0.616		8062.66		8047.98		105.58	

For CHNS, carbon black samples were run in two series of analyses. In each series, samples were analyzed in duplicate and the statistical data shown is the average of the four determinations. The system was calibrated with 2–3 mg of BBOT standard using K factor as calibration method while the sample was weighted at 2–2.5 mg. For oxygen determination, 1–2 mg of BBOT was analyzed as standard using K factor while the sample weight was 1–2 mg.

The performance of the FlashSmart EA was evaluated by comparing the repeatability of the CHN data obtained to the ASTM D 5373 requirements (Table 5). The repeatability limit (r) is the variations in measurements taken by a single person or instrument on the same sample, under the same conditions, and in a short period of time.

**Table 5. Concentration range and limit of repeatability accepted by ASTM D 5373.**

Element	Concentration Range (%)	Repeatability Limit (r)
Carbon	48.6-90.6	0.64
Hydrogen	0.14-5.16	0.16
Nitrogen	0.69-1.57	0.11

The accuracy of the FlashSmart Elemental Analyzer for CHN determinations was evaluated from the results shown in Table 3. Table 6 shows the difference calculated between data of each series of analyses. The difference falls within or below the repeatability limit indicated in the official method, meaning homogeneity and the complete combustion of the samples.

**Table 6. CHN data of carbon black samples according to ASTM D 5373 requirements.**

Sample	Series	N%	Difference	C%	Difference	H%	Difference
A	1	0.188	0.003	96.559	0.175	0.300	0.005
		0.185		96.734		0.295	
	2	0.186	0	96.817	0.111	0.304	
		0.186	96.706	0.308			
B	1	0.273	0.004	96.178	0.279	0.267	0.013
		0.277		95.889		0.280	
	2	0.272	0.001	95.851	0.228	0.272	
		0.273		96.079		0.277	
C	1	0.239	0.010	95.768	0.358	0.343	0.007
		0.229		96.126		0.350	
	2	0.239	0.003	95.826	0.125	0.341	
		0.232		95.700		0.328	
D	1	0.148	0.002	97.073	0.070	0.282	0.003
		0.146		97.066		0.285	
	2	0.149	0.003	96.966	0.180	0.292	
		0.152		97.146		0.286	

## Conclusions

For the CHNS/O determination of carbon black the Thermo Scientific FlashSmart Elemental Analyzer provides accurate data.

Data was obtained according to the ASTM D5373 Method. No matrix effect was observed when changing the sample indicating complete combustion.

The Flash*Smart* Elemental Analyzer enables to perform CHNS determination in a single run. Oxygen determination can be performed on the same analyzer without the need for extra modules or hardware changes.

Find out more at [thermofisher.com/OEA](http://thermofisher.com/OEA)

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