

CHI-C8-SEPPET

Label and Adhesive Separation Test for PET-based Packaging

Version 4.1 / August 2020

The CHI test method developed by cyclos-HTP for PET hot washing with label and adhesive. The results can be used to assess the recycling compatibility of adhesives or pressure-sensitive labels. The testing procedure comprises the following steps:

1. Materials

- 1.1. Sample of PET with a pressure-sensitive label and an adhesive application with unknown recycling compatibility
- 1.2. Caustic solution containing 2.0 % by weight of NaOH
- 1.3. Leaf stirrer or a suitable kitchen stirring machine, capable of accurate heating to 80°C
- 1.4. Sieve with pore size < 2 mm
- 1.5. Buchner-funnel and equipment for vacuum filtration
- 1.6. Air drying oven, capable of heating up to 240°C
- 1.7. Desiccator
- 1.8. Optional: Photo Spectrometer with CIE L*a*b* software

2. Preparation of the samples

- 2.1. Cut the packaging sample (label/adhesive/PET) into flakes with edge lengths of approx. 10-15 mm
- 2.2. Weighing: In the sample the total area of the labels should be $\geq 200 \text{ cm}^2$ per litre (= A); the weight of the entire packaging sample incl. PET and label should be $\geq 100 \text{ g}$ per litre to get a high stock density
- 2.3. Before starting the hot wash, the sample is added

3. Test procedure

- 3.1. Prepare an alkaline solution containing 2.0 % by weight of NaOH
- 3.2. Measure the quantity of alkaline solution (200 cm²/litre) in accordance with the quantity of the sample and in relation to the area of the sample and heat it to 80°C without sample
- 3.3. The batch with the sample is stirred at 80°C for 15 minutes with a leaf stirrer or a suitable kitchen stirring machine, this achieves higher shear forces than with a magnetic stirrer; the stirring speed is adjusted so that the flakes undergo a certain amount of shear; during this time the stirrer is switched off every minute to check whether the labels have detached from the PET; PO labels float and PET flakes sink to the bottom; the time after starting the hot wash at which this process begins is documented
- 3.4. After 15 minutes the hot wash is stopped
- 3.5. For samples with polyolefin-based label, carefully and completely skim off the label flakes and wash them once under running water; observe whether all label pieces have detached from the PET; after draining, transfer the flakes on a plate
- 3.6. If not all PO-based label pieces have detached from the PET, the test for this sample is stopped and repeated if necessary; if the result is confirmed, no recycling compatibility can be confirmed for the respective sample or the adhesive used.
- 3.7. The PET flakes are sieved, rinsed twice with approx. 200 ml of clear water and after draining transferred to a container
 - 3.7.1. (optional) If the adhesive has only been detached and not dissolved, the PET flakes must be washed carefully with water:
 - 3.7.2. Collect sinking PET flakes in a Buchner-funnel, filter by vacuum without paper filter and let water flow on it.

- 3.7.3. Collect sinking PET flakes in a beaker and stir vigorously by hand, carefully tilt the washing solution with floating adhesive.
- 3.8. The PET flakes are baked ('roasted') in a preheated oven at 220°C for 60 minutes; the tray with the sample is then cooled in the desiccator
- 3.9. The PP flakes are dried for 60 minutes at 80°C; the dish with the sample is then cooled in the desiccator
- 3.10. The two samples are documented photographically; colour changes from the original sample, especially in the case of PET, are documented.
- 3.11. By demand or to fulfil customer specifications the colour of the PET flakes can also be measured with a photo spectrometer using the CIE L*a*b* method. PET flakes from the same sample without adhesives and labels should be used as reference.

Depending on the specific task, the results can be used to assess the recycling compatibility of adhesives or pressure-sensitive labels.



Figure 1: Washing batch with swimming label pieces



Figure 2: PET sample without discolouring after roasting



Figure 3: PET sample with discolouring by remaining adhesive