

Automatic film processors are tested as part of the Food and Drug Administration's Mammography Quality Standards Act inspection program. The test is conducted to determine if the processing is equivalent to film manufacturers' recommendations and is known as the Sensitometric Test for the Evaluation of Film processing (STEP). The test utilizes calibrated sensitometers, densitometers, and calibrated control film from the same emulsion batch. Additional areas which will be discussed are how the FDA sensitometers and densitometers are calibrated, how the control film performs relative to other mammography films in various film manufacturers' chemical solutions, and recent observations of processing in mammography facilities.

Educational Objectives:

1. Familiarize the medical physicist with the film processing STEP test performed at MQSA inspections.
2. Provide the medical physicist with the tools to use the information from this test to optimize mammography processing.