**surface ionization**

*in mass spectrometry*

Takes place when an atom or molecule is ionized when it interacts with a solid surface. Ionization occurs only when the work function of the surface, the temperature of the surface, and the ionization energy of the atom or molecule have an appropriate relationship.

**Source:**
PAC, 1991, 63, 1541 (*Recommendations for nomenclature and symbolism for mass spectroscopy (including an appendix of terms used in vacuum technology).* (Recommendations 1991)) on page 1548