



Designation: D6108 – 18

Standard Test Method for Compressive Properties of Plastic Lumber and Shapes¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D6108; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope*

1.1 This test method covers the determination of the mechanical properties of plastic lumber and shapes, when the entire cross-section is loaded in compression at relatively low uniform rates of straining or loading. Test specimens in the “as-manufactured” form are employed. As such, this is a test method for evaluating the properties of plastic lumber or shapes as a product and not a material property test method.

1.2 Plastic lumber and plastic shapes are currently made predominantly with recycled plastics. However, this test method would also be applicable to similar manufactured plastic products made from virgin resins, or where the product is non-homogenous in the cross-section.

1.3 The values stated in inch-pound units are to be regarded as the standard. The values given in parentheses are for information only.

1.4 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

NOTE 1—There is no known ISO equivalent to this test method.

1.5 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

[D618 Practice for Conditioning Plastics for Testing](#)

[D883 Terminology Relating to Plastics](#)

[D4000 Classification System for Specifying Plastic Materials](#)

[D5033 Guide for Development of ASTM Standards Relating to Recycling and Use of Recycled Plastics \(Withdrawn 2007\)³](#)

[D5947 Test Methods for Physical Dimensions of Solid Plastics Specimens](#)

[D6111 Test Method for Bulk Density And Specific Gravity of Plastic Lumber and Shapes by Displacement](#)

[E4 Practices for Force Verification of Testing Machines](#)

[E83 Practice for Verification and Classification of Extensometer Systems](#)

[E691 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *compressive deformation*—the decrease in length produced in the gage length of the test specimen by a compressive load. It is expressed in units of length.

3.1.2 *compressive strain*—the ratio of compressive deformation to the gage length of the test specimen, that is, the change in length per unit of original gage length along the longitudinal axis. It is expressed as a dimensionless ratio.

3.1.3 *compressive strength*—the maximum compressive stress (nominal) carried by a test specimen during a compression test. It may or may not be the compressive stress (nominal) carried by the specimen at the moment of rupture.

3.1.4 *compressive stress (nominal)*—the compressive load per unit area of minimum (or effective as calculated in accordance with Test Method [D6111](#)) original cross section within the gage boundaries, carried by the test specimen at any given moment. It is expressed in force per unit area.

3.1.4.1 *Discussion*—The expression of compressive stress in terms of the minimum original cross section is almost universally used. Under some circumstances the compressive stress has been expressed per unit of prevailing cross section. This stress is called the “true compressive stress”.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D20](#) on Plastics and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D20.20](#) on Plastic Lumber (Section [D20.20.01](#)).

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard’s Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

³ The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.

*A Summary of Changes section appears at the end of this standard

3.1.5 *compressive stress-strain diagram*—a diagram in which values of compressive stress are plotted as ordinates against corresponding values of compressive strain as abscissas.

3.1.6 *compressive yield point*—the first point on the stress-strain diagram at which an increase in strain occurs without an increase in stress.

3.1.7 *modulus of elasticity*—the ratio of compressive stress (nominal) to corresponding compressive strain below the proportional limit of a material. It is expressed in force per unit area based on the effective/average initial cross-sectional area.

3.1.8 *percent compressive strain*—the compressive deformation of a test specimen expressed as a percent of the original gage length.

3.1.9 *plastic lumber, n*—a manufactured product made primarily from plastic materials (filled or unfilled), typically used as a building material for purposes similar to those of traditional lumber, which is usually rectangular in cross-section. (Terminology **D883**)

3.1.9.1 *Discussion*—Plastic lumber is typically supplied in sizes similar to those of traditional lumber board, timber and dimension lumber; however the tolerances for plastic lumber and for traditional lumber are not necessarily the same. (Terminology **D883**)

3.1.10 *plastic shape, n*—a manufactured product made primarily from plastic materials (filled or unfilled), which is not necessarily rectangular in cross section.

3.1.11 *proportional limit*—the greatest compressive stress that a material is capable of sustaining without any deviation from proportionality of stress to strain (Hooke's law). It is expressed in force per unit area.

3.1.12 *resin, n*—a solid or pseudosolid organic material often of high molecular weight, which exhibits a tendency to flow when subjected to stress, usually has a softening or melting range, and usually fractures conchoidally. (Terminology **D883**)

3.1.12.1 *Discussion*—In a broad sense, the term is used to designate any polymer that is a basic material for plastics.

3.1.13 *secant modulus*—the ratio of the compressive stress (nominal) to the corresponding value of compressive strain on the stress-strain diagram at a specified value of strain, typically one percent strain (0.01 mm/mm) for plastic lumber. It is expressed in force per unit area based on the effective initial cross-sectional area.

3.1.14 *stress at a given strain*—the stress on the stress-strain curve at a specified value of strain.

3.1.14.1 *Discussion*—The stress at a given strain should not be taken as the ultimate strength at failure. Typically a strain value of 3 % or 0.03 mm/mm is used for plastic lumber. The ultimate strength, or the maximum value of stress on the stress-strain diagram, can be higher for plastic lumber occurring at values of strain much greater than 3 %.

3.2 Additional definition of terms applying to this test method appear in Terminology **D883** and Guide **D5033**.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 Compression tests provide information about the compressive properties of plastic lumber and shapes when these products are used under conditions approximating those under which the tests are made. In the case of some materials, there will be a specification that requires the use of this test method, but with some procedural modifications that take precedence when adhering to the specification. Therefore, it is advisable to refer to that material specification before using this test method. Table 1 in Classification **D4000** lists the ASTM materials standards that currently exist.

4.2 Compressive properties include modulus of elasticity, secant modulus, compressive strength, and stress at a given strain. In the case of a material that fails in compression by a shattering fracture, the compressive strength has a very definite value. In the case of a material that does not fail in compression by a shattering fracture nor exhibits a compressive yield point, the compressive strength is an arbitrary one depending upon the degree of distortion that is regarded as indicating complete failure. Many plastic lumber materials will not exhibit a true yield point. Compressive strength can have no real meaning in such cases. For plastic lumber, the stress at a given strain of 3 % (0.03 in./in. (mm/mm)) is typically used.

4.3 Compression tests provide a standard method of obtaining data for research and development, quality control, acceptance or rejection under specifications, and special purposes. The tests cannot be considered significant for engineering design in applications differing widely from the load-time scale of the standard test. Such applications require additional tests such as impact, creep, and fatigue.

5. Apparatus

5.1 *Testing Machine*—Any suitable testing machine capable of control of constant-rate-of-crosshead movement and comprising essentially the following:

5.1.1 *Drive Mechanism*—A drive mechanism for imparting to the cross-head movable member, a uniform, controlled rate of movement with respect to the base (fixed member), with this cross-head rate to be regulated as specified in Section 9.

5.1.2 *Load Indicator*—A load-indicating mechanism capable of showing the total compressive load carried by the test specimen. The mechanism shall be essentially free from inertia-lag at the specified rate of testing and shall indicate the load with an accuracy of ± 1 % of the maximum indicated value of the test (load). The accuracy of the testing machine shall be verified at least once a year in accordance with Practices **E4**.

5.2 *Compressometer*—A suitable instrument for determining the distance between two fixed points on the test specimen at any time during the test. It is desirable that this instrument automatically record this distance (or any change in it) as a function of the load on the test specimen. The instrument shall be essentially free of inertia-lag at the specified rate of loading and shall conform to the requirements for a Class C extensometer as defined in Practice **E83**.

5.2.1 The requirements for extensometers cited herein apply to compressometers as well.

5.2.2 It is acceptable to use compression platen movement to determine compressive displacements of test samples.

5.3 *Compression Platens*—A compression platen for applying the load to the test specimen. Parallel platens shall be used to apply the load to an unconfined type specimen. One of the compression platens shall be self aligning so that it will be possible to apply the load evenly over the face of the specimen.

5.4 *Micrometers*—Suitable micrometers, reading to 0.01 in. for measuring the width, thickness, and length of the specimens.

6. Test Specimens

6.1 Test specimens for determining compressive properties of plastic lumber and shapes shall be cut from the “as manufactured” profile. Great care shall be taken in cutting and machining the ends so that smooth, flat parallel surfaces and sharp, clean edges result and are within 1/300 (0.0033) of the specimen length perpendicular to the long axis of the specimen. Plastic lumber is generally nonuniform through the cross-section; machining operations other than those required to provide flat, parallel ends shall not be carried out.

6.2 The standard test specimen, except as indicated in 6.3 to 6.4, shall be in the form of a right cylinder or prism whose height is twice its minimum width or diameter.

6.3 For rod material, the test specimen shall have a diameter equal to the diameter of the rod and whose height is twice its diameter.

6.4 When testing hollow profiles, the test specimen shall have a length equal to twice its minimum cross sectional dimension.

7. Number of Test Specimens

7.1 Five specimens shall be tested for each sample.

8. Conditioning

8.1 *Conditioning*—Condition the test specimens at 73.4 ± 3.6°F (23 ± 2°C) and 50 ± 5 % relative humidity for not less than 40 h prior to testing in accordance with Procedure A of Practice D618, unless otherwise specified by the customer or product specification. In cases of disagreement, the tolerances shall be ±1°C and ±2 % relative humidity.

8.2 *Test Conditions*—Conduct tests in the Standard Laboratory Atmosphere of 73.4 ± 3.6°F (23 ± 2°C) and 50 ± 5 % relative humidity, unless otherwise specified by the customer or product specification. In cases of disagreement, the tolerances shall be ±1.8°F (±1°C) and ±2 % relative humidity.

9. Speed of Testing

9.1 Speed of testing shall be the relative rate of motion of the compression platens during the test. It is acceptable to use rate of motion of the driven platen when the machine is running idle if it can be shown that the resulting speed of testing is within the limits of variation allowed.

9.2 The standard speed of testing shall result in a strain rate of 0.03 ± 0.003 in./in./min (mm/mm/min). At this speed a typical compression test on plastic lumber is expected to last 1 to 5 min.

10. Procedure

10.1 Measure the width and thickness or diameter of the specimen to a precision of 1 % of the measured dimension at several points along its length. Calculate and record the minimum value of the cross-sectional area. Measure the length of the specimen at several points and record the value (see Test Methods D5947 for additional information).

10.1.1 For test specimens that have some characteristic that does not allow for accurate measurement of the cross-sectional area in accordance with 10.1, it is acceptable to use the effective cross-sectional area as determined from Test Method D6111.

10.2 Place the test specimen between the surfaces of the compression platens, taking care to align the center line of its long axis with the center line of the platens to ensure that the ends of the specimen are parallel with the surface of the platens. Adjust the crosshead of the testing machine until it just contacts the top of the compression platen.

10.3 If only compressive strength or stress at a given strain are desired, proceed as follows:

10.3.1 Set the speed control so that it results in a strain rate of 0.03 ± 0.003 in./in./min (mm/mm/min) and start the test.

10.3.2 Record the maximum load carried by the specimen during the test (usually this will be the load at the moment of rupture). Or, record the value of load when the specified value of strain (3 % or 0.03 in./in. (mm/mm) for plastic lumber) is reached.

10.4 If stress-strain data are desired, proceed as follows:

10.4.1 Attach the compressometer if being used.

10.4.2 Set the speed control so that it results in a strain rate of 0.03 ± 0.003 in./in./min (mm/mm/min) and start the test.

10.4.3 Record loads and corresponding compressive strain at appropriate intervals of strain or, if the test machine is equipped with an automatic recording device, record the complete load-deformation curve.

10.4.4 Continue the test until the specimen fails or the specified value of strain (3 % or 0.03 in./in. (mm/mm) for plastic lumber) is reached.

11. Calculation

11.1 *Compressive Strength*—If the specimen exhibits a compressive yield point or otherwise fractures before a 3 percent strain, calculate the compressive strength by dividing the maximum compressive load carried by the specimen during the test by the original minimum or effective cross-sectional area of the specimen. Express the result in megapascals and report to three significant figures.

11.2 *Stress at a Given Strain*—Calculate the stress at a given strain by the method referred to in 3.1.10 at a strain value of 3 % or 0.03 in./in. (mm/mm). Express the result in megapascals and report to three significant figures.

11.3 *Modulus of Elasticity*—When a Hookean region (proportional area) exists, calculate the modulus of elasticity by drawing a tangent to the initial linear portion of the stress-strain curve, selecting any point on this straight line portion, and dividing the compressive stress represented by this point by the