



Designation: D4829 – 19

Standard Test Method for Expansion Index of Soils¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D4829; 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 allows for determination of expansion potential of soils when inundated with distilled water.² This test method measures a qualitative index property of the soil rather than a design parameter to be used for calculation of the actual amount of expansion. The expansion index, *EI*, provides an indication of swelling potential of a soil.

1.2 This test method provides a simple, yet sensitive, method for evaluation of expansion potential of soils for practical engineering applications using an index parameter.

1.3 *Units*—The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. The values given in parentheses are provided for information only and are not considered standard. Reporting of test results in units other than SI shall not be regarded as nonconformance with this standard.

1.3.1 The gravitational system of inch-pound units is used when dealing with inch-pound units. In the system, the pound (lbf) represents a unit of force (weight), while the units for mass are slugs. The slug unit is not given, unless dynamic ($F = ma$) calculations are involved.

1.3.2 The SI units presented for apparatus are substitutions of the inch-pound units, other similar SI units should be acceptable providing they meet the technical requirements established by the inch-pound apparatus.

1.3.3 It is common practice in the engineering/construction profession to concurrently use pounds to represent both a unit of mass (lbm) and of force (lbf). This practice implicitly combines two separate systems of units; the absolute and the gravitational systems. It is scientifically undesirable to combine the use of two separate sets of inch-pound units within a single standard. As stated, this standard includes the gravitational system of inch-pound units and does not use/present the slug unit of mass. However, the use of balances and scales

recording pounds of mass (lbm) or recording density in lbm/ft³ shall not be regarded as nonconformance with this standard.

1.3.4 The terms density and unit weight are often used interchangeably. Density is mass per unit volume, whereas unit weight is force per unit volume. In this standard, density is given only in SI units. After the density has been determined, the unit weight is calculated in SI or inch-pound units, or both.

1.4 All observed and calculated values shall conform to the guidelines for significant digits and rounding established in Practice D6026, unless superseded by this test method.

1.4.1 For purposes of comparing a measured or calculated value(s) with specified limits, the measured or calculated value(s) shall be rounded to the nearest decimal of significant digits in the specified limit.

1.4.2 The procedures used to specify how data are collected/recorded or calculated in the standard are regarded as the industry standard. In addition, they are representative of the significant digits that generally should be retained. The procedures used do not consider material variation, purpose for obtaining the data, special purpose studies, or any considerations for the user's objectives; and it is common practice to increase or reduce significant digits of reported data to be commensurate with these considerations. It is beyond the scope of this standard to consider significant digits used in analysis methods for engineering data.

1.5 *The text of this standard references notes and footnotes that provide explanatory material. These notes and footnotes (excluding those in tables and figures) shall not be considered as requirements of the standard.*

1.6 *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.*

1.7 *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.*

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D18 on Soil and Rock and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D18.05 on Strength and Compressibility of Soils.

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² Anderson, J. N., and Lade, P. V., "The Expansion Index Test," *Geotechnical Testing Journal*, Vol 4, No. 2, ASTM, 1981, pp. 58–67.

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

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:³

- D653 Terminology Relating to Soil, Rock, and Contained Fluids
- D698 Test Methods for Laboratory Compaction Characteristics of Soil Using Standard Effort (12,400 ft-lbf/ft³ (600 kN-m/m³))
- D854 Test Methods for Specific Gravity of Soil Solids by Water Pycnometer
- D2216 Test Methods for Laboratory Determination of Water (Moisture) Content of Soil and Rock by Mass
- D2435 Test Methods for One-Dimensional Consolidation Properties of Soils Using Incremental Loading
- D3740 Practice for Minimum Requirements for Agencies Engaged in Testing and/or Inspection of Soil and Rock as Used in Engineering Design and Construction
- D4546 Test Methods for One-Dimensional Swell or Collapse of Soils
- D4753 Guide for Evaluating, Selecting, and Specifying Balances and Standard Masses for Use in Soil, Rock, and Construction Materials Testing
- D6026 Practice for Using Significant Digits in Geotechnical Data
- E11 Specification for Woven Wire Test Sieve Cloth and Test Sieves

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

- 3.1.1 For definitions of common technical terms used in this standard, refer to Terminology D653.
- 3.1.2 *scarification*—scratching the surface of a compacted layer to facilitate bonding with the next layer to avoid potential separation between compacted layers.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 A sample is processed to obtain a representative sample that is then separated over a 4.75 mm (No. 4) sieve. Distilled water is added and thoroughly mixed with the soil passing the separation sieve (test specimen). A water content is determined and the soil is allowed to stand (cure) for 16 h before it is compacted into a specimen ring. The degree of saturation is calculated and must be $50 \pm 2\%$ before proceeding with testing. A new test specimen is made if the saturation doesn't meet the criteria. Several trials may occur before the necessary degree of saturation is achieved. Once achieved, the compacted specimen is placed in a loading device. Height and deformation readings are taken prior to applying a vertical stress of 6.9 kPa (1 lbf/in.²) on the specimen. After 10 min, the specimen is inundated with distilled water and deformation readings are taken at specific time intervals for 24 h or until the rate of expansion becomes less than 0.005 mm/h (0.0002 in./h). At the end of the test, final height and deformation readings are taken and the expansion index is calculated.

³ 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.

5. Significance and Use

- 5.1 The expansion index, *EI*, value is used by engineers and other professionals as an indicator of the soil's swelling potential. It may also be used to determine the suitability of a soil to satisfy requirements set by specifying agencies.
- 5.2 The *EI* test is not used to duplicate any particular field conditions such as soil density, water content, loading, in-place soil structure, or soil water chemistry. However, consistent test conditions are used in preparation of compacted specimens such that direct correlation of data can be made.
- 5.3 Based on experience with expansive soils, the recommended qualitative classification of potential expansion in a soil based on *EI* is provided in Table 1.

5.4 The measurement of the magnitude of one-dimensional wetting-induced swell or collapse (hydrocompression) under different vertical (axial) pressures, as well as the magnitude of swell pressure and the magnitude of free swell, and also the determination of data for stress-induced compression following wetting-induced swell or collapse are covered by Test Methods D4546. The ability to test intact specimens for measuring one-dimensional wetting-induced swell or collapse is also covered in Methods D4546.

NOTE 1—The quality of the result produced by this standard is dependent on the competence of the personnel performing it and the suitability of the equipment and facilities used. Agencies that meet the criteria of Practice D3740 are generally considered capable of competent and objective testing/sampling/inspection/etc. Users of this standard are cautioned that compliance with Practice D3740 does not in itself assure reliable results. Reliable results depend on many factors; Practice D3740 provides a means of evaluating some of those factors.

6. Apparatus

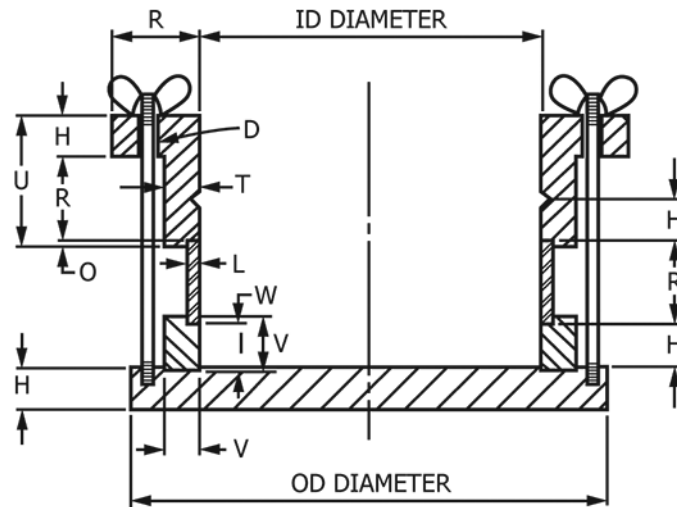
6.1 *Mold*—The mold shall be cylindrical in shape, made of metal, and shall have the dimensions indicated in Fig. 1. The mold shall have a metal, detachable collar inscribed with a mark 50.8 mm (2.00 in.) above the base. The lower section of the mold is designed to retain a removable stainless steel ring. The dimensions shown in Fig. 1 are necessary to properly manufacture the mold. Laboratories are not expected to have the capability to confirm these dimensions. See Section 9 for items needing verification.

6.1.1 *Specimen Ring*—A stainless steel ring that is 25.4 ± 0.2 mm (1.0 ± 0.01 in.) in height, 101.9 ± 0.1 mm (4.010 ± 0.005 in.) in internal diameter, and not less than 3.05 mm (0.120 in.) in wall thickness. This ring is designed to fit inside the mold.

6.2 *Rammer*—A metal rammer, either manually or mechanically operated, that shall fall freely through a distance of 305 ± 2 mm (12.0 ± 0.1 in.) from the surface of the specimen. The

TABLE 1 Classification of Potential Expansion of Soils Based on *EI*

Expansion Index, <i>EI</i>	Potential Expansion
0–20	Very Low
21–50	Low
51–90	Medium
91–130	High
>130	Very High



Letter	Dimensional Equivalents ^A	
	in.	mm
ID Diameter	4.010 ± 0.005	101.9 ± 0.1
OD Diameter	6.00 ± 0.01	152.4 ± 0.2
H	0.50 ± 0.01	12.7 ± 0.2
D (Hole)	⁷ / ₃₂ ± ¹ / ₆₄	5.5 ± 0.4
U	1.625 ± 0.01	41.3 ± 0.2
T	0.325 - 0.375	8.25 - 9.50
O	0.125 ± 0.005	3.2 ± 0.1
R	1.00 ± 0.01	25.4 ± 0.2
W	0.563 ± 0.004	14.3 ± 0.1
V	0.688 ± 0.01	17.5 ± 0.2
L (ring wall thickness)	≥0.120	≥3.05

^AThe SI units presented are basically substitutions of the inch-pound units; other rationalized SI units should be acceptable providing they meet the technical requirements established by the inch-pound apparatus.

FIG. 1 Mold with Ring for Compaction of Specimen

rammer shall be equipped with a suitable arrangement to control the drop height. The weight of the hammer shall be 24.47 ± 0.09 N (5.50 ± 0.02 lbf, or mass of 2.495 ± 0.009 kg). The striking face of the rammer shall be planar and circular with a diameter when new of 50.80 ± 0.13 mm (2.000 ± 0.005 in.) If using a manual rammer with a guide sleeve, the rammer shall meet the requirements described in Test Methods D698 for a manual rammer. If using a mechanical rammer, the circular face rammer shall meet the requirements described in Test Methods D698.

6.3 *Balance*—Balances shall conform to the requirements of Guide D4753 and calibrated in accordance with the interval given in Practice D3740.

6.3.1 A balance having a minimum capacity of 1000 g with a readability without estimation of 0.1 g for use when determining masses not related to water content determination. For water content determinations, the balance shall have a minimum capacity of 100 g with a readability without estimation of 0.01 g.

6.4 *Drying Oven*—A vented, thermostatically controlled oven capable of maintaining a uniform temperature of $110 \pm 5^\circ\text{C}$ ($230 \pm 9^\circ\text{F}$) throughout the drying chamber.

6.5 *Straightedge*—A stiff metal straight edge, preferably steel, of any convenient length but not less than 150 mm (6 in.).

One edge of the straightedge shall be beveled. The straightedge must be machined straight to a tolerance of ± 0.1 mm (± 0.005 in.).

6.6 *Separation Sieves*—A 4.75-mm (No. 4) sieve conforming to the requirements of Specification E11. This sieve is subject to rough operation and shall not be used for quantitative grain size analysis.

6.7 *Mixing Tools*—Miscellaneous tools such as mixing pans, spoons, trowels, spatulas, a spray bottle, a suitable manual or mechanical mixer, and so forth.

6.8 *Specimen Height Measurement Device*—A device used to measure the height of the specimen with a readability to 0.025 mm (0.001 in.) or better. The device shall be constructed such that its use will not disturb/deform, indent, or penetrate the specimen.

6.9 *Loading Device*—A consolidometer or equivalent loading device as described in Test Methods D2435.

6.10 *Porous Disks*—The disks shall be smooth ground and fine enough (Note 2) to reduce or prevent intrusion of soil into the disks. The disks shall have a close fit to the specimen ring to avoid extrusion or punching. Refer to the apparatus section of Test Methods D2435 for further details on the porous disks. The disks shall reduce false displacements caused by seating of