



Designation: **C591 – 19 C591 – 19a**

Standard Specification for Unfaced Preformed Rigid Cellular Polyisocyanurate Thermal Insulation¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation C591; 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.

This standard has been approved for use by agencies of the U.S. Department of Defense.

1. Scope

1.1 This specification covers the types, physical properties, and dimensions of unfaced, preformed rigid cellular polyisocyanurate plastic material intended for use as thermal insulation on surfaces from -297°F (-183°C) to 300°F (149°C). For specific applications, the actual temperature limits shall be agreed upon by the manufacturer and purchaser.

1.2 This specification only covers “polyurethane modified polyisocyanurate” thermal insulation which is commonly referred to as “polyisocyanurate” thermal insulation. This standard does not encompass all polyurethane modified materials. Polyurethane modified polyisocyanurate and other polyurethane materials are similar, but the materials will perform differently under some service conditions.

1.3 This standard is designed as a material specification, not a design document. Physical property requirements vary by application and temperature. At temperatures below -70°F (-51°C) the physical properties of the polyisocyanurate insulation at the service temperature are of particular importance. Below -70°F (-51°C) the manufacturer and the purchaser must agree on what additional cold temperature performance properties are required to determine if the material can function adequately for the particular application.

1.4 This standard addresses requirements of unfaced preformed rigid cellular polyisocyanurate thermal insulation manufactured using blowing agents with an ozone depletion potential of 0 (ODP 0).

1.5 When adopted by an authority having jurisdiction, codes that address fire properties in many applications regulate the use of the thermal insulation materials covered by this specification. Fire properties are controlled by job, project, or other specifications where codes or government regulations do not apply.

1.6 The values stated in inch-pound units are to be regarded as standard. The values given in parentheses are mathematical conversions to SI units that are provided for information only and are not considered standard.

1.7 *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.*

1.8 *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

[C165 Test Method for Measuring Compressive Properties of Thermal Insulations](#)

[C168 Terminology Relating to Thermal Insulation](#)

[C177 Test Method for Steady-State Heat Flux Measurements and Thermal Transmission Properties by Means of the Guarded-Hot-Plate Apparatus](#)

[C272/C272M Test Method for Water Absorption of Core Materials for Sandwich Constructions](#)

¹ This specification is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee C16 on Thermal Insulation and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee C16.22 on Organic and Nonhomogeneous Inorganic Thermal Insulations.

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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.

[C303 Test Method for Dimensions and Density of Preformed Block and Board-Type Thermal Insulation](#)
[C335/C335M Test Method for Steady-State Heat Transfer Properties of Pipe Insulation](#)
[C390 Practice for Sampling and Acceptance of Thermal Insulation Lots](#)
[C411 Test Method for Hot-Surface Performance of High-Temperature Thermal Insulation](#)
[C518 Test Method for Steady-State Thermal Transmission Properties by Means of the Heat Flow Meter Apparatus](#)
[C550 Test Method for Measuring Trueness and Squareness of Rigid Block and Board Thermal Insulation](#)
[C585 Practice for Inner and Outer Diameters of Thermal Insulation for Nominal Sizes of Pipe and Tubing](#)
[C871 Test Methods for Chemical Analysis of Thermal Insulation Materials for Leachable Chloride, Fluoride, Silicate, and Sodium Ions](#)
[C1045 Practice for Calculating Thermal Transmission Properties Under Steady-State Conditions](#)
[C1058/C1058M Practice for Selecting Temperatures for Evaluating and Reporting Thermal Properties of Thermal Insulation](#)
[C1114 Test Method for Steady-State Thermal Transmission Properties by Means of the Thin-Heater Apparatus](#)
[C1303/C1303M Test Method for Predicting Long-Term Thermal Resistance of Closed-Cell Foam Insulation](#)
[C1363 Test Method for Thermal Performance of Building Materials and Envelope Assemblies by Means of a Hot Box Apparatus](#)
[C1763 Test Method for Water Absorption by Immersion of Thermal Insulation Materials](#)
[D883 Terminology Relating to Plastics](#)
[D1621 Test Method for Compressive Properties of Rigid Cellular Plastics](#)
[D1622/D1622M Test Method for Apparent Density of Rigid Cellular Plastics](#)
[D2126 Test Method for Response of Rigid Cellular Plastics to Thermal and Humid Aging](#)
[D2856 Test Method for Open-Cell Content of Rigid Cellular Plastics by the Air Pycnometer \(Withdrawn 2006\)³](#)
[D6226 Test Method for Open Cell Content of Rigid Cellular Plastics](#)
[E84 Test Method for Surface Burning Characteristics of Building Materials](#)
[E96/E96M Test Methods for Water Vapor Transmission of Materials](#)

3. Terminology

- 3.1 For descriptions of terms used in this specification, refer to Terminologies [C168](#) and [D883](#).
- 3.2 The term polyisocyanurate does not encompass all polyurethane containing materials (see [1.2](#)).
- 3.3 The term “core specimen” refers to representative samples cut in accordance with the sampling procedure listed within each property test method.
- 3.4 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*
- 3.4.1 *aged, v—in relation to thermal conductivity testing*, the act of delaying thermal conductivity testing for a specified time period after the final polymerization.

3.4.1.1 *Discussion*—<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/81ea1304-aeeb-4add-8f7a-1fbc6df65a0c/astm-c591-19a>

Unfaced preformed rigid cellular polyisocyanurate thermal insulation samples are aged because the thermal conductivity of this material increases with time, primarily due to changes in the composition of the gas contained within the closed cells. The rate of this thermal conductivity increase diminishes with time so an aging time prior to testing is selected to reasonably represent the long-term performance of the material. The aging time for thermal conductivity test specimens of material covered by this standard is typically 180 days.

3.4.2 *conditioned, v*—the act of putting specimens in specified temperature and humidity conditions immediately prior to testing to allow the specimens to reach temperature and moisture content equilibrium.

3.4.2.1 *Discussion*—

Samples are conditioned for a fairly short time period (typically 12 to 24 h) during which the test lab holds the sample at standard lab conditions (see [11.3](#)) immediately prior to testing. If specimens are aged (see [3.4.1](#)) for thermal conductivity testing at the same conditions specified for conditioning and kept at these conditions until the time of testing, then a separate conditioning period at the end of the aging period is not necessary.

3.4.3 *final polymerization, n*—the final chemical reaction and cooling that occurs immediately following primary manufacturing of unfaced preformed rigid cellular polyisocyanurate thermal insulation materials created using a simultaneous blowing and exothermic polymerization process.

3.4.3.1 *Discussion*—

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

Unfaced preformed rigid cellular polyisocyanurate thermal insulation materials created using a simultaneous blowing and exothermic polymerization process are formed into a shape such as a bun during manufacture. This shape reaches its final form and size during primary manufacturing and is at a temperature substantially above ambient. This shape continues to undergo final polymerization and cooling for a time period ranging from a few hours to several days. This period of final polymerization and cooling is part of the manufacturing process and samples are not taken for testing or quality control until the end of this period is reached.

3.4.4 *ozone depletion potential (ODP), n*—a relative index indicating the extent to which a chemical product causes ozone depletion.

3.4.4.1 *Discussion*—

The reference level of 1 is the potential of trichlorofluoromethane (R-11 or CFC-11) to cause ozone depletion. ODP 0 is an ozone depletion potential of zero.

3.4.5 *primary manufacturing, n*—the initial manufacturing step of unfaced preformed rigid cellular polyisocyanurate thermal insulation materials that begins with the mixing of the precursor chemicals and ends with the formation of the final bun shape.

4. Classification

4.1 Unfaced, preformed rigid cellular polyisocyanurate thermal insulation covered by this specification is classified into six types as follows:

- 4.1.1 *Type I*—Compressive resistance of 20 lb/in² (137 kPa), minimum.
- 4.1.2 *Type IV*—Compressive resistance of 22 lb/in² (150 kPa), minimum.
- 4.1.3 *Type II*—Compressive resistance of 35 lb/in² (240 kPa), minimum.
- 4.1.4 *Type III*—Compressive resistance of 45 lb/in² (310 kPa), minimum.
- 4.1.5 *Type V*—Compressive resistance of 80 lb/in² (550 kPa), minimum.
- 4.1.6 *Type VI*—Compressive resistance of 125 lb/in² (862 kPa), minimum.

4.2 Unfaced, preformed rigid cellular polyisocyanurate thermal insulation covered by this specification is classified into one grade as follows:

- 4.2.1 Grade 2—Service temperature range of -297°F (-183°C) to 300°F (149°C).

5. Ordering Information

5.1 Orders for materials purchased under this specification shall include the following:

- 5.1.1 Designation of this specification and year of issue,
- 5.1.2 Product name or grade/type, or both,
- 5.1.3 Apparent thermal conductivity and specific thickness required,
- 5.1.4 Product dimensions,
- 5.1.5 Quantity of material,
- 5.1.6 Special packaging or marking, if required, and
- 5.1.7 Special requirements for inspection or testing, or both.

6. Materials and Manufacture

6.1 Unfaced, preformed rigid cellular polyisocyanurate thermal insulation is produced by the polymerization of polymeric polyisocyanates in the presence of polyhydroxyl compounds, catalysts, cell stabilizers, and blowing agents.

6.2 The material covered by this specification shall be supplied in “bun” form, finished board stock, or special shapes as agreed upon by the manufacturer and end-user.

7. Physical Properties

7.1 Unfaced, preformed rigid cellular polyisocyanurate thermal insulation shall conform to the requirements shown in **Table 1**. See **Note 1**. For each physical property requirement, the average from testing the number of test specimen(s) required by **11.4** of this specification shall be used to determine compliance.

NOTE 1—It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to determine the technical requirements for their specific applications and to select an appropriate Type of material.

7.2 Polyisocyanurate thermal insulation is an organic material and is combustible. Do not expose this insulation to flames or other ignition sources. The fire performance of the material shall be addressed through fire test requirements established by the appropriate governing authority. The manufacturer shall be contacted for specific data as fire performance characteristic will vary with grade, type, and thickness.

TABLE 1 Physical Property Requirements
Grade 2: Operating Temperature Range -297°F (-183°C) to 300°F (149°C)^A

NOTE 1—Grade 1, which was specific to PIR for use at operating temperatures of -70°F (-51°C) to 300°F (149°C), was deleted in 2009 because this material was no longer produced. Grade 2 was not renumbered to minimize conflict with various global engineering and end-user specifications which require the use of materials complying with, “ASTM C591, Grade 2”.

Property	Type I	Type IV	Type II	Type III	Type V	Type VI
Density, min lb/ft ³ (kg/m ³)	1.8 (29)	2.0 (32)	2.5 (40)	3.0 (48)	4.0 (60)	6.0 (96)
Compressive resistance at 10 % deformation or yield whichever occurs first, parallel to rise, min, lb/in ² (kPa)	20 (137)	22 (150)	35 (240)	45 (310)	80 (550)	125 (862)
Apparent thermal conductivity, max Btu-in/h-ft ² · °F (W/m-K), at a mean temperature of:						
-200°F (-129°C)	.13 (.019)	.13 (.019)	.13 (.019)	.14 (.020)	.14 (.020)	.15 (.022)
-150°F (-101°C)	.15 (.022)	.15 (.022)	.15 (.022)	.16 (.023)	.16 (.023)	.17 (.025)
-100°F (-73°C)	.17 (.025)	.17 (.025)	.17 (.025)	.18 (.026)	.18 (.026)	.19 (.027)
-50°F (-46°C)	.19 (.027)	.19 (.027)	.19 (.027)	.20 (.029)	.20 (.029)	.21 (.030)
0°F (-17°C)	.19 (.027)	.19 (.027)	.19 (.027)	.20 (.029)	.20 (.029)	.22 (.032)
50°F (10°C)	.18 (.026)	.18 (.026)	.18 (.026)	.19 (.027)	.19 (.027)	.21 (.030)
75°F (24°C)	.19 (.027)	.19 (.027)	.19 (.027)	.20 (.029)	.20 (.029)	.22 (.032)
150°F (66°C)	.23 (.033)	.23 (.033)	.23 (.033)	.24 (.035)	.24 (.035)	.26 (.037)
200°F (93°C)	.26 (.037)	.26 (.037)	.26 (.037)	.27 (.039)	.27 (.039)	.30 (.044)
Water absorption, max, % by volume	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.8
Water vapor permeability, max, perm-in (ng/Pa-s-m)	4.0 (5.8)	4.0 (5.8)	3.5 (5.1)	3.0 (4.4)	2.5 (3.7)	2.0 (2.9)
Dimensional stability, max % linear change, 1 week exposure						
158 ± 4°F (70 ± 2°C), 97 ± 3 % relative humidity	4	4	4	4	4	4
-40 ± 6°F (-40 ± 3°C), ambient relative humidity	1	1	1	1	1	1
212 ± 4°F (100 ± 2°C), ambient relative humidity	2	2	2	2	2	2
Closed cell content, min	90	90	90	90	90	90
Hot-surface performance, at 300°F (149°C) ^B	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass

^AThis specification does not purport to address all the performance issues associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate performance criteria.

^B Pass/fail criteria found in 12.4.

7.3 Not all physical properties at temperatures below -70°F (-51°C) have been fully tested. Where these properties are critical, the user shall consult the manufacturer for properties and performance at these lower temperatures.

8. Dimensions and Tolerances

8.1 The dimensions shall be as agreed upon by the purchaser and the supplier. Polyisocyanurate thermal insulation is commonly available in lengths up to 144 in. (3.66 m), widths up to 48 in. (1.22 m), and thicknesses from 0.5 in. (13 mm) to 24 in. (610 mm).

8.2 Insulation Board:

8.2.1 Dimensional tolerances for boards shall be as follows:

Dimension	Tolerance, in. (mm)
Length	±1/8 (3.2)
Width	±1/16 (1.6)
Thickness	±1/32 (0.8)

8.2.2 *Edge Trueness*—Determine in accordance with Test Method C550. The maximum deviation from the edge trueness shall not be greater than 1/32 in./ft (2.6 mm/m) of length or width.

8.2.3 *Face Trueness*—Determine in accordance with Test Method C550. The maximum deviation from flatness shall not be greater than 1/16 in./ft (5.2 mm/m) of length or width.

8.2.4 *Corner Squareness*—Determine in accordance with Test Method C550. The maximum deviation from corner squareness shall not be greater than 1/8 in. (3.2 mm) for all board thicknesses.

8.2.5 *Edge Squareness*—Determine in accordance with Test Method C550. The maximum deviation from edge squareness shall not be greater than 1/16 in. (1.6 mm) for all board thicknesses.

8.3 *Pipe Insulation*—Material supplied for pipe insulation shall have dimensions and tolerances that are in accordance with Practice C585.

9. Workmanship and Appearances

9.1 The polyisocyanurate thermal insulation shall have no defects that will adversely affect its service qualities.

10. Sampling

10.1 Unless otherwise specified, the polyisocyanurate thermal insulation shall be sampled and inspected for acceptance of material in accordance with Practice **C390**.

10.2 *Inspection Requirements*—The requirements for density shown in **Table 1**, the dimensional requirements described in Section 8, and the workmanship and appearance requirements described in Section 9 are defined as inspection requirements (refer to Practice **C390**).

10.3 *Qualification Requirements*—The physical requirements shown in **Table 1** except density are defined as qualification requirements (refer to Practice **C390**). Density is defined as an inspection requirement.

11. Specimen Selection and Preparation

11.1 Prior to the cutting of any test specimens, a period of at least 72 h shall elapse from the end of primary manufacturing to allow for final polymerization (see 3.4.5 and 3.4.3). The test specimens shall be cut from the buns of material as required by **Annex A1** for the reasons described in **Appendix X1**.

11.2 All test specimens shall be homogeneous per the definition of “homogeneous material” in Terminology **C168**. All test specimens shall be free of joints unless the size of the specimen required precludes it being cut from a single 3 ft long bun.

11.3 Unless otherwise specified, the test specimens shall be conditioned (see 3.4.2) at $73 \pm 4^\circ\text{F}$ ($23 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$) and $50 \pm 5\%$ relative humidity for at least 24 h prior to testing.

11.4 Number of specimens to test for each required property for continuous bunstock PIR (see **A1.2**):

11.4.1 *Density*—Test three specimens.

11.4.2 *Compressive Resistance*—Test six specimens.

11.4.3 *Apparent Thermal Conductivity*—Test three specimens at mean temperature of 75°F (24°C) and one specimen at the other mean temperatures listed in **Table 1**.

11.4.4 *Hot Surface Performance*—Test one specimen.

11.4.5 *Water Absorption*—Test three specimens as prescribed in Test Method **C272/C272M**, Procedure A with sample size 12 by 12 by 1 in. (305 by 305 by 25 mm) or Test Method **C1763**, Procedure C.

11.4.6 *Water Vapor Permeability*—Test three specimens as prescribed in Test Method **E96/E96M**.

11.4.7 *Dimensional Stability*—Test three specimens.

11.4.8 *Closed Cell Content*—Test three specimens.

11.5 Number of specimens to test for each bun tested for each required property for box-pour bunstock PIR. Due to the possible variability from bun to bun within a batch of box-pour bunstock PIR, it is necessary to test three buns from a given batch (see **A1.3**):

11.5.1 *Density*—Test three specimens.

11.5.2 *Compressive Resistance*—Test six specimens.

11.5.3 *Apparent Thermal Conductivity*—Test three specimens at mean temperature of 75°F (24°C) and one specimen at the other mean temperatures listed in **Table 1**.

11.5.4 *Hot Surface Performance*—Test one specimen.

11.5.5 *Water Absorption*—Test three specimens as prescribed in Test Method **C272/C272M**, Procedure A with sample size 12 by 12 by 1 in. (305 by 305 by 25 mm) or Test Method **C1763**, Procedure C.

11.5.6 *Water Vapor Permeability*—Test three specimens as prescribed in Test Method **E96/E96M**.

11.5.7 *Dimensional Stability*—Test three specimens.

11.5.8 *Closed Cell Content*—Test three specimens.

12. Test Methods

12.1 *Density*—Determine in accordance with Test Method **D1622/D1622M** or **C303**.

12.2 *Compressive Resistance*—Determine in accordance with Test Method **C165**, Procedure A or Test Method **D1621**, at a crosshead speed of 0.1 in/min (2.5 mm/min) for each 1 in. (25 mm) of specimen thickness. See **Note 2**.

NOTE 2—Polyisocyanurate insulation can be anisotropic and, therefore, strength properties can vary with direction. The manufacturer should be consulted if additional information is required.

12.3 *Apparent Thermal Conductivity*—Determine in accordance with Test Method **C177**, **C518**, **C1114** or **C1363** in accordance with Practice **C1045** using the small temperature differences indicated in Practice **C1058/C1058M**, Table 3 with the specimen cut so that the induced direction of heat flow is parallel to the rise (height) direction of the bun. In some cases where this insulation is used in pipe applications, Test Method **C335/C335M** is applicable. Core 1 in. (25 mm) thick test specimens shall be cut from buns after the final polymerization (see 3.4.3 and 11.1) is complete, be aged (3.4.1) at $73 \pm 4^\circ\text{F}$ ($23 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$) and $50 \pm 5\%$ relative humidity for 180 ± 5 days from time of specimen cutting, be conditioned if necessary (see 3.4.2), and then tested following these aging (and conditioning if present) periods. In case of dispute, Test Method **C177** shall be the referee method. The apparent thermal

conductivity of the material tested shall not be greater than the maximum value identified in **Table 1**. The apparent thermal conductivity of individual specimens tested shall not be greater than 110 % of the maximum value identified in **Table 1**. Compliance with qualification requirements shall be in accordance with Practice **C390**. It is possible that Test Method **C1303/C1303M** will provide useful information for estimating long term changes in thermal resistance. See **Note 3**.

NOTE 3—The core thickness has an impact on measured thermal resistance; as thickness increases the thermal resistance increases, as thickness decreases the thermal resistance decreases. The thermal resistance of polyisocyanurate thermal insulation may be significantly influenced by installation and service-related variables such as age, encapsulation within gas-barrier materials, environmental conditions, and mechanical abuse and may be reduced from measured values after exposure to conditions of use. For specific design recommendations using a particular product, consult the manufacturer.

12.4 Hot-Surface Performance—Determine in accordance with Test Method **C411**. Pass criteria is defined as ≤ 0.25 in. (6 mm) warpage, and no cracking, flaming, glowing, smoldering, and smoking when tested with a white background. Discoloration of the sample during this test is not an indication of failure.

12.5 Water Absorption—Report in units of % by volume determined by multiplying the water absorption % by weight obtained by testing in accordance with Test Method **C272/C272M**, Procedure A with sample size 12 by 12 by 1 in. (305 by 305 by 25 mm) or Test Method **C1763**, Procedure C, by the specimen specific gravity.

12.6 Water Vapor Permeability—Determine in accordance with Test Methods **E96/E96M** using the desiccant procedure at $73 \pm 2^\circ\text{F}$ ($23 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$). See **Note 4**.

NOTE 4—The application of a vapor retarder may be required in conjunction with the application of this insulation.

12.7 Dimensional Stability—Determine in accordance with Test Method **D2126**. Exposure time shall be 168 h (one week) ± 2 h.

12.8 Closed-Cell Content—Determine in accordance with Test Method **D2856** or **D6226**.

12.9 Surface Burning Characteristics—Determine, if required, in accordance with Test Method **E84** at the thickness supplied and results are to be reported.

12.10 Leachable Chloride, Fluoride, Silicate, and Sodium Ions—Determine in accordance with Test Method **C871**.

13. Inspection

13.1 Inspection of this material shall be agreed upon by the purchaser and the supplier as part of the purchase agreement.

14. Rejection and Rehearing

14.1 Failure to conform to the requirements of this specification shall be cause for rejection. Rejection shall be reported to the producer or supplier promptly and in writing.

14.2 In the case of rejection of a shipment, the producer shall have the right to resubmit the lot for inspection after the removal and replacement of that portion not conforming to requirements.

15. Packaging and Marking

15.1 Unless otherwise agreed upon between the purchaser and the supplier, materials under this specification shall be packaged by the manufacturer's standard commercial practice.

15.2 Unless otherwise specified, shipping containers shall be marked with the name and designation of the manufacturer, grade, type, lot number, size or thickness, product apparent thermal conductivity, and quantity of material in the container.

16. Supplementary Requirements

16.1 Fabricated polyisocyanurate thermal insulation pieces cut from buns shall be kept dry during storage, shipping, and installation.

17. Keywords

17.1 cellular plastic; polyisocyanurate; polyurethane modified polyisocyanurate; thermal insulation