



Designation: **B646—17 B646 – 19**

Standard Practice for Fracture Toughness Testing of Aluminum Alloys¹

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

1. Scope*

1.1 Fracture toughness is a key property for a number of aluminum alloys utilized in aerospace and process industries. Fracture toughness testing is often required for supplier qualification, quality control, and material release purposes. The purpose of this practice is to provide uniform test procedures for the industry, pointing out which current standards are utilized in specific cases, and providing guidelines where no standards exist. This practice provides guidance for testing (a) sheet and other products having a specified thickness less than ~~6.35 mm~~ 6.35 mm (0.250 in.), (b) intermediate thicknesses of plate, forgings, and extrusions that are too thin for valid plane-strain fracture toughness testing but too thick for treatment as sheet, such as products having a specified thickness greater than or equal to 6.35 mm (0.250 in.) but less than 25 to 50 mm (1 to 2 in.), depending on toughness level, and (c) relatively thick products where Test Method E399 is applicable.

~~1.2 This practice addresses both direct measurements of fracture toughness and screening tests, the latter recognizing the complexity and expense of making formal fracture toughness measurements on great quantities of production lots.~~

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. The values in inch-pound units given in parenthesis are provided for information purposes only.

1.3 *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.*

1.4 *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
- B557 Test Methods for Tension Testing Wrought and Cast Aluminum- and Magnesium-Alloy Products
 - B557M Test Methods for Tension Testing Wrought and Cast Aluminum- and Magnesium-Alloy Products (Metric)
 - B645 Practice for Linear-Elastic Plane-Strain Fracture Toughness Testing of Aluminum Alloys
 - E399 Test Method for Linear-Elastic Plane-Strain Fracture Toughness K_{Ic} of Metallic Materials
 - E561 Test Method for K_R Curve Determination
 - E1304 Test Method for Plane-Strain (Chevron-Notch) Fracture Toughness of Metallic Materials
 - E1823 Terminology Relating to Fatigue and Fracture Testing

3. Terminology

3.1 The terminology and definitions in the referenced documents, especially E1823, are applicable to this practice.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.2.1 For purposes of this practice, the following descriptions of terms are applicable in conjunction with Test Method E561:

3.2.2 ~~CMOD—crack mouth opening displacement; the measurement of specimen displacement between two points spanning the machined notch at locations specific to the specimen being tested.~~

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee B07 on Light Metals and Alloys and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee B07.05 on Testing. Current edition approved Aug. 1, 2017/Nov. 1, 2019. Published August 2017/November 2019. Originally approved in 1978. Last previous edition approved in 2012/2017 as B646—12; B646 – 17. DOI: 10.1520/B0646-17; 10.1520/B0646-19.

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.

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

3.2.2 K_{R25} —a value of K_R on the K_R curve based on a 25 % secant intercept of the force-CMOD test record from a C(T) specimen and the effective crack size a_e at that point that otherwise satisfies the remaining-ligament criterion of Test Method E561. If the maximum force is reached prior to the 25 % secant intercept point, the maximum force point shall be used instead to determine the K_{R25} value.

3.2.3 K_c —for the purpose of this practice, K_c is the critical stress intensity factor based on the maximum force value of the force-CMOD test record from an M(T) specimen and the effective crack size, a_e , at that point that otherwise satisfies the remaining-ligament criterion of Test Method E561.

3.2.4 K_{app} (~~also commonly designated K_{co}~~)—the apparent plane stress fracture toughness based on the initial crack size, a_o , and the maximum force value of the force-CMOD test record from an M(T) specimen that otherwise satisfies the remaining-ligament criterion of Test Method E561.

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 This practice provides guidelines for the selection of tests to evaluate the fracture toughness properties of aluminum alloys, particularly for quality assurance and material release purposes. It also provides supplemental information regarding specimen size, analysis, and interpretation of results for the following products and test methods:

4.2 *Fracture Toughness Testing of Thin Products:*

4.2.1 K_R curve testing of M(T) middle-crack tension specimens in accordance with Test Method E561.

4.2.2 K_c and K_{app} (also designated K_{co} or K_A) testing of M(T) specimens in general accordance with Test Method E561.

4.3 *Fracture Toughness Testing of Intermediate Thickness Products:*

4.3.1 Testing of C(T) compact-tension specimens in accordance with Test Method E399 supplemented with Practice B645.

4.3.2 ~~Tests on~~ Testing of C(T) specimens in accordance with Test Method E561 using the toughness ~~parameter; parameters,~~ K_{RR25} , K_c , and K_{app} (also designated $K_{A(s)}$).

4.4 *Fracture Toughness Testing of Thick Products:*

4.4.1 Linear-elastic plane-strain fracture testing in accordance with Test Method E399 supplemented with Practice B645.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This practice is provided to develop and maintain uniformity in practices for the evaluation of the toughness of aluminum alloys, particularly with regard to supplier qualification, quality assurance, and material release to specifications.

5.2 It is emphasized that the use of these procedures will not alter the validity of data determined with specific test methods, but provides guidance in the interpretation of test results (valid or invalid) and guidance in the selection of a reasonable test procedure in those instances where no standard exists today.

6. Selection of Fracture Toughness Test Methods for Specific Products

6.1 Product size dictates the appropriate fracture toughness test method to be used for supplier qualification and periodic quality control testing. The fracture toughness measures and test methods are given below for the following product sizes:

6.2 *Thin Products*—For sheet and other products having specified thicknesses less than 6.35 mm (0.250 in.):

6.2.1 Determine the critical stress intensity factor (K_c) or the apparent fracture toughness (K_{app}) from M(T) specimens tested in general accordance with Test Method E561 as supplemented by this practice in 7.1; or

6.2.2 Determine the K_R curve measured from M(T) specimens tested in accordance with Test Method E561 as supplemented by this practice in 7.2.

6.3 *Thick Products*—For products sufficiently thick to obtain a valid linear-elastic plane-strain fracture toughness measurement, determine K_{Ic} , from C(T) specimens measured in accordance with Test Method E399 and supplemented by Practice B645 and by this practice in 7.3.

NOTE 1—The plane-strain chevron notch toughness K_{IcM} may be used as a direct quantitative measure of fracture toughness³ when permitted by the material specification or by agreement between the purchaser and supplier. Testing and analysis of short-rod or short-bar specimens to obtain K_{IcM} shall be performed in accordance with Test Method E1304. Fracture toughness minimums for K_{IcM} should be established using the specimens and procedures of Test Method E1304 because those minimums may differ significantly from K_{Ic} minimums established using Test Method E399. The standard chevron notch specimens (short-rod or short-bar specimens 25.4 mm (1.00 in.) in diameter or width) are recommended. Two attractive features of the chevron notch test method are a) fatigue precracking is not required, and b) the specimen is small.

6.4 *Intermediate Thickness Products*—For products having thicknesses greater than or equal to 6.35 mm (0.250 in.), but too thin for valid linear-elastic plane-strain fracture toughness testing:

6.4.1 Determine K_Q “usable for lot release” from C(T) specimens tested in accordance with Test Method E399 supplemented with Practice B645 and this practice in 7.3; or

³ Rolfe, S. T. and Novak, S. R., “Review of Developments in Plane Strain Fracture Toughness Testing,” *ASTM STP 463*, ASTM, Sept. 1970, pp. 124–159.

6.4.2 Determine K_{R25} , K_c , or K_{app} from C(T) specimens tested in accordance with Test Method E561 as supplemented by this practice in 7.4.

6.5 *Thin Specimens from Thicker Products*—The methods of 6.2 may also be utilized on thin specimens machined from intermediate thickness or thick products for the purpose of evaluating their fracture toughness under plane stress conditions. These methods may be particularly desirable for products that will be machined into a thinner structural member. Typically, the specimen is machined from the product to a thickness representative of that used in the final application.

6.6 *Low Strength Alloy Products*—There are no current standard recommendations for toughness testing of relatively low-strength aluminum alloys which display large-scale yielding even in the presence of extremely large cracks in very thick sections. Such cases must be dealt with individually on a research basis using tests selected from program needs and anticipated design criteria. A typical case for general guidance is given in the literature.⁴

7. Fracture Toughness Testing Methods and Interpretation

7.1 K_c and K_{app} (K_{co} , K_A) *Testing—Testing of M(T) Specimens*—Fracture toughness testing to obtain either the critical stress intensity (K_c) or the apparent fracture toughness (K_{app}) shall be performed on M(T) specimens in accordance with Test Method E561 and the following supplemental requirements. ~~K_{co} is and K_A commonly used designations~~ are other designations for the apparent fracture toughness, so all requirements for K_{app} testing are also applicable to K_{co} and K_A .

NOTE 2— K_c , K_{app} , and the K_R curve may all be obtained from the same test record and specimen. K_c or K_{app} are often preferred for quality assurance or material release purposes because they provide a single value measure of material fracture toughness that can be compared against a minimum specification value. For higher strength, lower toughness alloys where the maximum force is preceded by one or more unstable extensions of the crack, K_{app} is recommended for material release purposes.

7.1.1 The testing shall be performed using the Test Method E561 procedure for compliance measurement of effective crack size and employing continuous monotonic deformation.

7.1.2 The M(T) specimen crack plane orientation, width W , and initial crack size a_o shall be in accordance with the material specification. The specimen thickness shall be the full thickness of the product for thin products less than or equal to ~~6.35 mm~~ 6.35 mm (0.250 in.) in thickness. The specimen shall be machined to a thickness of ~~6.35 mm~~ 6.35 mm (0.250 in.) by removing equal amounts from the top and bottom surfaces for thicker products, unless otherwise stated in the material specification. Recommended widths are $W = 406 \text{ mm}$ 406 mm (16 in.) for medium strength, higher toughness products and $W = 160 \text{ mm}$ (6.3 in.) for high strength, lower toughness products. For very high toughness sheet alloys, $W = 760 \text{ mm}$ (30 in.) are also sometimes used for supplier qualification. The recommended initial crack size is $2a_o/W = 0.25$. In all cases the initial crack size $2a_o$ should be within the range of 0.25 to 0.40 W , inclusive, as allowed in Test Method E561. If no dimensional requirements are given in the material specification, the nominal specimen size shall be 406 mm (16 in.) wide, with 380 mm (15 in.) being an acceptable minimum width and the initial crack size shall be $2a_o/W = 0.25$. For all specimen widths and initial crack sizes, the tolerance for the initial crack size shall be $+0.0125 W/-0 W$ or $+2.5/-0 \text{ mm}$ $+2.5/-0 \text{ mm}$ ($+0.1$ -0.1 $-0/-0$ in.), whichever is greater.

7.1.2.1 Tests for qualification and lot release testing shall be performed on specimens having the same width, or less, than specimens used for determining specification values.

NOTE 3—The values of K_c and K_{app} are dependent upon the interaction of the crack driving force, which is a function of specimen width, W , and the crack resistance curve (K_R curve). Thus, these values are dependent on specimen width (as well as thickness) and their values will typically decrease with decreasing specimen width, all other factors being equal. They also depend to a lesser extent on the initial crack size, a_o .

7.1.3 The M(T) specimen shall be machined and precracked in accordance with Test Method E561. The value of K_{max} in the finishing stage of fatigue precracking shall not exceed ~~16.5 MPa√m~~ 16.5 MPa√m (15 ksi√in.). Fatigue precracking may be omitted for alloy products only if it can be shown has been demonstrated that doing so does not increase the measured value of K_c or K_{app} .

NOTE 4—Omitting fatigue precracking is more likely to be possible for higher toughness alloy products than lower toughness alloy products.

7.1.4 Except when specifically stated in the material specification, testing shall be performed with face stiffeners on the specimen to prevent buckling above or below the center slot.

7.1.5 The K_c value shall be calculated at the maximum force by the use of the secant equation for the M(T) specimen given in Test Method E561. The half crack size used in the K -expression shall be the effective half crack size, a_e , at the maximum force point calculated using the compliance expression for the M(T) specimens in Test Method E561. If, as sometimes happens, there is considerable crack extension at maximum force, the point at which the force first reaches the maximum shall be used in the crack size calculations.

7.1.6 The K_{app} value shall be calculated at the maximum force by the use of the secant equation for the M(T) specimen given in Test Method E561. The half crack size used in the K -expression shall be the initial crack size, a_o .

7.1.7 The net section validity of K_c or K_{app} shall be determined at the maximum force in accordance with Test Method E561.

7.1.8 Values of K_c or K_{app} calculated under conditions in which the net section stress exceeds 100 % of the tensile yield strength of the material are not suitable for design purposes and do not express the full toughness capability of the material, but they are

⁴ Kaufman, J. G., and Kelsey, R. A., "Fracture Toughness and Fatigue Properties of 5083-0 Plate and 5183 Welds for Liquefied Natural Gas Applications," *Properties of Materials for Liquefied Natural Gas Tankage*, ASTM STP 579, ASTM, 1975, pp. 138–158.