INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

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Second edition
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Plastics — Determination of environmental stress cracking (ESC) — Ball or pin impression method

Plastiques — Détermination de la fissuration sous contrainte dans un environnement donné (ESC) — Méthode par enfoncement de billes ou de goupilles

Reference number
ISO 4600:1992(E)

Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

International Standard ISO 4600 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 61, *Plastics*, Sub-Committee SC 6, *Ageing, chemical and environmental resistance*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 4600:1981), of which it constitutes a technical revision.

International Organization for Standardization
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Introduction

Environmental stress cracking is exhibited by many materials, including plastics. When a plastic material is stressed or strained in air below its yield point, stress cracking can occur after a period of time, which may be very long. These stresses may be internal or external, or a combination of both. Exposure to a chemical medium simultaneously with the same stress or strain may result in a dramatic shortening of the time to failure. This phenomenon is referred to as environmental stress cracking (ESC). The permissible long-term stress or strain may be reduced considerably by this phenomenon.

The cracks produced may penetrate completely through the thickness of the material, separating it into two or more pieces, or they may be arrested on reaching regions of lower stress or different material morphology.

The determination of ESC is complex because it is influenced by many parameters, including:

— test specimen dimensions;

— test specimen state (orientation, structure, internal stresses);

— stress and strain;

— temperature of test;

— duration of test;

— chemical medium;

— test method;

— failure criterion.

By keeping all but one parameter constant, the influence of the variable parameter on ESC can be assessed. The main objective of ESC measurements is to determine the effect of chemical media (environment) on plastics (test specimens and articles). The measurements may also be used to evaluate the influence of the moulding conditions upon the quality of an article when the failure mode corresponds to that obtained in actual service. It may not be possible, however, to establish any direct correlation between the results of short-duration ESC measurements on test specimens and the actual service behaviour of articles, because the behaviour of the latter is likely to be more complex than that of test specimens.

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Plastics — Determination of environmental stress cracking (ESC) — Ball or pin impression method

1 Scope

This International Standard specifies methods for the determination of environmental stress cracking (ESC) of plastics by means of a constant-strain test.

The test is applicable to finished products and to test specimens, prepared by moulding and/or machining, and can be used for the assessment of both ESC of a plastic product or material exposed to different environments, and for the determination of ESC of different plastics materials exposed to a specific environment.

NOTE 1 An alternative method for the determination of environmental stress cracking by means of a constant-strain test is specified in ISO 4599. A method for the determination of environmental stress cracking by means of a constant-stress test is specified in ISO 6252.

2 Normative references

The following standards contain provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this International Standard. At the time of publication, the editions indicated were valid. All standards are subject to revision, and parties to agreements based on this International Standard are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the standards indicated below. Members of IEC and ISO maintain registers of currently valid International Standards.

ISO 178:1975, *Plastics — Determination of flexural properties of rigid plastics.*

ISO 291:1977, *Plastics — Standard atmospheres for conditioning and testing.*

ISO 293:1986, *Plastics — Compression moulding test specimens of thermoplastic materials.*

ISO 294:1975, *Plastics — Injection moulding test specimens of thermoplastic materials.*

ISO 468:1982, *Surface roughness — Parameters, their values and general rules for specifying requirements.*

ISO/R 527:1966, *Plastics — Determination of tensile properties.*

ISO 2557-1:1989, *Plastics — Amorphous thermoplastics — Preparation of test specimens with a specified maximum reversion — Part 1: Bars.*

ISO 2818:1980, *Plastics — Preparation of test specimens by machining.*

ISO 3167:1983, *Plastics — Preparation and use of multipurpose test specimens.*

ISO 4599:1986, *Plastics — Determination of resistance to environmental stress cracking (ESC) — Bent strip method.*

ISO 6252:1992, *Plastics — Determination of environmental stress cracking (ESC) — Constant-tensile-stress method.*

3 Definitions

For the purposes of this International Standard, the following definitions apply.

3.1 oversize (d_d): The difference between the diameter of an impressed steel ball or pin (d_b) and the diameter of the hole (d_h) drilled into the test specimen.

$$d_d = d_b - d_h$$

3.2 deformation step: A determination made at a defined oversize.

3.3 deformation step zero: A determination made using test specimens that are drilled and reamed only, i.e. without impressing a ball or pin.

3.4 deformation series: A number of successive deformation steps beginning with deformation step zero.

NOTE 2 Normally, a deformation series consists of seven deformation steps of increasing severity.

3.5 failure limit: The oversize in a deformation series that produces failure, as specified in terms of the following failure criteria:

a) in method A (for test specimens taken from products), as visible cracks, observable with the unaided eye;

b) in method B (for moulded or machined test specimens), by the following criteria (see figure 1):

   1) a 5 % reduction in the maximum tensile force measured at deformation step zero (criterion B_1),

   2) a 5 % reduction in the maximum flexural force measured at deformation step zero (criterion B_2),

   3) a 20 % reduction in the tensile elongation at rupture measured at deformation step zero (criterion B_3).

If there is no rupture immediately after application of the maximum tensile force, the tensile elongation at 50 % of the preceding maximum tensile force (see figure 1) may be measured. Failure is then defined by a 20 % reduction in the value at deformation step zero (criterion B_4).

NOTE 3 It is sufficient to measure the elongation between the grips.

If the value for the tensile stress or flexural stress is required, refer the force to the smallest cross-sectional area of the specimen at the location of the hole.

3.6 relative-stress-cracking factor: The ratio of the failure limit in the test environment to that in a reference environment, for example air, measured at the same test temperature after the same test duration.

4 Principle

A constant strain, produced by impressed balls or pins in a test specimen in a test environment, often generates microcracks which may, in time, develop to visible cracks. To shorten the time for the test, the failure may be accelerated by subsequent mechanical testing. If products cannot be assessed by mechanical tests, visual examination for cracks around the balls or pins may be undertaken.

A hole of specified diameter is drilled in the specimen, an oversize steel ball or pin is inserted into the hole and the test specimen is brought into contact with a chemical medium. This procedure is repeated using balls or pins of progressively greater diameter. After a specified time, the effect of the interaction may be determined by visual examination (method A) or by the determination of the tensile or flexural properties (method B). A parallel series of tests may be performed in which the test specimens are exposed to air and the comparative behaviour determined.

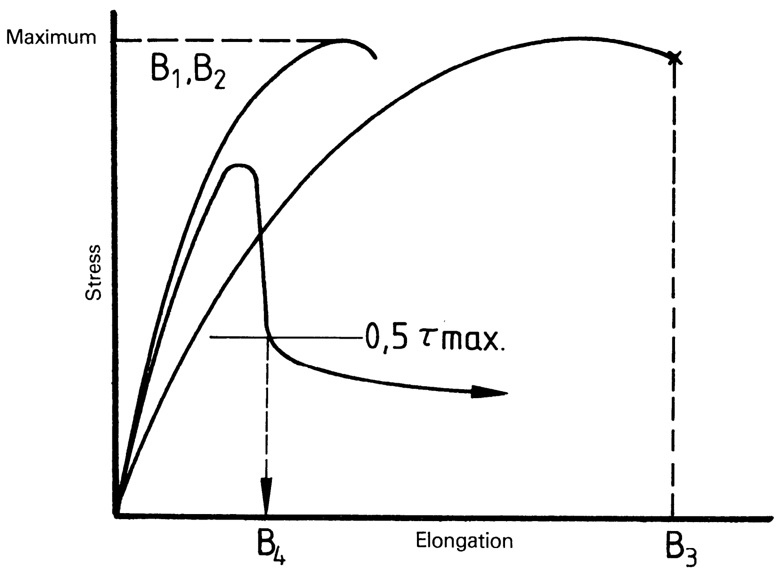

Figure 1 — Failure criteria for method B

NOTE 4 Pins are preferred for a single series of test specimens or articles with thicknesses greater than 1 mm. The deformation of the test specimen is the same along the whole length of the hole.

Balls are preferred for a number of series of test specimens or articles and for routine testing if the specimens have a thickness of 2 mm to 4 mm. The deformation of the test specimen is greatest at the ball equator.

Due to the differences in deformation, the results of ball tests and pin tests may be different.

5 Apparatus

5.1 Drilling machine, operating at a suitable frequency of rotation, for example at 1 000 min^{-1}.

5.2 Drills, of diameter 2,8 mm.

5.3 Reamer, suitable for finishing a hole of diameter (3,00 ± 0,05) mm.

NOTE 5 A 3^{H7} reamer (3,004 mm to 3,008 mm) is suitable.

5.4 Plug gauges, or other suitable devices for measuring the diameter of the reamed holes to within 0,005 mm.

5.5 Micrometer, for determining the diameter of the balls or pins with an accuracy of 0,001 mm.

5.6 Steel balls or pins.

NOTE 6 If steel is attacked in the test environment, other suitable hard materials, for example glass, may be used for the balls or pins.

5.6.1 Polished balls or pins, having tolerances of ± 0,001 mm on diameters up to 4 mm and ± 0,01 mm on diameters greater than 4 mm.

5.6.2 Pins, free of roughness or sharp edges, having a parallel-sided part 10 mm to 50 mm long and a taper (1:5) at one end to reduce the entry diameter to 2,5 mm (see 8.3.2). The surface roughness of the pins shall be equal, preferably with $R_a \leqslant 0{,}02$ µm (see ISO 468).

NOTE 7 A longer parallel-sided part of the pin will allow several test specimens to be mounted on the same pin.

The use of the range of diameters given in table 1 is recommended.

Table 1 — Recommended range of diameters

Dimensions in millimetres

Diameter	Increment
2,98 to 3,2	0,01
3,2 to 3,5	0,05
3,5 to 4,0	0,10
4,0 to 6,0	0,50

5.7 Jig, for drilling and reaming the holes (see figure 2).

5.8 Apparatus for pressing the balls or pins into the hole.

The spindle of the drilling machine or the tensile-testing machine itself may be used.

5.9 Vessels, for immersion of the specimens.

5.10 Clock.

5.11 Flexural- or tensile-testing machine (see ISO 178 and ISO/R 527), for the determination of flexural or tensile properties.

6 Test specimens

6.1 Shape

In general, use test specimens of the shape and method of preparation specified in the International Standard appropriate to the material or product concerned.

If the relevant International Standard contains no such specifications, test specimens of the following shape shall be used.

6.1.1 Method A

Use the product or parts of it as the test specimen.

6.1.2 Method B

Use moulded or machined test specimens, conforming to ISO 293/ISO 294 or ISO 2818, respectively.

Test specimens shall not be machined on the faces where the holes will be drilled. If test specimen dimensions are not specified for flexural testing, use a bar of dimensions 80 mm × 10 mm × 4 mm, as specified in ISO 178, and for tensile testing use the appropriate test specimen specified in ISO/R 527. Attention is drawn to the multipurpose specimen specified in ISO 3167.

6.2 State

For tests which are intended to be comparable, the test specimens shall be in the same state. Attention is drawn to ISO 2557-1 for the determination of level of shrinkage and to ISO 294 for the state of the specimens. If finished articles are tested, the holes and pins shall be applied in the same area or an area agreed upon by the interested parties, especially if critical regions, such as weld lines, are examined.

The level of shrinkage of the test specimens, whether compression moulded, injection moulded or machined from sheet, shall be determined on five test specimens before they are drilled and reamed.

In the case of evaluation of moulding materials of crystalline polymers, such as polyethylene and polypropylene, the amount of crystallinity shall be standardized by annealing, as specified in the International Standard appropriate to the material concerned or as agreed between the interested parties.

NOTE 8 The numerical value of the failure limit depends upon the method of determination and the distance between the edge of the hole and the side of the test specimen. The value decreases as this distance becomes smaller.

6.3 Number

The number of test specimens required depends upon the duration of the test, i.e. short (see 8.4.1) or long (see 8.4.2), and the method used. Three deformation steps shall lie on either side of the expected approximate failure limit.

6.3.1 Short-duration test (up to 20 h in the test environment) (see 8.4.1).

6.3.1.1 Method A

Three complete deformation series shall be used for testing in the test environment. The required number of test specimens depends, therefore, upon the number of holes that can be drilled in the region of homogeneous state in one product.

6.3.1.2 Method B

Five test specimens shall be used for each deformation step.

6.3.2 Long-duration test

The number of test specimens depends upon the test conditions (see 8.4.2).

7 Conditioning and test conditions

7.1 Conditioning

Unless otherwise agreed between the interested parties (for example for polyamides or polyolefins), the test specimens shall be conditioned before preparation and testing for at least 24 h at (23 ± 2) °C and (50 ± 5) % relative humidity (see ISO 291).

7.2 Test temperature

7.2.1 Unless otherwise agreed between the interested parties (for example for polyethylene), the temperature during insertion of the ball or pin shall be (23 ± 2) °C.

7.2.2 Unless otherwise specified, the temperature during immersion shall be (23 ± 2) °C and the test specimens shall be stored in air at (23 ± 2) °C and (50 ± 5) % relative humidity.

7.2.3 Tensile or flexural testing shall be performed at (23 ± 2) °C and (50 ± 5) % relative humidity, or (23 ± 2) °C if the relative humidity is not critical.

7.3 Chemical environment

The chemical medium used for the test shall be that specified in the relevant International Standard. If there is no such specification, use either the chemical medium with which the material will be in contact in the expected application or a product agreed upon between the interested parties.

8 Procedure

Test specimens, balls and pins shall be clean and free of grease, fat, perspiration or other substances that could affect the test result.

NOTE 9 Exposure of test specimens to intense artificial light or sunlight could also affect the result.

8.1 Drilling the test specimens

8.1.1 Method A

Drill holes of diameter 2,8 mm in each conditioned test specimen and ream them to 3 mm. The holes shall be perpendicular to the surface of the test specimens, at least 15 mm apart and 15 mm from the edges of the test specimen. Use a coolant during this operation (for example compressed air, water or other media known to have no effect on the material under test).

NOTE 10 Specimen preparation is difficult and critical and care should be exercised (see 6.2).

8.1.2 Method B

Drill a hole of diameter 2,8 mm in each conditioned test specimen and ream them to 3 mm. Drill the hole perpendicularly to the surface of the test specimen, so that it passes through the intersection of the axes of symmetry to within 0,2 mm longitudinally and 0,02 mm transversely. Drill the set of test specimens for each deformation series consecutively with the minimum time delay, using a coolant (see 8.1.1).

NOTE 11 To centre the hole when drilling, the type of fixture shown in figure 2 is recommended.

8.2 Measurement of hole diameter (Methods A and B)

Store the drilled and reamed test specimens for (24 ± 2) h in the atmosphere specified in 7.2.2.

Measure the diameter of five holes selected at random to within 0,005 mm. Check that the range of values is less than 0,01 mm and then calculate the arithmetic mean. This mean value shall be taken as the hole diameter for the series.

8.3 Insertion of balls or pins (Methods A and B)

8.3.1 Balls

Insert one ball into each hole using a ball impression apparatus or other suitable means, for example the spindle feed of the drilling machine (see 5.8). Ensure that the position of the balls is symmetrical to the thickness of the test specimens.

8.3.2 Pins

Insert the tapered end into the hole in the test specimen and press it in until the parallel-sided part of the pin is in contact with the wall of the hole along its entire length.

Do not wet the pin with the chemical medium selected for the test, since this will make it impossible to achieve reproducible exposure of the surface of the hole.

8.4 Immersion in the chemical medium (Methods A and B)

Store the prepared test specimens for (60 ± 5) min in the atmosphere specified in 7.2.2 prior to immersion in the test medium.

8.4.1 Short-duration test

8.4.1.1 Liquid medium

Immerse the test specimens in the liquid medium contained in a vessel (5.9) for 20 h at the specified temperature (see 7.2.2). Remove the specimens, wipe off the medium using blotting-paper and allow them to stand for 3 h in the atmosphere specified in 7.2.2 before determining stress cracking.

8.4.1.2 Viscous medium

If the medium is viscous (for example paste or grease), cover the area of the hole on both surfaces of the test specimen with the medium. Store at the specified temperature for 20 h, wipe off the medium using blotting-paper and allow the specimens to stand for 3 h in the atmosphere specified in 7.2.2 before determining stress cracking.

Dimensions in millimetres

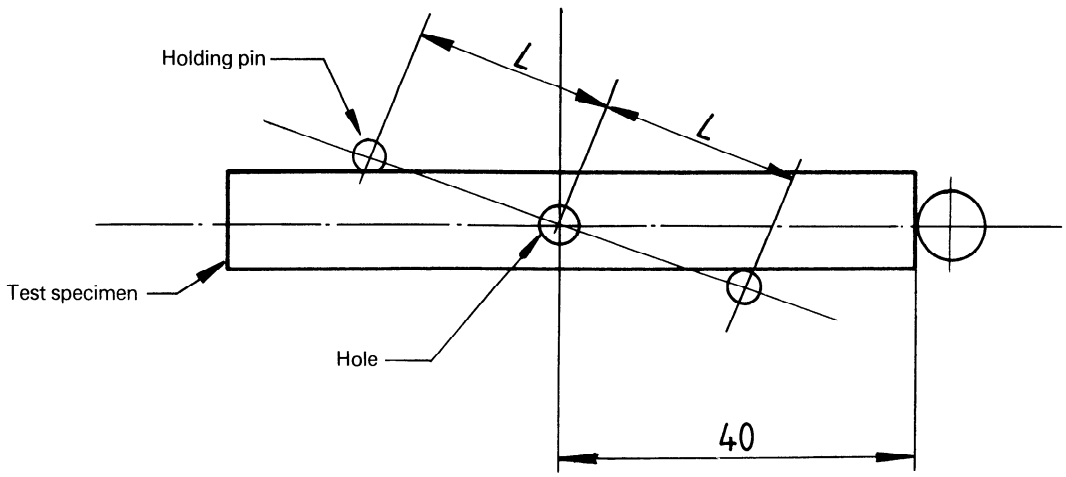

Figure 2 — Fixture for drilling holes in test specimens