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AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR TESTING AND MATERIALS
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Standard Practice for Extensometers Used in Rock¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 4403; 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 practice covers the description, application, selection, installation, data collecting, and data reduction of the various types of extensometers used in the field of rock mechanics.

1.2 Limitations of each type of extensometer system are covered in Section 3.

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 and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Significance and Use

2.1 Extensometers are widely used in the field of engineering and include most devices used to measure displacements, separation, settlements, convergence, and the like.

2.2 For tunnel instrumentation, extensometers are generally used to measure roof and sidewall movements and to locate the tension arch zone surrounding the tunnel opening.

2.3 Extensometers are also used extensively as safety monitoring devices in tunnels, in underground cavities, on potentially unstable slopes, and in monitoring the performance of rock support systems.

2.4 An extensometer should be selected on the basis of its intended use, the preciseness of the measurement required, the anticipated range of deformation, and the details accompanying installation. No single instrument is suitable for all applications.

3. Apparatus

3.1 *General*—Experience and engineering judgment are required to match the proper type of extensometer systems to the nature of investigation for a given project.

3.1.1 In applications for construction in rock, precise measurements will usually allow the identification of significant, possibly dangerous, trends in rock movement; however, precise measurement is much less important than the overall pattern of movement. Where measurements are used to determine rock properties (such as in plate-jack tests), accurate measurements involving a high degree of precision are re-

quired. For in-situ rock testing, instrument sensitivity better than 0.0012 in. (0.02 mm) is necessary for proper interpretation.

3.1.2 Most field measurements related to construction in rock do not require the precision of in-situ testing. Precision in the range of 0.001 to 0.01 in. (0.025 to 0.25 mm) is typically required and is readily obtainable by several instruments.

3.1.3 As the physical size of an underground structure or slope increases, the need for highly precise measurements diminishes. A precision of 0.01 to 0.04 in. (0.25 to 1.0 mm) is often sufficient. This range of precision is applicable to underground construction in soil or weak rock. In most hard rock applications, however, an instrument sensitivity on the order of 0.001 in. (0.025 mm) is preferred.

3.1.4 The least precision is required for very large excavations, such as open pit mines and large moving landslides. In such cases, the deformations are large before failure and, thus, relatively coarse precision is required, on the order of 1 % of the range where the range may be 3 ft. (1 m) or more.

3.1.5 For long-term monitoring, displacements are typically smaller than those that occur during construction. Therefore, greater precision may be required for the long-term measurements.

3.2 Extensometers:

3.2.1 *Rod Extensometers*—A large variety of rod extensometers are manufactured. They range from simple single-point units to complicated multipoint systems with electrical readout. The single-point extensometer is generally used to detect support system failures. The rod can also serve as a safety warning device in hazardous areas. Generally, the rod extensometer is read with a depth-measuring instrument such as a dial gage or depth micrometer, however, various electrical transducers such as LVDTs (linear variable differential transformers), linear potentiometers, and microswitches have been used where remote or continuous readings are required (as shown in Fig. 1). Another type of readout recently developed is a noncontact removable sonic probe digital readout system which is interchangeable with the depth micrometer type. Multipoint rod extensometers have up to eight measuring points. Reduced rod diameters are required for multipoint instruments and have been used effectively to depths of at least 150 ft (45 m). The rod acts as a rigid member and must react in both tension and compression. When used in deep applications, friction caused by drill hole misalignment and rod

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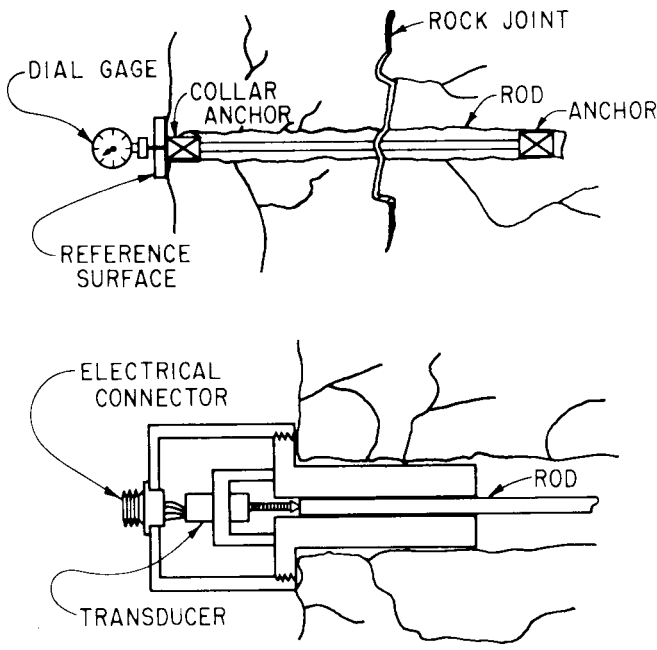


FIG. 1 Rod Extensometer

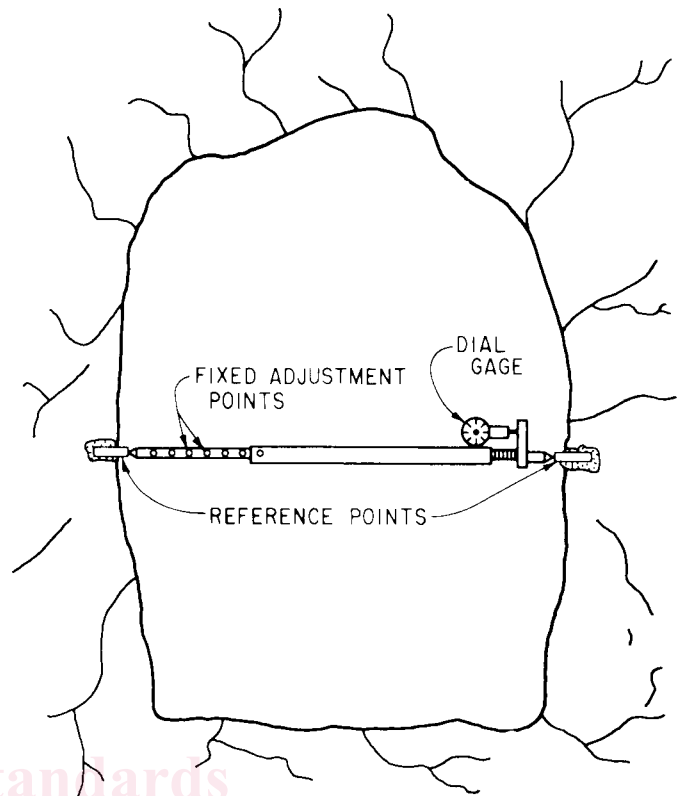


FIG. 2 Bar Extensometer

interference can cause erroneous readings.

3.2.2 Bar Extensometers—Bar extensometers are generally used to measure diametric changes in tunnels. Most bar extensometers consist of spring-loaded, telescopic tubes that have fixed adjustment points to cover a range of several feet. The fixed points are generally spaced at 1 to 4-in. (25 to 100-mm) increments. A dial gage is used to measure the displacements between the anchor points in the rock (as shown in Fig. 2). If the device is not constructed from invar steel, ambient temperature should be recorded and the necessary corrections applied to the results. Bar extensometers are primarily used for safety monitoring devices in mines and tunnels.

3.2.3 Tape Extensometers—Such devices are designed to be used in much the same manner as bar extensometers, however, tape extensometers allow the user to measure much greater distances, such as found in large tunnels or powerhouse openings. Tape extensometers consist of a steel tape (preferably invar steel), a tensioning device to maintain constant tension, and a readout head. Lengths of tape may be pulled out from the tape spool according to the need. The readout may be a dial gage or a vernier, and the tensioning mechanism may be a spring-loading device or a dead-weight (as shown in Fig. 3 and Fig. 4). The tape and readout head are fastened, or stretched in tension, between the points to be measured. Accuracies of 0.010 to 0.002 in. (0.25 to 0.05 mm) can be expected, depending on the length of the tape and the ability to tension the tape to the same value on subsequent readings, and provided that temperature corrections are made when necessary.

3.2.4 Joint Meters—Normally, joint meters consist of an extensometer fixed across the exposed surface of a joint (as demonstrated in Fig. 5), and are used to measure displacements along or across joints. The joint movements to be measured may be the opening or closing of the joint or slippage along the joint. Rod-type extensometers are generally used as joint

meters with both ends fixed across the joint. Preset limit switches are often mounted on the joint meter to serve as a warning device in problem areas such as slopes and foundations.

3.2.5 Wire Extensometers—Such devices utilize a thin stainless steel wire to connect the reference point and the measuring point of the instrument (as shown in Fig. 6). This allows a greater number of measuring points to be placed in a single drill hole. The wire or wires are tensioned by springs or weights. The wire is extended over a roller shiv and connected to a hanging weight. Wire extensometers tensioned by springs have the advantage of variable spring tension caused by anchor movements. This error must be accounted for when reducing the data. Wire-tensioned extensometers have been used to measure large displacements at drill hole depths up to approximately 500 ft (150 m). The instruments used for deep measurements generally require much heavier wire and greater spring tensions. Although wire extensometers are often used in open drill holes for short-term measurements, in areas of poor ground or unstable holes it is necessary to run a protective sleeve or tube over the measuring wires between the anchors.

3.3 Anchor Systems:

3.3.1 Groutable Anchors—These were one of the first anchoring systems used to secure wire extensometer measuring points in the drill hole. Groutable anchors are also used for rod type extensometers. Initially PVC (poly(vinyl chloride)) pipes clamped between the anchor points were employed to isolate the measuring wires from the grout column (as shown in Fig. 7), however, this arrangement was unreliable at depths greater than 25 ft (7.5 m) because the hydrostatic head pressure of the grout column often collapsed the PVC tubing. To counteract

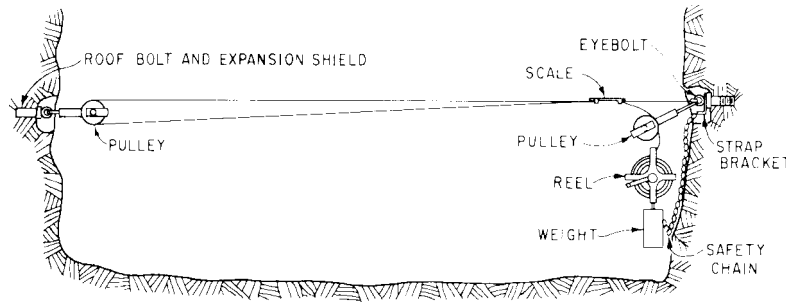


FIG. 3 Tape Extensometer with Vernier Readout and Deadweight

this condition, oil-filled PVC tubes were tried. The use of oil enabled this method to be used to depths of over 50 ft (15 m). As an alternative to this system, liquid-tight flexible steel conduit is used to replace the PVC pipe. This alternative system seems to work well and can be used in most applications. Resin anchors fall in this category and are very successful.

3.3.2 *Wedge-Type Anchors*—These consist of a mechanical anchor that has been widely used for short-term anchoring applications in hard rock. Fig. 8 shows the two basic types of wedge anchors: (1) the self-locking spring-loaded anchor, and (2) the mechanical-locking anchor. Self-locking anchors, when used in areas subject to shock load vibrations caused by blasting or other construction disturbances, may tend to slip in the drill holes or become more deeply-seated, causing the center wedge to move. Another disadvantage of the wedge anchor is that no protection is offered, if using wires, to the measuring wires in the drill hole against damage that might be caused by water or loose rock.

3.3.3 *Hydraulic Anchors*—These anchors have proven to be successful in most types of rock and soil conditions. Fig. 9 shows the two basic types of hydraulic anchors manufactured for use with extensometer systems: (1) the uncoiling Bourdon tube anchor, and (2) the hydraulic piston of grappling hook anchor, which is limited to soft rock and soils. Both anchors have the disadvantage of being rather costly. The Bourdon tube anchor works well in most rock and soil conditions and the complete anchor system can be fabricated before installing it in

the drill hole. There have been other specialized anchor systems developed, however, these systems have proven to be too costly and unsuccessful for most applications.

3.4 *Extensometer Transducers*—These extensometers convert displacements occurring in in-situ materials between two anchored points to mechanical movements that can be measured with conventional measuring devices such as dial gages, LVDTs, strain gages, and the like.

3.4.1 *Depth-Measuring Instruments*—A dial gage, or a depth micrometer are the simplest and most commonly used mechanical measuring instruments. Used in conjunction with extensometers, they provide the cheapest and surest methods of making accurate measurements. When using the dial gage or depth micrometer, the operator is required to take readings at the instrument head, however, local readings may not be practical or possible due to the instrument location or area conditions.

3.4.2 *Electrical Transducers*—For remote or continuous readings, electrical transducers are used rather than dial gages. LVDTs are often used because of their accuracy, small size, and availability. LVDTs require electrical readout equipment consisting of an a-c regulated voltage source and an accurate voltmeter, such as a digital voltmeter or bridge circuit. The use of linear potentiometers or strain gages is often desirable because of the simplicity of the circuitry involved. The disadvantage of using linear potentiometers is their inherently poor linearity and resolution.

3.4.3 When very accurate measurements are dictated by

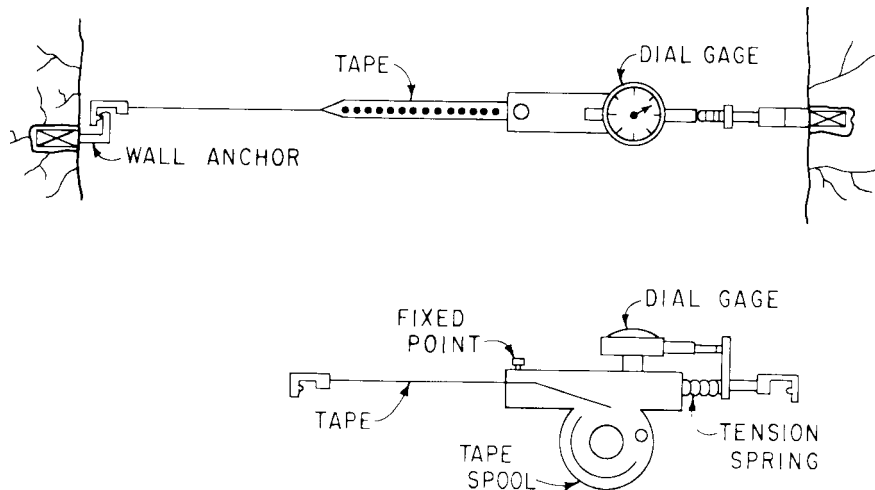
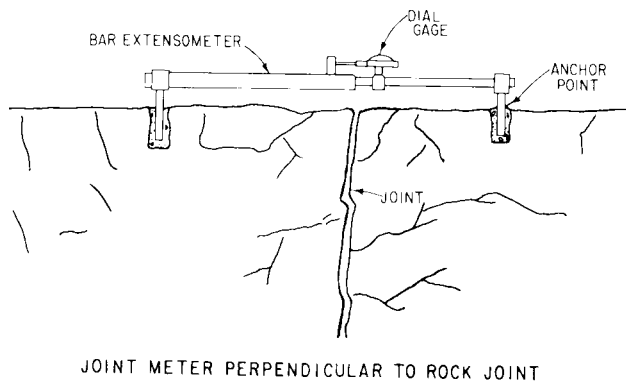


FIG. 4 Tape Extensometer with Dial Gage and Tension Spring



JOINT METER PERPENDICULAR TO ROCK JOINT

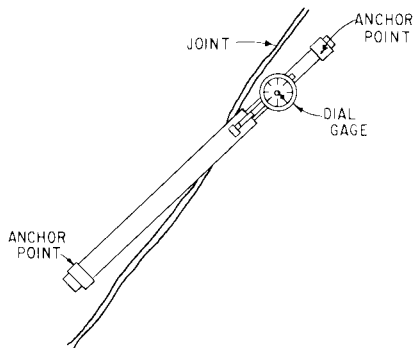


FIG. 5 Joint Meters

certain excavations, for example, the determination of the tension arch zone around a tunnel opening, extensometers which can be calibrated in the field after installation shall be used. In all cases, the accuracy of extensometers, either determined through calibration or estimation, should be given in addition to the sensitivity of the transducers. The strain-

gaged cantilever extensometer (shown in Fig. 10) has been used successfully for many years. The strain-gaged cantilever operates on the principles of the linear strain produced across a given area of a spring material when flexed. This type of extensometer readout is normally used when rock movements of 0.5 in. (12.5 mm) or less are expected. Strain gages produce a linear change in resistance of 1 to 3% of their initial resistance, over their total measurement range. Because of this small change in resistance, it is absolutely necessary to provide extremely good electrical connections and cable insulation when using this type of transducer. Standard strain-gage readout equipment can be used with this type of extensometer, however, care must be taken to protect this equipment from the hostile environments found in most field applications. Vibrating wire and sonic readouts are also reliable and are becoming more common than strain-gage readouts. Provision should always be made for mechanical readout capability.

4. Procedure

4.1 Preparatory Investigations:

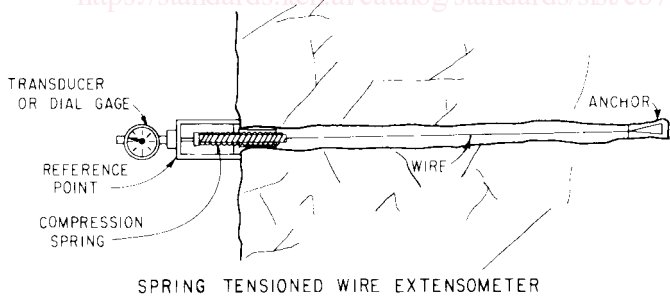
4.1.1 Select the location, orientation, length, and number of anchors for each extensometer on the basis of a thorough review of both the construction and geotechnical features of the project. Among the items to be considered are: direction and magnitude of anticipated rock movements, location and nature of other instruments to be installed, and the procedures and timing of construction activities before, during, and after installation of the instrument. If the instrument is installed where rock bolts are used for support, the deepest extensometer anchor shall be located beyond the end of the rock bolt. The length of the extensometer shall depend upon the anticipated depth of rock influenced by excavation, expressed for example in terms of tunnel diameter or slope height. As a general rule, the deepest anchor (reference point for all subsequent anchors) shall be placed at least 2½ tunnel diameters beyond the perimeter of the tunnel.

4.1.2 Displacement measurements are most valuable when extensometers are installed at, or before, the beginning of excavation, and when measurements have been taken regularly throughout the entire excavation period at several locations so that a complete history of movements is recorded. Documentation of the geologic conditions and construction events in the vicinity of the measurements is essential to the proper interpretation of the field data.

4.2 Drilling:

4.2.1 The size of borehole required for extensometers depends on the type, character, and number of anchors. The borehole size shall conform to the recommendations of the extensometer manufacturer.

4.2.2 The method of drilling used depends upon the nature of the rock, the available equipment, the cost of each method, and the need for supplemental geologic data. Percussion drilling equipment of the type used for blast holes is usually available and is the least costly. Coring methods, like those used for subsurface exploration, are usually more expensive but provide important information on the presence and nature of rock discontinuities. On large projects, coring or close observation of the percussion hole is usually justified to better define the geology. In addition, coring affords the opportunity



SPRING TENSIONED WIRE EXTENSOMETER

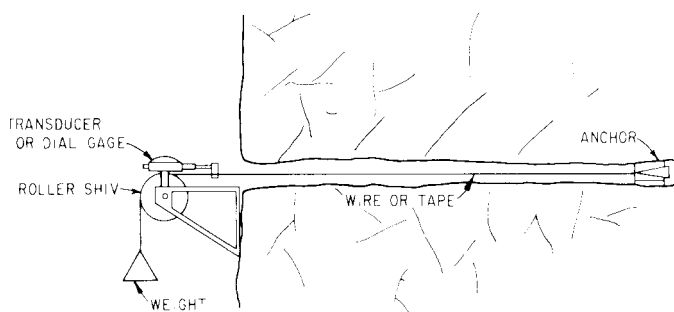


FIG. 6 Wire Extensometers