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Standard Practice for Preparation of Zinc (Hot-Dip Galvanized) Coated Iron and Steel Product and Hardware Surfaces for Painting¹

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

1. Scope

1.1 This practice describes methods of preparing surfaces of new and weathered hot-dip galvanized steel for painting with liquid paint and coating products. Preparing surfaces of new and partially weathered galvanized steel for powder coating is addressed in Practice [D7803](#). Hot-dip galvanized steel is produced by the immersion of fabricated or unfabricated products in a bath of molten zinc, as specified in Specifications [A123/A123M](#) or [A153/A153M](#). This practice covers surface preparation on iron and steel products and hardware that have not been painted previously. Galvanized surfaces may have been treated with protective coatings to prevent the occurrence of wet storage stain. This practice does not apply to sheet galvanized steel products nor to the coil coating or continuous roller coating processes. Sheet and coil surface preparation can be done in accordance with Practice [D7396](#).

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. The values given in parentheses are for information 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.*

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D01](#) on Paint and Related Coatings, Materials, and Applications and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D01.46](#) on Industrial Protective Coatings.

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2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

[A123/A123M](#) Specification for Zinc (Hot-Dip Galvanized) Coatings on Iron and Steel Products

[A153/A153M](#) Specification for Zinc Coating (Hot-Dip) on Iron and Steel Hardware

[A780](#) Practice for Repair of Damaged and Uncoated Areas of Hot-Dip Galvanized Coatings

[B201](#) Practice for Testing Chromate Coatings on Zinc and Cadmium Surfaces

[D4285](#) Test Method for Indicating Oil or Water in Compressed Air

[D6492](#) Practice for Detection of Hexavalent Chromium On Zinc and Zinc/Aluminum Alloy Coated Steel

[D7091](#) Practice for Nondestructive Measurement of Dry Film Thickness of Nonmagnetic Coatings Applied to Ferrous Metals and Nonmagnetic, Nonconductive Coatings Applied to Non-Ferrous Metals

[D7396](#) Guide for Preparation of New, Continuous Zinc-Coated (Galvanized) Steel Surfaces for Painting

[D7803](#) Practice for Preparation of Zinc (Hot-Dip Galvanized) Coated Iron and Steel Product and Hardware Surfaces for Powder Coating

[E376](#) Practice for Measuring Coating Thickness by Magnetic-Field or Eddy Current (Electromagnetic) Testing Methods

2.2 SSPC Specifications:³

[Surface Preparation Specification No. 1 Solvent Cleaning](#)
[Surface Preparation Specification No. 2 Hand Tool Cleaning](#)
[Surface Preparation Specification No. 3 Power Tool Cleaning](#)

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.

³ Available from Society for Protective Coatings (SSPC), 40 24th St., 6th Floor, Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4656, <http://www.sspc.org>.

[Surface Preparation Specification No. 7 Brush-Off Blast Cleaning](#)
[Surface Preparation Specification No. 11 Power Tool Cleaning to Bare Metal](#)
[Surface Preparation Specification No. 16 Brush-Off Blast Cleaning of Non-Ferrous Metals](#)
[Paint Specification No. 27 Basic Zinc Chromate-Vinyl Butyral Wash Primer](#)
[SSPC Guide 15 Field Methods for Extraction and Analysis of Soluble Salts on Steel and Other Nonporous Substrates](#)

3. Summary of Practice

3.1 This practice describes the preparation methods that provide clean and suitable galvanized surfaces for painting, specifically so that an applied coating system can develop the adhesion necessary for a satisfactory service life.

3.2 The zinc coating is constantly in a state of change. From the time the steel part is removed from the galvanizing kettle, the exposed zinc coating interacts with the environment to form, first zinc oxides, next zinc hydroxides, and then zinc carbonates.⁴ The process of complete conversion of the outer layer of zinc carbonates can take up to two years of exposure to the environment, depending on the local climatological conditions. During the first stage, known as newly galvanized steel, the exposed surface consists mainly of zinc metal with a small amount of zinc oxide. During the second stage, known as partially weathered galvanized steel, the exposed surface consists mainly of zinc oxides and zinc hydroxides with some zinc carbonates. At the final stage, known as weathered galvanized steel, when the part has been openly exposed to the elements for more than twelve months, the exposed surface consists mainly of water-insoluble zinc carbonates, some zinc oxides, and rarely, zinc hydroxides. The surface preparation for each of these stages must be treated separately.

3.3 Variations in surface preparation produce end conditions that differ, hence they do not necessarily yield identical results when paints are subsequently applied. Service conditions will dictate the type of surface preparation to be selected, although the quality produced by any individual process may vary with different compositions of the zinc surface.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 This practice describes the procedures that can be used to prepare new and weathered zinc-coated surfaces on after-fabrication steel products for painting, and that can improve the bond of paint to the zinc surface.

5. Processes for Newly Galvanized Steel

5.1 *Newly Galvanized Steel*—The category of newly galvanized steel refers to zinc-coated steel that has no surface treatment after galvanizing, such as water quenching or chromate conversion coating, and has been galvanized within the

previous 48 h. There also should be no visible signs of zinc oxide or zinc hydroxide, which first appear as a fine white powder.

5.2 *Surface Smoothing*—Hot-dip galvanized surfaces generally are relatively smooth after galvanizing. There may be some thick/rough edges at the drip line due to excess liquid zinc run-off during the galvanizing process, or high spots in the coating due to included iron-zinc intermetallics (dross) or zinc oxide particles. These high spots and rough edges must be smoothed to avoid paint film gaps in the areas of the high spots.

5.2.1 Zinc high spots, those that would cause paint film gaps such as the metal drip line, should be removed by smoothing with hand or power tools as described in SSPC Surface Preparation Specification No. 2 or No. 3. The zinc should be removed until it is level with the surrounding area, taking care that the base coating is not removed by the smoothing methods. After smoothing, the surface shall be inspected for conformance to the required zinc thickness in accordance with Specifications [A123/A123M](#) or [A153/A153M](#) utilizing a magnetic thickness instrument in accordance with Practice [E376](#) or Practice [D7091](#), or both. Any item falling below the required zinc thickness, before or after removal of any high spots, shall be repaired in accordance with Practice [A780](#).

5.3 *Surface Cleaning*—Hot-dip galvanized surfaces must be clean and free of oil and grease before they are painted. Soluble salts shall be removed to the degree specified in the painting/coating specification. Removal of Soluble salts can be extracted using SSPC Guide 15. Adhesion problems have been experienced with newly galvanized articles that have been water quenched or treated with chromate conversion coatings. These two post-galvanizing treatments are not recommended for galvanized articles that are to be painted. Practice [B201](#) or [D6492](#) can determine if contamination is on the galvanized surface prior to painting.

5.3.1 *Aqueous Alkaline Cleaning*—An alkaline solution, pH in the range of 11 to 12 definitely not greater than 13, can be used to remove traces of oil, grease, or dirt. The alkaline solution nominally is 2 to 5 % sodium compounds, with small additions of emulsifying, chelating, or sequestering agents, or a combination thereof. This solution can be applied through immersion in a tank filled with the solution, sprayed, or brushed with a soft bristle brush, usually nylon and not steel or copper. When dipping or spraying, the solution works best in the temperature range from 60 to 85 °C (140 to 185 °F). After cleaning, rinse thoroughly in hot water or water under pressure. Allow to dry completely before proceeding. Whenever galvanized steel is rinsed, it is desirable to use heated drying to accelerate the complete removal of water from the surface.

NOTE 1— An alkaline cleaner is unsuitable for removal of heavy build-up of zinc oxide or wet storage stain (see American Galvanizers Publications, *Wet Storage Stain*,⁵ for description of these conditions). See [5.3.3](#) or [5.4](#) for removal of zinc oxide layer.

5.3.2 *Solvent Cleaning*—Typical cleaning solvents, such as mineral spirits or high-flash naphtha, can be used to remove oil

⁴ This interaction is described in “Duplex Systems,” van Eijnsbergen, J.F.H., Elsevier Science, New York, NY 1994, and in *Zinc Handbook*, Porter, F., Marcel Dekker, Inc., New York, NY 1991.

⁵ Available from American Galvanizers Association (AGA), 6881 S. Holly Circle, Suite 108 Centennial, CO 80112, <http://www.galvanizeit.org>.

and grease. The procedure to be used is as specified in SSPC Surface Preparation Specification No. 1. Proper rags or brushes should be used to wipe the galvanized parts. (**Warning**—These rags or brushes should be cleaned or recycled often since oil can accumulate on their surfaces and be transferred back to the galvanized part.) Small parts may be dipped or cleaned in ultrasonic baths of solvents. After cleaning, rinse thoroughly in hot water or water under pressure. Allow to dry completely before proceeding.) Whenever galvanized steel is rinsed, it is desirable to use heated drying to accelerate the complete removal of water from the surface.

5.3.3 Hand or Power Tool Cleaning—Hand or power tool cleaning using equipment as specified in SSPC Surface Preparation Specification No. 2 or No. 3 is one method to clean light deposits of zinc reaction by products, such as light wet-storage stain.

5.4 Surface Preparation—Hot-dip galvanized surfaces have a layer of zinc oxide and zinc hydroxide that must be removed before paint will adhere to the zinc coating. Zinc coatings generally are relatively smooth and may be slightly roughened prior to painting. The following five methods may be used to prepare the galvanized surface for painting.

5.4.1 Sweep Blasting—Abrasive sweep or brush blasting in accordance with procedures described in SSPC Surface Preparation No. 16, which uses a rapid nozzle movement will roughen the galvanized surface profile. The abrasive material must be chosen with care to provide a stripping action without removing excess zinc layers, removal of up to 25 μm (1 mil) is acceptable. One of the materials that has been used successfully is aluminum/magnesium silicate. Particle size should be in the range of 200 to 500 μm (8 to 20 mils). Other materials that can be used are soft mineral sands with a Mohs hardness of five or less, organic media, such as corn cobs or walnut shells, corundum, limestone or cast zinc shot. The use of abrasive media with Mohs hardness of five or greater, or a bulk density over 200 lb/ft^3 is capable of producing roughened galvanized surfaces with increased peak heights, but additional mitigations may necessary by the blaster to significantly reduce the risk of damage. Depending on the value of hardness for the abrasive medium, blasting pressure may need to be determined for the appropriate nozzle to work-piece distance, geometry of the component, and blasting medium. For some all-alloy coatings, even the relatively low-pressure blast of 0.15 to 0.25 MPa (20 to 40 psi) can be too great, causing cohesion problems. Oil contamination of the compressed air will degrade paint adhesion to sweep-blasted hot-dip galvanized surfaces, test method for determining this contamination is Test Method **D4285**. Care is needed in averting this type of contamination. Care must be taken to leave zinc layers intact. The purpose of sweep blasting is to deform, not remove the galvanized metal. Any area falling below the required zinc thickness, before or after sweep blasting, should be repaired in accordance with Practice **A780**. The procedure for this process can be found in SSPC Surface Preparation Specification No. 16. Sweep blasting of zinc should be not less than 110 m^2/h (1200 ft^2/h) using these abrasive materials. The substrate should be maintained at a temperature greater than 3 $^\circ\text{C}$ (5 $^\circ\text{F}$)

above the dew point temperature. This procedure should be completed at the same location as the paint application.

5.4.2 Surface Grinding—Power tools such as grinders or sanders will roughen the surface of galvanized steel and produce a surface profile suitable for paint adhesion as per SSPC Surface Preparation Specification No. 11. The grinder or sander shall not be applied with sufficient force to remove all of the zinc coating rather a removal of up to 25 μm (1.0 mil) is acceptable. This procedure should be completed at the same location as the paint application.

NOTE 2—This grinding or sanding process may produce a sharper surface profile if the galvanized steel is over 50 $^\circ\text{C}$ (122 $^\circ\text{F}$) as the zinc metal is softer at elevated temperatures.

5.4.3 Zinc-Phosphate Treatment—This conversion-coating process consists of reacting the newly galvanized zinc surface in an acidic zinc phosphate solution containing oxidizing agents and other salts for accelerating the coating action. The zinc surface is converted to a crystalline phosphate coating of the proper texture to inhibit corrosion and increase the adherence and durability of the paint film. This process may be applied by immersion, spray or soft bristle brush application. After a time period of 3 to 6 min, the surface should be washed with clean water and allowed to completely dry before application of the paint system. Whenever galvanized steel is rinsed, it is desirable to use heated drying to accelerate the complete removal of water from the galvanized surface. This procedure should be completed at the same location as the paint application.

5.4.4 Wash Primer Treatment—This process involves the use of a metal conditioner to neutralize surface oxides and hydroxides along with etching the surface. One example of a wash primer is SSPC Paint Specification No. 27. The process is based on three primary components: a hydroxyl-containing resin; a pigment capable of reacting with resin and acid; and, an acid capable of making the resin insoluble by reacting with the resin, the pigment, and the zinc surface. The result is a film of approximately 8 to 13 μm (0.3 to 0.5 mils). Failures can occur if the film exceeds 13 μm (0.5 mils). The film usually is applied by spray but may be applied by soft bristle brush, dip, or roller coater. Using these latter coating methods, it may be difficult to control the film thickness. For drying time prior to top coating, follow the manufacturer's instructions. This wash primer treatment may be better suited to certain types of paint systems. See SSPC Paint Specification No. 27 for the best match of this treatment to a paint system. This procedure should be completed at the same location as the paint application.

5.4.5 Acrylic Passivation/Pretreatment—The passivation/pretreatment process consists of applying an acidic acrylic solution to the newly galvanized surface and then allowing it to dry, forming a thin film coating. When applied, the solution first reacts with the zinc surface forming a passivating conversion coating while simultaneously forming an acrylic coating suitable for painting on top of the passivation layer. The underlying conversion coating provides strong adhesion to the galvanized surface while the thin film acrylic layer provides barrier protection, which inhibits corrosion and provides a highly compatible surface for the application of organic paint