Designation: C597 – 22

Standard Test Method for Ultrasonic Pulse Velocity Through Concrete[1]

This standard is issued under the fixed designation C597; 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 test method covers the determination of the propagation velocity of longitudinal ultrasonic stress wave pulses through concrete. This test method does not apply to the propagation of other types of stress waves through concrete.

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard.

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]

C125 Terminology Relating to Concrete and Concrete Aggregates
C215 Test Method for Fundamental Transverse, Longitudinal, and Torsional Resonant Frequencies of Concrete Specimens
C823/C823M Practice for Examination and Sampling of Hardened Concrete in Constructions
E1316 Terminology for Nondestructive Examinations

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—Refer to Terminology C125 and the section related to ultrasonic examination in Terminology E1316 for definitions of terms used in this test method.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Pulses of longitudinal ultrasonic stress waves are generated by an electro-acoustical transducer that is held in contact with one surface of the concrete under test. After traversing through the concrete, the pulses are received and converted into electrical energy by a second transducer located a distance L from the transmitting transducer. The transit time T is measured electronically. The ultrasonic pulse velocity V is calculated by dividing L by T.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 The ultrasonic pulse velocity, V, of longitudinal ultrasonic stress waves in a concrete mass is related to its elastic properties and density according to the following relationship:

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{E(1-\mu)}{\rho(1+\mu)(1-2\mu)}} \quad (1)$$

where:

E = dynamic modulus of elasticity,
μ = dynamic Poisson's ratio, and
ρ = density.

5.2 This test method is applicable to assess the uniformity and relative quality of concrete, to indicate the presence of voids and cracks, and to evaluate the effectiveness of crack repairs. It is also applicable to indicate changes in the properties of concrete, and in the survey of structures, to estimate the severity of deterioration or cracking. If used to monitor changes in condition over time, test locations are to be marked on the structure to ensure that tests are repeated at the same positions.

5.3 The degree of saturation of the concrete affects the ultrasonic pulse velocity, and this factor must be considered when evaluating test results (Note 1). In addition, the ultrasonic pulse velocity in saturated concrete is less sensitive to changes in its relative quality.

NOTE 1—The ultrasonic pulse velocity in saturated concrete may be up

[1] This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee C09 on Concrete and Concrete Aggregates and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee C09.64 on Nondestructive and In-Place Testing.

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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.

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

to 5 % higher than in dry concrete.[3]

5.4 The ultrasonic pulse velocity is independent of the dimensions of the test object provided reflected waves from boundaries do not complicate the determination of the arrival time of the directly transmitted pulse. The least dimension of the test object must exceed the wavelength of the ultrasonic vibrations (Note 2).

NOTE 2—The wavelength of the vibrations equals the ultrasonic pulse velocity divided by the frequency of vibrations. For example, for a frequency of 54 kHz and a pulse velocity of 3500 m/s, the wavelength is 3500/54000 = 0.065 m.

5.5 The accuracy of the measurement depends upon the ability of the operator to determine precisely the distance between the transducers and of the equipment to measure precisely the ultrasonic pulse transit time. The received signal strength and measured transit time are affected by the coupling of the transducers to the concrete surfaces. Sufficient coupling agent and pressure must be applied to the transducers to ensure stable transit times. The strength of the received signal is also affected by the travel path length and by the presence and degree of cracking or deterioration in the concrete tested.

NOTE 3—Proper coupling can be verified by viewing the shape and magnitude of the received waveform. The waveform should have a decaying sinusoidal shape. The shape can be viewed by means of outputs to an oscilloscope or digitized display inherent in the device.

5.6 The measured quantity in this test method is transit time, from which an "apparent" ultrasonic pulse velocity is calculated based on the distance between the transducers. Not all forms of deterioration or damage actually change the ultrasonic pulse velocity of the material, but they affect the actual path for the ultrasonic pulse to travel from transmitter to receiver. For example, load-induced cracking will increase the true path length of the ultrasonic pulse and thus increase the measured ultrasonic pulse transit time. The true path length cannot be measured. Because the distance from transmitting to receiving transducer is used in the calculation, the presence of the cracking results in a decrease in the "apparent" pulse velocity even though the actual ultrasonic pulse velocity of the material has not changed. Many forms of cracking and deterioration are directional in nature. Their influence on transit time measurements will be affected by their orientation relative to the pulse travel path.

5.7 The results obtained by the use of this test method are not to be considered as a means of measuring strength nor as an adequate test for establishing compliance of the modulus of elasticity of field concrete with that assumed in the design. The longitudinal resonance method in Test Method C215 is recommended for determining the dynamic modulus of elasticity of test specimens obtained from field concrete because Poisson's ratio does not have to be known.

NOTE 4—If circumstances warrant, a velocity-strength (or velocity-modulus) relationship may be established by the determination of ultrasonic pulse velocity and compressive strength (or modulus of elasticity) on a number of specimens of a concrete. This relationship may serve as a basis for the estimation of strength (or modulus of elasticity) by further pulse-velocity tests on that concrete. Refer to ACI 228.1R[4] for guidance on the procedures for developing and using such a relationship.

5.8 The procedure is applicable in both field and laboratory testing regardless of size or shape of the specimen within the limitations of available pulse-generating sources.

NOTE 5—Presently available test equipment limits path lengths to approximately 50-mm minimum and 15-m maximum, depending, in part, upon the frequency and intensity of the generated signal. The upper limit of the path length depends partly on surface conditions and partly on the characteristics of the interior concrete under investigation. A preamplifier at the receiving transducer may be used to increase the maximum path length that can be tested. The maximum path length is obtained by using transducers of relatively low resonant frequencies (20 to 30 kHz) to minimize the attenuation of the signal in the concrete. (The resonant frequency of the transducer assembly determines the frequency of vibration in the concrete.) For the shorter path lengths where loss of signal is not the governing factor, it is preferable to use resonant frequencies of 50 kHz or higher to achieve more accurate transit-time measurements and hence greater sensitivity.

5.9 Because the ultrasonic pulse velocity in steel is up to double that in concrete, the ultrasonic pulse velocity measured in the vicinity of the reinforcing steel will be higher than in plain concrete of the same composition. If possible, avoid measurements close to steel parallel to the direction of pulse propagation.

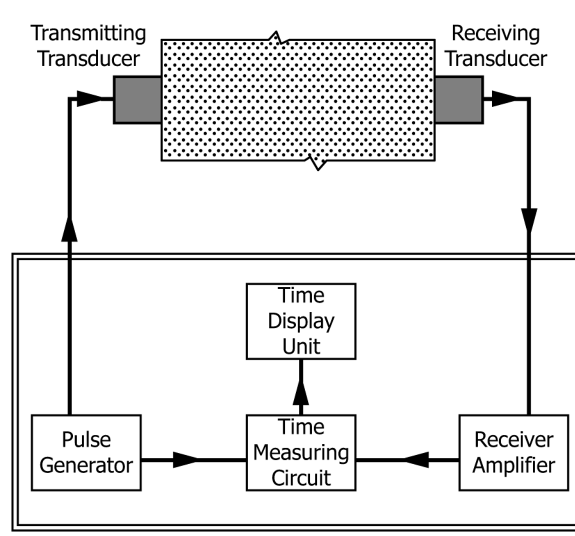
6. Apparatus

6.1 The testing apparatus, shown schematically in Fig. 1, consists of a pulse generator, a pair of transducers (transmitter and receiver), an amplifier, a time measuring circuit, a time display unit, and connecting cables.

6.1.1 *Pulse Generator and Transmitting Transducer*—The pulse generator shall consist of circuitry for generating pulses of voltage (Note 6). The transducer for transforming these electronic pulses into wave bursts of mechanical energy shall have a resonant frequency in the range from 20 kHz to 100 kHz

[3] Bungey, J. H., Millard, S. G., and Grantham, M.G., 2006 *Testing of Concrete in Structures*, 4th ed., Taylor & Francis, 339 pp.

[4] "In-Place Methods to Estimate Concrete Strength," ACI 228.1R, American Concrete Institute, Farmington Hills, MI.



NOTE 1—It is advantageous to incorporate the pulse generator, time measuring circuit, receiver amplifier, and time display into one unit.

FIG. 1 Schematic of Ultrasonic Pulse Velocity Apparatus

(Note 7). The pulse generator shall produce repetitive pulses at a rate of at least 3 pulses per second. The time interval between pulses shall exceed the decay time for the transmitting transducer. The transducer shall be constructed of piezoelectric, magnetostrictive, or other voltage-sensitive material, and housed for protection. A triggering pulse shall be produced to start the time measuring circuit.

NOTE 6—The pulse voltage affects the transducer power output and the maximum penetration of the longitudinal stress waves. Voltage pulses of 500 to 1000 V have been used successfully.

NOTE 7—Transducers with higher resonant frequencies have been used successfully in relatively small laboratory specimens.

6.1.2 *Receiving Transducer and Amplifier*—The receiving transducer shall be similar to the transmitting transducer. The voltage generated by the receiver shall be amplified as necessary to produce triggering pulses to the time-measuring circuit. The amplifier shall have a flat response between one half and three times the resonant frequency of the receiving transducer.

6.1.3 *Time-Measuring Circuit*—The time-measuring circuit and the associated triggering pulses shall be capable of providing an overall time-measurement resolution of at least 1 µs. Time measurement is initiated by a triggering voltage from the pulse generator, and the time measuring circuit shall operate at the repetition frequency of the pulse generator. The time-measuring circuit shall provide an output when the received pulse is detected, and this output shall be used to determine the transit time displayed on the time-display unit. The time-measuring circuit shall be insensitive to operating temperature in the range from 0 to 40°C and voltage changes in the power source of ±15 %.

6.1.4 *Display Unit*—A display unit shall indicate the pulse transit time to the nearest 0.1 µs.

6.1.5 *Reference Bar*—For units that use manual zero-time adjustment, provide a bar of metal or other durable material for which the transit time of longitudinal waves is known. The transit time shall be marked permanently on the reference bar. The reference bar is optional for units that perform automatic zero-time adjustment.

6.1.6 *Connecting Cables*—Where ultrasonic pulse velocity measurements on large structures require the use of long interconnecting cables, use low-capacitance, shielded, coaxial cables.

6.1.7 *Coupling Agent*—A viscous material (such as oil, petroleum jelly, water soluble jelly, moldable rubber, or grease) to ensure efficient transfer of energy between the concrete and the transducers. The function of the coupling agent is to eliminate air between the contact surfaces of the transducers and the concrete. Water is an acceptable coupling agent if ponded on the surface, or for underwater testing.

7. Procedure

7.1 *Functional Check of Equipment and Zero-time Adjustment*—Verify that the equipment is operating properly and perform a zero-time adjustment.

7.1.1 *Units with Automatic Zero-Time Adjustment*—Follow the manufacturer's instructions for performing zero-time adjustments.

NOTE 8—A reference bar may be used to verify that the zero-time adjustment has been performed correctly.

7.1.2 *Units with Manual Zero-Time Adjustment*—Apply coupling agent to the ends of the reference bar, and press the transducers firmly against the ends of the bar until a stable transit time is displayed. Adjust the zero reference until the displayed transit time agrees with the value marked on the bar.

7.1.3 Check the zero adjustment on an hourly basis during continuous operation of the instrument, and every time a transducer or connecting cable is changed. If zero-time adjustment cannot be accomplished, do not use the instrument until it has been repaired.

7.2 *Determination of Transit Time:*

7.2.1 For testing existing construction, select test locations in accordance with Practice C823/C823M, or follow the requirements of the party requesting the testing, whichever is applicable.

7.2.2 For best results, locate the transducers directly opposite each other. Because the beam width of the vibrational pulses emitted by the transducers is large, it is permissible to measure transit times across corners of a structure but with some loss of sensitivity and accuracy. Measurements along the same surface shall not be used unless only one face of the structure is accessible because such measurements may be indicative only of surface layers and calculated ultrasonic pulse velocities will not agree with those obtained by through transmission (Note 9).

NOTE 9—One of the sources of uncertainty in surface tests is the lengths of the actual travel paths of the ultrasonic pulses. Hence, individual readings are of little value. Surface tests, however, have been used to estimate the depth of a lower quality surface layer by making multiple measurements of transit time with varying distances between the transducers. From the plot of travel time versus spacing, it may be possible to estimate the depth of the lower quality concrete.[5]

7.2.3 Apply an appropriate coupling agent (such as water, oil, petroleum jelly, grease, moldable rubber, or other viscous materials) to the transducer faces or the test surface, or both. Press the faces of the transducers firmly against the surfaces of the concrete until a stable transit time is displayed, and measure the transit time (Note 10). Determine the straight-line distance between centers of transducer faces.

NOTE 10—The quality of the coupling is critically important to the accuracy and maximum range of the method. Inadequate coupling will result in unstable and inaccurate time measurements, and will significantly shorten the effective range of the instrument. Repeat measurements should be made at the same location to minimize erroneous readings due to poor coupling.

8. Calculation

8.1 Calculate the ultrasonic pulse velocity as follows:

[5] Chung, H. W., and Law, K. S., "Assessing Fire Damage of Concrete by the Ultrasonic Pulse Technique," *Cement, Concrete, and Aggregates*, CCAGDP, Vol 7, No. 2, Winter, 1985, pp. 84–88.