



Designation: D3532 – 99 (Reapproved 2004)

Standard Test Method for Gel Time of Carbon Fiber-Epoxy Prepreg¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D3532; 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 Department of Defense.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the determination of gel time of carbon fiber-epoxy tape and sheet. The test method is suitable for the measurement of gel time of resin systems having either high or low viscosity.

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. The values in parentheses are for reference 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 and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Summary of Test Method

2.1 A specimen of prepreg material approximately 5 mm (0.25 in.) square is placed between microscope cover glasses on a hot plate preheated to either of two test temperatures, 120 or 175°C (250 or 350°F). Pressure is applied to the specimen through the coverglass with a wood pick to form a bead of resin at the edge of the cover glass. The time from the application of heat until the resin ceases to form strings by contact with the pick is noted and reported as the gel time.

3. Significance and Use

3.1 This test method can be used to obtain the gel time of resin squeezed from prepreg tape or sheet material. This test is a useful measure for material acceptance.

3.2 The gel time will vary with the test temperature. The temperatures specified in this test method are two of many temperatures often used in processing epoxy prepreg material. If other test temperatures are used, this is to be clearly noted as indicated in 9.1.2.

3.3 Gel time is not recommended as a measure of outline (unacceptable degree of cross-linking). Use Resin Flow Test Method D3532, or Dynamic Viscosity Practice D4473.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D30 on Composite Materials and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D30.03 on Constituent/Precursor Properties.

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4. Apparatus

4.1 *Cutting Knife.*

4.2 *Hot Plate*, capable of maintaining temperatures of either 120°C (250°F) or 175°C (350°F) and the means of measuring its surface temperature to an accuracy of $\pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ ($\pm 2^\circ\text{F}$).

4.3 *Stopwatch or Suitable Timer*, capable of reading 1-s intervals up to 60 min.

4.4 *Microscope Coverglasses*, 18 to 22 mm (0.7 to 0.9 in.) in diameter.

4.5 *Wooden Probe*, small, such as a toothpick, mounted in a drafting pencil holder or fine glass rod. A low thermal capacity is needed.

5. Interferences

5.1 The test is a subjective measure of when a gel point is reached. The visual evidence of gel may vary between materials, reinforcements, and, in some cases, between resin material batches. If the definition of gel in this method is not sufficiently standard for a given material, interested parties shall agree on a further definition of gelation.

6. Test Specimen

6.1 A minimum of three specimens shall be tested for each sample.

6.2 The test specimen shall consist of prepreg material cut to approximately 6-mm (0.25-in.) square.

7. Conditioning

7.1 Store carbon fiber-epoxy prepreg tape at low temperatures, approximately -18°C (0°F), to prolong the usefulness of the material. Allow the sealed packages of material to warm to ambient temperature before the seal is opened to ensure that the material does not absorb moisture from the atmosphere.

8. Procedure

8.1 Cut the specimen of prepreg.

8.2 Preheat the hot plate to either test temperature A, $120 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ ($250 \pm 2^\circ\text{F}$) or B, $175 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ ($350 \pm 2^\circ\text{F}$) or the temperature that has been specified.

8.3 Place a cover glass on the hot plate and allow 20 s for it to reach temperature.