



Designation: D5819 – 05

Standard Guide for Selecting Test Methods for Experimental Evaluation of Geosynthetic Durability¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D5819; 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 guide covers a designer/specifier through a systematic determination of those factors of the appropriate application environment that may affect the post-construction service life of a geosynthetic. Subsequently, test methods are recommended to facilitate an experimental evaluation of the durability of geosynthetics in a specified environment so that the durability can be considered in the design process.

1.2 This guide is not intended to address durability issues associated with the manufacturing, handling, transportation, or installation environments.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

- D1204 Test Method for Linear Dimensional Changes of Nonrigid Thermoplastic Sheeting or Film at Elevated Temperature
- D1987 Test Method for Biological Clogging of Geotextile or Soil/Geotextile Filters
- D2990 Test Methods for Tensile, Compressive, and Flexural Creep and Creep-Rupture of Plastics
- D3083 Specification for Flexible Poly(Vinyl Chloride) Plastic Sheeting for Pond, Canal, and Reservoir Lining (Withdrawn 1998)³
- D3895 Test Method for Oxidative-Induction Time of Polyolefins by Differential Scanning Calorimetry
- D4355 Test Method for Deterioration of Geotextiles by Exposure to Light, Moisture and Heat in a Xenon Arc Type Apparatus
- D4594 Test Method for Effects of Temperature on Stability of Geotextiles

- D4716 Test Method for Determining the (In-plane) Flow Rate per Unit Width and Hydraulic Transmissivity of a Geosynthetic Using a Constant Head
- D4886 Test Method for Abrasion Resistance of Geotextiles (Sand Paper/Sliding Block Method)
- D5101 Test Method for Measuring the Soil-Geotextile System Clogging Potential by the Gradient Ratio
- D5262 Test Method for Evaluating the Unconfined Tension Creep and Creep Rupture Behavior of Geosynthetics
- D5322 Practice for Laboratory Immersion Procedures for Evaluating the Chemical Resistance of Geosynthetics to Liquids
- D5397 Test Method for Evaluation of Stress Crack Resistance of Polyolefin Geomembranes Using Notched Constant Tensile Load Test
- D5496 Practice for In Field Immersion Testing of Geosynthetics
- D5567 Test Method for Hydraulic Conductivity Ratio (HCR) Testing of Soil/Geotextile Systems
- D5885 Test Method for Oxidative Induction Time of Polyolefin Geosynthetics by High-Pressure Differential Scanning Calorimetry
- D5970 Test Method for Deterioration of Geotextiles from Outdoor Exposure

3. Summary of Guide

3.1 The effects of a given application environment on the durability of a geosynthetic must be determined through appropriate testing. Selection of appropriate tests requires a systematic determination of the primary function(s) to be performed and the associated degradation processes that should be considered. This guide provides a suitable systematic approach.

3.2 Primary functions of geosynthetics are listed and defined in Table 1. With knowledge of the specific geosynthetic application area and end use, the corresponding primary function(s) is (are) identified. Table 2 gives degradation concerns as they relate to geosynthetic functions. Table 3 gives the environmental elements that relate to the various degradation processes and the currently available ASTM Committee D-35 test method for the experimental evaluation of specific types of

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D35 on Geosynthetics and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D35.02 on Endurance Properties.

Current edition approved June 1, 2005. Published July 2005. Originally approved in 1995. Last previous edition approved in 1999 as D5819 – 99. DOI: 10.1520/D5819-05.

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 The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.

TABLE 1 Functions^A and Other Performance Characteristics^B

Containment^{B(C)} —A geosynthetic provides containment when it encapsulates or surrounds materials such as sand, rocks, and fresh concrete. ^C
Filtration^{A(F)} —A geosynthetic performs the filtration function when the equilibrium geotextile-to-soil system allows for adequate liquid flow with limited soil loss across the plane of the geotextile over a service lifetime compatible with the application under consideration.
Fluid Barrier^{A(FB)} —A geosynthetic performs the fluid barrier function when it essentially eliminates the migration of fluids through it.
Fluid Transmission^A (<i>a.k.a. drainage</i>)—A geosynthetic performs the fluid transmission function when the equilibrium geotextile-to-soil system allows for adequate flow with limited soil loss within the plane of the geotextile over a service lifetime compatible with the application under consideration.
Insulation^{A(I)} —A geosynthetic provides insulation when it reduces the passage of heat, electricity, or sound.
Protection^{A(P)} —A geosynthetic, placed between two materials, performs the protection function when it alleviates or distributes stresses and strains transmitted to the material to be protected.
Reinforcement^{A(R)} —A geosynthetic performs the reinforcement function when it provides often synergistic improvement of a total system's strength created by the introduction of a tensile force into a soil (good in compression but poor in tension) or other disjointed and separated material.
Screening^{B(Scr)} —A geosynthetic, placed across the path of a flowing fluid (ground water, surface water, wind) carrying particles in suspension, provides screening when it retains some or all soil fine particles while allowing the fluid to pass through. After some period of time, particles accumulate against the screen which requires that the screen be able to withstand pressures generated by the accumulated particles and the increasing fluid pressure.
Separation^{A(S)} —A geosynthetic placed between dissimilar materials so that the integrity and functioning of both materials can remain intact or be improved performs the separation function.
Surface Stabilization^{B(SS)} —A geosynthetic, placed on a soil surface, provides surface stabilization when it restricts movement and prevents dispersion of surface soil particles subjected to erosion actions (rain, wind), often while allowing or promoting vegetative growth.
Vegetative Reinforcement^{B(VR)} —A geosynthetic provides vegetative reinforcement when it extends the erosion control limits and performance of vegetation.

^AFunctions are used in the context of this guide as terms that can be quantitatively described by standard tests or design techniques, or both.

^BOther performance characteristics are qualitative descriptions that are not yet supported by standard tests or generally accepted design techniques.

Note—during the placement of fresh concrete in a geotextile flexible form, the geosynthetic functions temporarily as a filter to allow excess water to escape.

geosynthetic degradation. The following appendixes are included to provide background information:

- X1. Terminology
- X2. Application/End Use/Primary Function Tables
- X3. Example of Test Method Selection Procedure
- X4. Design-by-Function Discussion
- X5. Commentary on Geosynthetic Durability
- X6. Bibliography

4. Significance and Use

4.1 Designers/specifiers of geosynthetics should evaluate geosynthetic durability as an integral part of the geosynthetic specification/selection process. This guide is intended to guide a designer/specifier through a systematic determination of degradation concerns based on the intended geosynthetic function or performance characteristic. This guide then provides a guide to select available test methods for experimentally evaluating geosynthetic durability and to identify areas where no suitable test exists.

4.2 This guide does not address the evaluation of degradation resulting from manufacturing, handling, transporting or installing the geosynthetic.

5. Suggested Procedure

5.1 To utilize a structured procedure for selecting appropriate test methods, the geosynthetic designer/specifier must have knowledge of:

- 5.1.1 The intended geosynthetic application,
- 5.1.2 The end use of the geosynthetic via its primary function(s) or performance characteristic(s), or both,
- 5.1.3 The specific environment to which the geosynthetic will be exposed,

5.1.4 The types of geosynthetics that may or will be used, and

5.1.5 The duration or time of use (that is, service life).

5.2 With this knowledge, the designer/specifier follows the following procedure:

5.2.1 Identify the primary function(s) or performance characteristic(s), or both, to be performed by the geosynthetic in the specific application and end use intended. Functions and performance characteristics are defined in **Table 1**. (Tables for guidance in identifying primary function(s) and performance characteristics are given in **Appendix X2**.)

5.2.2 Using **Table 2**, identify the potential degradation process(es) that will almost always (denoted as “A”) or sometimes (denoted as “S”) be of concern when a geosynthetic performs the primary function(s) or provides the performance characteristic(s), or both, which were identified in **5.2.1**. Annex A1 contains associated notes to **Table 2** that help to identify the process(es) that is (are) sometimes a concern in the specific expected application environment.

5.2.3 Using **Table 3**, select the test method(s) that applies to the potential degradation process(es) identified in **5.2.2** as a concern(s) in the specific application environment expected.

NOTE 1—Guidance is given in **Table 3** to identify the most important elements or variables relating to each degradation process.

6. Keywords

6.1 aging; degradation; durability; environment; exposure; geosynthetic; long-term performance

TABLE 2 Geosynthetic Function/Durability Assessment^A

Function	Potential Degradation Process ^B													Explanations of Primary Long-Term Concerns	
	Abbreviation	Bio-logical Degradation	Chem-ical Degradation	Chem-ical Dissol-ution	Clog-ging/ Piping	Creep	Envi-ron-mental Stress Cracking	Hydro-lysis	Mechan-ical Damage	Photo-Degra-dation	Plastici-zation	Stress Relax-ation	Temper-ature Insta-bility		Thermal-Degra-dation
Containment	C	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	S ^F	S ^G	N	S ^H	S ^I	S ^J	N	S ^G	N	S ^K	Remain intact and maintain filtration performance
Filtration	F	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	A ^L	S ^M	N	S ^H	S ^I	S ^J	N	S ^M	N	S ^K	Maintain design filtration and resist deformation and intrusion
Fluid Barrier	FB	S ^C	S ^E	S ^E	N	S ^G	A ^{N,O}	S ^H	S ^I	S ^J	N	S ^G	S ^P	S ^K	Maintain intended level of essential impermeability
Fluid Transmission	FT	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	A ^Q	A ^R	A ^O	S ^H	S ^I	S ^J	N	A ^R	N	S ^K	Maintain flow under compressive loads
Insulation	I	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Minimize temperature losses and gains across geosyn
Protection	P	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	N	S ^S	N	S ^H	N	S ^J	N	S ^S	N	S ^K	Maintain protective performance
Reinforcement	R	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E , P ^T	N	A ^U	P ^O	S ^H	P ^T	S ^J	P ^V	S ^U	S ^U	S ^K	Provide necessary strength, stiffness and soil interaction
Screening	Scr	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	S ^W	N	N	S ^H	S ^I	S ^J	N	N	N	S ^K	Maintain filtration performance and resist deformation
Separation	S	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	N	N	N	S ^H	P ^X	S ^J	N	N	N	S ^K	Remain intact
Surface Stabilization	SS	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	N	N	N	S ^H	A ^Y	A ^Y	N	N	N	S ^K	Remain intact to resist erosive forces until vegetation is established
Vegetative Reinforcement	VR	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	N	N	N	S ^H	A ^Y	A ^Y	N	N	N	S ^K	Remain intact throughout vegetation

^ARefer to **Appendix X1** for terminology relating to Table 2.

^BM = Not a generally recognized concern; S = Sometimes a concern; A = Almost always a concern; P = Potential concern being researched.

^CMicroorganisms have been known to attack and digest additives (plasticizers, lubricants, emulsifiers) used to plasticize some base polymers. This attack will change physical and mechanical properties. Study is needed to determine relevance to polymers incorporated into geosynthetic products. Embrittlement of geosynthetic surfaces may influence interaction properties.

^DMicrobial enzymes have been known to initiate and propagate reactions deteriorative to some base polymers. Study is needed to determine relevance to polymers used in geosynthetic products.

^EChemical degradation or dissolution, or both, including the leaching of plasticizers or additives from the polymer structure, may be a concern for some geosynthetics exposed to liquids containing unusually high concentrations of metals, salts, or chemicals, especially at elevated temperatures.

^FIf select fill is not available, then a clogging resistance test should be performed with the job-specific soil.

^GGeosynthetics in containment structures which require long term strength characteristics should be designed using appropriate creep and stress relaxation criteria.

^HHydrolysis may be a concern for polyester (PET) and polyamide (PA) geosynthetics exposed to extreme pH conditions, especially at elevated temperatures.

^IWhen subject to rocking (abrasion), puncture (floating or airborne debris), or cutting (equipment or vandalism).

^JWhen permanently exposed or in extended construction phases (>2–4 weeks) and in “wrap-around” construction, photo degradation may be a concern for the exposed geosynthetic.

^KGeosynthetics in applications such as dam facings and floating covers which results in exposure to temperatures at or above ambient must be stabilized to resist thermal oxidation.

^LClogging resistance of geotextiles can only be assessed by testing with site-specific soil and (sometimes) liquid.

^MIf a filter geotextile is used with a geonet, it is important to assess short-term extrusion and long-term intrusion into the net.

^NResidual stresses and surface damage may produce synergistic effects with other degradation processes.

^OPolyethylene geosynthetics may experience slow crack growth under long-term loading conditions in certain environmental conditions.

^PExcessive expansion and contraction resulting from temperature changes may be a concern for geosynthetics without fabric reinforcement.

^QComposite drains must resist clogging due to soil retention problems and intrusion of filter medium.

^RGeosynthetics relying on a 3-D structure to facilitate flow must demonstrate resistance to compression creep.

^SSufficient thickness must be maintained by a protective layer over an extended period of time.

^TChemical dissolution of, or mechanical damage to geosynthetic surfaces or coatings may effect their interaction properties, i.e. lead to surface or joint slippage.

^UGeosynthetics creep and stress relax at different rates depending primarily on manufacturing process, polymer type, load levels, temperature, and application.

^VPlasticization may be a concern for polyester (PET) geosynthetics exposed to humid conditions or polypropylene and polyethylene geosynthetics exposed to hydrocarbons while under stress.

^WIf the screen is expected to operate indefinitely, then clogging should be assessed often. Commonly, screens are considered temporary.

^XHoles resulting from mechanical damage may alter the effectiveness of separators.

^YAlways exposed therefore resistance to photo oxidation and mechanical damage must be determined.

TABLE 3 Environmental Factors of Degradation

Potential Degradation Process	Environmental Elements Relating to Degradation										Test Methods Relating to Geosynthetics		
	Air Chemistry	Fluid Content	Geometry of Exposure	Liquid Chemistry	Macro-Organisms	Micro-Organisms	Radiation	Soil Chemistry	Stress	Temperature of Exposure		Time of Exposure	
Biological degradation	X	X			X	X		X		X	X	D3083	Microbiological Attack (In Soil)
Chemical degradation				X				X		X	X	D5322 D5496	Chemical Immersion In situ Immersion
Chemical dissolution				X				X		X	X	None	Effect of Solvents
Clogging/piping		X		X		X		X		X	X	D5567 D5101 D1987	Gradient Ratio Biological Clogging Precipitate Clogging
Creep			X						X	X	X	None D5262 D4716 D2990	None Tension Transmissivity Time-Temperature Superposition
Environmental stress cracking	X			X				X	X	X	X	D5397	Stress Cracking and Appendix
Hydrolysis		X		X						X	X	None	Effect of Water
Mechanical damage			X						X		X	D4886 None D4833	Abrasion Fatigue Puncture
Photo-degradation	X						X			X	X	None D4355 D5970	None Xenon Arc Outdoor Exposure
Plasticization		X		X						X	X	None	Fluorescent UV
Stress relaxation			X						X	X	X	None	Effect of Liquids
Temperature instability										X	X	D4594 D1204	Temperature Instability Temperature Instability
Thermal degradation	X						X			X	X	None D3895 D5885	Effect of Heat OIT HPOIT

NOTE 1—This table provides the standard test methods current at the time of the writing of this guide. ASTM Standards are in constant development, review, revision, and replacement. It is the responsibility of the geosynthetic specifier to identify the most current applicable standard test method. Refer to Appendix X1 for terminology relating to Table 3.

[ASTM D5819-05](https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/cc01e5b5-f36f-4953-961a-8579a9a66552/astm-d5819-05)

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/cc01e5b5-f36f-4953-961a-8579a9a66552/astm-d5819-05>

APPENDICES

(Nonmandatory Information)

X1. TERMINOLOGY

X1.1 The *application environment* in which a geosynthetic is placed can be characterized by the following environmental elements:

- Air Chemistry
- Fluid Content
- Geometry of Exposure
- Liquid Chemistry
- Organisms (micro- and macro-)
- Radiation
- Soil Chemistry
- Stress
- Temperature of Exposure
- Time of Exposure

X1.1.1 *Air chemistry* shall include the identification of the following characteristics of the gases expected to be present or created, or both:

- Oxygen content
- Gaseous pollution (for example, NO_x, SO₂)
- Ozone
- Organics (for example, methane)

X1.1.2 *Fluid content* is a measure of the amount of liquid or vapor, or both, which is in the environment immediately surrounding the geosynthetic.

- X1.1.3 *Geometry of exposure* may be described by:
- Angle of exposure
 - Degree of exposure (surface versus complete)

X1.1.4 *Liquid chemistry* shall include the identification of the following characteristics of the ground water or leachate:

- pH
- Electrolytic conditions
- Dissolved/suspended minerals
- Chemicals

B.O.D., C.O.D.
D.O.

X1.1.5 *Macro-organisms*—Those which are or could be present in the environment shall be identified. Macro-organisms such as insects, rodents and other higher life forms shall be considered.

X1.1.6 *Micro-organisms*—Those which are or could be present in the environment shall be identified. Possible micro-organisms included:

Bacteria
Fungi
Algae
Yeast

X1.1.7 *Radiation* shall be considered as including:

Ultraviolet Radiation
Ionizing Radiation
Infra-Red and Visible Radiation

X1.1.8 *Soil chemistry* shall include the identification of the following characteristics of the soil or waste:

Transition Metals
Soluble Minerals
Polarizability
Clay Mineralogy

X1.1.9 *Stress* shall be focused upon mechanical forces applied externally to the geosynthetic/soil system, resulting in tensile compressive or shear stresses, or both, on the geosynthetic. Stresses on the geosynthetic shall be described by:

Normal stresses
Planar stresses
Surface stresses
Intensity of stresses
How stresses vary with time (static, dynamic, periodic)
How stresses are distributed over the geosynthetic

X1.1.10 *Time of exposure* shall be defined by the duration of exposure to any specific set of environmental elements.

X1.1.11 *Temperature of exposure* shall be defined as the temperature of the geosynthetic, which is not necessarily that of the surrounding medium.

X1.2 The *effects* of the application environment are characterized by the following degradation processes:

Biological Macro- and Micro-Degradation	Mechanical Damage
Chemical Degradation	Oxidative Degradation
Chemical Dissolution	Photo Degradation
Clogging	Plasticization
Creep	Stress Relaxation
Environmental Stress Cracking	Temperature Instability
Hydrolysis	Thermal Degradation

X1.2.1 *Chemical degradation* is the reaction between a chemical(s) and a specific chemical structure within a polymer resulting in chain scission, and a reduction in molecular weight and physical properties.

X1.2.2 *Chemical dissolution* is the physical interaction between a solvent and polymer whereby the polymer absorbs the solvent, swells, and eventually dissolves.

X1.2.3 *Clogging* is the collection of soil particles, microbiological growth, precipitates, or combination thereof on or within the geosynthetic altering its initial hydraulic properties.

X1.2.4 *Creep* is the time-dependent part of a strain resulting from an applied stress.

X1.2.5 *Environmental stress cracking* is the deterioration of a polymer's mechanical properties that occurs when cracks created by high stress concentrations are exposed to certain environmental conditions.

X1.2.6 *Hydrolysis* is the degradative chemical reaction between a specific chemical group within a polymer and absorbed water causing chain scission and reduction in molecular weight.

X1.2.7 *Macrobiological degradation* is the attack and physical destruction of a geosynthetic by macroorganisms leading to a reduction in physical properties.

X1.2.8 *Microbiological degradation* is the chemical attack of a polymer by enzymes or other chemicals excreted by microorganisms resulting in a reduction of molecular weight and changes in physical properties.

X1.2.9 *Mechanical damage* is the localized degradation of the in-service geosynthetic as a result of externally applied load—abrasion, fatigue and puncture are examples.

X1.2.9.1 Discussion—*Construction damage* is excluded, but is an important consideration in geosynthetic selection.

X1.2.10 *Oxidation* is the chemical reaction between oxygen and a specific chemical group within a polymer converting the group into a radical complex which ultimately leads to molecular chain scission or crosslinking, thus changing the chemical structure, physical properties, and sometimes appearance of the polymer. Oxidation can occur during photo or thermal degradation, or both.

X1.2.11 *Photo degradation* is the change in chemical structure resulting in deleterious changes to physical properties and sometimes appearance of the polymer as a result of the irradiation of the polymer by exposure and light.

X1.2.12 *Plasticization* is the physical process of increasing the molecular mobility of a polymer by absorption or incorporation of material(s) of lower molecular weight. The effects are usually reversible when the material(s) are removed.

X1.2.13 *Stress relaxation* is the decrease in stress, at constant strain, with time.

X1.2.14 *Thermal degradation* is the change in chemical structure resulting in changes in physical properties, and sometimes appearance of a polymer caused by exposure to heat alone.

X1.2.15 *Temperature instability* is the change in appearance, weight, dimension, or other property of the geosynthetic as a result of low, high, or cyclic temperature exposure.

X1.3 *Aging* is the alteration of physical, chemical, and mechanical properties caused by the combined effects of environmental conditions over time. The following tests have

been utilized or considered to simulate some of these conditions.

- Accelerated Soil Burial Testing (ASTM [D3083](#))
- Environmental Stress Rupture (Withdrawn)
- Environmental Stress Cracking (ASTM [D5397](#))
- Radiation, Moisture, and Heat Exposure (ASTM [D4355](#))
- Xenon Arc

X1.3.1 Aging can manifest itself in numerous ways, including:

- Blistering
- Chalking
- Changes in Chemical Resistance
- Changes in Puncture, Burst, or Tear Resistance, or other index properties
- Crack Propagation
- Delamination
- Dimension Changes
- Discoloration
- Embrittlement
- Loss of Gloss
- Permeability Changes
- Stiffness Changes
- Surface Cracking
- Surface Cracking
- Surface Cracking
- Tensile or Compressive Elongation Changes
- Tensile or Compressive Modulus Changes
- Tensile or Compressive Strength Changes

X1.4 *Geosynthetics* —The latest versions of these terms will be inserted upon adoption of this guide by ASTM.

- X1.4.1 *Geocomposites*.
- X1.4.2 *Geogrids*.
- X1.4.3 *Geomembrane*.
- X1.4.4 *Geonets*.
- X1.4.5 *Geopipe*.
- X1.4.6 *Geotextiles*.

X1.5 *Geosynthetic polymers*—The following polymeric materials are the most widely used in the manufacture of currently available geosynthetics.

- Acrylics*—latex geogrid coatings
- Bitumen*—geogrid coatings
- Chlorinated Polyethylene* (CPE)
- Chlorosulfonated Polyethylene* (CSPE)
- Polyamide* (PA)—principally polycaprolactam (nylon 6).
- Polyester* (PET)—principally polyethylene terephthalate
- Polyethylene* (PE)—including a range of densities.
- Polypropylene* (PP)
- Polystyrene* (PS)
- Poly (vinyl chloride)*(PVC)—both plasticized (geomembranes and geogrid coatings) and rigid (geopipe).
- Polyurethane* (PUR)
- Ethylene Interpolymer Alloy* (EIA)

X2. APPLICATION/END USE/PRIMARY FUNCTION

X2.1 See [Tables X2.1-X2.5](#).

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