



Designation: D421 – 85 (Reapproved2007)

Standard Practice for Dry Preparation of Soil Samples for Particle-Size Analysis and Determination of Soil Constants¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D421; 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 practice covers the dry preparation of soil samples as received from the field for particle-size analysis and the determination of the soil constants.

1.2 *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. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

D2217 Practice for Wet Preparation of Soil Samples for Particle-Size Analysis and Determination of Soil Constants

E11 Specification for Woven Wire Test Sieve Cloth and Test Sieves

3. Significance and Use

3.1 This practice can be used to prepare samples for particle-size and plasticity tests where it is desired to determine test values on air-dried samples, or where it is known that air drying does not have an effect on test results relative to samples prepared in accordance with Practice D2217.

4. Apparatus

4.1 *Balance*, sensitive to 0.1 g.

4.2 *Mortar and Rubber-Covered Pestle*, suitable for breaking up the aggregations of soil particles.

4.3 *Sieves*—A series of sieves, of square mesh woven wire cloth, conforming to Specification E11. The sieves required are as follows:

No. 4 (4.75-mm)
No. 10 (2.00-mm)
No. 40 (425- μ m)

4.4 *Sampler*—A riffle sampler or sample splitter, for quartering the samples.

5. Sampling

5.1 Expose the soil sample as received from the field to the air at room temperature until dried thoroughly. Break up the aggregations thoroughly in the mortar with a rubber-covered pestle. Select a representative sample of the amount required to perform the desired tests by the method of quartering or by the use of a sampler. The amounts of material required to perform the individual tests are as follows:

5.1.1 *Particle-Size Analysis*—For the particle-size analysis, material passing a No. 10 (2.00-mm) sieve is required in amounts equal to 115 g of sandy soils and 65 g of either silt or clay soils.

5.1.2 *Tests for Soil Constants*—For the tests for soil constants, material passing the No. 40 (425- μ m) sieve is required in total amount of 220 g, allocated as follows:

Test	Grams
Liquid limit	100
Plastic limit	15
Centrifuge moisture equivalent	10
Volumetric shrinkage	30
Check tests	65

6. Preparation of Test Sample

6.1 Select that portion of the air-dried sample selected for purpose of tests and record the mass as the mass of the total test sample uncorrected for hygroscopic moisture. Separate the test sample by sieving with a No. 10 (2.00-mm) sieve. Grind that fraction retained on the No. 10 sieve in a mortar with a rubber-covered pestle until the aggregations of soil particles are broken up into the separate grains. Then separate the ground soil into two fractions by sieving with a No. 10 sieve.

6.2 Wash that fraction retained after the second sieving free of all fine material, dry, and weigh. Record this mass as the

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D18 on Soil and Rock and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D18.03 on Texture, Plasticity and Density Characteristics of Soils.

Current edition approved Sept. 1, 2007. Published September 2007. Originally approved in 1935. Last previous edition approved in 2002 as D421 – 85 (2002). DOI: 10.1520/D0421-85R07.

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.