



## **Standard Test Methods for Measurement of Hydraulic Conductivity of Saturated Porous Materials Using a Flexible Wall Permeameter<sup>1</sup>**

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 5084; 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.

<sup>ε1</sup> NOTE—Figure 2 was corrected editorially in January 2002.

### **1. Scope\***

1.1 These test methods cover laboratory measurement of the hydraulic conductivity (also referred to as *coefficient of permeability*) of water-saturated porous materials with a flexible wall permeameter at temperatures between about 15 and 30°C (59 and 86°F). Temperatures outside this range may be used, however, the user would have to determine the specific gravity of mercury and  $R_T$  (see 10.3) at those temperatures using data from *Handbook of Chemistry and Physics*. There are six alternate methods or hydraulic systems, that may be used to measure the hydraulic conductivity. These hydraulic systems are as follows:

- 1.1.1 *Method A*—Constant Head
- 1.1.2 *Method B*—Falling Head, constant tailwater elevation
- 1.1.3 *Method C*—Falling Head, rising tailwater elevation
- 1.1.4 *Method D*—Constant Rate of Flow
- 1.1.5 *Method E*—Constant Volume—Constant Head (by mercury)

1.1.6 *Method F*—Constant Volume—Falling Head (by mercury), rising tailwater elevation

1.2 These test methods may be utilized on all specimen types (undisturbed, reconstituted, remolded, compacted, etc.) that have a hydraulic conductivity less than about  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  m/s ( $1 \times 10^{-4}$  cm/s), providing the head loss requirements of 5.2.3 are met. For the constant-volume methods, the hydraulic conductivity typically has to be less than about  $1 \times 10^{-7}$  m/s.

1.2.1 If the hydraulic conductivity is greater than about  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  m/s, but not more than about  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  m/s; then the size of the hydraulic tubing needs to be increased along with the porosity of the porous end pieces. Other strategies, such as using higher viscosity fluid or properly decreasing the cross-sectional area of the test specimen, or both, may also be

possible. The key criterion is that the requirements covered in Section 5 have to be met.

1.2.2 If the hydraulic conductivity is less than about  $1 \times 10^{-10}$  m/s, then standard hydraulic systems and temperature environments will typically not suffice. Strategies that may be possible when dealing with such impervious materials may include the following. Tightening the temperature control. The adoption of unsteady state measurements by using high-accuracy equipment along with the rigorous analyses for determining the hydraulic parameters (this approach reduces testing duration according to Zhang et al. (1)<sup>2</sup>). Properly shortening the length or enlarging the cross-sectional area, or both, of the test specimen. Other items, such as use of higher hydraulic gradients, lower viscosity fluid, elimination of any possible chemical gradients and bacterial growth, and strict verification of leakage, may also be considered.

1.3 The hydraulic conductivity of materials with hydraulic conductivities greater than  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  m/s may be determined by Test Method D 2434.

1.4 All observed and calculated values shall conform to the guide for significant digits and rounding established in Practice D 6026.

1.4.1 The procedures used to specify how data are collected/recorded and calculated in this standard are regarded as the industry standard. In addition, they are representative of the significant digits that should generally be retained. The procedures used do not consider material variation, purpose for obtaining the data, special purpose studies, or any considerations for the user's objectives; and it is common practice to increase or reduce significant digits of reported data to be commensurate with these considerations. It is beyond the scope of this standard to consider significant digits used in analysis methods for engineering design.

<sup>1</sup> This standard is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D18 on Soil and Rock and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D18.04 on Hydrologic Properties of Soil and Rocks.

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<sup>2</sup> The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to the list of references appended to this standard.



1.5 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard, unless other units are specifically given. By tradition in U.S. practice, hydraulic conductivity is reported in centimeters per second, although the common SI units for hydraulic conductivity is meters per second.

1.6 *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.*

1.7 This standard also contains a Hazards section about using mercury, see Section 7.

## **2. Referenced Documents**

### **2.1 ASTM Standards:**

- D 653 Terminology Relating to Soil, Rock, and Contained Fluids<sup>3</sup>
- D 698 Test Methods for Laboratory Compaction Characteristics of Soil Using Standard Effort (12,4000 ft-lbf/ft<sup>3</sup>(600 kN·m/m<sup>3</sup>))<sup>3</sup>
- D 854 Test Method for Specific Gravity of Soil Solids by Water Pycnometer<sup>3</sup>
- D 1557 Test Methods for Laboratory Compaction Characteristics of Soil Using Modified Effort (56,000 ft-lbf/ft<sup>3</sup>(2,700 kN·m/m<sup>3</sup>))<sup>3</sup>
- D 1587 Practice for Thin-Walled Tube Geotechnical Sampling of Soils<sup>3</sup>
- D 2113 Practice for Rock Core Drilling and Sampling for Site Investigation<sup>3</sup>
- D 2216 Test Method for Laboratory Determination of Water (Moisture) Content of Soil and Rock by Mass<sup>3</sup>
- D 2434 Test Method for Permeability of Granular Soils (Constant Head)<sup>3</sup>
- D 3550 Practice for Ring-Lined Barrel Sampling of Soils<sup>3</sup>
- D 3740 Practice for Minimum Requirements for Agencies Engaged in the Testing and/or Inspection of Soil and Rock Used in Engineering Design and Construction<sup>3</sup>
- D 4220 Practices for Preserving and Transporting Soil Samples<sup>3</sup>
- D 4753 Specification for Evaluating, Selecting and Specifying Balances and Scales for Use in Soil, Rock, and Construction Materials Testing<sup>3</sup>
- D 4767 Test Method for Consolidated Undrained Triaxial Compression Test for Cohesive Soils<sup>3</sup>
- D 5079 Practices for Preserving and Transporting Rock Core Samples<sup>4</sup>
- D 6026 Practice for Using Significant Digits in Geotechnical Data<sup>4</sup>
- D 6151 Practice for Using Hollow-Stem Augers for Geotechnical Exploration and Soil Sampling<sup>4</sup>
- D 6169 Guide for Selection of Soil and Rock Sampling Devices Used with Drill Rigs for Environmental Investigations<sup>4</sup>

## **3. Terminology**

### **3.1 Definitions:**

3.1.1 For common definitions of other terms in this standard, see Terminology D 653.

3.1.2 *head loss, h<sub>L</sub> or h*—the change in total head of water across a given distance.

3.1.2.1 *Discussion*—typically the change in total head is across the influent and effluent lines connected to the permeameter, while the given distance is typically the length of the test specimen.

3.1.3 *permeameter*—the apparatus (cell) containing the test specimen in a hydraulic conductivity test.

3.1.3.1 *Discussion*—the apparatus in this case is typically a triaxial-type cell with all of its components (top and bottom specimen caps, stones, and filter paper; membrane; chamber; top and bottom plates; valves; etc.)

3.1.4 *hydraulic conductivity, k*—the rate of discharge of water under laminar flow conditions through a unit cross-sectional area of porous medium under a unit hydraulic gradient and standard temperature conditions (20°C).

3.1.4.1 *Discussion*—The term *coefficient of permeability* is often used instead of *hydraulic conductivity*, but *hydraulic conductivity* is used exclusively in this standard. A more complete discussion of the terminology associated with Darcy's law is given in the literatures.(2,3)

3.1.5 *pore volume of flow*—the cumulative quantity of flow into a test specimen divided by the volume of voids in the specimen.

## **4. Significance and Use**

4.1 These test methods apply to one-dimensional, laminar flow of water within porous materials such as soil and rock.

4.2 The hydraulic conductivity of porous materials generally decreases with an increasing amount of air in the pores of the material. These test methods apply to water-saturated porous materials containing virtually no air.

4.3 These test methods apply to permeation of porous materials with water. Permeation with other liquids, such as chemical wastes, can be accomplished using procedures similar to those described in these test methods. However, these test methods are only intended to be used when water is the permeant liquid.

4.4 It is assumed that Darcy's law is valid and that the hydraulic conductivity is essentially unaffected by hydraulic gradient. The validity of Darcy's law may be evaluated by measuring the hydraulic conductivity of the specimen at three hydraulic gradients; if all measured values are similar (within about 25 %), then Darcy's law may be taken as valid. However, when the hydraulic gradient acting on a test specimen is changed, the state of stress will also change, and, if the specimen is compressible, the volume of the specimen will change. Thus, some change in hydraulic conductivity may occur when the hydraulic gradient is altered, even in cases where Darcy's law is valid.

4.5 These test methods provide a means for determining hydraulic conductivity at a controlled level of effective stress. Hydraulic conductivity varies with varying void ratio, which in turn changes when the effective stress changes. If the void ratio is changed, the hydraulic conductivity of the test specimen will likely change, see Appendix X2. To determine the relationship

<sup>3</sup> Annual Book of ASTM Standards, Vol 04.08.

<sup>4</sup> Annual Book of ASTM Standards, Vol 04.09.

between hydraulic conductivity and void ratio, the hydraulic conductivity test would have to be repeated at different effective stresses.

4.6 The correlation between results obtained using these test methods and the hydraulic conductivities of in-place field materials has not been fully investigated. Experience has sometimes shown that hydraulic conductivities measured on small test specimens are not necessarily the same as larger-scale values. Therefore, the results should be applied to field situations with caution and by qualified personnel.

4.7 In most cases, when testing high swell potential materials and using a constant-volume hydraulic system, the effective confining stress should be about 1.5 times the swell pressure of the test specimen or a stress which prevents swelling. If the confining stress is less than the swell pressure, anomalous flow conditions may occur; e.g., mercury column(s) move in the wrong direction.

NOTE 1—The quality of the result produced by this standard is dependent of the competence of the personnel performing it and the suitability of the equipment and facilities used. Agencies that meet the criteria of Practice D 3740 are generally considered capable of competent and objective testing/sampling/inspection/etc. Users of this standard are cautioned that compliance with Practice D 3740 does not in itself assure reliable results. Reliable results depend on many factors; Practice D 3740 provides a means of evaluating some of those factors.

## 5. Apparatus

5.1 *Hydraulic System*—Constant head (Method A), falling head (Methods B and C), constant rate of flow (Method D), constant volume-constant head (Method E), or constant volume-falling head (Method F) systems may be utilized provided they meet the following criteria:

5.1.1 *Constant Head*—The system must be capable of maintaining constant hydraulic pressures to  $\pm 5\%$  or better and shall include means to measure the hydraulic pressures to within the prescribed tolerance. In addition, the head loss across the permeameter must be held constant to  $\pm 5\%$  or better and shall be measured with the same accuracy or better. A pressure gage, electronic pressure transducer or any other device of suitable accuracy shall measure pressures to a minimum of three significant digits. The last digit may be due to estimation, see 5.1.1.1.

5.1.1.1 Practice D 6026 discusses the use or application of estimated digits. When the last digit is estimated and that reading is a function of the eye's elevation/location, then a mirror or another device is required to reduce the reading error caused by parallax.

5.1.2 *Falling Head*—The system shall allow for measurement of the applied head loss, thus hydraulic gradient, to  $\pm 5\%$  or better at any time. In addition, the ratio of initial head loss divided by final head loss over an interval of time shall be measured such that this computed ratio is accurate to  $\pm 5\%$  or better. The head loss shall be measured with a pressure gage, electronic pressure transducer, engineer's scale, graduated pipette, or any other device of suitable accuracy to a minimum of three significant digits. The last digit may be due to estimation, see 5.1.1.1. Falling head tests may be performed with either a constant tailwater elevation (Method B) or a rising tailwater elevation (Method C), see Fig. 1.

5.1.3 *Constant Rate of Flow*—The system must be capable of maintaining a constant rate of flow through the specimen to  $\pm 5\%$  or better. Flow measurement shall be by calibrated syringe, graduated pipette, or other device of suitable accuracy. The head loss across the permeameter shall be measured to a minimum of three significant digits and to an accuracy of  $\pm 5\%$  or better using an electronic pressure transducer(s) or other device(s) of suitable accuracy. The last digit may be due to estimation, see 5.1.1.1. More information on testing with a constant rate of flow is given in the literature (4).

5.1.4 *Constant Volume-Constant Head (CVCH)*—The system, with mercury to create the head loss, must be capable of maintaining a constant head loss cross the permeameter to  $\pm 5\%$  or better and shall allow for measurement of the applied head loss to  $\pm 5\%$  or better at any time. The head loss shall be measured to a minimum of three significant digits with an electronic pressure transducer(s) or equivalent device, (5) or based upon the pressure head caused by the mercury column, see 10.1.2. The last digit may be due to estimation, see 5.1.1.1.

5.1.4.1 A schematic drawing of a typical CVCH hydraulic system is shown in Fig. 2 (5). In this system, the head loss will remain constant providing the mercury column remains vertical and intact/unbroken.

5.1.4.2 *Hazards*—Since this hydraulic system contains mercury, special health and safety precautions have to be considered. See Section 7.

5.1.4.3 *Caution*—For these types of hydraulic systems to function properly, the separation of the mercury column has to be prevented. To prevent separation, the mercury and "constant head" tube have to remain relatively clean, and the inside diameter of this tube cannot be too large; typically a capillary tube is used. The larger diameter flushing tube is added to enable flushing clean water through the system without excessive mercury displacement. Traps to prevent the accidental flow of mercury out of the "Constant Head" tube or flushing tube are not shown in Fig. 2.

5.1.5 *Constant Volume-Falling Head (CVFH)*—The system, with mercury to create the head loss, shall meet the criteria given in 5.1.2. The head loss shall be measured to a minimum of three significant digits with an electronic pressure transducer(s) or equivalent device(s), (5) or based upon the differential elevation between the top surfaces of the mercury level in the headwater and tailwater tubes. The last digit may be due to estimation, see 5.1.1.1.

5.1.5.1 A schematic drawing of a typical CVFH hydraulic system is shown in Fig. 3 (5). Typically, the tailwater tube has a smaller area than the headwater tube to increase the sensitivity of flow measurements, and to enable flushing clean water through the system without excessive mercury displacement in the headwater tube. The development of the hydraulic conductivity equation for this type of system is given in Appendix X1.

5.1.5.2 *Hazards*—Since this hydraulic system contains mercury, special health and safety precautions have to be considered. See Section 7.

5.1.5.3 *Caution*—For these types of hydraulic systems to function properly, the separation of the mercury column and entrapment of water within the mercury column have to be prevented. To prevent such problems, the mercury and tubes

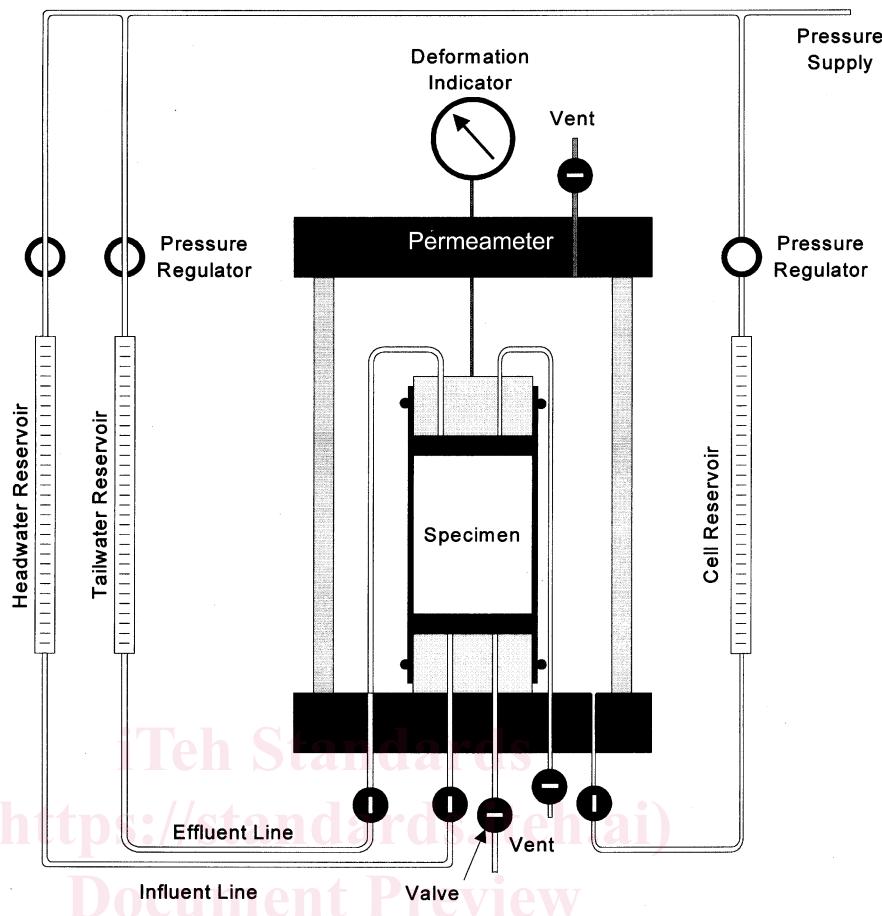


FIG. 1 Falling Head – Rising Tail System, Method C

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have to remain relatively clean. In addition, if different size headwater and tailwater tubes are used, capillary head might have to be accounted for, see Appendix X1, X1.2.3.2 and X1.4. Traps to prevent the accidental flow of mercury out of the tubes are not shown in Fig. 3.

**5.1.6 System De-airing**—The hydraulic system shall be designed to facilitate rapid and complete removal of free air bubbles from flow lines; e.g., use of properly sized tubing and ball valves, and fittings without pipe threads. Properly sized tubing, etc. means they are small enough to prevent entrapment of air bubbles, but not so small that the requirements of 5.2.3 can not be met.

**5.1.7 Back Pressure System**—The hydraulic system shall have the capability to apply back pressure to the specimen to facilitate saturation. The system shall be capable of maintaining the applied back pressure throughout the duration of hydraulic conductivity measurements. The back pressure system shall be capable of applying, controlling, and measuring the back pressure to  $\pm 5\%$  or better of the applied pressure. The back pressure may be provided by a compressed gas supply, a deadweight acting on a piston, or any other method capable of applying and controlling the back pressure to the tolerance prescribed in this paragraph.

NOTE 2—Application of gas pressure directly to a fluid will dissolve

gas in the fluid. A variety of techniques are available to minimize dissolution of gas in the back pressure fluid, including separation of gas and liquid phases with a bladder and frequent replacement of the liquid with de-aired water.

**5.2 Flow Measurement System**—Both inflow and outflow volumes shall be measured unless the lack of leakage, continuity of flow, and cessation of consolidation or swelling can be verified by other means. Flow volumes shall be measured by a graduated accumulator, graduated pipette, vertical standpipe in conjunction with an electronic pressure transducer, or other volume-measuring device of suitable accuracy.

**5.2.1 Flow Accuracy**—Required accuracy for the quantity of flow measured over an interval of time is  $\pm 5\%$  or better.

**5.2.2 De-airing and Compliance of the System**—The flow-measurement system shall contain a minimum of dead space and be capable of complete and rapid de-airing. Compliance of the system in response to changes in pressure shall be minimized by using a stiff flow measurement system. Rigid tubing, such as metallic or rigid thermoplastic tubing, or glass shall be used.

**5.2.3 Head Losses**—Head losses in the tubes, valves, porous end pieces, and filter paper may lead to error. To guard against such errors, the permeameter shall be assembled with no specimen inside and then the hydraulic system filled.

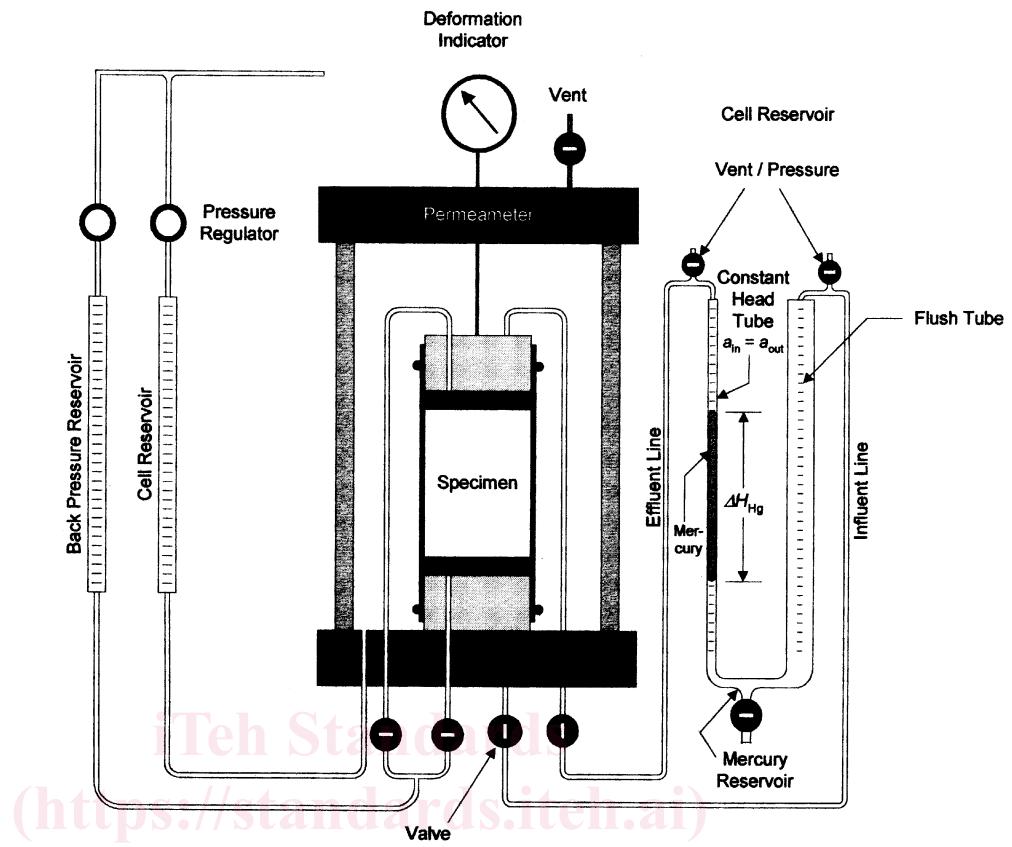


FIG. 2 Constant Volume – Constant Head System, Method E (5)

ASTM D5084-00e1

5.2.3.1 *Constant or Falling Head*—If a constant or falling head test is to be used, the hydraulic pressures or heads that will be used in testing a specimen shall be applied, and the rate of flow measured with an accuracy of  $\pm 5\%$  or better. This rate of flow shall be at least ten times greater than the rate of flow that is measured when a specimen is placed inside the permeameter and the same hydraulic pressures or heads are applied.

5.2.3.2 *Constant Rate of Flow*—If a constant rate of flow test is to be used, the rate of flow to be used in testing a specimen shall be supplied to the permeameter and the head loss measured. The head loss without a specimen shall be less than 0.1 times the head loss when a specimen is present.

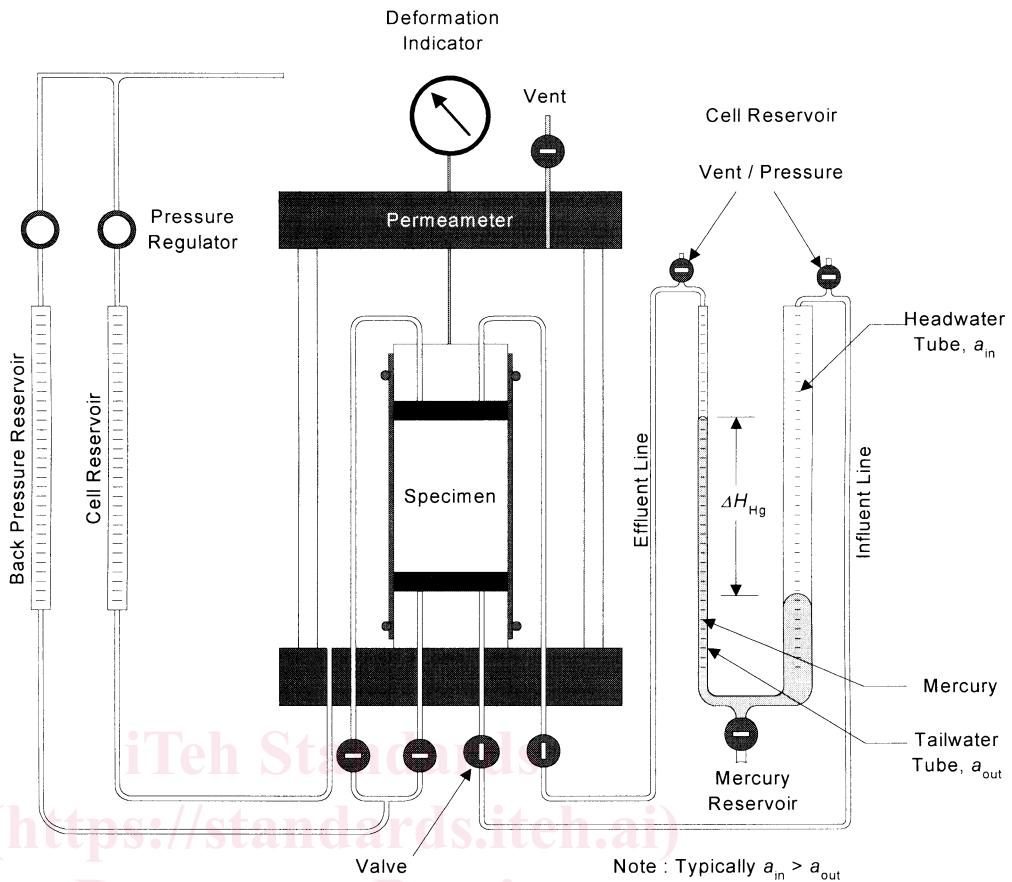
5.3 *Permeameter Cell Pressure System*—The system for pressurizing the permeameter cell shall be capable of applying and controlling the cell pressure to  $\pm 5\%$  or better of the applied pressure. However, the effective stress on the test specimen (which is the difference between the cell pressure and the pore water pressure) shall be maintained to the desired value with an accuracy of  $\pm 10\%$  or better. The device for pressurizing the cell may consist of a reservoir connected to the permeameter cell and partially filled with de-aired water, with the upper part of the reservoir connected to a compressed gas supply or other source of pressure (see Note 3). The gas pressure shall be controlled by a pressure regulator and

measured by a pressure gage, electronic pressure transducer, or any other device capable of measuring to the prescribed tolerance. A hydraulic system pressurized by deadweight acting on a piston or any other pressure device capable of applying and controlling the permeameter cell pressure within the tolerance prescribed in this paragraph may be used.

NOTE 3—De-aired water is commonly used for the cell fluid to minimize potential for diffusion of air through the membrane into the specimen. Other fluids that have low gas solubilities such as oils, are also acceptable, provided they do not react with components of the permeameter. Also, use of a long (approximately 5 to 7 m) tube connecting the pressurized cell liquid to the cell helps to delay the appearance of air in the cell fluid and to reduce the flow of dissolved air into the cell.

5.4 *Permeameter Cell*—An apparatus shall be provided in which the specimen and porous end pieces, enclosed by a membrane sealed to the cap and base, are subjected to controlled fluid pressures. A schematic diagram of a typical permeameter cell and falling head (raising tailwater) hydraulic system is shown in Fig. 1.

5.4.1 The permeameter cell may allow for observation of changes in height of the specimen, either by observation through the cell wall using a cathetometer or other instrument, or by monitoring of either a loading piston or an extensometer extending through the top plate of the cell bearing on the top cap and attached to a dial indicator or other measuring device.



**FIG. 3 Constant Volume – Falling Head System, Method F (5)**

The piston or extensometer should pass through a bushing and seal incorporated into the top plate and shall be loaded with sufficient force to compensate for the cell pressure acting over the cross-sectional area of the piston where it passes through the seal. If deformations are measured, the deformation indicator shall be a dial indicator or cathetometer graduated to 0.3 mm (0.01 in.) or better and having an adequate travel range. Any other measuring device meeting these requirements is acceptable.

5.4.2 In order to facilitate gas removal, and thus saturation of the hydraulic system, four drainage lines leading to the specimen, two each to the base and top cap, are recommended. The drainage lines shall be controlled by no-volume-change valves, such as ball valves, and shall be designed to minimize dead space in the lines.

5.4.3 *Top Cap and Base*—An impermeable, rigid top cap and base shall be used to support the specimen and provide for transmission of permeant liquid to and from the specimen. The diameter or width of the top cap and base shall be equal to the diameter or width of the specimen to  $\pm 5\%$  or better. The base shall prevent leakage, lateral motion, or tilting, and the top cap shall be designed to receive the piston or extensometer, if used, such that the piston-to-top cap contact area is concentric with the cap. The surface of the base and top cap that contacts the membrane to form a seal shall be smooth and free of scratches.

5.4.4 *Flexible Membranes*—The flexible membrane used to encase the specimen shall provide reliable protection against

leakage. The membrane shall be carefully inspected prior to use and if any flaws or pinholes are evident, the membrane shall be discarded. To minimize restraint to the specimen, the diameter or width of the non-stretched membrane shall be between 90 and 95 % of that of the specimen. The membrane shall be sealed to the specimen base and cap with rubber O-rings for which the unstressed, inside diameter or width is less than 90 % of the diameter or width of the base and cap, or by any other method that will produce an adequate seal.

NOTE 4—Membranes may be tested for flaws by placing them around a form sealed at both ends with rubber O-rings, subjecting them to a small air pressure on the inside, and then dipping them into water. If air bubbles come up from any point on the membrane, or if any visible flaws are observed, the membrane shall be discarded.

5.4.5 *Porous End Pieces*—The porous end pieces shall be of silicon carbide, aluminum oxide, or other material that is not attacked by the specimen or permeant liquid. The end pieces shall have plane and smooth surfaces and be free of cracks, chips, and discontinuities. They shall be checked regularly to ensure that they are not clogged.

5.4.5.1 The porous end pieces shall be the same diameter or width ( $\pm 5\%$  or better) as the specimen, and the thickness shall be sufficient to prevent breaking.

5.4.5.2 The hydraulic conductivity of the porous end pieces shall be significantly greater than that of the specimen to be tested. The requirements outlined in 5.2.3 ensure this.



**5.4.6 Filter Paper**—If necessary to prevent intrusion of material into the pores of the porous end pieces, one or more sheets of filter paper shall be placed between the top and bottom porous end pieces and the specimen. The paper shall have a negligibly small hydraulic impedance. The requirements outlined in 5.2.3 ensure that the impedance is small.

**5.5 Equipment for Compacting a Specimen**—Equipment (including compactor and mold) suitable for the method of compaction specified by the requester shall be used.

**5.6 Sample Extruder**—When the material being tested is a soil core, the soil core shall usually be removed from the sampler with an extruder. The sample extruder shall be capable of extruding the soil core from the sampling tube in the same direction of travel in which the sample entered the tube and with minimum disturbance of the sample. If the soil core is not extruded vertically, care should be taken to avoid bending stresses on the core due to gravity. Conditions at the time of sample extrusion may dictate the direction of removal, but the principal concern is to keep the degree of disturbance minimal.

**5.7 Trimming Equipment**—Specific equipment for trimming the specimen to the desired dimensions will vary depending on quality and characteristics of the sample (material). However, the following items listed may be used: lathe, wire saw with a wire about 0.3 mm (0.01 in.) in diameter, spatulas, knives, steel rasp for very hard clay specimens, cradle or split mold for trimming specimen ends, and steel straight edge for final trimming of specimen ends.

**5.8 Devices for Measuring the Dimensions of the Specimen**—Devices used to measure the dimensions of the specimen shall be capable of measuring to the nearest 0.3 mm (0.01 in.) or better (see 8.1.1) and shall be constructed such that their use will not disturb the specimen.

**5.9 Balances**—The balance shall be suitable for determining the mass of the specimen and shall be selected as discussed in Specification D 4753. The mass of specimens less than 100 g shall be determined to the nearest 0.01 g. The mass of specimens between 100 g and 999 g shall be determined to the nearest 0.1 g. The mass of specimens equal to or greater than 1000 g shall be determined to the nearest 1.0 g.

**5.10 Equipment for Mounting the Specimen**—Equipment for mounting the specimen in the permeameter cell shall include a membrane stretcher or cylinder, and ring for expanding and placing O-rings on the base and top cap to seal the membrane.

**5.11 Vacuum Pump**—To assist with de-airing of permeant liquid (water) and saturation of specimens.

**NOTE 5**—For guidance or avoiding excessive consolidation in the use of vacuum for specimen saturation, consult 8.2 of Test Method D 4767.

**5.12 Temperature Maintaining Device**—The temperature of the permeameter, test specimen, and reservoir of permeant liquid shall not vary more than  $\pm 3^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $\pm 5.7^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) or better. Normally, this is accomplished by performing the test in a room with a relatively constant temperature. If such a room is not available, the apparatus shall be placed in a water bath, insulated chamber, or other device that maintains a temperature within the tolerance specified above. The temperature shall be periodically measured and recorded.

**5.13 Water Content Containers**—The containers shall be in accordance with Method D 2216.

**5.14 Drying Oven**—The oven shall be in accordance with Test Method D 2216.

## **6. Reagents**

### **6.1 Permeant Water:**

6.1.1 The permeant water is the liquid used to permeate the test specimen and is also the liquid used in backpressuring the specimen.

6.1.2 The type of permeant water should be specified by the requestor. If no specification is made, drinkable tap water shall be used for the permeant liquid. The type of water utilized shall be indicated in the test data sheet/form.

**NOTE 6**—Chemical interactions between a permeant liquid and the porous material may lead to variations in hydraulic conductivity. Distilled water can significantly lower the hydraulic conductivity of clayey soils (2). For this reason, distilled water is not usually recommended as a permeant liquid. A permeant liquid used by some is 0.01 molar  $\text{CaCl}_2$  solution, which can be obtained for example, by dissolving 11.1 g of reagent-grade  $\text{CaCl}_2$  in 10 L of de-aired, distilled water (commercial grade). This  $\text{CaCl}_2$  solution is thought to neither increase nor decrease significantly the hydraulic conductivity of clayey soils. In areas with extremely hard or soft water, the  $\text{CaCl}_2$  solution is recommended. Its use is also recommended when the flow of permeant water is significant (greater than about  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  times the volume of voids). Additional de-airing may modify the concentration of this solution, however, this should not affect its application.

6.1.3 **Deaired Water**—To aid in removing as much air from the test specimen as possible, deaired water shall be used. The water is usually deaired by boiling, by spraying a fine mist of water into an evacuated vessel attached to a vacuum source, or by forceful agitation of water in a container attached to a vacuum source. If boiling is used, care shall be taken not to evaporate an excessive amount of water, which can lead to a larger salt concentration in the permeant water than desired. To prevent dissolution of air back into the water, deaired water shall not be exposed to air for prolonged periods.

## **7. Hazards**

**7.1 Warning**—Mercury is a hazardous substance that can cause illness and death. Inhalation of mercury vapor is a serious health hazard. Mercury can also be absorbed through the skin. The effects of mercury are cumulative.

7.1.1 Tubing composed of glass or other brittle materials may explode/shatter when under pressure, especially air. Therefore, such tubing should be enclosed. Also establish allowable working pressures and make sure they are not exceeded. Also establish allowable working pressures and make sure they are not exceeded.

**7.2 Precaution**—In addition to other precautions, store mercury in sealed shatterproof containers to control evaporation. When adding/subtracting mercury to/from the hydraulic system used in Method E or F, work in a well-ventilated area (preferably under a fume hood), and avoid contact with skin. Rubber gloves should be worn at all times when contact with mercury is possible.

7.2.1 Minimize uncontrolled flow of mercury out of its specialized hydraulic system by installing mercury traps or



inline ball-check mechanism. Minimize uncontrolled spills by using shatterproof materials or protective shields, or both.

7.2.2 If mercury comes into contact with brass/copper fitting, valves, etc., such items will become rapidly useless (leak). Therefore, where-ever practical use stainless steel fittings, etc.

7.2.3 Clean up spills immediately using a recommended procedure explicitly for mercury.

7.2.4 Dispose of contaminated waste materials containing mercury in a safe and environmentally acceptable manner.

## **8. Test Specimens**

8.1 **Size**—Specimens shall have a minimum diameter of 25 mm (1.0 in.) and a minimum height of 25 mm. The height and diameter of the specimen shall be measured to three significant digits or better (see 8.1.1). The length and diameter shall vary by no more than  $\pm 5\%$ . The surface of the test specimen may be uneven, but indentations must not be so deep that the length or diameter vary by more than  $\pm 5\%$ . The diameter and height of the specimen shall each be at least 6 times greater than the largest particle size within the specimen. If, after completion of a test, it is found based on visual observation that oversized particles are present, that information shall be indicated on the data sheet(s)/form(s).

8.1.1 If the density or unit weight needs to be determined/recorded to four significant digits, or the void ratio to three significant digits; then the test specimens dimensions will have to have four significant digits; i.e., typically measured to the nearest 0.01 mm or 0.001 in.

8.1.2 Specimens of soil-cement and mixtures of cement, bentonite, and soils often have more irregular surfaces than specimens of soil. Thus, for these specimens the length and the diameter may vary by no more than  $\pm 10\%$ .

**NOTE 7**—Most hydraulic conductivity tests are performed on cylindrical test specimens. It is possible to utilize special equipment for testing prismatic test specimens, in which case reference to “diameter” in 8.1 applies to the least width of the prismatic test specimen.

8.2 **Undisturbed Specimens**—Undisturbed test specimens shall be prepared from a representative portion of undisturbed samples secured in accordance with Practice D 1587, Practice D 3550, Practice D 6151, or Practice D 2113. In addition, undisturbed samples may be obtained by “block sampling” (6). Additional guidance on other drilling and sampling methods is given in Guide D 6169. Samples shall be preserved and transported in accordance with these requirements; for soils follow Group C in Practice D 4220, while for rock follow either “special care” or “soil-like care”, as appropriate in Practice D 5079. Specimens obtained by tube sampling or coring may be tested without trimming except for cutting the end surfaces plane and perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the specimen, provided soil characteristics are such that no significant disturbance results from sampling. Where the sampling operation has caused disturbance of the soil, the disturbed material shall be trimmed. Where removal of pebbles or crumbling resulting from trimming causes voids on the surface of the specimen that cause the length or diameter to vary by more than  $\pm 5\%$ , the voids shall be filled with remolded material obtained from the trimmings. The ends of the test

specimen shall be cut and not troweled (troweling can seal off cracks, slicksides, or other secondary features that might conduct water flow). Specimens shall be trimmed, whenever possible, in an environment where changes in water content are minimized. A controlled high-humidity room is usually used for this purpose. The mass and dimensions of the test specimen shall be determined to the tolerances given in 5.8 and 5.9. The test specimen shall be mounted immediately in the permeameter. The water content of the trimmings shall be determined in accordance with Method D 2216, to the nearest 0.1 % or better.

8.3 **Laboratory-Compacted Specimens**—The material to be tested shall be prepared and compacted inside a mold in a manner specified by the requester. If the specimen is placed and compacted in layers, the surface of each previously-compacted layer shall be lightly scarified (roughened) with a fork, ice pick, or other suitable object, unless the requester specifically states that scarification is not to be performed. Test Methods D 698 and D 1557 describe two methods of compaction, but any other method specified by the requester may be used as long as the method is described in the report. Large clods of material should not be broken down prior to compaction unless it is known that they will be broken in field construction, as well, or the requester specifically requests that the clod size be reduced. Neither hard clods nor individual particles of the material shall exceed  $\frac{1}{6}$  of either the height or diameter of the specimen. After compaction, the test specimen shall be removed from the mold, the ends scarified, and the dimensions and weight determined within the tolerances given in 5.8 and 5.9. After the dimensions and mass are determined, the test specimen shall be immediately mounted in the permeameter. The water content of the trimmings shall be determined in accordance with Method D 2216 to the nearest 0.1 % or better.

8.4 **Other Preparation Methods**—Other methods of preparation of a test specimen are permitted if specifically requested. The method of specimen preparation shall be identified in the data sheet(s)/form(s).

8.5 After the height, diameter, mass, and water content of the test specimen have been determined, the dry unit weight shall be calculated. Also, the initial degree of saturation shall be estimated (this information may be used later in the back-pressure stage).

## **9. Procedure**

### **9.1 Specimen Setup:**

9.1.1 Cut two filter paper sheets to approximately the same shape as the cross section of the test specimen. Soak the two porous end pieces and filter paper sheets, if used, in a container of permeant water.

9.1.2 Place the membrane on the membrane expander. Apply a thin coat of silicon high-vacuum grease to the sides of the end caps. Place one porous end piece on the base and place one filter paper sheet, if used, on the porous end piece, followed by the test specimen. Place the second filter paper sheet, if used, on top of the specimen followed by the second porous end piece and the top cap. Place the membrane around the specimen, and using the membrane expander or other suitable O-ring expander, place one or more O-rings to seal the

membrane to the base and one or more additional O-rings to seal the membrane to the top cap.

9.1.3 Attach flow tubing to the top cap, if not already attached, assemble the permeameter cell, and fill it with de-aired water or other cell fluid. Attach the cell pressure reservoir to the permeameter cell line and the hydraulic system to the influent and effluent lines. Fill the cell pressure reservoir with deaired water, or other suitable liquid, and the hydraulic system with deaired permeant water. Apply a small confining pressure of 7 to 35 kPa (1 to 5 psi) to the cell and apply a pressure less than the confining pressure to both the influent and effluent systems, and flush permeant water through the flow system. After all visible air has been removed from the flow lines, close the control valves. At no time during saturation of the system and specimen or hydraulic conductivity measurements shall the maximum applied effective stress be allowed to exceed that to which the specimen is to be consolidated.

9.2 *Specimen Soaking (Optional)*—To aid in saturation, specimens may be soaked under partial vacuum applied to the top of the specimen. Water under atmospheric pressure shall be applied to the specimen base through the influent lines, and the magnitude of the vacuum set to generate a hydraulic gradient across the specimen less than that which will be used during hydraulic conductivity measurements.

NOTE 8—Soaking under vacuum is applicable when there are continuous air voids in the specimen e.g., specimens having a degree of saturation of less than about 85%. The specimen may swell when exposed to water; the effective stress will tend to counteract the swelling. However, for materials that tend to swell, unless the applied effective stress is greater than or equal to the swell pressure, the specimen will swell. In addition, see Note 5.

9.3 *Back-Pressure Saturation*—To saturate the specimen, back pressuring is usually necessary. Fig. 4 (7) provides guidance on back pressure required to attain saturation. Additional guidance on the back-pressure process is given by Black and Lee (8) and Head (9).

NOTE 9—The relationships presented in Fig. 4 are based on the

assumption that the water used for back pressuring is deaired and that the only source for air to dissolve into the water is air from the test specimen. If air pressure is used to control the back pressure, pressurized air will dissolve into the water, thus reducing the capacity of the water used for back pressure to dissolve air located in the pores of the test specimen. The problem is minimized by using a long (>5 m) tube that is impermeable to air between the air-water interface and test specimen, by separating the back-pressure water from the air by a material or fluid that is relatively impermeable to air, by periodically replacing the back-pressure water with deaired water, or by other means.

9.3.1 During the saturation process, any change in the volume (swelling or compression of the void ratio, density, etc.) of the test specimen should be minimized. The easiest way to verify that volume changes are minor is to measure the height of the specimen during the back-pressuring process. Volume changes are considered minor if the resulting change in hydraulic conductivity is less than about  $\frac{1}{2}$  the acceptable error of 25 % given in 9.5.3, unless more stringent control on density or hydraulic conductivity, or both is required. For this to occur the axial strain should be less than about 0.4 % for normally consolidated soils, or about 0.1 % for overconsolidated soils. See Appendix X2.

9.3.2 Take and record an initial reading of specimen height, if being monitored. Open the flow line valves and flush out of the system any free air bubbles using the procedure outlined in 9.1.3. If an electronic pressure transducer or other measuring device is to be used during the test to measure pore pressures or applied hydraulic gradient, it should be bled of any trapped air.

9.3.3 Adjust the applied confining pressure to the value to be used during saturation of the specimen. Apply back pressure by simultaneously increasing the cell pressure and the influent and effluent pressures in increments. The maximum value of an increment in back pressure shall be sufficiently low such that no point in the specimen is exposed to an effective stress in excess of that to which the specimen will be subsequently consolidated. At no time shall a head be applied such that the effective confining stress is <7 kPa (1 psi) because of the danger of separation of the membrane from the test specimen.

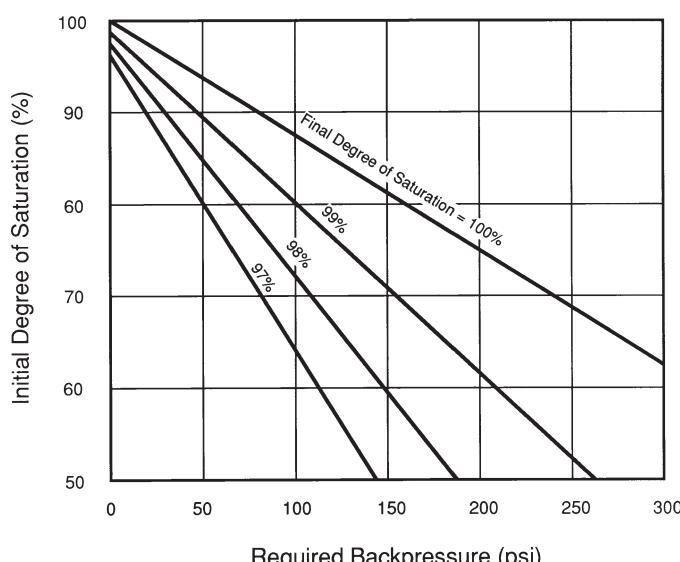


FIG. 4 Back Pressure to Attain Various Degrees of Saturation (7)

Maintain each increment of pressure for a period of a few minutes to a few hours, depending upon the characteristics of the specimen. To assist in removal of trapped air, a small hydraulic gradient may be applied across the specimen to induce flow.

9.3.4 Saturation shall be verified with one of the three following techniques:

9.3.4.1 Saturation may be verified by measuring the *B* coefficient as described in Test Method D 4767 (see Note 10). The test specimen shall be considered to be adequately saturated if the *B* value is  $\geq 0.95$ , or for relatively incompressible materials, for example, rock, if the *B* value remains unchanged with application of larger values of back pressure. The *B* value may be measured prior to or after completion of the consolidation phase (see 9.4). An accurate *B*-value determination can only be made if no gradient is acting on the specimen and all pore-water pressure induced by consolidation has dissipated.

NOTE 10—The *B* coefficient is defined for this type of test as the change in pore-water pressure in the porous material divided by the change in confining pressure. Compressible materials that are fully saturated with water will have a *B* value of 1.0. Relatively incompressible, saturated materials have *B* values that are somewhat less than 1.0 (10).

9.3.4.2 Saturation of the test specimen may be confirmed at the completion of the test by calculation of the final degree of saturation. The final degree of saturation shall be  $100 \pm 5\%$ . However, measurement of the *B* coefficient as described in 9.3.4.1 or use of some other technique (9.3.4.3) is strongly recommended because it is much better to confirm saturation prior to permeation than to wait until after the test to determine if the test was valid.

9.3.4.3 Other means for verifying saturation, such as observing the flow of water into the specimen when the back pressure is increased, can be used for verifying saturation provided data are available for similar materials to establish that the procedure used confirms saturation as required in 9.3.4.1 or 9.3.4.2.

9.4 *Consolidation*—The specimen shall be consolidated to the effective stress specified by the requestor. Consolidation shall be accomplished in stages, with the increase in cell pressure minus back pressure (effective stress) in each new stage equal to or less than the effective stress in the previous stage i.e., consolidation increment ratio of one or less.

NOTE 11—The test specimen may be consolidated prior to application of back pressure. Also, the back pressure and consolidation phases may be completed concurrently if back pressures are applied sufficiently slowly to minimize potential for overconsolidation of the specimen.

9.4.1 Record the specimen height, if being monitored, prior to application of consolidation pressure and periodically during consolidation.

9.4.2 Increase the cell pressure to the level necessary to develop the desired effective stress, and begin consolidation. Drainage may be allowed from the base or top of the specimen, or simultaneously from both ends.

9.4.3 (Optional) Record outflow volumes to confirm that primary consolidation has been completed prior to initiation of the hydraulic conductivity test. Alternatively, measurements of

the change in height of the test specimen can be used to confirm completion of consolidation.

NOTE 12—The procedure in 9.4.3 is optional because the requirements of 9.5 ensure that the test specimen is adequately consolidated during permeation because if it is not, inflow and outflow volumes will differ significantly. However, for accurate *B*-value determination, saturation should be confirmed at the completion of consolidation (see 9.3.4.1). It is recommended that outflow volumes or height changes be recorded as a means for verifying the completion of consolidation prior to initialization of permeation. Also, measurements in the change in height of the test specimen, coupled with knowledge of the initial height, provide a means for checking the final height of the specimen.

### 9.5 *Permeation*:

9.5.1 *Hydraulic Gradient*—When possible, the hydraulic gradient ( $i = h/L$ , for definitions of notation see 10.1) used for hydraulic conductivity measurements should be similar to that expected to occur in the field. In general, hydraulic gradients from  $<1$  to 5 cover most field conditions. However, the use of small hydraulic gradients can lead to very long testing times for materials having low hydraulic conductivity (less than about  $1 \times 10^{-8}$  m/s). Somewhat larger hydraulic gradients are usually used in the laboratory to accelerate testing, but excessive gradients must be avoided because high seepage pressures may consolidate the material, material may be washed from the specimen, or fine particles may be washed downstream and plug the effluent end of the test specimen. These effects could increase or decrease hydraulic conductivity. If no gradient is specified by the requestor, the following guidelines may be followed:

Hydraulic Conductivity, m/s	Recommended Maximum Hydraulic Gradient
$1 \times 10^{-5}$ to $1 \times 10^{-6}$	2
$1 \times 10^{-6}$ to $1 \times 10^{-7}$	5
$1 \times 10^{-7}$ to $1 \times 10^{-8}$	10
$1 \times 10^{-8}$ to $1 \times 10^{-9}$	20
less than $1 \times 10^{-9}$	30

NOTE 13—Seepage pressures associated with large hydraulic gradients can consolidate soft, compressible specimens and reduce their hydraulic conductivity. It may be necessary to use smaller hydraulic gradients ( $<10$ ) for such specimens.

9.5.2 *Initialization*—Initiate permeation of the specimen by increasing the influent (headwater) pressure (see 9.3.3). The effluent (tailwater) pressure shall not be decreased because air bubbles that were dissolved by the specimen water during backpressuring may come out of solution if the pressure is decreased. The back pressure shall be maintained throughout the permeation phase.

9.5.2.1 At the start and end of each permeation trial, at  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ , read and record the test temperature to the nearest  $0.1^\circ\text{C}$ . See Section 10. If the number of significant digits in the calculation of hydraulic conductivity at  $20^\circ\text{C}$  can be one, then the test temperature can be measured to the nearest degree Celsius.

### 9.5.3 *Constant Head Tests*:

9.5.3.1 (Method A)—Measure and record the required head loss across the tolerances and significant digits stated in 5.1.1 and 5.2.3 at the start and end of each permeation trial (as a minimum). The head loss across the permeameter shall be kept constant to  $\pm 5\%$  or better. Measure and record periodically the quantity of inflow as well as the quantity of outflow to a