



Designation: C156 – 09

Standard Test Method for Water Retention by Liquid Membrane-Forming Curing Compounds for Concrete¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation C156; 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 laboratory determination of the efficiency of liquid membrane-forming compounds for curing concrete, as measured by their ability to reduce moisture loss during the early hardening period.

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. The values given in parentheses are mathematical conversions to inch-pound units that are provided for information only and are not considered 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 and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use. (Warning—Fresh hydraulic cementitious mixtures are caustic and may cause chemical burns to skin and tissue upon prolonged exposure.)²*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:³

[C87 Test Method for Effect of Organic Impurities in Fine Aggregate on Strength of Mortar](#)

[C150 Specification for Portland Cement](#)

[C230/C230M Specification for Flow Table for Use in Tests of Hydraulic Cement](#)

[C305 Practice for Mechanical Mixing of Hydraulic Cement Pastes and Mortars of Plastic Consistency](#)

[C778 Specification for Standard Sand](#)

[D1475 Test Method For Density of Liquid Coatings, Inks, and Related Products](#)

[D1653 Test Methods for Water Vapor Transmission of Organic Coating Films](#)

[D2369 Test Method for Volatile Content of Coatings](#)

[E178 Practice for Dealing With Outlying Observations](#)

3. Significance and Use

3.1 The moisture retaining ability of a product as determined by this test method is used to assess the suitability of materials for contributing to an appropriate curing environment for concrete. The laboratory test method is used both in formulating and in specifying or qualifying curing products. This test method gives the user a measure of the ability of tested curing materials to impede the escape of moisture from a hydraulic cement mortar. Since it is desirable to retain moisture in fresh concrete to promote the hydration process, failure of the product to minimize the escape of moisture may lead to loss of strength, cracking, shrinkage, or low abrasion resistance of the hardened concrete, or a combination thereof.

3.2 Many factors affect the laboratory test results. Test results obtained may be highly variable as indicated by the precision statement. Critical factors include the precision of the control of the temperature, humidity and air circulation in the curing cabinet, preparation and sealing of the mortar specimens, the age and surface condition of the mortar specimen when the curing product is applied, and the uniformity and quantity of application of the curing membrane.

4. Apparatus

4.1 *Mechanical Mortar Mixer*, as described in Practice [C305](#), or a larger size mixture operating on the same principle.

4.2 *Flow Table*, as described in Specification [C230/C230M](#).

4.3 *Molds* shall be made of metal, glass, hard rubber, or plastic, and shall be watertight and rigidly constructed to prevent distortion during molding of the specimens or handling of the mold containing fresh mortar. They shall have a minimum surface area of 12000 mm² (18.6 in.²), and a minimum depth of 19 mm (³/₄ in.). The top surface shall be

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² Section on Safety Precautions, Manual of Aggregate and Concrete Testing, *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 04.02.

³ 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.

round, square, or rectangular with length not more than twice the width. The top of the mold shall have a rim to provide a firm level surface to support the wood float and to facilitate the grooving and sealing steps of the procedure. The rim shall be parallel with the bottom surface of the mold.

NOTE 1—Take care to avoid use of an excessive amount of oil, grease, or mold release compound on molds, particularly along the top rim where sealing compound will be applied. Use of masking tape on the top rim during application of release compound to prevent contamination has been found expedient.

4.4 *Spoon*—A stainless steel serving spoon having a bowl 75 to 100 mm (3 to 4 in.) long and 50 to 75 mm (2 to 3 in.) wide for transferring the mortar from the mixing bowl to the mold.

4.5 *Gloves*, of rubber or plastic, to be worn while molding the specimens.

4.6 *Tamper*, of a nonabsorptive, nonabrasive material such as medium-hard rubber or seasoned oak rendered non-absorptive by immersion for 15 min in paraffin at approximately 200 °C. The tamper shall be rectangular with a 25 by 50-mm (1 by 2-in.) cross section and it shall be a convenient length (150 to 300 mm (6 to 12 in.)).

4.7 *Wood Float*, approximately 75 by 280 by 20 mm thick (3 by 11 by ¾ in.).

NOTE 2—A commercial wood float equipped with a substantial handle can be readily reduced to these dimensions. The float shall be resurfaced or replaced when there is noticeable wear to the floating surface.

4.8 *Brush*, medium-soft bristle 50-mm (2-in.) paint brush to brush the surface of the specimens prior to sealing.

4.9 *Curing Cabinet*, maintained at a temperature of 37.8 ± 1.1 °C (100 ± 2 °F) and a relative humidity of 32 ± 2 %. The curing cabinet shall be of a design that allows movement of conditioned air such that the solvent from the curing compound will be readily evaporated and eliminated from the system. Air flow over the specimens shall be adjusted to provide an evaporation rate of 2.0 to 3.4 g/h as measured by the procedure of Annex A1. The evaporation rate shall initially be measured for each position in the cabinet in which a specimen will be placed, and shall be verified annually and whenever any changes are made to the cabinet. The range of evaporation rates for all specimen positions in the test cabinet shall be reported.

4.10 *Balance*, having the capacity to determine the mass of a filled specimen mold to the nearest 0.1 g or less.

4.11 *Applicator*—For spray application, any apparatus that can be used to apply the curing compound uniformly and with minimum overspray is acceptable. For brush or roller application, use the equipment recommended by the curing compound manufacturer.

5. Materials

5.1 *Portland Cement*, conforming to the requirements for Type I of Specification C150.

5.2 *Graded Standard Sand*, conforming to the requirements of Specification C778.

5.3 *Sealing Compound*, that will not be affected by the curing material and which effectively seals against moisture loss between the boundary of the specimen and the edge of the mold.

NOTE 3—Tissue embedding wax, readily available from scientific supply houses, is a convenient and reliable sealant.

6. Conditioning

6.1 The temperature of the room and of all materials when used in this test shall be 23 ± 2 °C (73 ± 4 °F) unless otherwise specified, and the room humidity shall be 50 ± 10 %.

7. Number of Specimens

7.1 A set of three or more test specimens shall be made in order to constitute a test of a given curing material.

NOTE 4—When more than one set of specimens is to be prepared, each set should be handled as a group throughout the preparation to make the elapsed time between molding and application of the curing product as uniform as possible. This may require mixing the mortar for each set separately.

7.2 For determining the quantity of curing compound to be applied (MA) calculate the total top surface area of the specimen, including the seal and the rim of the mold in square millimetres using appropriate geometric formulae.

NOTE 5—The area (A) used in calculating the mass loss per unit area (L) is calculated in 14.2 from the surface dimensions measured inside the seal of the specimen.

8. Proportioning and Mixing Mortar

8.1 *Proportioning*—Determine the sand content of the mortar by adding dry sand to a cement paste having a water-cement ratio of 0.40 by weight, to produce a flow of 35 ± 5 in 10 drops of the flow table, following the procedure described in Test Method C87. Discard the mix used to determine the proportion of sand to cement.

NOTE 6—The sand:cement ratio required varies with the source of the cement. A ratio of 2.5:1 is suggested as a starting point. Flow may be determined on a 3 to 4 kg batch of mortar which is conveniently mixed in the mixer described in Practice C305. The mixture used to establish the sand:cement ratio is discarded because it is thought that the age and mixing history of the mortar affect the final moisture loss results and must be controlled.

8.2 *Mixing*—Combine the components of the mortar in a mortar-mixing machine to produce a homogeneous mortar not more than 6 min from the time the water and the cement are combined.

NOTE 7—A generally effective sequence is to add the cement to all of the water in the mixing bowl and allow it to stand for 30 s. Then, mix at low speed for 30 s and, without stopping the mixer, add the sand within 30 s and continue mixing for 1 min. Stop the mixer for 1 min. During the first 15 s, scrape down the sides of the bowl. Finish by mixing for an additional 1 min, and promptly begin molding the specimens.

9. Preparing Specimens

9.1 Thoroughly clean the molds before each use. Use of a mold release is acceptable provided that care is taken to avoid its application to the top rim of the mold to prevent interference with sealing of the edge.

9.2 Half fill the mold and spread the mortar with the back of the spoon to create a layer of approximately uniform thickness. Tamp over the entire surface with one stroke of the 25 by 50 mm (1 by 2 in.) face of the tamper per 1000 mm² of surface