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Standard Practice for Evaluating Retroreflective Pavement Markings Using Portable Hand-Operated Instruments¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This practice describes several field techniques to evaluate the retroreflective properties of pavement markings containing retroreflecting optics (for example, centerlines and edgelines) and applied to the road surface. The techniques described in this practice contain sampling criteria such as the length of test sections and the number of measurements needed. The practice is based on retroreflective measurements made with portable hand-operated instruments in compliance with Test Method [E1710](#).

1.2 The data obtained from this practice can be used to determine the acceptance or rejection of a project based on specified levels of retroreflectivity established by the agency having jurisdiction.

1.3 This practice can be used for the evaluation of newly installed or existing pavement markings. When testing newly applied pavement markings, it is recommended that the evaluation be done no sooner than 48 hours after application but before 30 days after application so that excess retroreflective optics, such as glass spheres, are no longer present.

1.4 The assessment techniques in this practice are based on best practices and designed to provide three levels of confidence in terms of quantifying the retroreflective performance of markings. Each technique represents a tradeoff between the number of measurements and the confidence of the retroreflective performance of the markings under study.

1.5 This practice can be used by agencies as is or may be customized to meet an agency's specific needs. Where applicable, the practice describes areas where different assumptions could be made, which would impact the sampling needs and the confidence levels of the results. When deviations from this practice are made, they shall be documented in the test report.

NOTE 1—When measuring newly installed pavement markings, there are several factors that contribute to erroneous values for measurements

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made within a short time after application, such as excess retroreflective optics, top-coatings on tape, incomplete curing of the binder, and coatings on the retroreflective optics. Retroreflective measurements taken within 48 h after application may be useful to quickly gauge the application quality but are not intended to be used with this practice.

NOTE 2—When measuring existing or in-service pavement markings, care should be taken so that representative sections of pavement markings are measured. There are particular conditions where excessive pavement marking wear can be associated with a specific cause such as vehicle tracking along horizontal curves, access points to gravel pits, and high weave areas. Pavement markings can also collect dirt, grime, and debris.

1.6 This practice replaces Test Method [D6359](#) with a multi-level strategy for evaluating the retroreflectance of pavement marking materials. This change was desired to provide agencies with options for project acceptance and monitoring of pavement markings during service.

1.7 The values stated in either SI units or inch-pound units are to be regarded separately as standard. The values stated in each system may not be exact equivalents; therefore, each system shall be used independently of the other. Combining values from the two systems may result in non-conformance with the standard.

1.8 *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

[D4061](#) Test Method for Retroreflectance of Horizontal Coatings

[D6359](#) Specification for Minimum Retroreflectance of Newly Applied Pavement Marking Using Portable Hand-Operated Instruments (Withdrawn 2006)³

[E284](#) Terminology of Appearance

[E808](#) Practice for Describing Retroreflection

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.

E1710 Test Method for Measurement of Retroreflective Pavement Marking Materials with CEN-Prescribed Geometry Using a Portable Retroreflectometer

3. Terminology

3.1 The terms and definitions in Terminology E284 and Practice E808 are applicable to this specification.

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 *acceptable quality level, AQL, n*—the maximum percent defective that, for purposes of sampling inspection, can be considered satisfactory as a process average (that is, the percent defective that can be tolerated without impairing performance).

3.2.1.1 *Discussion*—This is the maximum allowable proportion of pavement marking readings with values below specification.

3.2.2 *evaluation section*—the specific area of the pavement marking along which measurements will be made.

3.2.3 *limit quality, LQ, n*—limit of the AQL that is acceptable, providing a specified limited quality for protection.

3.2.3.1 *Discussion*—This is the proportion of pavement marking readings with values below the acceptable level, which in the worst case, would be allowed.

3.2.4 *producer's risk*—the risk the producer of the marking takes that the marking will fail the requirement specified when the marking is actually acceptable.

3.2.4.1 *Discussion*—If the population of the entire pavement marking fulfills the specification, there is still the probability that the sampling of the marking will fall below the required level as specified. This is designated the α risk (alpha risk).

3.2.5 *user's risk*—the risk the owner of the marking takes that the marking will meet the requirement specified when the marking retroreflectivity is actually substandard.

3.2.5.1 *Discussion*—If the population of the entire pavement marking fails the specification, there is still the probability that the sampling of the marking will equal or exceed the required level as specified. This is designated the β risk (beta risk).

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 This practice does not set the minimum retroreflectance values for newly installed pavement markings or minimum maintenance levels of pavement markings. It is the responsibility of the agency having jurisdiction to set the acceptable retroreflectivity values within their specifications.

4.2 This practice describes assessment techniques (including sampling criteria) to evaluate the retroreflective performance of pavement markings, which can then be used to determine compliance to a referenced specification. More specifically, this practice includes:

4.2.1 A nighttime visual inspection protocol to inspect the appearance of the markings and identify sections that appear to have inadequate retroreflectivity levels.

4.2.2 A standard evaluation protocol, which provides a reasonable measure of assurance that the retroreflectivity data collected with hand-held devices is representative of the markings being evaluated. The protocol was designed to

require a minimum number of measurements while maintaining confidence with the results.

4.2.3 A more rigorous evaluation protocol, which provides a higher level of assurance that the retroreflectivity data collected with hand-held devices is representative of the marking being evaluated. This protocol requires an intensive measurement protocol and should be used as the referee method to resolve disputes regarding the status of a marking.

4.3 The three assessment techniques described in 4.2 were designed so that they could be used independently of one another. In other words, an agency can specify the use of a specific assessment technique, a combination, or all three. Furthermore, they are not meant to be used sequentially for all evaluations, but that is certainly an option.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This practice provides procedures for the determination of the retroreflective performance of pavement markings. This practice does not set the minimum retroreflectance values for pavement markings, it describes sampling criteria for determining the retroreflective properties of pavement markings, which then can be used to determine compliance with a specification. It is the responsibility of the agency having jurisdiction to set the acceptable retroreflectivity values within their own specifications.

5.2 This practice does not purport to address all the concerns regarding contamination of the markings, but the following may be helpful. It is very important that the markings being evaluated are *clean and dry*. If the evaluation is being used relative to a measure of the performance of a contractor, it is imperative that the parties agree beforehand on the definition of *clean and dry*. There are many forms of contamination on a roadway that will lower the retroreflectivity readings of a marking, but not all of them can be removed. Asphalt oil and rubber skid marks are examples. Loose dirt can be removed by pressure washing, perhaps using soap, brushing or high-pressure air, however, these techniques are usually insufficient to remove dirt that is packed into the marking surface. Care should be taken to select areas that are *typical* of the marking section, avoiding areas of paint tracking or contamination, for example. It may be useful to take photographs using a digital camera and a good macro lens to be able to see the contamination on or between the glass beads.

6. Procedure

6.1 *Standardization of Portable Hand-Operated Retroreflective Measurement Instruments:*

6.1.1 Before taking measurements, the retroreflectometer(s) shall be standardized with an instrument standard as defined in Test Method D4061.

6.1.2 When more than one instrument is used, the instruments should be compared to a known standard in order to determine the characteristics of the specific instrument. These characteristics should be noted and taken into account when recording values.

6.2 *Nighttime Visual Inspection Protocol:*

6.2.1 This technique may be used to assess newly installed markings, and to assess the performance of in-service markings. This technique may be used to assess all types of pavement markings.

6.2.2 Schedule a night to conduct the visual inspection of the project so that the pavement markings are dry and the ambient weather conditions are free of rain, fog, or other types of precipitation.

6.2.3 A representative automobile or light passenger truck shall be used for the inspection. The headlamps shall be in good working condition and aimed correctly.

6.2.4 The inspection shall be conducted in full nighttime conditions (after civil twilight) with the vehicle headlamps on low beam.

6.2.5 Inspect all the markings visually through the windshield while driving at the posted speed.

6.2.6 Look for areas that appear to lack the luminance expected based on the specified retroreflectivity or lack the expected uniformity. Look for inconsistent areas where the luminance is below what could be expected for the pavement marking system being inspected. The use of an inspection panel with a known retroreflective level, which provides a known luminance level under given observation conditions, may be useful to identify inadequate sections. When conducting inspections of in-service markings (not newly applied markings), it is helpful to use multiple inspectors with expertise in pavement marking retroreflectivity.

6.2.7 If suspect areas are identified, note the locations. During a subsequent daytime inspection, ensure that the markings are representative and without excessive wear caused by such factors as a nearby gravel pit or in proximity to a high weave area. Evaluate the suspect areas in accordance with 6.3 Standard Evaluation Protocol or 6.4 Referee Evaluation Protocol to determine compliance to the required specification.

6.2.8 If no suspect areas are identified, record a minimum of four measurements and calculate the average. The averaged retroreflectivity level shall be used to determine compliance with the appropriate specification.

6.3 *Standard Evaluation Protocol:*

6.3.1 This technique is intended for longitudinal markings such as edgelines, lane lines, and centerlines. It is not intended to be used for pavement marking symbols, intersection markings, crosswalks, or other non-longitudinal pavement markings. Use 6.2 or 6.4 to evaluate the retroreflectivity of non-longitudinal pavement markings.

6.3.2 All measurements shall be made in the direction of travel. On the centerline of undivided highways, measurements shall be made in both directions unless otherwise specified by the agency having jurisdiction.

6.3.3 The evaluation sections can be obtained through the Nighttime Visual Inspection Protocol described in 6.2 (areas identified as being suspect). The evaluation sections can also be defined by the agency having jurisdiction, particularly if the Nighttime Visual Inspection Protocol described in 6.2 is not used.

6.3.4 The evaluation sections should be at least 400 ft [125 m] and clearly identified. There should be at least 3 evaluation sections per pavement marking of interest (unless the pavement

marking of interest is less than 2 miles [3 km], in which case a minimum of one evaluation section is needed). For pavement marking lines longer than 10 miles [16 km], the agency having jurisdiction may elect to specify more than three evaluation sections (such as three evaluation sections per 10 miles [16 km]). Measurements should be taken at regular intervals throughout the evaluation section. For lane lines and broken centerlines, two measurements should be taken on each skip line.

6.3.5 Once safe conditions are provided, portable hand-operated retroreflective measurements can be taken for each evaluation section. The intent is to take enough measurements to be confident that the mean of the measurements are close to the true mean retroreflectivity of the measurement section while minimizing the number of measurements needed. The recommended number of measurements is 16 per section, as described in Annex A1.

6.3.6 Once the measurements are recorded, calculate the average to determine a single retroreflectivity value representative for the evaluation section. This average value represents the retroreflectivity of the pavement marking and can be used to determine compliance with the appropriate specification. On the centerline of undivided roadways, the owner shall specify if the directional measurements will be averaged together to determine compliance with the appropriate specification or if they will be kept separate to determine compliance as a function of direction of travel.

6.4 *Referee Evaluation Protocol:*

6.4.1 This technique may be used to assess newly installed markings, and to assess the performance of in-service markings. This technique can be used to assess all types of pavement markings. The basis of this protocol is described in further detail in Annex A2.

6.4.2 All measurements are to be made in the direction of travel. On the centerline of undivided highways, measurements should be made in both directions unless otherwise specified by the agency having jurisdiction. Both single and double lines can be measured, the acceptance criteria of 6.4.5 shall be followed for each line.

6.4.3 *Longitudinal Pavement Marking Lines:*

6.4.3.1 *For Pavement Marking Lines 2 miles [3 km] or less (see Fig. 1)*—Measurements shall be made at one randomly located and representative evaluation section within the pavement marking line of interest. The sample size shall be set at 20 and assessed using the acceptance criteria of 6.4.5.

6.4.3.2 *For Pavement Marking Lines 2 to 10 miles [3 to 16 km] (see Fig. 2)*—Measurements shall be made at three randomly located and representative evaluation sections within the pavement marking line of interest. The evaluation sections shall not overlap. Measurements within each evaluation section shall be made with a sample size of 20 and assessed using the acceptance criteria of 6.4.5.

6.4.3.3 *For Pavement Marking Lines more than 10 miles [16 km]*—For assessing pavement marking lines longer than 10 miles [16 km], the agency having jurisdiction may elect to specify more than three evaluation sections (such as three evaluation sections per 10 miles [16 km]).