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## Standard Guide for Selection of Dimension Stone<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

Natural stone, while being perhaps the oldest building material known to man, can also be one of the most difficult of all building materials to properly evaluate, select, and specify. Every natural stone product is unique, having its own physical properties and performance capabilities. Responsible stone selection involves extensive and objective evaluation of both the stone material and the application in which it is required to perform.

This guide presents a cursory review of the different stone types commonly used in construction, common applications, available finishes, and factors affecting product costs. It is intended to be used in combination with good judgment, responsible engineering analysis, local building codes, and any other available resources. It is not a “how-to” or a “step-by-step” guide, and has been prepared with the assumption that the user has some familiarity in the use of natural stone prior to utilizing this guide.

Past performance is the best test of a dimension stone’s durability. Yet because the physical properties of a natural stone can vary within a single deposit, even stones with a history of satisfactory performance may need to be tested to ascertain the quality of the current production stock. Common physical property tests include absorption, density, compressive strength, modulus of rupture, flexural strength, abrasion resistance, and anchor strength. Additional tests may also be required depending on the material and application.

In a high proportion of the cases, failure of a natural stone in service is a result of improper application, rather than the inherent properties of the stone. Placing stones in unsuitable environments, faulty fabrication, installation, or construction practices, and incompatible associated materials are frequent causes of stone system failures (for example, high-porosity stones in subgrade applications, inadequate anchorage or expansion space, mortars leaching alkalis, inappropriate strength mortars, staining grouts, voids in setting beds, and pavement stones with inadequate resistance to abrasion).

In selection of natural dimension stone products, the application as well as the aesthetic appeal must be considered. While aesthetics are important to the design, the selection of the proper stone material, thickness, anchorage, and related components is necessary to ensure meeting the performance and durability requirements of the design.

### 1. Scope

1.1 This guide is intended to be used by architects, engineers, specifiers, contractors, and material suppliers who design, select, specify, install, purchase, fabricate, or supply natural stone products for construction applications.

1.2 *Consensus Standard*—This guide is an industry consensus standard drafted in a cooperative effort among engineers, architects, geologists, producers, and installers of natural stone.

### 2. Referenced Documents

#### 2.1 *ASTM Standards*:<sup>2</sup>

C97 Test Methods for Absorption and Bulk Specific Gravity of Dimension Stone

C99 Test Method for Modulus of Rupture of Dimension Stone

<sup>1</sup> This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee C18 on Dimension Stone and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee C18.08 on Selection of Dimension Stone.

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<sup>2</sup> For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org), or contact ASTM Customer Service at [service@astm.org](mailto:service@astm.org). For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard’s Document Summary page on the ASTM website.



- C119 Terminology Relating to Dimension Stone
- C120 Test Methods of Flexure Testing of Slate (Breaking Load, Modulus of Rupture, Modulus of Elasticity)
- C121 Test Method for Water Absorption of Slate
- C170 Test Method for Compressive Strength of Dimension Stone
- C217 Test Method for Weather Resistance of Slate
- C241 Test Method for Abrasion Resistance of Stone Subjected to Foot Traffic
- C295 Guide for Petrographic Examination of Aggregates for Concrete
- C503 Specification for Marble Dimension Stone
- C568 Specification for Limestone Dimension Stone
- C615 Specification for Granite Dimension Stone
- C616 Specification for Quartz-Based Dimension Stone
- C629 Specification for Slate Dimension Stone
- C880 Test Method for Flexural Strength of Dimension Stone
- C856 Practice for Petrographic Examination of Hardened Concrete
- C1201 Test Method for Structural Performance of Exterior Dimension Stone Cladding Systems by Uniform Static Air Pressure Difference
- C1242 Guide for Selection, Design, and Installation of Dimension Stone Attachment Systems
- C1352 Test Method for Flexural Modulus of Elasticity of Dimension Stone
- C1353 Test Method for Abrasion Resistance of Dimension Stone Subjected to Foot Traffic Using a Rotary Platform, Double-Head Abraser
- C1354 Test Method for Strength of Individual Stone Anchorages in Dimension Stone
- C1526 Specification for Serpentine Dimension Stone
- C1527 Specification for Travertine Dimension Stone
- C1721 Guide for Petrographic Examination of Dimension Stone
- D2203 Test Method for Staining from Sealants

2.2 Provisions of dimension stone handbooks, manuals, and specifications should be reviewed for compatibility with the principles outlined in this guide.

### 3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of terms used in this guide, refer to Terminology C119.

### 4. Significance and Use

4.1 *Related Components*—Natural stone is only one component of a building's construction. All related materials and assemblies need to be evaluated to ensure compatible interactive behavior with the stone product.

4.2 *Applicable Codes*—Every stone application shall comply with applicable building codes.

## EXTERIOR APPLICATIONS OF DIMENSION STONES—STONE

### 5. Introduction

5.1 Natural stones have long been used and admired for their beauty and permanence. As a natural material, each piece of stone has features and physical characteristics that make it unique. The rich variation in color and texture, as well as its ability to age gracefully in the exterior environment, ~~has~~have made stone one of the most popular materials for construction, sculpture, and monuments.

5.2 Varieties of stone possess certain properties making it suitable for a specific application. Stone geology (mineral content and structure), compressive strength, flexural strength, resistance to absorption and erosion, as well as its ability to be worked, vary widely by stone type. These are all key characteristics that dictate the best use of the material and must be considered during the process of stone selection.

### 6. Applications

~~6.1 Several major categories of stone applications are introduced briefly as follows: Exterior Applications~~

6.1 There are several major categories of exterior applications for stone; each of these is introduced below.

### 7. Load-Bearing Masonry

7.1 Load-bearing masonry is perhaps the oldest form of stone construction. Its defining feature is the transferring of structural load vertically by relying on the compressive strength of the stone to support itself and other imposed loads. Due to the weight of the stone itself, structures built in this manner tend to be of limited height. As the height of the structure increases, the wall thickness at the structure's base must increase, thus requiring large individual stones, or multiple wythes of stone. The costs of such walls are typically higher than other systems, due to the large amount of stone and labor involved.

### 8. Cladding

8.1 In response to the limitations and expense of load-bearing masonry, stone cladding systems were developed. Cladding

systems can offer the appearance of load-bearing masonry but without the mass and expense. Cladding systems also offer a wide variety of applications, allowing greater architectural innovation.

8.2 When stone is used as cladding, it is exposed to unique loading characteristics that can require complex structural analysis and detailing in order to be used successfully. Materials other than stone are also often integrated into cladding systems, requiring consideration of their material properties as well as compatibility with the stone components.

## **9. Building Trim**

9.1 Stone has been and continues to be used in architecture to accent other building materials, or to perform a specific purpose. Stone is often integrated into wall systems as decorative belt courses, window sills, lintels, arches, or water tables. Stone can add an element of interest to buildings, in addition to performing as a durable wall component with a specific and well-defined purpose.

## **10. Pavements**

10.1 From cobblestone streets to modern plazas, stone is used to carry vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Modern systems include those bearing on pedestals and traditional sand or cement-based setting bed systems.

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11.2 Steps are manufactured from dimension stones as “cubic,” in which the tread and riser faces are of one piece of stone, and also “veneered” in which multiple pieces of thin stone material are placed over a concrete or steel frame to form the tread and riser surfaces.

## **12. Coping**

12.1 Wall systems that are fully exposed to the environment, such as roof parapet walls, balcony and terrace enclosure walls, and planter walls, are particularly susceptible to water penetration. Stone coping and wall caps are often used to help protect the underlying wall system from excessive moisture penetration and associated distress.

12.2 Copings and wall caps can also add a visual accent to the wall system, improving the appearance of the wall system by defining changes in the wall configuration.

12.3 Stone copings and wall caps are typically jointed, therefore, protection of the wall system is also reliant on proper treatment of the joints.

## **13. Roofing**

13.1 Roofing applications for natural stone are typically limited to slate, a variety of stone that can be quarried and fabricated into thin, shingle-shaped elements. Dense, nonporous stones can provide a durable, water-resistant roof system that effectively utilizes the unique physical characteristics of the material.

## **14. Ornamental, Sculpture, and Monumental Elements**

14.1 Many varieties of stone possess characteristics that make them a desirable material for sculpting and carving. Most stone varieties can be worked by hand or power tools into unique shapes and representations, including engravings and reliefs. Properly selected stones can demonstrate resistance to environmental effects, thereby providing a sense of permanence to monuments and decorative sculpted items.

### **COMMON DIMENSION STONE TYPES**

#### **INTERIOR APPLICATIONS OF DIMENSION STONE**

## **15. Interior Applications**

15.1 Stone is often used at the interior of buildings due to its exceptional durability, beauty, and classical appearance. Due to the lack of environmental exposure, these applications are usually more forgiving of the material and allow for a broader range of stone varieties to be used. The major categories of interior use are discussed briefly below.

## **16. Flooring**

16.1 Stone floors are typically highly durable, low maintenance, and aesthetically pleasing. When using stone as flooring, one must make sure that the finish is appropriate for its intended use; stone used for flooring should be abrasion resistant and have a finish that is not slippery to foot traffic when wet.

16.2 Joint conditions in floor installations are also critical; while interior flooring is not subject to the same temperature fluctuations as exterior installations, the joint system should include expansion joints that will accommodate cyclic variations in the stone dimensions over time, particularly if there is a substantial heat load from sunlight exposure or below floor-heating elements.