



Designation: D5240/D5240M – 12

Standard Test Method for Evaluation of Durability of Rock for Erosion Control Using Sodium Sulfate or Magnesium Sulfate¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D5240/D5240M; 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 reappraisal. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reappraisal.

1. Scope*

1.1 This test method covers test procedures for evaluating the soundness of rock for erosion control by the effects of a sodium or magnesium sulfate solution on slabs of rock. The test is an accelerated weathering test that simulates the freezing and thawing of cold weather exposure. The rock slabs, prepared in accordance with procedures in Practice D5121, are intended to be representative of erosion control sized materials and their inherent weaknesses. The test is appropriate for breakwater stone, armor stone, riprap and gabion sized rock materials.

The limitations of this test are twofold. First the test is a simulation of freezing and thawing conditions. The internal expansive force, derived from the rehydration of the salt upon re-immersion, simulates the expansion of water on freezing relying on chemical crystal formation to simulate freezing rather than the actual freezing of water. Secondly the size of the cut rock slab specimens may eliminate some of the internal defects present in the rock structure. The test specimens may not be representative of the quality of the larger rock samples used in construction. Careful examination of the rock source and proper sampling are essential in minimizing this limitation.

1.2 The use of reclaimed concrete and other materials is beyond the scope of this test method.

1.3 *Units*—The values stated in either SI units or inch-pound units [presented in brackets] 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.

1.4 All observed and calculated values shall conform to the guidelines for significant digits and rounding established in Practice D6026, unless superseded by this standard.

1.4.1 For purposes of comparing measured or calculated value(s) with specified limits, the measured or calculated

value(s) shall be rounded to the nearest decimal or significant digits in the specified limits.

1.4.2 The procedures used to specify how data are collected/recorded or calculated, in this standard are regarded as the industry standard. In addition, they are representative of the significant digits that generally should 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 analytical methods for engineering design.

1.5 *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

- C88 Test Method for Soundness of Aggregates by Use of Sodium Sulfate or Magnesium Sulfate
- C295 Guide for Petrographic Examination of Aggregates for Concrete
- D653 Terminology Relating to Soil, Rock, and Contained Fluids
- D2216 Test Methods for Laboratory Determination of Water (Moisture) Content of Soil and Rock by Mass
- D3740 Practice for Minimum Requirements for Agencies Engaged in Testing and/or Inspection of Soil and Rock as Used in Engineering Design and Construction
- D4753 Guide for Evaluating, Selecting, and Specifying Balances and Standard Masses for Use in Soil, Rock, and Construction Materials Testing
- D4992 Practice for Evaluation of Rock to be Used for Erosion Control

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D18 on Soil and Rock and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D18.17 on Rock for Erosion Control.

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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.

*A Summary of Changes section appears at the end of this standard



[D5121 Practice for Preparation of Rock Slabs for Durability Testing](#)

[D6026 Practice for Using Significant Digits in Geotechnical Data](#)

[E100 Specification for ASTM Hydrometers](#)

[E145 Specification for Gravity-Convection and Forced-Ventilation Ovens](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—See Terminology [D653](#) for general definitions.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.2.1 *rock saw, n*—a saw capable of cutting rock. The term “rock saw” shall include the blade which saws the rock, any components that control or power the sawing process or both, and framework on which the blade and any other associated components are mounted.

3.2.2 *slab, n*—a section of rock having two smooth, approximately parallel faces, produced by two saw cuts. The thickness of the slab is generally less than the other dimensions of the rock. The slab will be the rock specimen which will subsequently undergo durability tests. The words “slab” and “specimen” are interchangeable throughout the test method.

3.2.3 *armor stone, n*—stone generally 900 to 2,700 kg [one to three tons] resulting from blasting, cutting, or by other methods placed along shorelines or in jetties to protect the shoreline from erosion due to the action of large waves.

3.2.4 *breakwater stone, n*—stone generally 2,700 to 18,000 kg [three to twenty tons] resulting from blasting, cutting, or by other methods placed along shorelines or in jetties to protect the shoreline from erosion due to the action of large waves.

3.2.5 *riprap stone, n*—stone generally less than 1,800 kg [two tons] specially selected and graded, when properly placed prevents erosion through minor wave action, or strong currents and thereby preserves the shape of a surface, slope, or underlying structure.

3.2.6 *gabion-fill stone, n*—stone generally less than 22 kg [50 lb] and placed in baskets of wire or other suitable material. These baskets are then tied together to form an integral structure designed to resist erosion along stream banks and around bridge piers.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Erosion control rock samples are trimmed into saw-cut slab specimens. The trimmed slabs are oven dried to a constant mass. The specimens are repeatedly immersed in saturated solutions of sodium sulfate or magnesium sulfate followed by oven drying. At the completion of the test, the percent loss by mass for each specimen set is determined. A visual examination of the slabs is performed at the end of testing. The type of deterioration and changes to previously noted planes of weakness are recorded.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Rock for erosion control consists of individual pieces of natural stone. The ability of these individual pieces of stone to resist deterioration due to weathering action affects the stability

of the integral placement of rock for erosion control and hence, the stability of construction projects, structures, shorelines, and stream banks.

5.2 The sodium sulfate or magnesium sulfate soundness test is one method by which to estimate qualitatively the durability of rock under weathering conditions. This test method was developed to be used in conjunction with additional test methods listed in Practice [D4992](#). This test method does not provide an absolute value, but rather an indication of the resistance to freezing and thawing; therefore, the results of this test method are not to be used as the sole basis for the determination of rock durability.

5.3 This test method has been used to evaluate many different types of rocks. There have been occasions when test results have provided data that have not agreed with the durability of rock under actual field conditions; samples yielding a low soundness loss have disintegrated in actual usage, and the reverse has been true.

NOTE 1—The quality of results produced by this standard is dependent on the competence of the personnel performing it and suitability of the equipment and facilities used. Agencies that meet the criteria of Practice [D3740](#) are generally considered capable of competent and objective testing/sampling/inspection/etc. Users of this standard are cautioned that compliance with Practice [D3740](#) does not in itself assure reliable results. Reliable results depend on many factors and Practice [D3740](#) provides a means of evaluating some of them.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Rock Saw*—A laboratory water-cooled diamond saw used to cut geological and concrete specimens, or a diamond saw used for lapidary purposes, shall be acceptable. A minimum blade diameter of 36 cm [14 in.] will be needed to obtain the required slab sizes (a larger blade is preferable). The blade shall be a circular diamond blade.

6.1.1 The rock saw apparatus shall have a fixed or removable vise to hold the samples during the cutting process. An automatic feed (either gravity, hydraulic, or screwfeed operated) that controls the cutting action is preferred; however, a manual feed is also acceptable. The saw shall have a platform to prevent the cut slab from falling and shattering.

NOTE 2—Coolants other than water may interfere with subsequent testing or evaluation, or both.

6.2 *Containers*—Of sufficient size to hold the specimens and baskets fully immersed in a sulfate solution. It is advised that these containers be sealable, non-reactive, resistant to breakage and resistant to deformation and degradation when exposed to the chemicals and temperatures encountered in this test method.

6.3 *Baskets*—Baskets for immersing the slab specimens in the solution, in accordance with the procedure described in this test method, shall be perforated in such a manner as to permit free access of the solution to the specimen and drainage of the solution from the specimen without loss of material.

NOTE 3—Baskets made of suitable wire mesh or sieves with suitable openings are satisfactory containers for the samples.

6.4 *Temperature Regulation*—Suitable means for regulating the temperature of the samples at 21 ± 1 °C [70 ± 2 °F] during immersion in the sodium sulfate or magnesium sulfate solution shall be provided.

6.5 *Balances*—The balance shall meet the requirements of Specification **D4753**. A Class GP 10 balance of 5 g readability and accuracy is acceptable.

6.6 *Drying Oven*—Thermostatically controlled oven meeting the requirements of Specification **E145** and capable of maintaining a uniform temperature of 110 ± 5 °C [230 ± 9 °F] throughout the drying chamber. These requirements typically require the use of a forced-draft type oven. Preferably the oven should be vented outside the building. The rate of evaporation, at this range of temperature, shall be at least 25 g/h for 4 h, during which period the doors of the oven shall be kept closed. This rate shall be determined by the loss of water from 1-L Griffin low-form beakers, each initially containing 500 g [1 lb] of water at a temperature of 21 ± 2 °C [70 ± 3 °F], placed at each corner and the center of each shelf of the oven. The evaporation requirement is to apply to all test locations when the oven is empty except for the beakers of water.

6.7 *Specific Gravity Measurement*—Hydrometers conforming to the requirements of Specification **E100**, or a suitable combination of graduated glassware and balance, capable of measuring the solution specific gravity within ± 0.001 .

6.8 *Camera*—A digital or film camera capable of producing good quality, color photographs for “before” and “after” photographs.

6.9 *Photographic Scale*—A scale of appropriate dimension and division when compared to the field of view and the detail being studied. When selecting a scale, always choose the scale that will provide at least as precise a measurement as the system that will be measuring the photographic information. If the system has a precision to one millimeter, make sure the scale used is accurate and precise to at least one millimeter across the entire scale.

7. Special Solutions Required

7.1 Prepare the solution for immersion of test samples from either sodium or magnesium sulfate in accordance with **7.1.1** or **7.1.2** (Note 4). The volume of the solution shall be at least five times the solid volume of all samples immersed at any one time.

NOTE 4—Some rock containing carbonates of calcium or magnesium are attacked chemically by fresh sulfate solution, resulting in erroneously high measured losses. If this condition is encountered or is suspected, repeat the test using a filtered solution that has been used previously to test the same type of carbonate rock, provided that the solution meets the requirements of **7.1.1** and **7.1.2** for specific gravity.

7.1.1 *Sodium Sulfate Solution*—Prepare a saturated solution of sodium sulfate by dissolving a reagent grade of the salt in water at a temperature of 25 to 30 °C [77 to 86 °F]. Add sufficient salt (Note 5), of either the anhydrous (Na_2SO_4) or the crystalline ($\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$) form, to ensure not only saturation but also the presence of excess crystals when the solution is ready for use in the tests. Thoroughly stir the mixture during the addition of the salt and stir the solution at frequent intervals until used. To reduce evaporation and prevent contamination, keep the solution covered at all times when access is not needed. Allow the solution to cool to 21 ± 1 °C [70 ± 2 °F]. Again stir, and allow the solution to remain at the designated

temperature for at least 48 h before use. Prior to each use, break up the salt cake, if any, in the container, stir the solution thoroughly, and determine and record the specific gravity of the solution.

When used, the solution shall have a specific gravity of 1.151 to 1.174. Discard a discolored solution, or filter it and check for specific gravity.

NOTE 5—For the solution, 215 g of anhydrous salt or 700 g of the decahydrate per litre of water are sufficient for saturation at 22 °C [71.6 °F]. However, since these salts are not completely stable and since it is desirable that an excess of crystals be present, the use of not less than 350 g of the anhydrous salt or 750 g of the decahydrate salt per litre of water is recommended.

7.1.2 *Magnesium Sulfate Solution*—Prepare a saturated solution of magnesium sulfate by dissolving a reagent grade of the salt in water at a temperature of 25 to 30 °C [77 to 86 °F]. Add sufficient salt (Note 6), of either the anhydrous (MgSO_4) or the crystalline ($\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$) (Epsom salt) form, to ensure saturation and the presence of excess crystals when the solution is ready for use in the tests. Thoroughly stir the mixture during the addition of the salt and stir the solution at frequent intervals until used. To reduce evaporation and prevent contamination, keep the solution covered at all times when access is not needed. Allow the solution to cool to 21 ± 1 °C [70 ± 2 °F]. Again stir, and allow the solution to remain at the designated temperature for at least 48 h before use. Prior to each use, break up the salt cake, if any, in the container, stir the solution thoroughly, and determine and record the specific gravity of the solution. When used, the solution shall have a specific gravity of 1.295 to 1.308. Discard a discolored solution, or filter it and check for specific gravity.

NOTE 6—For the solution, 350 g of anhydrous salt or 1230 g of the heptahydrate per litre of water are sufficient for saturation at 23 °C [73.4 °F]. However, since these salts are not completely stable, with the hydrous salt being the more stable of the two, and since it is desirable that an excess of crystals be present, it is recommended that the heptahydrate salt be used and in an amount of not less than 1400 g/litre of water.

7.1.3 *Barium Chloride Solution*—Prepare 100 mL of 5 % barium chloride solution by dissolving 5 g of BaCl_2 in 100 mL of distilled water.

NOTE 7—The previous iteration of this procedure, Test Method D5240-04, referred to Test Method **C88**. The references were to provide guidance in 1) the preparation of special solutions required and 2) the storage, drying, and cyclic requirements of the test specimens. The sections that had previously only cited Test Method **C88** have been expanded verbatim from Test Method **C88**, including all time temperature and special solution-specific gravity requirements, to permit Test Method D5240/D5240M to be a stand-alone method.

8. Sampling, Test Specimens, and Test Units

8.1 Rock source sampling shall be guided by the principles in Practice **D4992**.

8.2 Rock sources may be from mine, quarry, outcrop, or field boulders. Visual observation of color, texture, mineralogy, or some other feature, will be the key to proper representative sampling.

8.2.1 A rock source that is macroscopically uniform shall be represented by a minimum of five pieces of the material