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Standard Test Method for Tension-Tension Fatigue of Polymer Matrix Composite Materials¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D3479/D3479M; 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.

This standard has been approved for use by agencies of the Department of Defense.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method determines the fatigue behavior of polymer matrix composite materials subjected to tensile cyclic loading. The composite material forms are limited to continuous-fiber or discontinuous-fiber reinforced composites for which the elastic properties are specially orthotropic with respect to the test direction. This test method is limited to unnotched test specimens subjected to constant amplitude uniaxial in-plane loading where the loading is defined in terms of a test control parameter.

1.2 This test method presents two procedures where each defines a different test control parameter.

1.2.1 *Procedure A*—A system in which the test control parameter is the load (stress) and the machine is controlled so that the test specimen is subjected to repetitive constant amplitude load cycles. In this procedure, the test control parameter may be described using either engineering stress or applied load as a constant amplitude fatigue variable.

1.2.2 *Procedure B*—A system in which the test control parameter is the strain in the loading direction and the machine is controlled so that the test specimen is subjected to repetitive constant amplitude strain cycles. In this procedure, the test control parameter may be described using engineering strain in the loading direction as a constant amplitude fatigue variable.

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

1.4 *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

[D883 Terminology Relating to Plastics](#)

[D3039/D3039M Test Method for Tensile Properties of Polymer Matrix Composite Materials](#)

[D3878 Terminology for Composite Materials](#)

[D5229/D5229M Test Method for Moisture Absorption Properties and Equilibrium Conditioning of Polymer Matrix Composite Materials](#)

[E4 Practices for Force Verification of Testing Machines](#)

[E6 Terminology Relating to Methods of Mechanical Testing](#)

[E83 Practice for Verification and Classification of Extensometer Systems](#)

[E122 Practice for Calculating Sample Size to Estimate, With Specified Precision, the Average for a Characteristic of a Lot or Process](#)

[E177 Practice for Use of the Terms Precision and Bias in ASTM Test Methods](#)

[E456 Terminology Relating to Quality and Statistics](#)

[E467 Practice for Verification of Constant Amplitude Dynamic Forces in an Axial Fatigue Testing System](#)

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D30](#) on Composite Materials and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D30.04](#) on Lamina and Laminate Test Methods.

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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.

[E739 Practice for Statistical Analysis of Linear or Linearized Stress-Life \(*S-N*\) and Strain-Life \(*-N*\) Fatigue Data](#)
[E1012 Practice for Verification of Testing Frame and Specimen Alignment Under Tensile and Compressive Axial Force Application](#)
[E1823 Terminology Relating to Fatigue and Fracture Testing](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—Terminology [D3878](#) defines terms relating to high-modulus fibers and their composites. Terminology [E1823](#) defines terms relating to fatigue. Terminology [D883](#) defines terms relating to plastics. Terminology [E6](#) defines terms relating to mechanical testing. Terminology [E456](#) and Practice [E177](#) define terms relating to statistics. In the event of a conflict between terms, Terminology [D3878](#) shall have precedence over the other standards.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:* The following definitions shall have precedence over Terminology [D3878](#) and over other standards.

3.2.1 *constant amplitude loading, n —in fatigue*, a loading in which all of the peak values of the test control parameter are equal and all of the valley values of the test control parameter are equal.

3.2.2 *fatigue loading transition, n —in the beginning of fatigue loading*, the number of cycles before the test control parameter reaches the desired peak and valley values.

3.2.3 *frequency, f [T^{-1}], n —in fatigue loading*, the number of load (stress) or strain cycles completed in 1 s (Hz).

3.2.4 *load (stress) ratio, R [nd], n —in fatigue loading*, the ratio of the minimum applied load (stress) to the maximum applied load (stress).

3.2.5 *peak, n —in fatigue loading*, the occurrence where the first derivative of the test control parameter versus time changes from positive to negative sign; the point of maximum load (stress) or strain in constant amplitude loading.

3.2.6 *replicate (repeat) tests, n* —nominally identical tests on different test specimens conducted at the same nominal value of the independent variable.

3.2.7 *residual stiffness, [FL^{-2}], n* —the value of modulus of a specimen under quasi-static loading conditions after the specimen is subjected to fatigue loading.

3.2.8 *residual strength, [FL^{-2}], n* —the value of load (stress) required to cause failure of a specimen under quasi-static loading conditions after the specimen is subjected to fatigue loading.

3.2.9 *spectrum loading, n —in fatigue*, a loading in which the peak values of the test control parameter are not equal or the valley values of the test control parameter are not equal (also known as variable amplitude loading or irregular loading.)

3.2.10 *strain ratio, R [nd], n —in fatigue loading*, the ratio of the minimum applied strain to the maximum applied strain.

3.2.11 *test control parameter, n* —the variable in constant amplitude loading whose maximum and minimum values remain the same during cyclic loading, in other words, load (stress) or strain.

3.2.12 *valley, n —in fatigue loading*, the occurrence where the first derivative of the test control parameter versus time changes from negative to positive; the point of minimum load (stress) or strain in constant amplitude loading.

3.2.13 *wave form, n* —the shape of the peak-to-peak variation of the test control parameter as a function of time.

3.3 Symbols:

3.3.1 S_{max} (or σ_{max})—the value of stress (or strain) corresponding to the peak value of the test control parameter in a constant amplitude loading.

3.3.2 S_{min} (or σ_{min})—the value of stress (or strain) corresponding to the valley value of the test control parameter in a constant amplitude loading.

3.3.3 S_{mn} (or σ_{mn})—the mean value of stress (or strain) as illustrated in Fig. 1 and given by $S_{mn} = (S_{max} + S_{min})/2$ or $\sigma_{mn} = (\sigma_{max} + \sigma_{min})/2$.

3.3.4 S_a (or σ_a)—the difference between the mean value of stress (or strain) and the maximum and minimum stress (or strain) as illustrated in Figure 1 and given by $S_a = (S_{max} - S_{min})/2$ or $\sigma_a = (\sigma_{max} - \sigma_{min})/2$.

3.3.5 N_f —the scalar value of fatigue life or number of constant amplitude cycles to failure.

3.3.6 —Weibull fatigue life scale parameter.

3.3.7 —Weibull fatigue life shape parameter.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 The tensile specimen described in Test Method [D3039/D3039M](#) is mounted in the grips of the testing machine and is tested as follows:

4.1.1 *Procedure A*—The specimen is cycled between minimum and maximum in-plane axial load (stress) at a specified frequency. The number of load cycles at which failure occurs (or at which a predetermined change in specimen stiffness is observed) can be determined for a specimen subjected to a specific load (stress) ratio and maximum stress. For some purposes it

is useful to obtain the in-plane stiffness at selected cycle intervals from static axial stress-strain curves using modulus determination procedures found in Test Method [D3039/D3039M](#).

4.1.2 *Procedure B*—The specimen is cycled between minimum and maximum in-plane axial strain at a specified frequency. The number of strain cycles at which specimen failure occurs (or at which a predetermined change in specimen stiffness is observed) can be determined at a given strain ratio and maximum strain. For some purposes it is useful to obtain the in-plane stiffness at selected cycle intervals from static axial stress-strain curves using modulus determination procedures found in Test Method [D3039/D3039M](#) or continuously from dynamic axial stress-strain data using similar procedures as found in Test Method [D3039/D3039M](#).

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method is designed to yield tensile fatigue data for material specifications, research and development, quality assurance, and structural design and analysis. The primary test result is the fatigue life of the test specimen under a specific loading and environmental condition. Replicate tests may be used to obtain a distribution of fatigue life for specific material types, laminate stacking sequences, environments, and loading conditions. Guidance in statistical analysis of fatigue life data, such as determination of linearized stress life (S-N) or strain-life (-N) curves, can be found in Practice [E739](#).

5.2 This test method can be utilized in the study of fatigue damage in a polymer matrix composite such as the occurrence of microscopic cracks, fiber fractures, or delaminations.³ The specimen's residual strength or stiffness, or both, may change due to these damage mechanisms. The loss in stiffness may be quantified by discontinuing cyclic loading at selected cycle intervals to obtain the quasi-static axial stress-strain curve using modulus determination procedures found in Test Method [D3039/D3039M](#). The loss in strength associated with fatigue damage may be determined by discontinuing cyclic loading to obtain the static strength using Test Method [D3039/D3039M](#).

NOTE 1—This test method may be used as a guide to conduct tension-tension variable amplitude loading. This information can be useful in the understanding of fatigue behavior of composite structures under spectrum loading conditions, but is not covered in this test ~~method~~.method.

6. Interferences

6.1 *Material and Specimen Preparation*—Poor material fabrication practices, lack of control of fiber alignment, and damage induced by improper coupon machining are known causes of a large degree scatter in composite fatigue data.

6.2 *System Alignment*—Excessive bending will cause premature failure. Every effort should be made to eliminate excess bending from the test system. Bending may occur due to misaligned grips, or from specimens themselves if improperly installed in the grips, or from out-of-tolerance due to poor specimen preparation. If there is any doubt as to the alignment inherent in a given test machine then the alignment should be checked as discussed in [7.2.6](#).

6.3 *Tab Failure*—Premature failure of the specimen in the tab region is common in tension-tension fatigue testing as a result of stress concentrations in the vicinity of tab region. A set of preliminary fatigue tests are recommended to find the combination of tab material, tab length, and adhesive that minimizes tab failures. Using an optical microscope to view the edge of the specimen, it can be determined if similar states of damage occur in the tab region and the gage region.

6.4 *Load History*—Variations in testing frequency, and stress (or strain) ratio from test to test will result in variations in fatigue life data. Every effort should be made to evaluate the fatigue performance of composite laminates using the same testing frequencies and load (or stress) ratios.

7. Apparatus

7.1 *Micrometers*—As described in Test Method [D3039/D3039M](#).

7.2 *Testing Machine*—The testing machine shall be in conformance with Practices [E4](#) and [E467](#), and shall satisfy the following requirements:

7.2.1 *Testing Machine Heads*—The testing machine shall have both an essentially stationary head and a movable head.

7.2.2 *Drive Mechanism and Controller*—The testing machine shall be capable of imparting to the movable head a controlled velocity with respect to the stationary head. The velocity of the movable head shall be capable of being regulated under cyclic load (stress) or strain conditions. The drive mechanism and controller shall be in compliance with Practice [E467](#) and shall be capable of imparting a continuous loading wave form to the specimen. It is important to minimize drift of the fatigue loading away from the maximum and minimum values. Achieving such accuracy is critical in the development of reliable fatigue life data since small errors in loading may result in significant errors in fatigue life.

7.2.3 *Load Indicator*—As described in Test Method [D3039/D3039M](#). The load indicator shall be in compliance with Practice [E4](#). The fatigue rating of the load indicator shall exceed the loads at which testing will take place. Additionally this test method recommends compliance with Practice [E467](#) for the development of a system dynamic conversion for the verification of specimen loads to within 1 % of true loads.

³ Reifsnider, K. L., 1991, "Damage and Damage Mechanics," *Composite Materials Series: Fatigue of Composites*, Vol 4, pp. 11–75.