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Standard Test Methods for Determining the Effects of High Altitude on Packaging Systems by Vacuum Method¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D6653/D6653M; 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.

~~^{ε1} NOTE—Units information was corrected editorially in March 2011.~~

1. Scope

1.1 These test methods determine the effects of pressure differential when packaged products are transported via certain modes of transport, such as feeder aircraft or ground over high mountain passes. The results of these tests are intended to be used for qualitative purposes.

1.2 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.

1.3 *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.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

[D996 Terminology of Packaging and Distribution Environments](#)

[D3078 Test Method for Determination of Leaks in Flexible Packaging by Bubble Emission](#)

[D4169 Practice for Performance Testing of Shipping Containers and Systems](#)

[D4332 Practice for Conditioning Containers, Packages, or Packaging Components for Testing](#)

[D4991 Test Method for Leakage Testing of Empty Rigid Containers by Vacuum Method](#)

[D5094 Test Methods for Gross Leakage of Liquids from Containers with Threaded or Lug-Style Closures](#)

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

2.2 Other:

[Altitude-pressure tables based on the United States Standard Atmospheres³](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—Terms and definitions used in these test methods may be found in Terminology [D996](#).

3.2 *Definition of Term:*

3.2.1 *feeder aircraft, n*—small, potentially nonpressurized aircraft used to transport express air packages to remote areas.

¹ These test methods are under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D10](#) on Packaging and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D10.21](#) on Shipping Containers and Systems - Application of Performance 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.

³ Available from [http://naca.larc.nasa.gov/reports/1936/naca-report-538/](#).



4. Significance and Use

4.1 Packaged products transported via the feeder aircraft network are liable to experience altitudes as high as 5 791 m [19 000 ft].⁴ When exposed to these high altitude conditions, products or packaging systems, or a combination thereof, may be affected negatively by the resultant pressure differential.

4.2 These test methods are suitable for evaluating the effect of high altitude on packaging systems.

4.3 These test methods are suitable for package or product, or both, development and engineering.

4.4 Other test methods, such as Test Methods **D3078**, **D4991** and **D5094**, test for leakage of packaging systems by vacuum method and are applicable for testing the effects of high altitude.

5. Apparatus

5.1 *Vacuum Chamber*—Any suitable chamber capable of withstanding approximately one atmosphere pressure differential fitted with a flat-vacuum-tight cover or equivalent chamber providing the same functional capabilities, such as an altitude chamber.

5.2 *Vacuum Gage, Inlet Tube from a Source of Vacuum and Outlet Tube to the Atmosphere*, shall be sealed to the chamber. The inlet and outlet tubes shall be equipped with hand operated valves. The vacuum gauge shall be laboratory quality with a full-scale range of 0 to 100 kPa [0 to 30 in. Hg] with minimum graduation no greater than 2 kPa [1 in. Hg] and accuracy to within 2 %.

5.3 *The Chamber*, shall be large enough to contain the test specimen, as well as allow for the expansion of the product or package, or both.

6. Sampling

6.1 The test specimens and number of samples shall be chosen to permit an adequate determination of representative performance (see Practice **E122**).

6.2 In the absence of any sampling plan, at least three representative specimens should be selected for performance evaluation.

7. Test Specimen

7.1 A test specimen shall consist of an assembled packaging system, representative of a production run package, or components of an assembled packaging system, to include primary and/or secondary packaging.

8. Conditioning

8.1 Test specimens shall be conditioned to $5.6 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ [$42 \pm 3.6^\circ\text{F}$] for a minimum of 24 h prior to testing.

8.2 Test specimens shall be tested in and at conditions of $5.6 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ [$42 \pm 3.6^\circ\text{F}$].⁴

8.3 If conditioning prior to testing or during test is not possible, then it is recommended to condition test specimen to a standard conditioning atmosphere of $23 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ [$73.4 \pm 3.6^\circ\text{F}$] for a minimum of 24 h prior to testing (see Practice **D4332**).

8.4 Conditioning specifications may be modified based on knowledge of shipping environment, product value, desired damage level acceptances, or other criteria (see **Appendix X1** for guidance).

9. Procedure

9.1 Place the test specimen in the vacuum chamber. Close the chamber inlet valve, open the outlet valve and turn the vacuum source on so that the gauge rises at an approximate rate of 305 m [1 000 ft] 30-60 s until the appropriate pressure is achieved.

9.1.1 Attain a pressure equivalent to 4 877 m [16 000 ft] $\pm 5\%$ for test specimens tested at condition specifications.⁴

9.1.2 Attain a pressure equivalent to 4 267 m [14 000 ft] $\pm 5\%$ if testing the test specimens at the condition specifications is not possible (see **8.1**, **8.3** and Table X1.1).

9.1.3 The vacuum pressure may be modified based on knowledge of shipping environment, product value, desired damage level acceptances, or other criteria (see **Appendix X1** and Table X2.1 for guidance).

9.2 Maintain the vacuum for 60 min. The test duration may be modified based on knowledge of shipping environment, product value, desired damage level acceptances, or other criteria (see **Appendix X1** and Table X2.1 for guidance).

9.3 Partially open the chamber inlet valve and release the vacuum at a rate of approximately 305 m [1 000 ft] per 30-60 s.

9.4 Open the chambers cover and remove the test specimen and examine for any damage or deformation.⁵

9.5 Record the results of examination.

⁴ Based on field testing analysis. Available from ASTM headquarters. Request analysis. See Singh, S. P., Singh, RR:D10-1013 on Altitude-J., Stallings, J., Burgess, G., and Saha, K., "Measurement and Analysis of Temperature and Pressure in High Altitude Air Shipments," *and Temperature—Study Journal of Packaging Technology and Science, of the Feeder Aircraft Network*, Vol. 23, Issue 1, pp. 35 – 46, December 2009.

⁵ Damage may be in the form of package failure, closure failure, material failure, product failure, or combination thereof.