Designation: B571 – 97 (Reapproved 2013)

Standard Practice for Qualitative Adhesion Testing of Metallic Coatings[1]

This standard is issued under the fixed designation B571; 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.

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

1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers simple, qualitative tests for evaluating the adhesion of metallic coatings on various substances.

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this 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. Significance and Use

2.1 These tests are useful for production control and for acceptance testing of products.

2.2 Interpreting the results of qualitative methods for determining the adhesion of metallic coatings is often a controversial subject. If more than one test is used, failure to pass any one test is considered unsatisfactory. In many instances, the end use of the coated article or its method of fabrication will suggest the technique that best represents functional requirements. For example, an article that is to be subsequently formed would suggest a draw or a bend test; an article that is to be soldered or otherwise exposed to heat would suggest a heat-quench test. If a part requires baking or heat treating after plating, adhesion tests should be carried out after such post-treatment as well.

2.3 Several of the tests are limited to specific types of coatings, thickness ranges, ductilities, or compositions of the substrate. These limitations are noted generally in the test descriptions and are summarized in Table 1 for certain metallic coatings.

2.4 "Perfect" adhesion exists if the bonding between the coating and the substrate is greater than the cohesive strength of either. Such adhesion is usually obtained if good electroplating practices are followed.

2.5 For many purposes, the adhesion test has the objective of detecting any adhesion less than "perfect." For such a test, one uses any means available to attempt to separate the coating from the substrate. This may be prying, hammering, bending, beating, heating, sawing, grinding, pulling, scribing, chiseling, or a combination of such treatments. If the coating peels, flakes, or lifts from the substrate, the adhesion is less than perfect.

2.6 If evaluation of adhesion is required, it may be desirable to use one or more of the following tests. These tests have varying degrees of severity; and one might serve to distinguish between satisfactory and unsatisfactory adhesion in a specific application. The choice for each situation must be determined.

2.7 When this guideline is used for acceptance inspection, the method or methods to be used must be specified. Because the results of tests in cases of marginal adhesion are subject to interpretation, agreement shall be reached on what is acceptable.

2.8 If the size and shape of the item to be tested precludes use of the designated test, equivalent test panels may be appropriate. If permitted, test panels shall be of the same material and have the same surface finish as the item to be tested and shall be processed through the *same* preplating, electroplating, and postplating cycle with the parts they represent.

3. Bend Tests

3.1 Bend the part with the coated surface away over a mandrel until its two legs are parallel. The mandrel diameter should be four times the thickness of the sample. Examine the deformed area visually under low magnification, for example, 4×, for peeling or flaking of the coating from the substrate, which is evidence of poor adhesion. If the coating fractures or blisters, a sharp blade may be used to attempt to lift off the coating. With hard or brittle coatings, cracking usually occurs in the bend area. Such cracks may or may not propagate into the substrate. In either case, cracks are not indicative of poor adhesion unless the coating can be peeled back with a sharp instrument.

[1] This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee B08 on Metallic and Inorganic Coatings and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee B08.10 on Test Methods.

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TABLE 1 Adhesion Tests Appropriate for Various Coatings

Adhesion Test	Coating Material[A]											
	Cadmium	Chromium	Copper	Lead and Lead/Tin Alloy	Nickel	Nickel and Chromium	Palladium	Rhodium	Silver	Tin and Tin/Lead Alloy	Zinc	Gold
Bend	+	–	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Burnish	–	+	+	–	+	+	–	–	+	–	+	–
Chisel/knife	+	+	+	+	+	–	+	–	+	+	–	+
Draw	–	–	+	–	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	–
File	–	+	+	+	+	+	–	+	+	+	–	+
Grind and saw	+	+	–	–	+	+	+	–	–	+	+	–
Heat/quench	–	+	+	+	+	+	–	–	+	+	–	+
Impact	+	–	+	–	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	–
Peel	–	+	+	–	+	–	–	–	+	+	–	+
Push	–	–	–	–	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	–
Scribe	–	–	+	–	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

[A] + Appropriate; – not appropriate.

TABLE 2 Temperature Test Guide

Substrate	Coating Material						
	Chromium, Nickel, Nickel + Chromium, Copper, Temperature, °C	Tin, Temperature, °C	Lead, Tin/Lead, Temperature, °C	Zinc, Temperature, °C	Gold and Silver, Temperature, °C	Palladium, Temperature, °C	Rhodium, Temperature, °C
Steel	250	150	150	150	250	350	185
Zinc alloys	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
Copper and copper alloys	250	150	150	150	250	350	185
Aluminum and aluminum alloys	220	150	150	150	220	220	185

3.2 Bend the part repeatedly, back and forth, through an angle of 180° until failure of the basis metal occurs. Examine the region at low magnification, for example, 10×, for separation or peeling of the coating. Prying with a sharp blade will indicate unsatisfactory adhesion by lift off of the coating.

4. Burnishing Test

4.1 Rub a coated area of about 5 cm with a smooth-ended tool for approximately 15 s. A suitable tool is a steel rod 6 mm in diameter with a smooth hemispherical end. The pressure shall be sufficient to burnish the coating at each stroke but not so great as to dig into it. Blisters, lifting, or peeling should not develop. Generally, thick deposits cannot be evaluated satisfactorily.

5. Chisel-Knife Test

5.1 Use a sharp cold chisel to penetrate the coating on the article being evaluated. Alternatively the chisel may be placed in back of an overhang area of the coating or at a coating-substrate interface exposed by sectioning the article with a saw. A knife may be substituted for the chisel with or without hammering or light tapping. If it is possible to remove the deposit, the adhesion is not satisfactory. Soft or thin coatings cannot be evaluated for adhesion by this method.

6. Draw Test

6.1 Form a suitable sample about 60 mm in diameter into a flanged cap approximately 38 mm in diameter, to a depth up to 18 mm, through the use of a set of adjustable dies in an ordinary punch press.[2] Penetration of the male die may be continued until the cap fractures. The adhesion of the coating may be observed directly or evaluated further by techniques described in Section 5 for detachment from the substrate. If there is peeling or flaking of the coating or if it can be detached, the adhesion is not satisfactory.

6.2 Results from this technique must be interpreted cautiously, because the ductilities of both the coating and substrate are involved.

7. File Test

7.1 Saw off a piece of the coated specimen and inspect it for detachment at the deposit/substrate interface. Apply coarse mill file across the sawed edge from the substrate toward the coating so as to raise it, using an approach angle of approximately 45° to the coating surface. Lifting or peeling is evidence of unsatisfactory adhesion.

7.2 This technique is not suitable for thin or soft coatings.

8. Grind-Saw Test

8.1 Hold the coated article against a rough emery wheel so that the wheel cuts from substrate toward the deposit in a jerky or bumpy fashion. A hack saw may be substituted for the wheel, making sure to saw in the direction that tends to

[2] Romanoff, F. P., *Transactions*, Electrochem. Soc., Vol 65, 1934, p. 385; *Proceedings*, Amer. Electroplaters Soc. Vol 22, 1934, p. 155; *Monthly Review*, Amer. Electroplaters Soc., Vol 22, April 1935, p. 8.