



Standard Guide for Underground Installation of “Fiberglass” (Glass- Fiber Reinforced (Glass-Fiber Reinforced Thermosetting- Resin) Pipe)¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D3839; 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 U.S. Department of Defense.

1. Scope*

1.1 This practice establishes procedures for the burial of pressure and nonpressure “fiberglass” (glass-fiber-reinforced thermosetting-resin) pipe in many typically encountered soil conditions. Included are recommendations for trenching, placing pipe, joining pipe, placing and compacting backfill, and monitoring deflection levels. Guidance for installation of fiberglass pipe in subaqueous conditions is not included.

1.2 Product standards for fiberglass pipe encompass a wide range of product variables. Diameters range from 1 in. to 13 ft (25 mm to 4000 mm) and pipe stiffnesses range from 9 to over 72 psi (60 to 500 kPa) with internal pressure ratings up to several thousand pound force per square inch. This standard does not purport to consider all of the possible combinations of pipe, soil types, and natural ground conditions that may occur. The recommendations in this practice may need to be modified or expanded to meet the needs of some installation conditions. In particular, fiberglass pipe with diameters of a few inches are generally so stiff that they are frequently installed in accordance with different guidelines. Consult with the pipe manufacturer for guidance on which practices are applicable to these particular pipes.

1.3 The scope of this practice excludes product-performance criteria such as a minimum pipe stiffness, maximum service deflection, or long-term strength. Such parameters may be contained in product standards or design specifications, or both, for fiberglass pipe. It is incumbent upon the specified product manufacturer or project engineer to verify and ensure that the pipe specified for an intended application, when installed in accordance with procedures outlined in this practice, will provide a long-term, satisfactory performance in accordance with criteria established for that application.

NOTE 1—There is no similar or equivalent ISO standard.

NOTE 2—A discussion of the importance of deflection and a presentation of a simplified method to approximate field deflections are given in AWWA Manual of Practice M45 Fiberglass Pipe Design.

1.4 The values stated in inch-pound units are to be regarded as standard. The values given in parentheses are mathematical conversions to SI units that are provided for information only and are not considered standard.

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

[D8 Terminology Relating to Materials for Roads and Pavements](#)

[D653 Terminology Relating to Soil, Rock, and Contained Fluids](#)

[D698 Test Methods for Laboratory Compaction Characteristics of Soil Using Standard Effort \(12 400 ft-lbf/ft³ \(600 kN-m/m³\)\)](#)

[D883 Terminology Relating to Plastics](#)

[D1556 Test Method for Density and Unit Weight of Soil in Place by Sand-Cone Method](#)

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D20 on Plastics and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D20.23 on Reinforced Plastic Piping Systems and Chemical Equipment.

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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

- ~~D1557 Test Methods for Laboratory Compaction Characteristics of Soil Using Modified Effort (56,000 ft-lbf/ft³ (2,700 kN-m/m³))~~
- D2167 Test Method for Density and Unit Weight of Soil in Place by the Rubber Balloon Method
- D2216 Test Methods for Laboratory Determination of Water (Moisture) Content of Soil and Rock by Mass
- D2487 Practice for Classification of Soils for Engineering Purposes (Unified Soil Classification System)
- D2488 Practice for Description and Identification of Soils (Visual-Manual Procedure)
- ~~D2922 Test Methods for Density of Soil and Soil-Aggregate in Place by Nuclear Methods (Shallow Depth) (Withdrawn 2007)³~~
- ~~D3017 Test Method for Water Content of Soil and Rock in Place by Nuclear Methods (Shallow Depth)~~
- D4253 Test Methods for Maximum Index Density and Unit Weight of Soils Using a Vibratory Table
- D4254 Test Methods for Minimum Index Density and Unit Weight of Soils and Calculation of Relative Density
- D4318 Test Methods for Liquid Limit, Plastic Limit, and Plasticity Index of Soils
- D4564 Test Method for Density and Unit Weight of Soil in Place by the Sleeve Method (Withdrawn 2013)³
- D4643 Test Method for Determination of Water (Moisture) Content of Soil by Microwave Oven Heating
- D4914 Test Methods for Density and Unit Weight of Soil and Rock in Place by the Sand Replacement Method in a Test Pit
- D4944 Test Method for Field Determination of Water (Moisture) Content of Soil by the Calcium Carbide Gas Pressure Tester
- D4959 Test Method for Determination of Water (Moisture) Content of Soil By Direct Heating
- D5030 Test Method for Density of Soil and Rock in Place by the Water Replacement Method in a Test Pit
- D5080 Test Method for Rapid Determination of Percent Compaction
- D5821 Test Method for Determining the Percentage of Fractured Particles in Coarse Aggregate
- D6938 Test Method for In-Place Density and Water Content of Soil and Soil-Aggregate by Nuclear Methods (Shallow Depth)
- D7382 Test Methods for Determination of Maximum Dry Unit Weight and Water Content Range for Effective Compaction of Granular Soils Using a Vibrating Hammer
- F412 Terminology Relating to Plastic Piping Systems
- F1668 Guide for Construction Procedures for Buried Plastic Pipe

2.2 Other Standards:

- AASHTO LRFD Bridge Design Specifications, 2nd Edition, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials⁴
- AASHTO M145 Classification of Soils and Soil Aggregate Mixtures⁴
- AWWA Manual of Practice M45 Fiberglass Pipe Design Manual⁵

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *General*—Unless otherwise indicated, definitions are in accordance with Terminologies **D8**, **D653**, **D883**, and **F412**.

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 *bedding*—backfill material placed in the bottom of the trench or on the foundation to provide a uniform material on which to lay the pipe.

3.2.2 *compactibility*—a measure of the ease with which a soil may be compacted to a high density and high stiffness. Crushed rock has high compactibility because a dense and stiff state may be achieved with little compactive energy.

3.2.3 *deflection*—any change in the inside diameter of the pipe resulting from installation or imposed loads, or both; deflection may be either vertical or horizontal and is usually reported as a percentage of the nominal inside pipe diameter.

3.2.4 *engineer*—the engineer in responsible charge of the work or his duly recognized or authorized representative.

3.2.5 *fiberglass pipe*—a tubular product containing glass-fiber reinforcements embedded in or surrounded by cured thermosetting resin; the composite structure may contain aggregate, granular, or platelet fillers, thixotropic agents, pigments, or dyes; thermoplastic or thermosetting liners or coatings may be included.

3.2.6 *final backfill*—backfill material placed from the top of the initial backfill to the ground surface (see **Fig. 1**.)

3.2.7 *fines*—soil particles that pass a No. 200 (0.076 mm) seive; sieve.

3.2.8 *foundation*—in situ soil or, in the case of unsuitable ground conditions compacted backfill material, in the bottom of the trench the supports the bedding and the pipe (see **Fig. 1**).

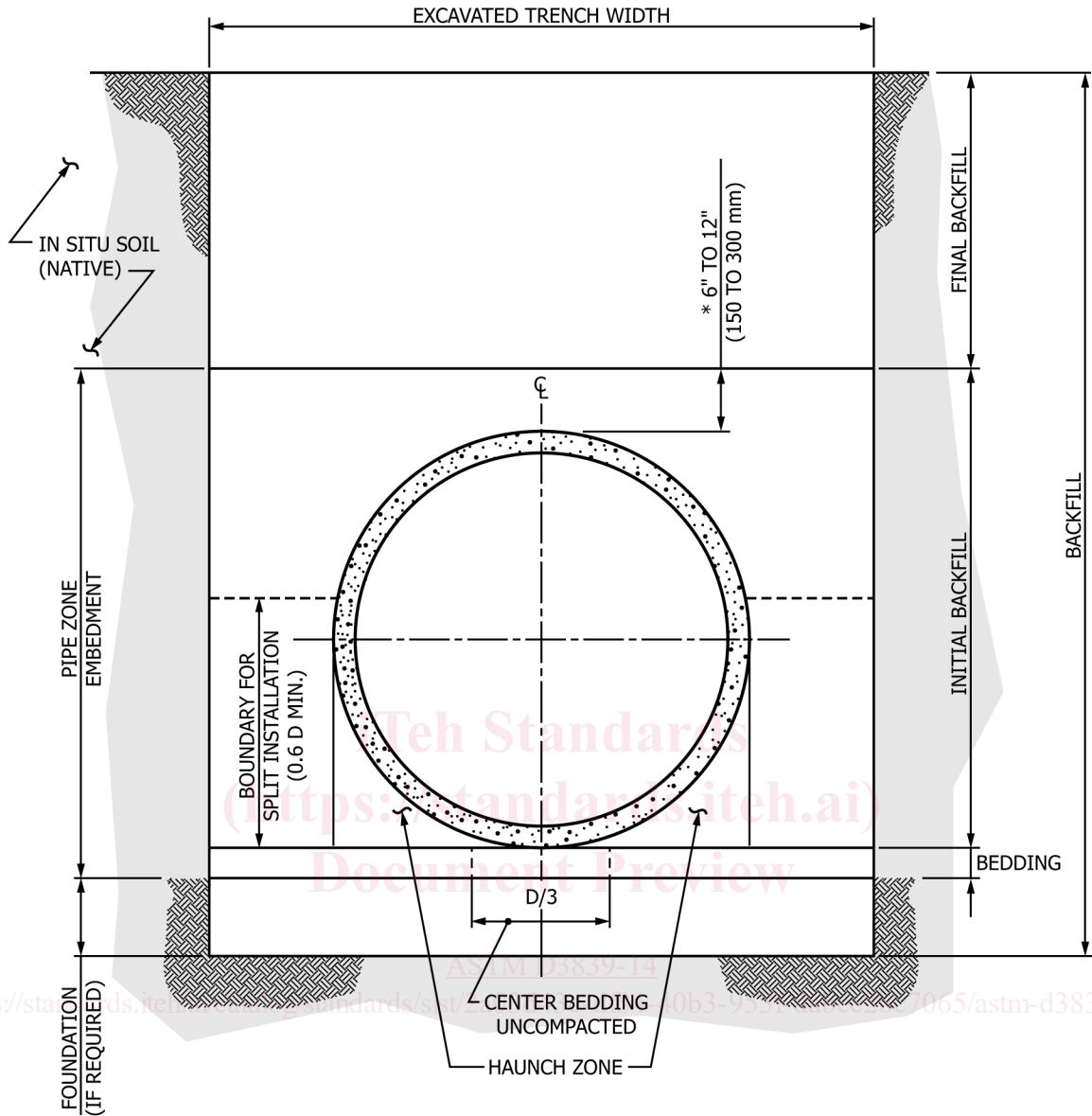
3.2.9 *geotextile*—any permeable textile material used with foundation, soil, earth, rock, or any other geotechnical engineering related material, as an integral part of a man-made product, structure, or system.

3.2.10 *haunching*—backfill material placed on top of the bedding and under the springline of the pipe; the term haunching only pertains to soil directly beneath the pipe (see **Fig. 1**).

³ The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.

⁴ Available from American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), 444 N. Capitol St., NW, Suite 249, Washington, DC 20001.

⁵ Available from American Water Works Association (AWWA), 6666 W. Quincy Ave., Denver, CO 80235, <http://www.awwa.org>.



*See 7.7, Minimum Cover.

FIG. 1 Trench Cross-Section Terminology

3.2.11 *initial backfill*—backfill material placed at the sides of the pipe and up to 6 to 12 in. (150 to 300 mm) over the top of the pipe, including the haunching.

3.2.12 *manufactured aggregates*—aggregates that are products or by-products of a manufacturing process, or natural aggregates that are reduced to their final form by a manufacturing process such as crushing.

3.2.13 *maximum standard Proctor density—modulus of soil reaction (E')*—the maximum dry unit weight of soil compacted at optimum moisture content, as obtained by laboratory test in accordance with Test Method ~~D698~~ an empirical value used in the Iowa deflection formula that defines the stiffness of the soil embedment around a buried pipe. ~~D698~~:

3.2.14 *native (in situ) soil*—natural soil in which a trench is excavated for pipe installation or on which a pipe and embankment are placed.

3.2.15 *open-graded aggregate*—an aggregate with a particle-size distribution such that when compacted, the resulting voids between the aggregate particles are relatively large.

3.2.16 *optimum moisture content*—the moisture content of soil at which its maximum density is obtained. (See Test Method ~~D698~~ and ~~D1557~~.)

3.2.17 *percent compaction*—the ratio, expressed as a percentage, of: (1) dry unit weight of a soil, to (2) maximum unit weight obtained in a laboratory compaction test.

3.2.18 *pipe zone embedment*—all backfill around the pipe; this includes the bedding, haunching, and initial backfill.

3.2.19 *processed aggregates*—aggregates which are screened or washed or mixed or blended to produce a specific particle-size distribution.

3.2.20 *relative density*—*secant constrained soil modulus (M_s)*—a measure of the density of a granular soil based on the actual density of the soil “relative” to the soil in its loosest state and the soil in its densest state (see Terminology value for soil stiffness determined as the secant slope of the stress-strain curve of [D653](#) for a precise definition) as obtained a one-dimensional compression test; M_s by laboratory testing in accordance with Test Methods can be used in place of E' in [D4253](#) and the Iowa [D4254](#) deflection formula.

3.2.21 *soil stiffness*—a property of soil, generally represented numerically by a modulus of deformation that indicates the relative amount of deformation that will occur under a given load.

3.2.22 *split installation*—an installation in which the initial backfill consists of two different materials or one material placed at two different densities; the first material extends from the top of the bedding to a depth of at least 0.6 times the diameter and the second material extends to the top of the initial backfill.

3.2.23 *standard proctor density (SPD)*—the maximum dry unit weight of soil compacted at optimum moisture content, as obtained by laboratory test in accordance with Test Methods [D698](#).

4. Significance and Use

4.1 This practice is for use by designers and specifiers, manufacturers, installation contractors, regulatory agencies, owners, and inspection organizations involved in the construction of buried fiberglass pipelines. As with any practice, modifications may be required for specific job conditions, or for special local or regional conditions. Recommendations for inclusion of this practice in contract documents for a specific project are given in [Appendix X1](#).

5. Materials

5.1 *Classification*—Soil types used or encountered in burying pipes include those natural soils classified in [Table 1](#) Practice [D2487](#) and natural, manufactured, manufactured and processed aggregates. The soil classifications materials are grouped into soil-stiffness categories (SC#) soil classes in [Table 21](#) based on the typical soil stiffness when compacted. Category SC1 Class I indicates a soil that generally provides the highest soil stiffness at any given percentage of maximum Proctor density, percent compaction, and provides a given soil stiffness with the least compactive effort. Each higher-number soil-stiffness category soil class provides successively less soil stiffness at a given percentage of maximum Proctor density percent compaction and requires greater compactive effort to provide a given level of soil stiffness.

NOTE 3—See Practices [D2487](#) and [D2488](#) for laboratory and field visual-manual procedures for identification of soils.

NOTE 4—Processed materials produced for highway construction, including coarse aggregate, base, subbase, and surface coarse materials, when used for foundation, embedment, and backfill, should be categorized in accordance with this section and [Table 1](#) Practice [D2487](#) in accordance with particle size and gradation. standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/2a03d43c-df84-40b3-953f-dabcc2bc7065/astm-d3839-14

5.2 *Installation and Use*—[Table 32](#) provides recommendations on installation and use based on soil-stiffness category class and location in the trench. Categories SC1 to SC4 Soil Classes I to IV should be used as recommended in [Table 32](#). Soil-stiffness Category 5; Soil Class V, including clays and silts with liquid limits greater than 50; 50 %, organic soils, and frozen soils, shall be excluded from the pipe-zone embedment.

5.2.1 *Soil-Stiffness Category 1 (SC1)—Soil Class I—SC1 Class I* materials provide maximum stability and pipe support for a given percent compaction due to the low content of sand and fines. With minimum effort these materials can be installed at relatively high-soil stiffnesses over a wide range of moisture contents. In addition, the high permeability of SC1 Class I materials may aid in the control of water, and these materials are often desirable for embedment in rock cuts where water is frequently encountered. However, when ground-water flow is anticipated, consideration should be given to the potential for migration of fines from adjacent materials into the open-graded SC1 Class I materials. (See [5.6](#).)

5.2.2 *Soil-Stiffness Category 2 (SC2)—Soil Class II—SC2 Class II* materials, when compacted, provide a relatively high level of pipe support; however, open-graded groups may allow migration and the sizes should be checked for compatibility with adjacent material; see [5.6](#).

5.2.3 *Soil-Stiffness Category 3 (SC3)—Soil Class III—SC3 Class III* materials provide less support for a given density than SC1 or SC2 percent compaction than Class I or Class II materials. Higher levels of compactive effort are required and moisture content must be near optimum to minimize compactive effort and achieve the required density. percent compaction. These materials provide reasonable levels of pipe support once proper density percent compaction is achieved.

5.2.4 *Soil-Stiffness Category 4 (SC4)—Soil Class IV—SC4 Class IV* materials require a geotechnical evaluation prior to use. Moisture content must be near optimum to minimize compactive effort and achieve the required density. percent compaction. Properly placed and compacted, SC4 Class IV materials can provide reasonable levels of pipe support; however, these materials may not be suitable under high fills, surface-applied wheel loads, or under high-energy-level vibratory compactors and tampers. Do not use where water conditions in the trench may prevent proper placement and compaction.

NOTE 5—The term “high energy level vibratory compactors and tampers” refers to compaction equipment that might deflect or distort the pipe more

TABLE 2 Soil Stiffness Categories^{A,B,C,D}

Soil Group ^A	Soil Stiffness Category	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Soil Groups ^B
Crushed rock: ≤ 15 % sand, maximum 25 % passing the 3/8 in. sieve and maximum 5 % passing a #200 sieve	SC1 ^C	
Clean, coarse grained soils: SW, SP, GW, GP or any soil beginning with one of these symbols with 12 % or less passing a #200 sieve	SC2	A1, A3
Coarse grained soils with fines: GM, GC, SM, SC, or any soil beginning with one of these symbols, containing more than 12 % passing a #200 sieve; Sandy or gravelly fine-grained soils: CL, ML, (or CL-ML, CL/ML, ML/CL) with more than 30 % retained on a #200 sieve	SC3 ^D	A-2-4, A-2-5, A-2-6, or A-4 or A-6 soils with more than 30% retained on a No. 200 sieve
Fine-grained soils: CL, ML, (or CL-ML, CL/ML, ML/CL) with 30 % or less retained on a #200 sieve	SC4	A-2-7, or A-4, or A-6 soils with 30% or less retained on a No. 200 sieve
MH, CH, OL, OH, PT	SC5 Not for use as embedment	A5, A7

TABLE 1 Soil Classes^{A,B,C,D}

Soil Group ^{A,E}	Soil Class	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Soil Groups ^B
Crushed rock ^C : ≤ 15 % sand, maximum 25 % passing the 3/8 in. sieve and maximum 5 % passing a #200 sieve	Class I	
Clean, coarse grained soils: SW, SP, GW, GP or any soil beginning with one of these symbols with 12 % or less passing a #200 sieve ^{D,F}	Class II	A1, A3
Coarse grained soils with fines: GM, GC, SM, SC, or any soil beginning with one of these symbols, containing more than 12 % passing a #200 sieve; Sandy or gravelly fine-grained soils: CL, ML, or any soil beginning with one of these symbols, with ≥ 30 % retained on a #200 sieve	Class III	A-2-4, A-2-5, A-2-6, or A-4 or A-6 soils with more than 30% retained on a No. 200 sieve
Fine-grained soils: CL, ML, or any soil beginning with one of these symbols, with <30 % retained on a #200 sieve	Class IV	A-2-7, or A-4, or A-6 soils with 30% or less retained on a No. 200 sieve
MH, CH, OL, OH, PT	Class V Not for use as embedment	A5, A7

^AASTM D2487 Standard Classification of Soils for Engineering Purposes (Unified Soil Classification System)

^BAASHTO M145, Classification of Soils and Soil Aggregate Mixtures.

^CSC1 soils have higher stiffness than SC2 soils, but data on specific soil stiffness of placed, uncompacted SC1 soils can be taken equivalent to SC2 soils compacted to 95 % of maximum standard Proctor density (SPD95), and the soil stiffness of compacted crushed rock is defined as angular and subangular in accordance with ASTM D2488. SC1 soils can be taken equivalent to SC2 soils compacted to 100 % of maximum standard Proctor density (SPD100). Even if placed uncompacted (that is, dumped), SC1 materials should always be worked into the haunch zone to assure complete placement.

^DUniform fine sands (SP) with more than 50 % passing a No. 100 sieve (0.0006 in., 0.15 mm) are very sensitive to moisture and should not be used as backfill for fiberglass pipe unless specifically allowed in the contract documents. If use of these materials is allowed, compaction and handling procedures should follow the guidelines for SC3 Class III materials.

^ELimits may be imposed on the soil group to meet project or local requirements if the specified soil remains within the group. For example, some project applications require a Class I material with minimal fines to address specific structural or hydraulic conditions and the specification may read: "Use Class I soil with a maximum of 5% passing the #200 sieve."

^FMaterials such as broken coral, shells, and recycled concrete, with ≤ 12 % passing a No. 200 sieve, are considered to be Class II materials. These materials should only be used when evaluated and approved by the Engineer.

than permitted by the specifications or the manufacturer.

5.2.5 *Soil Stiffness Category 5 (SC5) — Soil Class V*—SC5 Class V materials should be excluded from pipe-zone embedment.

5.3 *Moisture Content of Embedment Materials*—The moisture content of embedment materials must be controlled to permit placement and compaction to required levels. For soils with low permeability (that is, SC3 and SC4 Class III and Class IV and some borderline SC2 Class II soils), moisture content is normally controlled to ± 3 % of optimum (see Test Method D698). The

TABLE 32 Recommendations for Installation and Use of Soils and Aggregates for Foundation and Pipe-Zone Embedment

Soil Stiffness-Category/Class ^A	SG1Class I ^D	SG2Class II	SG3Class III	SG4Class IV
General Recommendations and Restrictions	Acceptable and common where no migration is probable or when combined with a geotextile filter media. Suitable for use as a drainage blanket and under drain where adjacent material is suitably graded or when used with a geotextile filter fabric (see 5.6).	Where hydraulic gradient exists check gradation to minimize migration. Clean groups are suitable for use as a drainage blanket and underdrain (see Table 2). Uniform fine sands (SP) with more than 50% passing a #100 sieve (0.006 in., 0.15 mm) behave like silts and should be treated as SG3 soils.	Do not use where water conditions in trench prevent proper placement and compaction. Not recommended for use with pipes with stiffness of 9 psi or less	Difficult to achieve high soil stiffness. Do not use where water conditions in trench prevent proper placement and compaction. Not recommended for use with pipes with stiffness of 9 psi or less
General Recommendations and Restrictions	Acceptable and common where no migration is probable or when combined with a geotextile filter media. Suitable for use as a drainage blanket and under drain where adjacent material is suitably graded or when used with a geotextile filter fabric (see 5.6).	Where hydraulic gradient exists check gradation to minimize migration. Clean groups are suitable for use as a drainage blanket and underdrain (see Table 1). Uniform fine sands (SP) with more than 50% passing a #100 sieve (0.006 in., 0.15 mm) behave like silts and should be treated as Class III soils.	Do not use where water conditions in trench prevent proper placement and compaction. Not recommended for use with pipes with stiffness of 9 psi or less	Difficult to achieve high soil stiffness. Do not use where water conditions in trench prevent proper placement and compaction. Not recommended for use with pipes with stiffness of 9 psi or less
Foundation	Suitable as foundation and for replacing over-excavated and unstable trench bottom as restricted above.	Suitable as foundation and for replacing over-excavated and unstable trench bottom as restricted above. Install and compact in 12 in. (300 mm) maximum layers	Suitable for replacing over-excavated trench bottom as restricted above. Install and compact in 6 in. (150 mm) maximum layers	Not suitable.
Foundation	Suitable as foundation and for replacing over-excavated and unstable trench bottom as restricted above.	Suitable as foundation and for replacing over-excavated and unstable trench bottom as restricted above. Install and compact in 12 in. (300 mm) maximum layers	Suitable for replacing over-excavated trench bottom as restricted above. Install and compact in 6 in. (150 mm) maximum layers	Suitable for replacing over-excavated trench bottom for depths up to 12 in. as restricted above. Use only where uniform longitudinal support of the pipe can be maintained, as approved by the engineer. Install and compact in 6-in (150 mm) maximum layers.
Pipe Zone Embedment	Suitable as restricted above. Work material under pipe to provide uniform haunch support.	Suitable as restricted above. Work material under pipe to provide uniform haunch support.	Suitable as restricted above. Difficult to place and compact in the haunch zone.	Suitable as restricted above. Difficult to place and compact in the haunch zone.
<i>Embedment Compaction:</i>				
Min Recommended Density, SPD ^B	C	85%	90%	95%
Min Recommended Percent Compaction, SPD ^B	C	85% (SW and SP soils) For GW and GP soils, see ^E .	90%	95%
Relative Compactive Effort Required to Achieve Minimum Density	low	moderate	high	very high
Relative Compactive Effort Required to Achieve Minimum Percent Compaction	low	moderate	high	very high
Compaction Methods	vibration or impact	vibration or impact	impact	impact
Required Moisture Control	none	none	maintain near optimum to minimize compactive effort	maintain near optimum to minimize compactive effort

^ASG5-Class V materials are unsuitable as embedment. They may be used as final backfill as permitted by the engineer.

^BSPD/SPD is standard Proctor density as determined by Test Method D698.

^CMinimum density/Suitable compaction typically achieved by dumped placement (that is, uncompacted but worked into haunch zone to ensure complete placement.)

TABLE 1 Soil Classification Chart (see Classification D2487)

Criteria for Assigning Group Symbols and Group Names Using Laboratory Tests ^A				Soil Classification	
				Group Sym- bol	Group Name ^B
Coarse-Grained Soils More than 50% retained on No. 200 sieve	gravels more than 50% of coarse fraction retained on No. 4 sieve	clean gravels less than 5% fines ^E	$Gu \geq 4$ and $1 \leq Ce \leq 3^C$	GW	well-graded gravel ^D
			$Gu < 4$ and/or $1 > Ce > 3^C$	GP	poorly-graded gravel ^D
		gravels with fines more than 12% fines ^E	Fines classify as ML or MH	GM	silty gravel ^{D, F, G}
			Fines classify as CL or CH	GC	clayey gravel ^{D, F, G}
50% or more of coarse fraction passes No. 4 sieve	sands less than 5% fines ^F	clean sands less than 5% fines ^F	$Gu \geq 6$ and $1 \leq Ce \leq 3^C$	SW	well-graded sand ^H
			$Gu < 6$ and/or $1 > Ce > 3^C$	SP	poorly-graded sand ^H
		sands with fines more than 12% fines ^F	Fines classify as ML or MH	SM	silty sand ^{F, G, H}
			Fines classify as CL or CH	SC	clayey sand ^{F, G, H}