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Standard Practice for Moisture Surveying of Roofing and Waterproofing Systems Using Non-Destructive Electrical Impedance Scanners¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D7954/D7954M; 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.

1. Scope

1.1 This practice applies to techniques that use non-destructive electrical impedance (EI) scanners to locate moisture and evaluate the comparative moisture content within insulated low-slope roofing and waterproofing systems.

1.2 This practice is applicable to roofing and waterproofing systems wherein insulation is placed above the deck and positioned underneath and in contact with electrically nonconductive single-ply or built-up roofing and waterproofing membranes and systems such as coal tar, asphalt, modified bitumen, thermoplastics, spray polyurethane foam, and similar electrically non-conductive membrane materials. This practice is also applicable to roofing and waterproofing systems without insulation placed above moisture absorbing decks such as wood, concrete, or gypsum, that are in contact with single-ply or built-up roofing and waterproofing membranes as described above.

1.3 This practice is applicable to roofing and waterproofing systems incorporating electrically nonconductive rigid board insulation made from materials such as organic fibers, perlite, cork, fiberglass, wood-fiber, polyisocyanurate, polystyrene, phenolic foam, composite boards, gypsum substrate boards, and other electrically nonconductive roofing and waterproofing systems such as spray-applied polyurethane foam.

1.4 This practice is not appropriate for all combinations of materials used in roofing and waterproofing systems.

1.4.1 Metal and other electrically conductive surface coverings and near-surface embedded metallic components are not suitable for surveying with impedance scanners because of the electrical conductivity of these materials.

1.4.2 Black ethylene propylene diene terpolymer (EPDM) produces false positive readings when tested because of the material's high dielectric constant.

1.4.3 Aluminum foil on top-faced insulation, roofing, or waterproofing membranes gives a false positive reading and is

not suitable for surveying with impedance scanners; however, liquid-applied aluminum pigmented emulsified asphalt-based coatings shall not normally affect impedance scanner readings.

1.4.4 See A1.4 for some cautionary notes on roofing anomalies and limitations that affect the impedance test practice.

1.5 Moisture scanners using impedance based technology are classified as EI scanners.

NOTE 1—The term capacitance is sometimes used when describing impedance scanners. Capacitance scanners are purely capacitive as they do not have a resistive component. Impedance scanners combine both capacitance and resistance for testing; thus, they are well suited to the measurement of different types of materials and constructions found in roofing and waterproofing systems as the combination of both components allows for a more versatile testing, calibration, and measurement arrangement.

1.6 This practice also addresses necessary verification of impedance data involving invasive test procedures using core samples.

1.7 This practice addresses two generally accepted scanning techniques for conducting moisture surveys using electrical impedance scanners:

1.7.1 *Technique A*—Continuous systematic scanning and recording (see 8.2), and

1.7.2 *Technique B*—Grid format scanning and recording (see 8.3).

1.8 This practice addresses some meteorological conditions and limitations for performing impedance inspections.

1.9 This practice addresses the effect of the roofing or waterproofing construction, material differences, and exterior surface conditions on the moisture inspections.

1.10 This practice addresses operating procedures, operator qualifications, operating methods, scanning, surveying, and recording techniques.

1.11 *Units*—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.

1.12 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the*

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D08 on Roofing and Waterproofing and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D08.20 on Roofing Membrane Systems.

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responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use. Caution should be taken when accessing, walking, or using scanning equipment on the roofing or waterproofing surfaces, or elevated locations, when using ladders, and when raising and lowering equipment to elevated locations.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards*:²

- C1616** Test Method for Determining the Moisture Content of Organic and Inorganic Insulation Materials by Weight
- D1079** Terminology Relating to Roofing and Waterproofing
- D7438** Practice for Field Calibration and Application of Hand-Held Moisture Meters
- E2586** Practice for Calculating and Using Basic Statistics
- F2659** Guide for Preliminary Evaluation of Comparative Moisture Condition of Concrete, Gypsum Cement and Other Floor Slabs and Screeds Using a Non-Destructive Electronic Moisture Meter

NOTE 2—See **A1.3** for other referenced documents.

3. Terminology

3.1 For definitions of terms used in this practice, refer to Terminology **D1079**.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard*:

3.2.1 *comparative moisture, content, n*—qualitative characterization of moisture content in relative terms (that is, low, medium, and high levels of moisture).

3.2.2 *core sample, n*—small specimen of insulation and membrane having a minimum of 2-in. [50-mm] diameter obtained by cutting through these components down to the deck and removing them from the roofing section under test.

3.2.2.1 *Discussion*—Core samples are used to verify the membrane and insulation composition and ascertain information on their condition.

3.2.3 *detect or detection, v or n*—for the purpose of impedance scanning, the condition at which there is a consistent indication that an elevated level of impedance reading is present within the roofing or waterproofing system.

3.2.4 *false-positive, adj*—reading that indicates that elevated moisture is present when it is not.

3.2.4.1 *Discussion*—For example, a false positive in roofing for impedance scanning may be returned when some other electrically conductive material is present in the roofing system.

3.2.5 *gravimetric analysis, n*—determination of moisture content by weight of a material by comparing wet weight to over dry weight expressed as a percentage.

3.2.6 *moisture content, MC, n*—mass of moisture per unit mass of dry material.

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.

3.2.6.1 *Discussion*—The moisture content is usually expressed as a percentage by weight and determined gravimetrically.

3.2.7 *roof assembly, n*—assembly of interacting roof components including the roof deck, air or vapor retarder, insulation and membrane, or primary roof covering designed to weatherproof a structure.

3.2.8 *roof section, n*—portion of a roof that is separated from adjacent portions by walls or expansion joints with no changes in the components throughout the section.

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 This practice covers a procedure in which a specifically developed non-destructive electronic impedance (EI) based moisture scanner is used in conjunction with interpretive data and invasive verification practices to detect and evaluate the moisture conditions within low-sloped roofing and waterproofing systems by non-destructively measuring the electrical alternating current (ac) impedance.

4.2 This practice is intended to be used in conjunction with the impedance scanner manufacturer's operation instructions and guides.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Excess moisture trapped in roofing or waterproofing systems can adversely affect performance and lead to premature failure of roofing or waterproofing systems and its components. It also reduces thermal resistance, resulting in reduced energy efficiency and inflated energy costs. Impedance scans can be effective in identifying concealed and entrapped moisture within roofing or waterproofing systems.

5.2 This practice is intended to be used at various stages of the roofing and waterproofing system's life such as: completion of installation of roofing system to determine if there was moisture intrusion into the roofing system or materials for quality control purposes, at regular intervals as part of a preventative maintenance program, and before re-roofing or repair work to assist in determining the extent of work and replacement materials.

5.3 This practice alone does not determine the cause of moisture infiltration into roofing or waterproofing systems; however, it can be used to help tracing excess moisture to the point of ingress.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *EI Scanner*—This apparatus shall be specifically developed to detect and evaluate non-destructively comparative moisture conditions within roofing and waterproofing systems.

6.1.1 *Principles of Operation*—The EI of a material varies in proportion with the material's moisture content. The EI of materials such as those listed in **1.2** and **1.3** in the roofing or waterproofing system directly under the footprint of the scanner is measured by creating an alternating electric field that penetrates the materials under test. The small alternating current (ac) flowing through this field is inversely proportional with the impedance of these moisture-absorbing materials. The

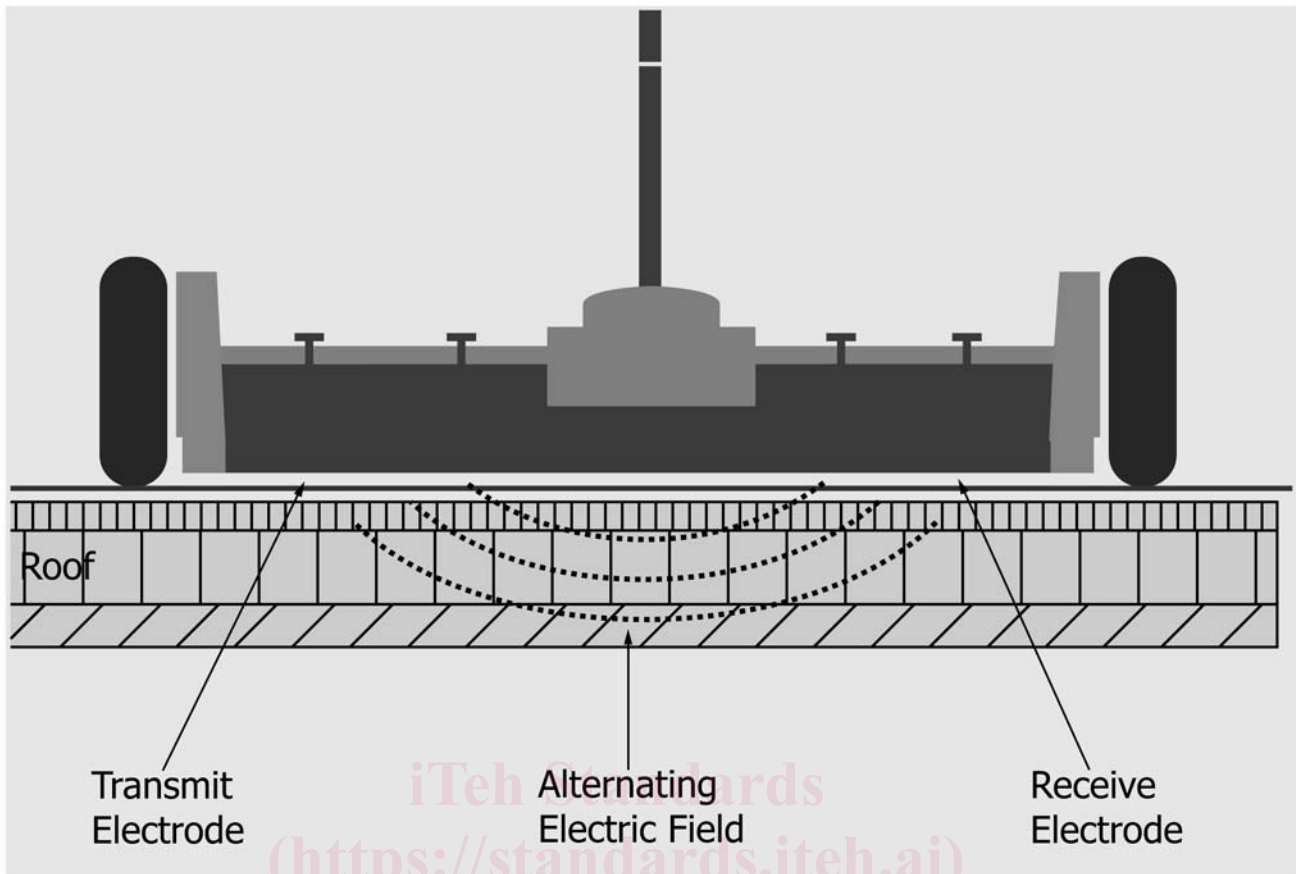


FIG. 1 Typical Non-Destructive Moisture Scanner

instrument determines the current's amplitude and converts this value to a comparative moisture value.

6.1.1.1 The depth of the signal penetration varies depending on the sensitivity and signal strength settings of the scanner as well as the composition of materials, thickness, and moisture content of the roofing or waterproofing system under test.

6.1.2 *Apparatus Requirements:*

6.1.2.1 The moisture scanner shall be capable of sending signals non-destructively into the materials below the surfacing and the scanner.

6.1.2.2 The moisture scanner shall have integrated adjustable calibration ability for the differing composition, thickness, density of materials, and moisture conditions that can be encountered in roofing or waterproofing assemblies.

6.1.2.3 The moisture scanner shall have a display giving comparative readings of moisture conditions of materials found in roofing and waterproofing systems.

6.2 *Scanner Types*—Two types of impedance scanners are commercially available:

6.2.1 Handheld scanner designed to be used for point readings on a grid system, and

6.2.2 Mobile-wheeled scanner, which can be rolled across the roofing or waterproofing to obtain continuous readings as the scanner moves over the surface.

NOTE 3—See A1.1 and A1.2 for examples of typical handheld and mobile-wheeled types of impedance scanners.

7. Operator Qualifications and Referenced Materials

7.1 The operator shall:

- 7.1.1 Be familiar with the use of the impedance scanner;
- 7.1.2 Have knowledge of and available for reference at the roof site a copy of the manufacturer's operating and calibration instructions for the impedance scanner used;
- 7.1.3 Have knowledge of how and under what circumstances the impedance scanning system can be used, as well as its limitations;
- 7.1.4 Have a thorough understanding of the construction and components used in the roofing or waterproofing system assembly under test, such as types of membranes, roofing insulations, decking, and attachment;
- 7.1.5 Confirm the composition of the roofing or waterproofing assembly and endeavor to obtain historical data regarding the construction, age, and performance of the roofing or waterproofing assembly; and
- 7.1.6 Have a thorough understanding and knowledge of roofing and waterproofing technology including types of roofing or waterproofing membranes and materials, decks, insulation materials, system assemblies and construction procedures, equilibrium moisture content, moisture migration in buildings, as well as health and safety requirements when carrying out roofing or waterproofing moisture surveying.

7.2 *Data Interpreter*—Individuals interpreting the field data shall have knowledge of: impedance scanner principles of

operation, moisture migration transport mechanisms, environmental effects, oven dry and equilibrium moisture contents (EMC), thermal resistance ratios (TRR), verification methods, and roofing and waterproofing construction as it applies to moisture analysis and gravimetric analysis to diagnose and interpret the readings from the roofing or waterproofing system surveyed.

NOTE 4—See A1.4 for additional information on technique and anomalies.

8. Impedance Scanning Techniques

8.1 Two techniques, (A) and (B), for conducting moisture surveys using impedance scanners are:

8.2 *Technique A—Continuous Systematic Scanning and Recording*—This practice involves moving (rolling) the impedance scanner in a systematic and continuous row-by-row manner when traversing the roof surface.

8.2.1 As the scanner is rolled along each run or row in a systematic fashion, continuous impedance readings shall be displayed on the scanner's meter. These readings shall be visually observed by the operator.

8.2.2 All areas where elevated moisture content levels are indicated by increased impedance readings displayed on the scanner's meter shall be referenced, recorded, and marked on the roof surface or the appropriate position on the roof drawing or both by the operator.

8.2.3 This technique is applicable to the mobile-wheeled unit as it gives a continuous reading while traversing the roof surface (see 6.2.2).

8.3 *Technique B—Grid Format Scanning and Recording*—This practice involves the scanning the roof using a grid format where the scanner is moved within the grid pattern.

8.3.1 Scanning is done with a grid pattern layout system in which the scanner is moved in a uniform fashion within the grid pattern. Readings are taken and recorded at each grid intersection point or at regular similar spaced intervals on or between grid lines; additional readings are taken and recorded in areas where elevated moisture levels are indicated by increased impedance readings.

8.3.2 See 9.3 for information on grid system layout.

8.3.3 This technique is considered applicable to both handheld and the mobile-wheeled impedance scanners as referenced in 6.2.1 and 6.2.2.

8.4 When impedance or comparative moisture level readings or other markings are recorded on the roof surface, obtain permission from the building owners or their agent before marking the roof surface with paint or similar marking material. Ensure that materials used for marking are compatible with the roofing or waterproofing systems so damage does not occur.

9. Preparation

9.1 *Preparation as Applying to Both Technique A and B*—Before commencement of non-destructive impedance testing, the operator shall:

9.1.1 Confirm the composition of the roofing or waterproofing assembly and obtain any available historical data regarding

the construction, age, and performance of the roofing or waterproofing assembly;

9.1.2 Obtain a roofing and waterproofing plan drawing, if available; and

9.1.3 Prepare drawings (if not available) and survey report sheets for each roofing or waterproofing section being surveyed on to which scanner readings and other relevant data shall be recorded.

9.2 Calibration as Applying to Both Technique A and B:

9.2.1 Before carrying out a roofing or waterproofing moisture survey with either a handheld or mobile-wheeled impedance scanner, it is necessary to calibrate the equipment on an area of roofing or waterproofing where the surface and subsurface insulation and components are dry.

9.2.2 Typically, core samples taken for calibration purposes shall consist of specimens of the roofing or waterproofing system at least 2 in. [50 mm] in diameter to include roofing or waterproofing membrane and all materials from the top surface down to the deck.

9.2.3 Core samples shall be taken by cutting through the system down to the deck and shall be evaluated by appropriate methods to determine composition, condition, and moisture content. If decking material is capable of moisture absorption, its moisture condition shall be also be evaluated by appropriate means (see Note 5). Typically, core samples taken from dry reference locations shall be retained for gravimetric analysis in accordance with Test Method C1616 at the verification stage (see Section 11).

NOTE 5—Readings obtained by a resistance-pin-type moisture meter to evaluate moisture conditions of core samples are relative and, typically, need to be correlated with moisture content value at the verification stage (see Note 9). Typically, for evaluation of the moisture condition for a wood deck, use a practice such as Practice D7438. For concrete and gypsum decks, use a guide such as Guide F2659.

9.2.4 All roofing or waterproofing areas where core samples were taken shall be repaired ensuring the affected area is weathertight and these repairs shall be carried out in accordance with the roofing or waterproofing system manufacturer's recommendations or the National Roofing Contractors Association *Repair Manual for Low-Slope Roof Systems*.³

9.3 Additional Preparation Applying to Technique B:

9.3.1 *Grid System*—Establish an *x-y* square coordinate grid system on the entire area to be surveyed. This grid system shall be set up in even increments. This indicates test points or passes (in the case of the mobile unit) on or between grid lines. This grid system provides location reference for scanner readings.

9.3.2 The recommended grid spacing is 5 ft [1.5 m] and the maximum spacing shall not exceed 10 ft [3.0 m]. Closer grid spacing to increase the survey resolution is permitted.

9.3.3 In addition to readings taken at regular intervals, additional readings shall be taken at edges, near penetrations, equipment curbs, flashings, and other roof areas commonly identified as locations of possible moisture ingress into roofing and waterproofing systems.

³ Available from the National Roofing Contractors Association, 10255 W. Higgins Rd., Suite 600, Rosemont, IL 60018-5607.