



Standard Test Method for Determining the Heat Release Rate and Other Fire-Test-Response Characteristics of Wall Covering or Ceiling Covering Composites Using a Cone Calorimeter¹

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INTRODUCTION

This test method provides a means for measuring the fire-test-response characteristics of wall coverings, ceiling coverings, wall covering composites, and ceiling covering composites using a bench-scale oxygen consumption calorimeter.

1. Scope ~~Scope*~~

1.1 This fire-test-response test method covers determination of the ignitability and heat release rate of composites consisting of a wall covering or ceiling covering, a substrate, and all laminating adhesives, coatings, and finishes. Heat release information cannot be used alone to evaluate the flammability of wall coverings or ceiling coverings. The data are intended to be used for modeling or with other data to evaluate a material.

1.2 This test method provides for measurement of the time to sustained flaming, heat release rate, peak and total heat release, and effective heat of combustion at a constant initial test heat flux of 35 kW/m². Heat release data at different heat fluxes are also obtained by this test method. The specimen is oriented horizontally, and a spark ignition source is used.

1.3 The fire-test-response characteristics are determined using the apparatus and procedures described in Test Method [E1354](#).

1.4 The tests are conducted on bench-scale specimens combining the components used in the actual installation.

1.5 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. See [IEEE/ASTM SI-10](#).

1.6 Fire testing of products and materials is inherently hazardous, and adequate safeguards for personnel and property shall be used in conducting these tests. This test method potentially involves hazardous materials, operations, and equipment.

1.7 *This standard is used to measure and describe the response of materials, products, or assemblies to heat and flame under controlled conditions, but does not by itself incorporate all factors required for fire hazard or fire risk assessment of the materials, products, or assemblies under actual fire conditions.*

1.8 ~~Fire testing of products and materials is inherently hazardous, and adequate hazardous. Adequate safeguards for personnel and property shall be employed in conducting these tests. This test method may involve hazardous materials, operations, and equipment.~~ Specific information about hazard is given in Section 6.

1.9 *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

[C1186 Specification for Flat Fiber-Cement Sheets](#)

[D123 Terminology Relating to Textiles](#)

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E05 on Fire Standards and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E05.21 on Smoke and Combustion Products.

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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

[D5865 Test Method for Gross Calorific Value of Coal and Coke](#)
[E84 Test Method for Surface Burning Characteristics of Building Materials](#)
[E176 Terminology of Fire Standards](#)
[E603 Guide for Room Fire Experiments](#)
[E906 Test Method for Heat and Visible Smoke Release Rates for Materials and Products Using a Thermopile Method](#)
[E1354 Test Method for Heat and Visible Smoke Release Rates for Materials and Products Using an Oxygen Consumption Calorimeter](#)
[E1474 Test Method for Determining the Heat Release Rate of Upholstered Furniture and Mattress Components or Composites Using a Bench Scale Oxygen Consumption Calorimeter](#)
[IEEE/ASTM SI-10 American National Standard for Use of the International System of Units \(SI\): The Modern Metric System](#)
 2.2 *NFPA Standard*:³
[NFPA 265 Standard Methods of Fire Tests for Evaluating Room Fire Growth Contribution of Textile Wall Covering](#)
[NFPA 286 Standard Method of Fire Test for Evaluating Contribution of Wall and Ceiling Interior Finish to Room Fire Growth](#)
 2.3 *ISO Standards*:⁴
[ISO 4880 Burning Behaviour of Textiles and Textile Products—Vocabulary](#)
[ISO 5660 Fire Tests—Reaction to Fire—Part 1: Rate of Heat Release from Building Products \(Cone Calorimeter Method\)](#)
[ISO 13943 Fire Safety—Vocabulary](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of terms used in this test method and associated with fire issues, refer to Terminology [E176](#) and ISO 13943. The definitions given in Terminology [E176](#) shall prevail in case of conflict. For definitions of terms used in this test method and associated with textile issues, refer to Terminology [D123](#) and ISO 4880. The definitions given in Terminology [D123](#) shall prevail in case of conflict.

3.1.1 *effective heat of combustion, n*—the amount of heat generated per unit mass lost by a material, product, or assembly, when exposed to specific fire test conditions (see *gross heat of combustion*).

³ Available from National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02269-9101.

⁴ Available from International Standardization Organization, P.O. Box 56, CH-1211, Geneva 20, Switzerland.

3.1.1.1 *Discussion*—

The effective heat of combustion depends on the test method and is determined by dividing the measured heat release by the mass loss during a specified period of time under the specified test conditions. Typically, the specified fire test conditions are provided by the specifications of the fire test standard that cites effective heat of combustion as a quantity to be measured. For certain fire test conditions, involving very high heat and high oxygen concentrations under high pressure, the effective heat of combustion will approximate the gross heat of combustion. More often, the fire test conditions will represent or approximate certain real fire exposure conditions, and the effective heat of combustion is the appropriate measure. Typical units are kJ/g or MJ/kg.

3.1.2 *gross heat of combustion, n*—the maximum amount of heat per unit mass that theoretically can be released by the combustion of a material, product, or assembly; it can be determined experimentally only under conditions of high pressure and in pure oxygen (contrast *effective heat of combustion*).

3.1.3 *heat flux, n*—heat transfer to a surface per unit area, per unit time (see also *initial test heat flux*).

3.1.3.1 *Discussion*—

The heat flux from an energy source, such as a radiant heater, can be measured at the initiation of a test (such as Test Method [E1354](#) or Test Method [E906](#)) and then reported as the incident heat flux, with the understanding that the burning of the test specimen can generate additional heat flux to the specimen surface. The heat flux can also be measured at any time during a fire test, for example as described in Guide [E603](#), on any surface, and with measurement devices responding to radiative and convective fluxes. Typical units are kW/m², kJ/(m²), W/cm², or BTU/(s ft²).

3.1.4 *initial test heat flux, n*—the heat flux set on the test apparatus at the initiation of the test (see also *heat flux*).

3.1.4.1 *Discussion*—

The initial test heat flux is the heat flux value commonly used when describing or setting test conditions.

3.1.5 *oxygen consumption principle*—the expression of the relationship between the mass of oxygen consumed during combustion and the heat released.

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 *heat release rate*—the heat evolved from the specimen, expressed per unit area of exposed specimen area per unit of time.

3.2.2 *ignitability*—the propensity for ignition, as measured by the time to sustained flaming at a specified heating flux.

3.2.3 *net heat of combustion, n*—the oxygen bomb (see Test Method **D5865**) value for the heat of combustion, corrected for gaseous state of product water.

3.2.3.1 Discussion—

The net heat of combustion differs from the gross heat of combustion in that the former assesses the heat per unit mass generated from a combustion process that ends with water in the gaseous state while the latter ends with water in the liquid state.

3.2.4 *orientation*—the plane in which the exposed face of the specimen is located during testing, which is horizontal facing up for this test.

3.2.5 *sustained flaming*—the existence of flame on or over the surface of the specimen for periods of 4 s or more.

3.2.6 *wall or ceiling covering, n*—a textile-, paper-, or polymeric (including vinyl)-based product designed to be attached to a wall or ceiling surface for decorative or acoustical purposes.

3.2.6.1 Discussion—

Wall or ceiling coverings with ink or topcoat layers added as part of the manufacturing process are included in this definition.

3.2.7 *wall or ceiling covering composite, n*—wall or ceiling covering system.

NOTE 1—The terms wall covering composite and ceiling covering composite, used in Test Method E1740, have the same meaning as the terms wall covering system and ceiling covering system, which are more widely used.

3.2.8 *wall or ceiling covering system, n*—an assembly of a textile wall or ceiling covering, a paper wall or ceiling covering, a polymeric (including vinyl) wall or ceiling covering, adhesive (if used), and substrate (if it is part of the assembly) used as a wall or ceiling treatment for decorative or acoustical purposes.

3.2.8.1 Discussion—

The wall or ceiling covering material is usually intended to be directly attached to a substrate, via adhesives or mechanical fasteners. In some cases the wall or ceiling covering system will be supported by a frame system some distance away from the wall or ceiling covering material.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 This test method is based on the observation that, generally, the net heat of combustion is directly related to the amount of oxygen required for combustion. Approximately 13.1×10^3 kJ of heat are released per 1 kg of oxygen consumed. Specimens in the test are burned in ambient air conditions while subjected to a prescribed external initial test heat flux of 35 kW/m².

4.2 The heat release is determined by measurement of the oxygen consumption, as determined by the oxygen concentration and flow rate in the combustion product stream, in accordance with Test Method **E1354**.

4.3 The primary measurements are oxygen concentration and exhaust gas flow rate. Additional measurements include the mass loss rate of the specimen, time to sustained flaming (or time to ignition), and effective heat of combustion. Ignitability is determined by measuring the time period from initial exposure to attainment of sustained flaming of the specimen.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method is used to determine the time to sustained flaming and heat release of materials and composites exposed to a prescribed initial test heat flux in the cone calorimeter apparatus.

5.2 Quantitative heat release measurements provide information that can be used to compare wall or ceiling coverings and constructions and for input to fire models.

5.3 Heat release measurements provide useful information for product development by giving a quantitative measure of specific changes in fire performance caused by component and composite modifications.

5.4 Heat release data obtained by this test method will be inappropriate if the product will not spread flame over its surface under the fire exposure conditions of interest.

5.5 Variations in substrates, mounting methods, and adhesives used to laminate composite products will potentially affect the test responses. These variables must be controlled during any comparative experiments.

5.6 *Test Limitations*—The test data are invalid if any of the following occur:

5.6.1 Explosive spalling,

5.6.2 The specimen swells sufficiently prior to ignition to touch the spark plug or swells up to the plane of the heater base during combustion, or

5.6.3 The surface laminate rolls or curls when placed under the radiant heater.

5.7 The specimens are subjected to one or more specific sets of laboratory conditions in this procedure. If different test conditions are substituted or the end-use conditions are changed, it is not always possible by or from this test to predict changes in the fire-test-response characteristics measured. The results are therefore valid only for the fire test exposure conditions described in this procedure.

6. Hazards

6.1 The test procedures involve high temperatures and heat fluxes. Hazards therefore exist for burns, ignition of extraneous objects or clothing, and inhalation of combustion products. The operator must use protective gloves for insertion and removal of the test specimens. Do not touch the cone heater or the associated fixtures while hot, except with the use of protective gloves.

7. Test Specimens

7.1 *Size and Preparation:*

7.1.1 All elements of the test specimen shall represent the actual materials used in the final installation. Include the wall or ceiling covering, adhesive used for the lamination, and actual substrate. Wall or ceiling coverings that are laminated in the field shall be bonded to the actual substrate or to fiber-reinforced cement board (Specification **C1186**) if a non-combustible substrate is anticipated. Use the adhesive recommended by the manufacturer. Test wall or ceiling covering composites as manufactured for use.

7.1.2 The test specimens shall be cut to an overall size of 100 by 100 mm and tested in the actual thickness, if a composite. The maximum thickness to be tested is 50 mm. If substrates exceed this maximum, the back surface shall be made thinner to reduce the overall thickness of the specimen to 50 mm.

7.2 Specimens shall be cured according to the manufacturer's instructions and conditioned at an ambient temperature of $23 \pm 3^\circ\text{C}$ and relative humidity of $50 \pm 5\%$ for a minimum of 48 h.

7.3 *Specimen Holder and Mounting:*

7.3.1 The specimen holder consists of the bottom, edge frame, retaining pins, and wire grid. The bottom is constructed from 2-mm nominal stainless steel and has outside dimensions of 106 by 106 ± 2 mm by 24 ± 2 mm height. The grid is constructed from 2-mm nominal stainless steel rod and has dimensions of 100 ± 2 by 100 ± 2 mm. The grid has 2-mm ribs, and the openings in the center are 18 ± 1 by 18 ± 1 mm. The edge frame is constructed from 1.9-mm nominal stainless steel with outside dimensions of 111 ± 2 by 111 ± 2 by 54 ± 2 -mm height. The frame has an 8-mm lip on the top to provide an opening of 94 by 94 mm on the top. There are two 3 ± 0.5 -mm diameter by 130 ± 3 -mm long retaining pins to lock the test specimen in the edge frame.

7.3.2 The bottom is lined with a layer of a low-density (nominal density 65 kg/m^3) refractory fiber blanket with a thickness of at least 13 mm. If necessary, fill the edge frame below the test specimens with a refractory blanket to the level of the retaining pins. Lock the assembly with retaining pins, and place it on the bottom specimen holder. The distance between the bottom of the radiant heater and the top of the edge frame is adjusted to 25 ± 1 mm by using a sliding height adjustment.

8. Procedure

8.1 *Preparation:*

8.1.1 Calibrate the test apparatus as directed in Test Method **E1354**.

8.1.2 Position the cone heater for a horizontal specimen orientation, and set the radiant heat flux level to the required value of $35 \pm 1 \text{ kW/m}^2$.

8.1.3 Verify that the distance between the bottom of the cone heater baseplate and the top of the specimen is 25 mm.

8.1.4 Some specimens swell up and contact the heater baseplate or sparker assembly during the test. Contact of the specimen with the sparker or heater baseplate will affect the mass loss readings temporarily. The mass loss readings will resume if the specimen does not remain in contact, and the total mass loss and average heat of combustion can be calculated. If sustained flaming has been achieved, retract the sparker to prevent contact with the swelling specimen. Alternatively, raise the sparker/heater assembly to prevent contact with the specimen.

8.2 *Procedure:*

8.2.1 Prepare the data collection system for testing in accordance with the operating procedures for the system. The heat release curve of some wall or ceiling coverings is a narrow peak. Increase the data collection rate to one reading/s for testing wall or ceiling coverings.

8.2.2 Assemble the specimen with the edge frame and grid in the appropriate holder. The assembly must initially be at room temperature. A surface area correction must be applied to compensate for the reduction in surface area caused by the edge frame and grid.

8.2.3 Energize the sparker, and move it into place rapidly after the specimen is inserted. The sparker is to remain in place until sustained flaming occurs. If flaming ceases less than 60 s after removal of the sparker, reinsert the sparker and maintain it in place until the end of the test.

8.2.4 Start the timer at the beginning of the test. After flaming is first observed, continue the observation for an additional 4 s. Record the time at that point, and move the spark igniter out of the flame. Determine the time to sustained flaming (or time to ignition). Note that the time to ignition is the time for sustained flaming to start; therefore, if the timer is stopped at the end of the 4 s observation period, the time to be reported is that value minus 4 s.

NOTE 2—If sustained flaming is not observed, report as “no ignition was observed” or “no sustained flaming was observed” and not as “time to ignition equals zero.”

8.2.5 Collect data from the start of the test until either of the following occurs: (1) flaming or other signs of combustion cease or (2) 20 min have elapsed. The test need not be terminated at 20 min if the specimen continues to burn. Move the sparker out of the flame.

8.2.6 Record time-dependent measurements (mass loss, total heat release, and average heat of combustion) at 20 min or at the end of the test.

8.2.7 Observe and record physical changes to the specimen, such as melting, swelling, cracking, or shrinking. Record the final mass of the test specimen. Remove and discard the specimen if it does not ignite within 10 min.

8.2.8 Remove the specimen holder.

8.2.9 Replace with an empty specimen holder or insulated pad to prevent thermal damage to the load cell.

8.2.10 Test a minimum of three specimens of each material or product.

9. Report

9.1 Report the following, as a summary, for all specimens of a particular material or product:

9.1.1 Specimen identification or number;

9.1.2 Manufacturer or submitter;

9.1.3 Date of test;

9.1.4 Composition or generic identification;

9.1.5 Details of preparation; and

9.1.6 Number of replicate specimens tested, which shall be a minimum of three;

9.2 Include the following information for each specimen:

9.2.1 Specimen thickness (mm);

9.2.2 Initial specimen mass measured on the load cell (g);

9.2.3 Heat flux (kW/m^2) and initial exhaust system flow rate;

9.2.4 Time to sustained flaming (s);

9.2.5 Heat release rate curve versus time;

9.2.6 Average heat release rate for the first 60, 120, 180, and 300 s after ignition (kW/m^2);

9.2.7 Peak heat release rate (kW/m^2);

9.2.8 Total heat released by the specimen per unit area (MJ/m^2), including total test time(s);

9.2.9 Average effective heat of combustion for the entire test (MJ/kg), which is obtained by dividing the total heat released by the specimen mass loss;

9.2.10 Mass remaining at test termination (g);

9.2.11 Specimen mass loss (g) and (%);

9.2.12 Additional observations, if any; and

9.2.13 Difficulties encountered in testing, if any.

9.3 The following final values should be averaged for all specimens:

9.3.1 Time to sustained flaming (s);

9.3.2 Average heat release rate value (kW/m^2) over the first 60, 120, 180, and 300 s after ignition;

9.3.3 Average effective heat of combustion (MJ/kg) for the entire test;

9.3.4 Peak heat release rate (kW/m^2); and

9.3.5 Total heat released (MJ/m^2).

10. Precision and Bias

10.1 *Precision*—The precision of this test method has not been determined. The Appendix contains information on repeatability from one laboratory which indicates (see [Tables X1.3 and X1.4](#)) the relationship between the standard deviation and the average.

10.2 *Bias*—For solid specimens of unknown chemical composition, as used in building materials, furnishings, and common occupant fuel load, it has been documented that the use of the relationship that approximately 13.1×10^3 kJ of heat are released per 1 kg of oxygen consumed results in an expected error band of $\pm 5\%$ compared to true value. For homogeneous materials with only a single pyrolysis mechanism, this uncertainty is reduced by determining the heat evolution from oxygen bomb measurements and oxygen consumption from ultimate elemental analysis. This is not practical for most testing since test specimens are frequently composites and nonhomogeneous. Thus, they often exhibit several degradation reactions. For unknown specimens, a $\pm 5\%$ accuracy limit is therefore seen. For reference materials, however, careful determination of the heat released per unit of oxygen consumed makes this source of uncertainty substantially less.

11. Keywords

11.1 calorimeter; ceiling covering; fire; fire-test response; heat release; ignition; oxygen consumption; small scale; wall covering

APPENDIX

(Nonmandatory Information)

X1. EFFECT OF SPECIMEN PREPARATION ON TEST RESULTS

X1.1 Introduction

X1.1.1 The cone calorimeter has been standardized in the United States (Test Method E1354) and internationally (ISO 5660, Part 1). Although widely used as a research tool, applications for product evaluations are developing (such as Test Method E1474, for upholstered furniture and mattress composites or components). Wall or ceiling coverings are now regulated in the United States by requirements based on the Test Method E84 tunnel test and on requirements based on full-scale room fire tests such as NFPA 286; textile and expanded vinyl wall coverings are now regulated based on full-scale room-fire tests such as NFPA 265. Reliable bench-scale test methods for composite wall panels could potentially serve as the basis for a predictive method for the full-scale room fire test protocols. The benefits of such predictive methods include reduced testing costs through screening and product classification. Experiments were conducted to determine the effect of varying parameters on the composite wall panel cone calorimeter results. The following work is the effort of one laboratory.

X1.2 Experiment

[ASTM E1740-15](https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/7069323f-264e-438a-8afc-c65b2f976e63/astm-e1740-15)

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/7069323f-264e-438a-8afc-c65b2f976e63/astm-e1740-15>

X1.2.1 A preliminary study covered as many experimental conditions as possible, based on the time and materials available. The experiment was simplified to more practical conditions after the preliminary study. A limited group of wall coverings was then evaluated in the cone calorimeter to observe the effects of fabric type (construction and form) and substrate. Additional effects investigated were exposure flux, influence of holders and grids, orientation, and supplemental fastening. The experiments compared the following eight fire-test-response characteristics from the cone calorimeter: peak heat release rate (abbreviated as peak heat), time to peak heat release rate (abbreviated as time peak), heat release rate at 60 s after ignition (abbreviated as heat rate or HRR 60 s), total heat released (abbreviated as total heat), time to sustained flaming (abbreviated as time sust), effective heat of combustion (abbreviated as heat comb or HC (eff)), average mass loss rate (abbreviated as mass loss), and average specific extinction area (abbreviated as avg smoke or smoke). Table X1.1 contains a matrix of the experimental conditions investigated in the first set of experiments.

X1.2.2 Qualitative and quantitative analyses were conducted of the effects of each experimental variable on the fire-test-response characteristics described.

X1.2.3 The qualitative analysis focused particularly on the reactions of the fabrics themselves. Observations are given in Table X1.2.

X1.2.4 The conditions selected for the experiment did not account for the fact that certain fabrics can pull loose, even with staples intended to prevent curling, as indicated in Table X1.1.

X1.2.5 The actual experimental data obtained are presented in Table X1.3 (peak heat release rate, time to peak heat release rate, heat release rate at 60 s after ignition, and total heat released) and Table X1.4 (time to sustained flaming, average effective heat