



Designation: C39/C39M – 15a

Standard Test Method for Compressive Strength of Cylindrical Concrete Specimens¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation C39/C39M; 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 test method covers determination of compressive strength of cylindrical concrete specimens such as molded cylinders and drilled cores. It is limited to concrete having a density in excess of 800 kg/m³ [50 lb/ft³].

1.2 The values stated in either SI units or inch-pound units are to be regarded separately as standard. The inch-pound units are shown in brackets. 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. (Warning—Means should be provided to contain concrete fragments during sudden rupture of specimens. Tendency for sudden rupture increases with increasing concrete strength and it is more likely when the testing machine is relatively flexible. The safety precautions given in the [Manual of Aggregate and Concrete Testing](#) are recommended.)*

1.4 The text of this standard references notes which provide explanatory material. These notes shall not be considered as requirements of the standard.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

[C31/C31M Practice for Making and Curing Concrete Test Specimens in the Field](#)

[C42/C42M Test Method for Obtaining and Testing Drilled Cores and Sawed Beams of Concrete](#)

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee C09 on Concrete and Concrete Aggregates and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee C09.61 on Testing for Strength.

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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.

[C192/C192M Practice for Making and Curing Concrete Test Specimens in the Laboratory](#)

[C617/C617M Practice for Capping Cylindrical Concrete Specimens](#)

[C670 Practice for Preparing Precision and Bias Statements for Test Methods for Construction Materials](#)

[C873/C873M Test Method for Compressive Strength of Concrete Cylinders Cast in Place in Cylindrical Molds](#)

[C1077 Practice for Agencies Testing Concrete and Concrete Aggregates for Use in Construction and Criteria for Testing Agency Evaluation](#)

[C1231/C1231M Practice for Use of Unbonded Caps in Determination of Compressive Strength of Hardened Concrete Cylinders](#)

[E4 Practices for Force Verification of Testing Machines](#)

[E74 Practice of Calibration of Force-Measuring Instruments for Verifying the Force Indication of Testing Machines](#)
[Manual of Aggregate and Concrete Testing](#)

3. Summary of Test Method

3.1 This test method consists of applying a compressive axial load to molded cylinders or cores at a rate which is within a prescribed range until failure occurs. The compressive strength of the specimen is calculated by dividing the maximum load attained during the test by the cross-sectional area of the specimen.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 Care must be exercised in the interpretation of the significance of compressive strength determinations by this test method since strength is not a fundamental or intrinsic property of concrete made from given materials. Values obtained will depend on the size and shape of the specimen, batching, mixing procedures, the methods of sampling, molding, and fabrication and the age, temperature, and moisture conditions during curing.

4.2 This test method is used to determine compressive strength of cylindrical specimens prepared and cured in accordance with Practices [C31/C31M](#), [C192/C192M](#), [C617/C617M](#), and [C1231/C1231M](#) and Test Methods [C42/C42M](#) and [C873/C873M](#).

*A Summary of Changes section appears at the end of this standard

4.3 The results of this test method are used as a basis for quality control of concrete proportioning, mixing, and placing operations; determination of compliance with specifications; control for evaluating effectiveness of admixtures; and similar uses.

4.4 The individual who tests concrete cylinders for acceptance testing shall meet the concrete laboratory technician requirements of Practice C1077, including an examination requiring performance demonstration that is evaluated by an independent examiner.

NOTE 1—Certification equivalent to the minimum guidelines for ACI Concrete Laboratory Technician, Level I or ACI Concrete Strength Testing Technician will satisfy this requirement.

5. Apparatus

5.1 *Testing Machine*—The testing machine shall be of a type having sufficient capacity and capable of providing the rates of loading prescribed in 7.5.

5.1.1 Verify the accuracy of the testing machine in accordance with Practices E4, except that the verified loading range shall be as required in 5.3. Verification is required:

5.1.1.1 Within 13 months of the last calibration,

5.1.1.2 On original installation or immediately after relocation,

5.1.1.3 Immediately after making repairs or adjustments that affect the operation of the force applying system or the values displayed on the load indicating system, except for zero adjustments that compensate for the mass of bearing blocks or specimen, or both, or

5.1.1.4 Whenever there is reason to suspect the accuracy of the indicated loads.

5.1.2 *Design*—The design of the machine must include the following features:

5.1.2.1 The machine must be power operated and must apply the load continuously rather than intermittently, and without shock. If it has only one loading rate (meeting the requirements of 7.5), it must be provided with a supplemental means for loading at a rate suitable for verification. This supplemental means of loading may be power or hand operated.

5.1.2.2 The space provided for test specimens shall be large enough to accommodate, in a readable position, an elastic calibration device which is of sufficient capacity to cover the potential loading range of the testing machine and which complies with the requirements of Practice E74.

NOTE 2—The types of elastic calibration devices most generally available and most commonly used for this purpose are the circular proving ring or load cell.

5.1.3 *Accuracy*—The accuracy of the testing machine shall be in accordance with the following provisions:

5.1.3.1 The percentage of error for the loads within the proposed range of use of the testing machine shall not exceed $\pm 1.0\%$ of the indicated load.

5.1.3.2 The accuracy of the testing machine shall be verified by applying five test loads in four approximately equal increments in ascending order. The difference between any two successive test loads shall not exceed one third of the difference between the maximum and minimum test loads.

5.1.3.3 The test load as indicated by the testing machine and the applied load computed from the readings of the verification device shall be recorded at each test point. Calculate the error, E , and the percentage of error, E_p , for each point from these data as follows:

$$E = A - B \quad (1)$$

$$E_p = 100(A - B)/B$$

where:

A = load, kN [lbf] indicated by the machine being verified, and

B = applied load, kN [lbf] as determined by the calibrating device.

5.1.3.4 The report on the verification of a testing machine shall state within what loading range it was found to conform to specification requirements rather than reporting a blanket acceptance or rejection. In no case shall the loading range be stated as including loads below the value which is 100 times the smallest change of load estimable on the load-indicating mechanism of the testing machine or loads within that portion of the range below 10 % of the maximum range capacity.

5.1.3.5 In no case shall the loading range be stated as including loads outside the range of loads applied during the verification test.

5.1.3.6 The indicated load of a testing machine shall not be corrected either by calculation or by the use of a calibration diagram to obtain values within the required permissible variation.

5.2 The testing machine shall be equipped with two steel bearing blocks with hardened faces (Note 3), one of which is a spherically seated block that will bear on the upper surface of the specimen, and the other a solid block on which the specimen shall rest. Bearing faces of the blocks shall have a minimum dimension at least 3 % greater than the diameter of the specimen to be tested. Except for the concentric circles described below, the bearing faces shall not depart from a plane by more than 0.02 mm [0.001 in.] in any 150 mm [6 in.] of blocks 150 mm [6 in.] in diameter or larger, or by more than 0.02 mm [0.001 in.] in the diameter of any smaller block; and new blocks shall be manufactured within one half of this tolerance. When the diameter of the bearing face of the spherically seated block exceeds the diameter of the specimen by more than 13 mm [0.5 in.], concentric circles not more than 0.8 mm [0.03 in.] deep and not more than 1 mm [0.04 in.] wide shall be inscribed to facilitate proper centering.

NOTE 3—It is desirable that the bearing faces of blocks used for compression testing of concrete have a Rockwell hardness of not less than 55 HRC.

5.2.1 Bottom bearing blocks shall conform to the following requirements:

5.2.1.1 The bottom bearing block is specified for the purpose of providing a readily machinable surface for maintenance of the specified surface conditions (Note 4). The top and bottom surfaces shall be parallel to each other. If the testing machine is so designed that the platen itself is readily maintained in the specified surface condition, a bottom block is not required. Its least horizontal dimension shall be at least 3 %

greater than the diameter of the specimen to be tested. Concentric circles as described in 5.2 are optional on the bottom block.

NOTE 4—The block may be fastened to the platen of the testing machine.

5.2.1.2 Final centering must be made with reference to the upper spherical block. When the lower bearing block is used to assist in centering the specimen, the center of the concentric rings, when provided, or the center of the block itself must be directly below the center of the spherical head. Provision shall be made on the platen of the machine to assure such a position.

5.2.1.3 The bottom bearing block shall be at least 25 mm [1 in.] thick when new, and at least 22.5 mm [0.9 in.] thick after any resurfacing operations.

5.2.2 The spherically seated bearing block shall conform to the following requirements:

5.2.2.1 The maximum diameter of the bearing face of the suspended spherically seated block shall not exceed the values given below:

Diameter of Test Specimens, mm [in.]	Maximum Diameter of Bearing Face, mm [in.]
50 [2]	105 [4]
75 [3]	130 [5]
100 [4]	165 [6.5]
150 [6]	255 [10]
200 [8]	280 [11]

NOTE 5—Square bearing faces are permissible, provided the diameter of the largest possible inscribed circle does not exceed the above diameter.

5.2.2.2 The center of the sphere shall coincide with the surface of the bearing face within a tolerance of $\pm 5\%$ of the radius of the sphere. The diameter of the sphere shall be at least 75 % of the diameter of the specimen to be tested.

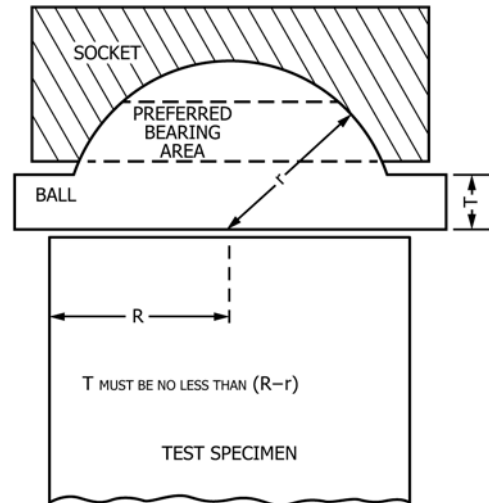
5.2.2.3 The ball and the socket shall be designed so that the steel in the contact area does not permanently deform when loaded to the capacity of the testing machine.

NOTE 6—The preferred contact area is in the form of a ring (described as “preferred bearing area”) as shown on Fig. 1.

5.2.2.4 At least every six months, or as specified by the manufacturer of the testing machine, clean and lubricate the curved surfaces of the socket and of the spherical portion of the machine. The lubricant shall be a petroleum-type oil such as conventional motor oil or as specified by the manufacturer of the testing machine.

NOTE 7—To ensure uniform seating, the spherically seated head is designed to tilt freely as it comes into contact with the top of the specimen. After contact, further rotation is undesirable. Friction between the socket and the spherical portion of the head provides restraint against further rotation during loading. Petroleum-type oil such as conventional motor oil has been shown to permit the necessary friction to develop. Pressure-type greases can reduce the desired friction and permit undesired rotation of the spherical head and should not be used unless recommended by the manufacturer of the testing machine.

5.2.2.5 If the radius of the sphere is smaller than the radius of the largest specimen to be tested, the portion of the bearing face extending beyond the sphere shall have a thickness not less than the difference between the radius of the sphere and



NOTE 1—Provision shall be made for holding the ball in the socket and for holding the entire unit in the testing machine.

FIG. 1 Schematic Sketch of a Typical Spherical Bearing Block

radius of the specimen. The least dimension of the bearing face shall be at least as great as the diameter of the sphere (see Fig. 1).

5.2.2.6 The movable portion of the bearing block shall be held closely in the spherical seat, but the design shall be such that the bearing face can be rotated freely and tilted at least 4° in any direction.

5.2.2.7 If the ball portion of the upper bearing block is a two-piece design composed of a spherical portion and a bearing plate, a mechanical means shall be provided to ensure that the spherical portion is fixed and centered on the bearing plate.

5.3 Load Indication:

5.3.1 If the load of a compression machine used in concrete testing is registered on a dial, the dial shall be provided with a graduated scale that is readable to at least the nearest 0.1 % of the full scale load (Note 8). The dial shall be readable within 1 % of the indicated load at any given load level within the loading range. In no case shall the loading range of a dial be considered to include loads below the value that is 100 times the smallest change of load that can be read on the scale. The scale shall be provided with a graduation line equal to zero and so numbered. The dial pointer shall be of sufficient length to reach the graduation marks; the width of the end of the pointer shall not exceed the clear distance between the smallest graduations. Each dial shall be equipped with a zero adjustment located outside the dialcase and easily accessible from the front of the machine while observing the zero mark and dial pointer. Each dial shall be equipped with a suitable device that at all times, until reset, will indicate to within 1 % accuracy the maximum load applied to the specimen.

NOTE 8—Readability is considered to be 0.5 mm [0.02 in.] along the arc described by the end of the pointer. Also, one half of a scale interval is readable with reasonable certainty when the spacing on the load indicating mechanism is between 1 mm [0.04 in.] and 2 mm [0.06 in.]. When the spacing is between 2 and 3 mm [0.06 and 0.12 in.], one third of a scale interval is readable with reasonable certainty. When the spacing is 3 mm