Designation: G21 – 15

Standard Practice for Determining Resistance of Synthetic Polymeric Materials to Fungi[1]

This standard is issued under the fixed designation G21; 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 determination of the effect of fungi on the properties of synthetic polymeric materials in the form of molded and fabricated articles, tubes, rods, sheets, and film materials. Changes in optical, mechanical, and electrical properties may be determined by the applicable ASTM methods.

1.2 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. The inch-pound units given in parentheses are for information only.

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. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*[2]

D149 Test Method for Dielectric Breakdown Voltage and Dielectric Strength of Solid Electrical Insulating Materials at Commercial Power Frequencies

D150 Test Methods for AC Loss Characteristics and Permittivity (Dielectric Constant) of Solid Electrical Insulation

D257 Test Methods for DC Resistance or Conductance of Insulating Materials

D495 Test Method for High-Voltage, Low-Current, Dry Arc Resistance of Solid Electrical Insulation

D618 Practice for Conditioning Plastics for Testing

D638 Test Method for Tensile Properties of Plastics

D747 Test Method for Apparent Bending Modulus of Plastics by Means of a Cantilever Beam

D785 Test Method for Rockwell Hardness of Plastics and Electrical Insulating Materials

D882 Test Method for Tensile Properties of Thin Plastic Sheeting

D1003 Test Method for Haze and Luminous Transmittance of Transparent Plastics

D1708 Test Method for Tensile Properties of Plastics by Use of Microtensile Specimens

E96/E96M Test Methods for Water Vapor Transmission of Materials

E308 Practice for Computing the Colors of Objects by Using the CIE System

2.2 *TAPPI Standard:*

Test Method T 451-CM-484 Flexural Properties of Paper[3]

2.3 *Federal Standards:*

FED STD 191 Method 5204 Stiffness of Cloth, Directional; Self Weighted Cantilever Method[4]

FED STD 191 Method 5206 Stiffness of Cloth Drape and Flex; Cantilever Bending Method[4]

3. Summary of Practice

3.1 The procedure described in this practice consists of selection of suitable specimens for determination of pertinent properties, inoculation of the specimens with suitable organisms, exposure of inoculated specimens under conditions favorable to growth, examination and rating for visual growth, and removal of the specimens and observations for testing, either before cleaning or after cleaning and reconditioning.

NOTE 1—Since the procedure involves handling and working with fungi, it is recommended that personnel trained in microbiology perform the portion of the procedure involving handling of organisms and inoculated specimens.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 The synthetic polymer portion of these materials is usually fungus-resistant in that it does not serve as a carbon

[1] This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee G03 on Weathering and Durability and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee G03.04 on Biological Deterioration.

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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.

[3] Available from Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry (TAPPI), 15 Technology Parkway South, Norcross, GA 30092, http://www.tappi.org.

[4] Available from Standardization Documents Order Desk, DODSSP, Bldg. 4, Section D, 700 Robbins Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19111-5098, http://dodssp.daps.dla.mil.

source for the growth of fungi. It is generally the other components, such as plasticizers, cellulosics, lubricants, stabilizers, and colorants, that are responsible for fungus attack on plastic materials. To assess materials other than plastics, use of this test method should be agreed upon by all parties involved. It is important to establish the resistance to microbial attack under conditions favorable for such attack, namely, a temperature of 2 to 38°C (35 to 100°F) and a relative humidity of 60 to 100 %.

4.2 The effects to be expected are as follows:

4.2.1 Surface attack, discoloration, loss of transmission (optical), and

4.2.2 Removal of susceptible plasticizers, modifiers, and lubricants, resulting in increased modulus (stiffness), changes in weight, dimensions, and other physical properties, and deterioration of electrical properties such as insulation resistance, dielectric constant, power factor, and dielectric strength.

4.3 Often the changes in electrical properties are due principally to surface growth and its associated moisture and to pH changes caused by excreted metabolic products. Other effects include preferential growth caused by nonuniform dispersion of plasticizers, lubricants, and other processing additives. Attack on these materials often leaves ionized conducting paths. Pronounced physical changes are observed on products in film form or as coatings, where the ratio of surface to volume is high, and where nutrient materials such as plasticizers and lubricants continue to diffuse to the surface as they are utilized by the organisms.

4.4 Since attack by organisms involves a large element of chance due to local accelerations and inhibitions, the order of reproducibility may be rather low. To ensure that estimates of behavior are not too optimistic, the greatest observed degree of deterioration should be reported.

4.5 Conditioning of the specimens, such as exposure to leaching, weathering, heat treatment, etc., may have significant effects on the resistance to fungi. Determination of these effects is not covered in this practice.

5. Apparatus

5.1 *Glassware*—Glass or plastic vessels are suitable for holding specimens when laid flat. Depending on the size of the specimens, the following are suggested:

5.1.1 For specimens up to 75 mm (3 in.) in diameter, 100 by 100 mm (4¼ by 4¼ in.) plastic boxes[5] or 150-mm (6-in.) covered Petri dishes, and

5.1.2 For 75 mm (3 in.) and larger specimens, such as tensile and stiffness strips, large Petri dishes, trays of borosilicate glass, or baking dishes up to 400 by 500 mm (16 by 20 in.) in size, covered with squares of window glass.

5.2 *Incubator*—Incubating equipment for all test methods shall maintain a temperature of 28 to 30°C (82.4 to 86°F) and a relative humidity not less than 85 %. Automatic recording of wet and dry-bulb temperature is recommended.

6. Reagents and Materials

6.1 *Purity of Reagents*—Reagent grade chemicals shall be used in all tests. Unless otherwise indicated, it is intended that all reagents shall conform to the specifications of the Committee on Analytical Reagents of the American Chemical Society, where such specification are available.[6] Other grades may be used, provided it is first ascertained that the reagent is of sufficiently high purity to permit its use without lessening the accuracy of the determination.

6.2 *Purity of Water*—Unless otherwise indicated, references to water shall be understood to mean distilled water or water of equal or higher purity.

6.3 *Nutrient-Salts Agar*—Prepare this medium by dissolving in 1 L of water the designated amounts of the following reagents:

Potassium dihydrogen orthophosphate (KH_2PO_4)	0.7 g
Magnesium sulfate ($MgSO_4 \cdot 7H_2O$)	0.7 g
Ammonium nitrate (NH_4NO_3)	1.0 g
Sodium chloride (NaCl)	0.005 g
Ferrous sulfate ($FeSO_4 \cdot 7H_2O$)	0.002 g
Zinc sulfate ($ZnSO_4 \cdot 7H_2O$)	0.002 g
Manganous sulfate ($MnSO_4 \cdot H_2O$)	0.001 g
Agar	15.0 g
Dipotassium monohydrogen orthophosphate (K_2HPO_4)	0.7 g

6.3.1 Sterilize the test medium by autoclaving at 121°C (250°F) for 20 min. Adjust the pH of the medium so that after sterilization the pH is between 6.0 and 6.5.

6.3.2 Prepare sufficient medium for the required tests.

6.3.3 *Nutrient– Salts Broth*—Prepare using the formula in 6.3, omitting the agar. Broth may be filter sterilized to avoid the precipitation of the salts that occurs with autoclaving.

6.4 *Mixed Fungus Spore Suspension:*

NOTE 2—Since a number of other organisms may be of specific interest for certain final assemblies or components, such other pure cultures of organisms may be used if agreed upon by the purchaser and the manufacturer of the plastic. Reference (1)[7] illustrates such a choice.

[5] Available from Tri-State, Inc., Henderson, KY.

[6] *Reagent Chemicals, American Chemical Society Specifications,* American Chemical Society, Washington, DC. For suggestions on the testing of reagents not listed by the American Chemical Society, see *Analar Standards for Laboratory Chemicals*, BDH Ltd., Poole, Dorset, U.K., and the *United States Pharmacopeia and National Formulary*, U.S. Pharmaceutical Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.

[7] The boldface numbers given in parentheses refer to a list of references at the end of the practice.

6.4.1 Use the following test fungi in preparing the cultures:

Fungi	ATCC No.[A]
Aspergillus brasiliensis[B]	9642
Penicillium funiculosum[C]	11797
Chaetomium globosum	6205
Trichoderma virens[D]	9645
Aureobasidium pullulans	15233

[A]Available from American Type Culture Collection, 12301 Parklawn Drive, Rockville, MD 20852.
[B]Historically known as *A. niger.*
[C]Historically known as *P. pinophilum.*
[D]Historically known as *Gliocladium virens.*

6.4.1.1 Maintain cultures of these fungi separately on an appropriate medium such as potato dextrose agar. The stock cultures may be kept for not more than four months at approximately 3 to 10°C (37 to 50°F). Use subcultures incubated at 28 to 30°C (82 to 86°F) for 7 to 20 days in preparing the spore suspension.

6.4.1.2 Prepare a spore suspension of each of the five fungi by pouring into one subculture of each fungus a sterile 10-mL portion of water or of a sterile solution containing 0.05 g/L of a nontoxic wetting agent such as sodium dioctyl sulfosuccinate. Use a sterile platinum, plastic, or nichrome inoculating wire to gently scrape the surface growth from the culture of the test organism.

6.4.2 Pour the spore charge into a sterile flask or tube containing 45 mL of sterile water with wetting agent and 10 to 15 solid glass beads. Cap and shake the flask vigorously to liberate the spores from the fruiting bodies and to break the spore clumps.

6.4.3 Alternatively, the spore charge can be poured into a sterile glass tissue grinder and gently ground to break up the spore clumps and liberate the spores from the fruiting bodies.

6.4.4 Filter the shaken or ground suspension through a thin layer of sterile glass wool in a glass funnel into a sterile flask in order to remove mycelial fragments.

6.4.5 Centrifuge the filtered spore suspension aseptically, and discard the supernatant liquid. Resuspend the residue in an aliquot of sterile water and centrifuge.

6.4.6 If large mycelia fragments or clumps of agar were dislodged during the harvesting, wash the spores in this manner three times to remove possible nutrient carryover from the original cultures. Dilute the final washed residue with sterile nutrient-salts solution (see 6.3.3) in such a manner that the resultant spore suspension shall contain 1 000 000 ± 200 000 spores/mL as determined with a counting chamber.

6.4.7 Repeat this operation for each organism used in the test and blend equal volumes of the resultant spore suspension to obtain the final mixed spore suspension.

6.4.8 The mixed spore suspension may be prepared fresh each day or may be held in the refrigerator at 3 to 10°C (37 to 50°F) for not more than four days. The individual spore suspensions may be held in the refrigerator at 3 to 10°C (37 to 50°F) for not more than fourteen days.

7. Viability Control

7.1 With each daily group of tests place each of three pieces of sterilized filter paper, 25 mm (1 in.) square, on hardened nutrient-salts agar in separate Petri dishes. Inoculate these, along with the test items, with the spore suspension by spraying the suspension from a sterilized atomizer[8] so that the entire surface is moistened with the spore suspension. Incubate these at 28 to 30°C (82 to 86°F) at a relative humidity not less than 85 % and examine them after 14 days' incubation. There shall be copious growth on all three of the filter paper control specimens. Absence of such growth requires repetition of the test.

8. Test Specimens

8.1 The simplest specimen may be a 50 by 50-mm (2 by 2-in.) piece, a 50-mm (2-in.) diameter piece, or a piece (rod or tubing) at least 76 mm (3 in.) long cut from the material to be tested. Completely fabricated parts or sections cut from fabricated parts may be used as test specimens. On such specimens, observation of effect is limited to appearance, density of growth, optical reflection or transmission, or manual evaluation of change in physical properties such as stiffness.

8.2 Film-forming materials such as coatings may be tested in the form of films at least 50 by 25 mm (2 by 1 in.) in size. Such films may be prepared by casting on glass and stripping after cure, or by impregnating (completely covering) filter paper or ignited glass fabric.

8.3 For visual evaluation, three specimens shall be inoculated. If the specimen is different on two sides, three specimens of each, face up and face down, shall be tested.

NOTE 3—In devising a test program intended to reveal quantitative changes occurring during and after fungal attack, an adequate number of specimens should be evaluated to establish a valid value for the original property. If five replicate specimens are required to establish a tensile strength of a film material, the same number of specimens shall be removed and tested for each exposure period. It is to be expected that values of physical properties at various stages of fungal attack will be variable; the values indicating the greatest degradation are the most significant (see 4.4). Reference **(2)** may be used as a guide.

9. Procedure

9.1 *Inoculation*—Pour sufficient nutrient-salts agar into suitable sterile dishes (see 5.1) to provide a solidified agar layer from 3 to 6 mm (⅛ to ¼ in.) in depth. After the agar is solidified, place the specimens on the surface of the agar. Inoculate the surface, including the surface of the test specimens, with the composite spore suspension by spraying the suspension from a sterilized atomizer[8] so that the entire surface is moistened with the spore suspension.

9.2 *Incubation Conditions:*

9.2.1 *Incubation*—Cover the inoculated test specimens and incubate at 28 to 30°C (82 to 86°F) and not less than 85 % relative humidity.

NOTE 4—Covered dishes containing nutrient agar are considered to

[8] DeVilbiss No. 163 atomizer or equivalent has been found satisfactory for this purpose.