



Designation: D6804 – 02 (Reapproved 2015)

Standard Guide for Hand Hole Design in Corrugated Boxes¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D6804; 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 standard provides guidelines for designing pre-cut apertures intended for use as hand holes in corrugated boxes during manual handling of boxed cargo.

1.2 *Limitations*—This standard offers guidance for package development and for subsequent testing of boxes to measure performance. It is not intended to provide specific information on the design of hand holes.

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

1.4 *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 requirements prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards*:²

[D585 Practice for Sampling and Accepting a Single Lot of Paper, Paperboard, Fiberboard, and Related Product \(Withdrawn 2010\)](#)³

[D996 Terminology of Packaging and Distribution Environments](#)

[D1974 Practice for Methods of Closing, Sealing, and Reinforcing Fiberboard Boxes](#)

[D4332 Practice for Conditioning Containers, Packages, or Packaging Components for Testing](#)

[D5276 Test Method for Drop Test of Loaded Containers by Free Fall](#)

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

[E122 Practice for Calculating Sample Size to Estimate, With](#)

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D10 on Packaging and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D10.27 on Paper and Paperboard 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.

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

[Specified Precision, the Average for a Characteristic of a Lot or Process](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—General definitions for packaging and distribution environments are found in Terminology [D996](#).

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard*:

3.2.1 *hand holes*—apertures, pre-cut in corrugated boxes by box manufacturers, as requested by box purchasers. These apertures facilitate manual handling during distribution and improve grip during handling.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 It may be desirable at times to provide hand holes in corrugated boxes. Package designers use hand holes to solve ergonomic and handling problems associated with large or awkward containers. This guide provides an aid for proper hand hole design and use.

4.2 *Ergonomics*:

4.2.1 In studying and applying ergonomic principles, of primary concern is the need to provide a safe work environment for material handlers who may be required to lift or transport packages. A safe work environment is difficult to define and varies with the package in question. Several ergonomic safety issues involve repetitive motions and spine loading in the lifting process. Other issues involve finger and foot protection.

4.2.2 In distribution centers or warehouses, low back disorders have been identified as areas of elevated risk. Low back problems continue to represent the most common and costly musculoskeletal disorders in the work place.⁴

4.2.3 One method used to reduce the concern of distance of lift (spinal loading) is to bring the reach of the material handler's hands closer to the body. With large or awkward boxes, placing hand holes in a more advantageous position can solve this problem.

4.3 *NIOSH*:

4.3.1 The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has published *Work Practices Guide for*

⁴ "Effects of Box Features on Spine Loading during Warehouse Order Selecting," Marras, Granata, Davis, Allread, and Jorgensen, The Institute for Ergonomics, Ohio State University.

*Manual Lifting.*⁵ This document may be of assistance in developing proper hand holes and their placement for a specific package.

4.4 *Improper Use of Hand Holes:*

4.4.1 Because of past lawsuits involving the use and misuse of hand holes, the corrugated box industry prefers the term access hole instead of hand hole on specifications. This terminology may have to be agreed upon between supplier and user. **Fig. 1**

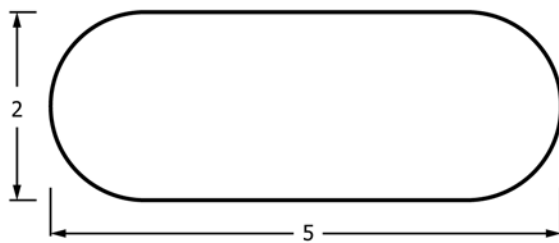
4.4.2 Since all end use conditions and requirements cannot be foreseen and since designing for worst case scenario for all applications is prohibitively expensive, designers should follow best practices. The prudent designer will consider product and package weight when deciding the proper use of a hand hole.

5. General Design Considerations

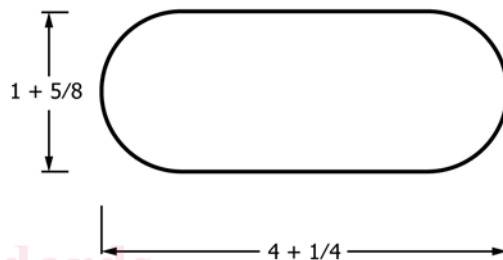
5.1 Hand holes can take many forms (see Fig. 1). They can:

- 5.1.1 Be a simple hole in a box,
- 5.1.2 Be a complex molded handle with a reinforcement mounted at the attaching point,
- 5.1.3 Incorporate rope handles, and

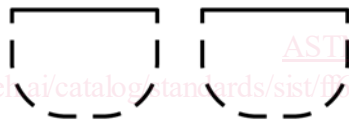
⁵ NIOSH Technical Report No. 81-122 from the US Department of Health and Human Services.



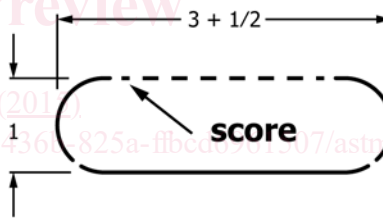
Large conventional hand hole to accommodate gloved hand



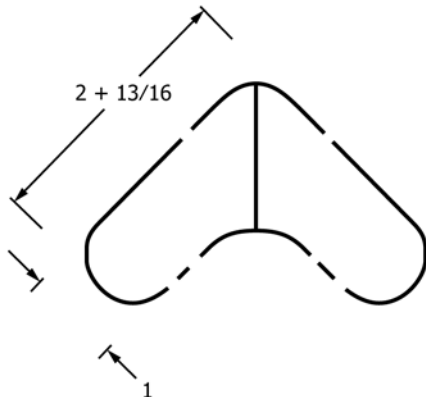
Conventional purpose hand hole



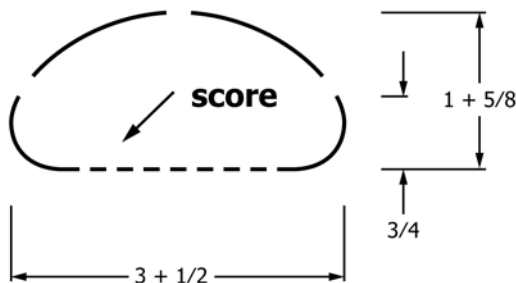
Two finger hand hole to straddle a divider or flange



Top hinged hand hole often used with heavy cases



Arc top hand hole sometimes offers greater tear out resistance



Modified arc top hand hole sometimes offers greater tear out resistance

FIG. 1 Common Hand Hole Types

5.1.4 Be reinforced by the box maker with reinforcing tape applied above them.

5.2 If possible, position hand holes so that product and internal cushioning material can add support for carrying (see Fig. 2). If the box must bear all the weight, it is best to position the hand holes at least two (2) in. below the horizontal score line of end panels to distribute the compressive forces and avoid failure. When placing hand holes, consider product balance and box closure method.

5.3 Some closure methods, such as taping, can affect hand hole placement. When a hand hole is to be used with a box style such as an RSC, which is to have a tape closure (see Practice D1974), it is best to allow enough room (2 to 2½-in.) for the end-leg of the tape (see Fig. 3). For a Bliss style box, hand holes should be placed just below the top flange (see Fig. 4).

5.4 Several methods are used to reinforce a box above the hand hole. For example, pressure sensitive, heat activated, and adhesive based products can be used. Some have fiberglass or polyester yarn reinforcement, some are tensilized, and some are made of heavy kraft paper (see Fig. 5).

5.5 When possible, use curved type hand holes: they will not tear as easily as the straight top design (see Fig. 4). The curved design eliminates a sharp edge at the corners, resulting in a more evenly distributed lifting force across the surface. Note that a different type of grasping device will be required when testing curved hand holes as opposed to straight ones (see X1.3, Apparatus).

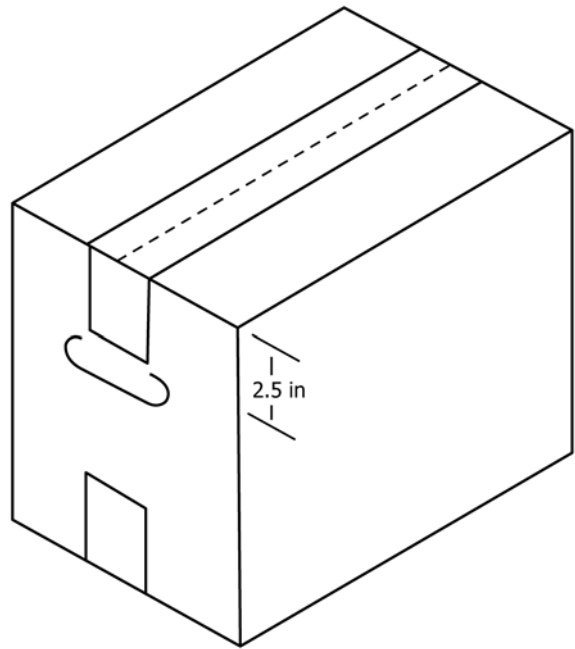


FIG. 3 RSC Style Box with Tape Closure, showing location of Hand Hole 2.5 in. below top edge of box

6. Evaluation

6.1 The test methods in Appendix X1 are not ASTM standards, but are evaluation methods to assist in determining the relative performance of hand holes during handling in the

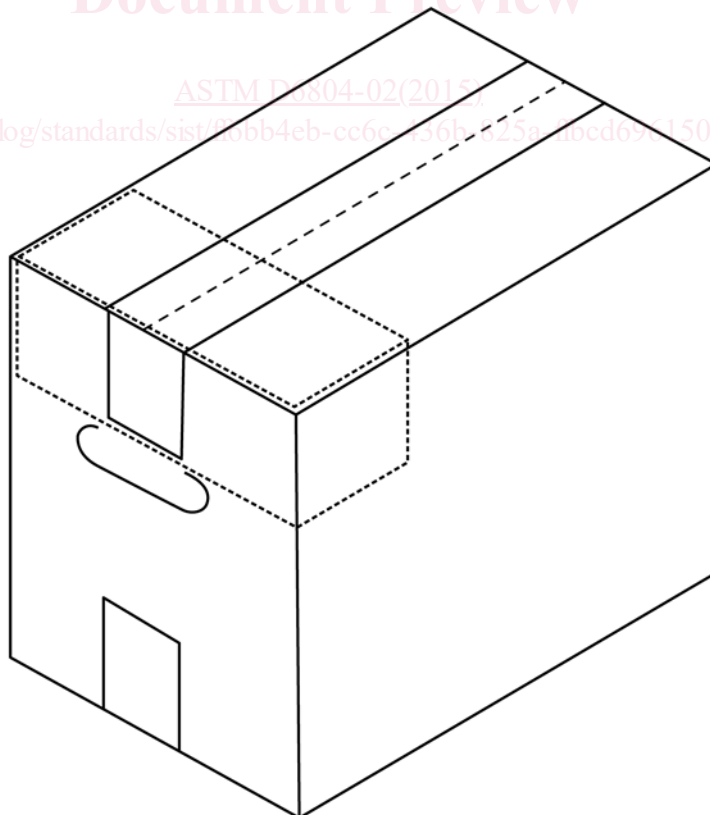


FIG. 2 Box with Internal Cushioning Material, showing location above Hand Hole to provide Added Support for Carrying

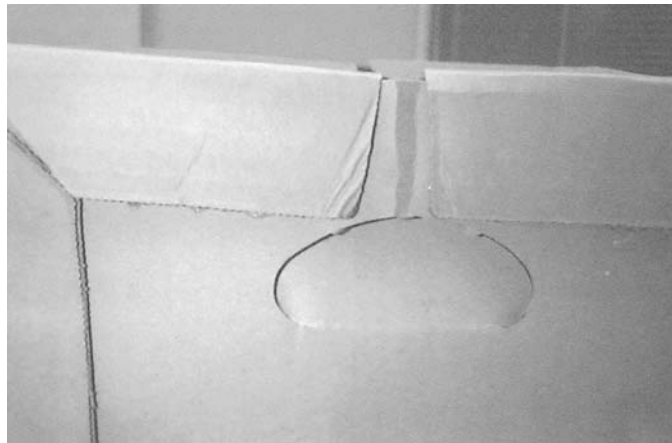


FIG. 4 Bliss Style Box showing Curved Hand Hole located just below the Top Flange

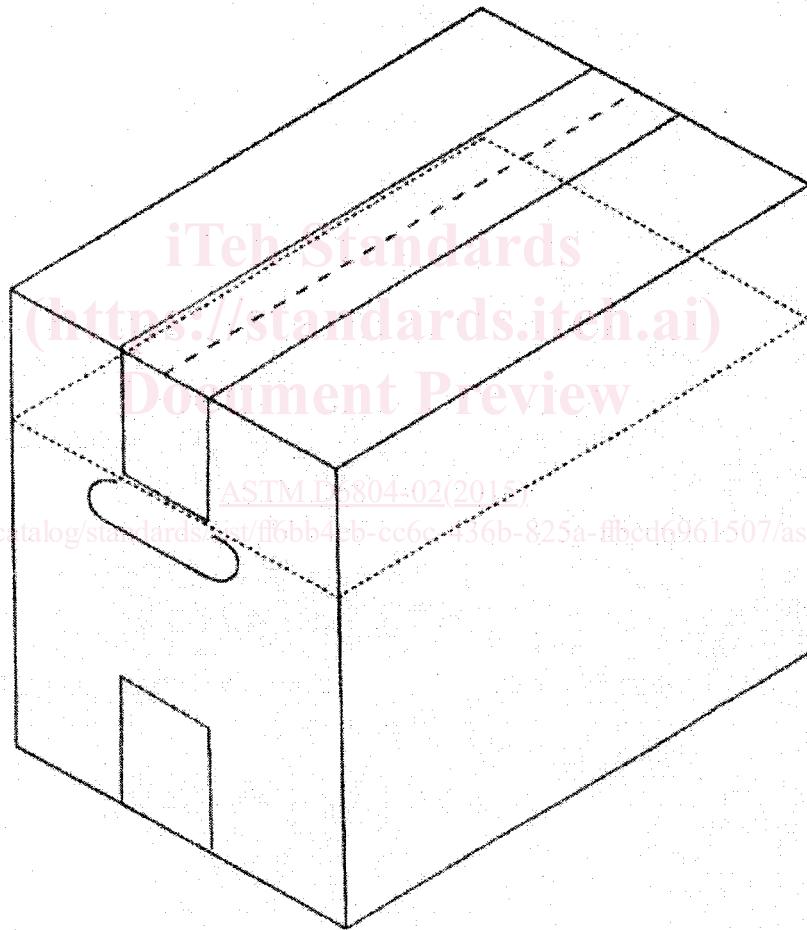


FIG. 5 RSC Style Box showing placement of Reinforcement Material around perimeter of box, just above Hand Hole

distribution environment. The methods, in experimental trials, were shown to have high variability between laboratories; however, within laboratories the methods were useful in determining relative performance.

7. Keywords

7.1 corrugated boxes; distribution environment; hand holes; manual handling