



Standard Test Method for Impact Attenuation of ~~Playing Surface Systems and~~ ~~Materials Systems, Other Protective Sport Systems, and~~ ~~Materials Used for Athletics, Recreation and Play~~¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation F355; 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 test method measures the impact attenuation of ~~playing surface systems and materials~~, specifically the peak impact acceleration (“impact shock”) produced under prescribed impact conditions.

1.2 This test method is applicable to natural and artificial ~~playing surface systems~~ intended to provide impact attenuation, including natural and artificial turf sports ~~fields and playground surfaces~~.fields.

1.3 This test method is applicable to impact attenuating mats and padding used in sports facilities, including stadium wall padding, gymnastic ~~mats and wrestling mats~~.mats, wrestling mats, turf playing systems, pole vault landing systems, playground protective surfacing, and other systems.

1.4 This test method ~~may be is~~ used to measure the impact attenuation of materials and components used as protective padding on trampoline frames, goal posts, etc., provided the material or component can be tested separately from the equipment to which it is attached.

1.5 Without modifications, this test method shall not be used to test materials and components that are attached to structures or equipment or finished products, unless the impact attenuation of the whole system is of interest.

1.6 While it is widely believed that appropriate impact attenuation can reduce the risk of impact-related injuries, the relationships between the results of this test method and specific injury risk and outcomes have not been determined.

1.7 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. The values given in parentheses are for information only.

1.8 *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

D1596 Test Method for Dynamic Shock Cushioning Characteristics of Packaging Material

E105 Practice for Probability Sampling of Materials

E122 Practice for Calculating Sample Size to Estimate, With Specified Precision, the Average for a Characteristic of a Lot or Process

E691 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method

F1292 Specification for Impact Attenuation of Surfacing Materials Within the Use Zone of Playground Equipment

F2650 Terminology Relating to Impact Testing of Sports Surfaces and Equipment

2.2 SAE Standard:

SAE J211/1 Instrumentation for Impact Tests - Part 1 - Electronic Instrumentation (rev. July 2007)³

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee F08 on Sports Equipment, Playing Surfaces, and Facilities and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee F08.52 on Miscellaneous Playing Surfaces.

Current edition approved July 1, 2010 July 1, 2016. Published August 2010 July 2016. Originally approved in 1972. Last previous edition approved in 2010 as F355 – 10: F355 – 10a. DOI: 10.1520/F0355-10A-10.1520/F0355-16.

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 SAE International (SAE), 400 Commonwealth Dr., Warrendale, PA 15096-0001, http://www.sae.org.

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions of terms related to impact testing of sports surfaces equipment can be found in Terminology F2650, except as noted.

3.2 Definitions:

3.2.1 HIC interval, n —the time interval within the acceleration-time history of an impact over which the HIC integral is evaluated.

3.2.2 impact, n —contact caused by a moving object (for example, an impact test missile) striking another object (for example, a surface) and during which one or both bodies are subject to high accelerations.

3.2.3 impact test, n —a procedure in which the impact attenuation of a playground surface or surfacing materials is determined by measuring the acceleration of a missile dropped onto the surface.

3.2.4 free-fall impact test, n —an impact test in which the trajectory of the missile is not restrained by rails, wires, or mechanisms or structures of any type.

3.2.5 guided impact test, n —an impact test in which the trajectory of the missile is restrained by rails, wires, or other mechanism or structure.

3.2.6 impact test results, n —one or more measured or calculated values from one or more impact tests used to define the impact attenuation of a playground surface or surfacing materials.

3.2.7 impact test site, n —point on the surface of an installed playground surface that is selected as the target of an impact test.

3.2.8 impact velocity, n —the velocity (V_0) of a falling body (for example, a missile) at the instant of impact.

3.2.9 missile, n —a rigid object of specified mass and dimensions; used to impart an impact to a surface.

3.2.10 impact test system, n —a device or system for performing an impact test in which an instrumented missile as described in Annex A1 and Annex A2 is used to impact the surface or surfacing materials as specified in the appropriate specification or test procedure.

3.2.11 missile reference plane, n —the plane of the flat circular face of the hemispherical missile.

3.2.12 reference drop height, n —a specification of the theoretical drop height of an impact test.

3.2.13 reference MEP pad, n —a modular elastomer programmer pad with consistent and known impact attenuation properties that is used to verify proper functioning of the impact test equipment.

3.2.14 theoretical drop height, n —the drop height (h) that, under standard conditions, would result in an impact velocity equal to a missile's measured impact velocity (V_0). The standard conditions assume that friction and air resistance do not affect the acceleration of the missile and that the acceleration due to gravity is equal to the standard value of g at sea level. In a free-fall impact test, the actual drop height will approximate the theoretical drop height. In a guided impact test, the theoretical drop height will be less than the actual drop height, due to the effects of friction in the guidance mechanism.

3.3 Definitions: Definitions of Terms Related to the Measurement of Acceleration Used in Annexes:

3.1.1 Definitions of terms related to impact testing of sports surfaces equipment can be found in Terminology F2650.

3.3.1 accelerometer, n —a transducer for measuring acceleration.

3.3.1.1 transducer, n —the first device in data channel, used to convert a physical quantity to be measured into a second quantity (such as an electrical voltage) which can be processed by the remainder of the channel.

3.3.1.2 triaxial accelerometer, n —a transducer or combination of transducers used for measuring the three vector components of acceleration in three dimensions, relative to three orthogonal spatial axes.

3.3.1.3 uniaxial accelerometer, n —a transducer used to measure the component of acceleration relative to a single spatial axis.

3.3.2 accelerometer data channel, n —all of the instrumentation used to communicate information about the physical quantity of acceleration from its origin to the point of presentation. The data channel includes all transducers, signal conditioners, amplifiers, filters, digitizers, recording devices, cables and interconnectors through which the information passes and also includes the analytical software or procedures that may change the frequency, amplitude, or timing of the data.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 A test specimen is impacted at a specified velocity with a specific missile of given mass and geometry. geometry as stipulated in a specification or test method. An accelerometer mounted in the missile is used to record the acceleration-time history of the impact and the peak acceleration is used as a measure of impact severity. Optionally, the displacement history of the impact may also be recorded.

4.2 This test method defines three missiles for use in playing surface impact tests:

4.2.1 Missiles A and D are both cylindrical, with specified mass and geometry and a circular, flat, metal impacting surface. These missiles are used with a guidance mechanism.

4.2.2 *Missile E* has a hemispherical impacting surface of specified mass and geometry and ~~may be~~ is used with a guidance system or, if equipped with a triaxial accelerometer, without guidance (“free-fall”).

4.2.3 The specific masses and geometries of the missiles are detailed in [6.2 Annex A1](#).

5. Significance and Use

5.1 The results of this method quantify the impact attenuation of playing surface and system specimens under the specific test conditions.

5.2 The test method measures the outcome of impacts performed under specific conditions. It does not quantify the intrinsic material properties of the tested specimens.

5.3 Test results from different specimens obtained under the same conditions (that is, the same missile mass and geometry, drop height, etc.) ~~may be~~ are used to compare impact attenuation under those conditions.

5.4 Test results obtained under different conditions are not comparable. Specifically obtained with different missiles are not equivalent and cannot be directly compared. Similarly, test results obtained using the same missile, but using different drop heights, are not directly comparable.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Anvil*—For tests performed on surface samples in a laboratory, the surface sample shall be mounted on a rigid anvil or base having a mass at least 100 times that of the missile.

6.2 *Impact Test System*—A device or system for performing an impact test in which an instrumented missile is dropped onto a playing surface or surfacing material from a predetermined drop height.

6.2.1 *Missile*:

6.2.1.1 The missile shall have one of the combinations of mass and geometry specified in [Table 1](#). (See also [Fig. 1](#).)

6.2.1.2 The missile may include cavities and additional components required to accommodate the attachment of sensors or to attach a supporting assembly. The form of any cavities or additional components shall be generally symmetrical about the Z-axis of the level missile such that center of mass lies within 0.08 in. (2 mm) of the Z-axis and the moments of inertia about any two horizontal axes do not differ by more than 5 %.

6.2.1.3 A supporting assembly (for example, a handle or ball arm) may be rigidly attached to the missile as a means of connecting it to an external guidance system. The total mass of the drop assembly, which is the combined mass of the missile, accelerometer and supporting assembly shall be that defined in [Table 1](#). The mass of the supporting assembly alone shall not exceed 30 % of the total mass.

6.2.2 *Guidance Mechanism for Guided Impact Tests*—For guided impact tests, the missile may be connected to low-friction guides (such as a monorail, dual rails, or guide wires) using a follower or other mechanism in order to constrain the fall trajectory of the missile to a vertically downward path. Missile A and D may be guided using a ventilated tube. The guidance system must allow the missile to be leveled prior to a drop and must maintain the missile in a level ($\pm 5^\circ$) attitude during the drop. The guidance mechanism shall be constructed in a manner that that does not impede the trajectory of the missile during its fall or during its contact with the surface being tested; other than necessary impedance caused by friction in the guidance mechanism.

6.2.3 *Support Structure for Free-Fall Impact Tests*—For free-fall impact tests, a support structure (for example, a tripod) shall be used to ensure repeatable drop height and location. The support structure shall be sufficiently rigid to support the weight of the missile without visible deformation. The support structure shall be erected in a manner that does not impede the trajectory of the missile during its fall or during its contact with the surface being tested.

6.2.4 *Drop Height Control Mechanism*—The guidance mechanism of [6.2.2](#) or the support structure of [6.2.3](#) shall incorporate a means of repeatedly positioning the missile at a predetermined drop height.

6.2.5 *Release Mechanism*—The operation of any release mechanism provided as a means of initiating a drop of the missile shall not influence the fall trajectory of the missile following release.

6.1 *Acceleration Measurement System*—A transducer or transducers and associated equipment for measuring and recording the acceleration of the missile during an impact with an accuracy of within ± 1 % of the true value. The user is to select the appropriate apparatus as called for in the test method or specification for the testing.

6.3.1 *Accelerometers*—An accelerometer shall be rigidly attached at the center of mass of the missile. The sensing axis or axes of the accelerometer shall pass through the center of mass of the missile.

6.3.1.1 For a free-fall test, a triaxial accelerometer is required.

6.3.1.2 For a guided test, a single uniaxial accelerometer may be used. The accelerometer shall be rigidly attached at the center of mass of the missile (± 2 mm) with its axis of sensitivity aligned ($\pm 5^\circ$) with the missile’s Z axis and passing through the center of mass of the missile.

NOTE 1—The apparatus is detailed in [Annex A1](#).

6.3.2 Accelerometers shall have a minimum sensitive range of ± 500 g and be capable of tolerating accelerations of at least 1000 g along any axis.

6.3.3 Accelerometer Calibration—Accelerometers shall be calibrated by reference to a National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) traceable standard using a shaker table to excite a range of frequencies and amplitudes determined suitable by the accelerometer manufacturer. The calibration procedure shall include, as a minimum, the range of frequencies from 2 to 2000 Hz.

NOTE 1—Accelerometer calibration is usually performed by the manufacturer.

6.3.4 Accelerometers shall be recalibrated at a time interval recommended by the equipment manufacturer or every two years, whichever ever is the lesser time interval.

6.3.5 Accelerometer Connections—The means of providing power and signal connections to the accelerometer (for example, a cable) shall be constructed in a manner such that the connecting devices do not influence the trajectory of the missile before or during the impact test.

6.3.6 Accelerometer Signal Conditioning—Any signal conditioning or amplifying electronics required for proper operation of accelerometers shall be of a type recommended by the accelerometer manufacturer and shall have impedance and frequency response characteristics that are compatible with the accelerometer.

6.3.7 Accelerometer Signal Filtering:

6.3.7.1 Anti-Aliasing Filter—To prevent aliasing in the digitized acceleration data, the acceleration signals shall be filtered with an analog low pass filter prior to digitization. The anti-aliasing filter shall have a corner frequency of 5000 ± 500 Hz or a maximum of $0.25 \times$ the single channel sampling rate.

6.3.7.2 Data Channel Filter—Digitized data shall be filtered in accordance with the specification for an SAE Channel Class 1000 data channel, using a 4th order Butterworth. An analog filter may be substituted provided it has 4-pole characteristics and conforms to the data channel specification.

6.3.8 Recording Device—A digital recording device such as a digital storage oscilloscope, a dedicated waveform analyzer or a computer equipped with an analog to digital converter shall be used to capture the acceleration time signal produced during an impact. Analog oscilloscopes and other analog recording devices shall not be used.

6.3.9 Resolution—The conversion from analog accelerometer signal to digital data shall be accomplished with a digitizer having a resolution of 0.25 g or less. (For example, a twelve bit digitizer spanning the range ± 500 g has a resolution of 0.244 g.)

6.3.10 Sample Rate—The minimum sampling rate of the recording device shall be 10.0 kHz per accelerometer channel. When a triaxial accelerometer is used, three individual digitizers (one per accelerometer axis), each with a minimum sampling rate of 10 kHz are required.

6.3.11 Capacity—The digitizer shall be capable of recording and storing data continuously for a minimum of 50 ms, beginning at least 5 ms before onset of the impact and ending no earlier than 5 ms after the cessation of the impact.

6.3.12 Display—The recording system shall have the capability of displaying the recorded acceleration-time data in order to allow inspection by the operator. A graphical display is recommended, but a tabular printout or other form of display is acceptable. The display shall allow inspection of all the data points recorded from at least 5 ms before the onset of impact until no less than 5 ms after cessation of the impact. The display shall show acceleration data in a manner that allows inspection of all data points lying in the acceleration range from -10 g to a value that exceeds the maximum recorded acceleration value.

6.3.13 Accelerometer Data Channels:

6.3.13.1 Accuracy—The accuracy of the each data channel shall be such that the maximum acceleration recorded during an impact is recorded is within $\pm 1\%$ of the true value.

6.3.13.2 Frequency Response—All acceleration data channels, before signal filtering, shall have a flat frequency response ± 0.1 dB in a range extending from below a maximum of 1.0 Hz to above a minimum of 2000 Hz.

6.3.13.3 Channel Frequency Class—All acceleration data channels, including signal filtering, shall, as a minimum, conform to the requirements of a Channel Frequency Class 1000 data channel, as specified by SAE J211/1.

6.4 Drop Height Measurement—A means of repeatably determining the missile's drop height with a resolution of 1 in. (25 mm) and to an accuracy of $\pm 1\%$ of the true value is required.

6.4.1 For a free-fall impact test, the drop height shall be measured directly, prior to release of the missile, using a measuring stick, a steel tape or other appropriate means where possible. An indirect means of determining the theoretical drop height shall also be used. Such indirect means may comprise the velocity measuring system described in 6.4.2, or a means of measuring the time interval between release of the missile and the onset of impact (the fall time), in which case the time interval shall be determined with a resolution and accuracy of 1.0 ms. Both the measured drop height and the theoretical drop height shall be reported.

6.4.2 For a guided impact test, the theoretical drop height must be determined by measuring the velocity of the missile immediately prior to the onset of an impact; at a point in the missile's trajectory no more than 2.0 in. (51 mm) above the first point of contact between the missile and the surface under test. The velocity measuring system may consist of a light gate device to measure the time an opaque flag interrupts a light sensor or other appropriate means. The velocity measuring device shall not interfere with or impede the trajectory of the missile and shall be capable of recording impact velocity with a resolution of 0.1 ft/s^{-1} (0.03 m/s^{-1}) and an accuracy of $\pm 1\%$ of the true value.

NOTE 2—Since theoretical drop height is proportional to the square of impact velocity, the $\pm 2\%$ tolerance on drop height measurement and the $\pm 1\%$

tolerance on velocity measurement are equivalent. For a typical flag and light gate velocimeter to achieve $\pm 1\%$ accuracy, the flag width must be known to an accuracy of $\pm 0.5\%$ and the transit time measured with an accuracy of $\pm 20\ \mu\text{s}$ (that is, a timing device with a clock rate of at least 50 kHz is required):

6.5 Battery Operated Equipment—Battery-operated equipment shall have a means of monitoring battery voltage (for example, a voltage gauge or indicator):

6.6 System Integrity Check—Prior to and following each use, the test apparatus shall be checked for proper operation. The system integrity check shall include, as a minimum, the following steps:

6.6.1 The battery status of each piece of battery-operated equipment shall be checked to ensure adequate power availability and voltage level.

6.6.2 Test the proper operation of the equipment by performing the instrumentation check described in [10.1](#).

7. Test Specimen

7.1 Test specimens shall represent the playing surface system or protective padding as it is intended to be used. The minimum distance between the outer dimension of the missile and the edge of the specimen shall be at least 25.4 mm (1 in.) and no less than the thickness of the specimen.

7.2 Where the sample is to be tested in a controlled laboratory a method of confinement for the sample is required when specified in the appropriate standard.

7.3 Where the test is to be performed on an installed surface or in a location where it is to be used, there will be a testing protocol in the system specifications that will state the test procedure. The procedure can include, the theoretical drop height, test locations, surface preparation, temperature and requirements for the collection, recording and reporting of data.

7.4 Where the missiles and [Annex A1](#) and [Annex A2](#) are used in the testing of surface systems, the appropriate specification shall provide any reference or confirmation procedures required.

8. Number of Specimens

8.1 The number of specimens tested as a sample can vary widely, depending upon the intended use of the data. It is recommended that at least two specimens be tested for each set of conditions. To obtain a specific quality assurance level, the sampling procedures of Practices [E105](#) and [E122](#) ~~should~~ shall be followed.

8.2 The appropriate specification will have requirements for number and size of samples required for laboratory testing.

8.3 Where the testing is to take place at the site of installation or use, the appropriate standard will provide direction to the person performing the testing as to the number of test locations and how they are determined.

9. Conditioning Laboratory Testing

9.1 Do not stack the specimens during any conditioning. They shall be under the intended use condition or preconditioned at $50 \pm 2\%$ relative humidity and $23 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ for a minimum of 4 h, or until desired temperature is attained. Samples to be tested at other than these conditions shall be stored in the desired environment for at least 4 h, or until they reach the desired temperature, before testing. Samples shall be tested (that is, impacted) within 10 s after removal from the environmental chamber. Samples shall be returned to the environmental chamber within 20 s after impact and stored for at least 2 h between drops. Testing at other than ambient precludes conducting successive drops at short time intervals.

NOTE 3—Due to differing thermal conductivities and the extreme time dependence of temperature profiles in most materials exposed to extreme surface temperature changes there may be variability introduced by this type of testing.

9.2 The specification to which the sample is being tested will outline all requirements for conditioning of laboratory test samples.

9.3 The specification to which the surface system is being tested in the field will outline all requirements of conditioning or preparation requirements for the surface or the selection of the test location.

NOTE 2—Due to differing thermal conductivities and the extreme time dependence of temperature profiles in most materials exposed to extreme surface temperature changes there may be variability introduced by this type of testing.

10. Procedure

~~10.1 Prewarm the recording equipment as recommended by the manufacturer. Calibrate~~ Perform an instrument check as described for the appropriate instrument in time [Annex A1](#) and [Annex A2](#) penetration-time recorder in accordance with the recommended procedure of the equipment manufacturer. Reference drops are performed appropriate to the test.

10.2 Place the specimen under the missile, or orient the dynamic test equipment over the playing surface system.

10.3 Determine the baseline by preloading the test specimen to 6.8 kPa (1.0 psi) for Procedure A and adjusting the recorder to read zero penetration. When testing at other than ambient conditions, determine the baseline with the sample at the desired test temperature.

NOTE 4—When using Procedures B or C, care should be exercised to lower the missile gently onto the sample when establishing the baseline.

10.4 Set the ~~missile-propelling mechanism-theoretical drop height~~ to obtain the desired impact velocity.

10.5 Release the missile, and record the results in accordance with the recommended procedures of the equipment manufacturers.

10.6 Make three consecutive drops at intervals of $3 \pm 0.25 - 1 \pm 0.5$ min, unless otherwise specified (see ~~9+Annex A1~~).

NOTE 5—*Calculation of Theoretical Drop Height:* For comparison of data based on drop height, only the theoretical drop height should be used. The following calculation should be used (see Test Method ~~D1596~~):

$$H = V^2/2g \tag{1}$$

where:

H = theoretical height, mm (in.);

V = velocity, mm/s (in./s), and

g = acceleration of gravity, 9806 mm/s/s (386 in./s/s).

This calculation eliminates variations in using actual drop height, which may be affected by frictional losses.

10.7 Ensure the measured drop height corresponds with the theoretical drop height.

11. ~~Calculation~~ Evaluation of the Data

11.1 Select the appropriate calculations as the relevant specification.

11.2 G_{max} —Determine the maximum deceleration in the time-deceleration history to the closest G .

11.2 ~~Time to G_{max}~~ —Determine the time to maximum deceleration to the nearest 0.05 ms.

11.3 ~~Severity Index~~—The time integral of deceleration exponentiated 2.5 times may be calculated by dividing the deceleration-time record into equally sized time subintervals of magnitude of 0.05 ms and summing the deceleration values (in G) exponentiated 2.5 times between the two intersections of the deceleration record and the time axis. Multiply this result by the time subinterval length (in seconds) and the result is the Severity Index in G -s.

11.4 ~~Head Injury Criterion~~—More sophisticated methods of data integration such as the Head Injury Criterion (HIC) may be used if desired. The HIC evolved from the Severity Index calculation and requires the maximization of the mathematical expression, involving the time-average acceleration by varying of the time interval over which the average is calculated. Numerical evaluation of the HIC requires analog-to-digital conversion of the acceleration time profile using a sampling rate sufficient to characterize the pulse accurately. These data are easily processed by a digital computer. The HIC number is determined by evaluating the equation for all iterative combinations of the integration limits that the time interval allows for the evaluation. The equation^{4,5} for calculating the HIC value is as follows:

$$HIC = \left[(t_2 - t_1) \left(\frac{1}{(t_2 - t_1)} \int_{t_1}^{t_2} a dt \right)^{2.5} \right]_{\max} \tag{2}$$

A time interval of 0.05 ms should be used.

11.5 ~~Maximum Penetration~~—Determine the maximum displacement to the nearest 0.254 mm (0.01 in.).

11.6 ~~Time to Maximum Penetration~~—Determine the time to maximum penetration.

11.7 ~~Rebound Velocity~~—Use a straightedge to draw a tangent line at the exit of the penetration-time trace. The slope of this line, multiplied by the appropriate distance and time calibration, is the rebound velocity. Alternatively, the rebound velocity may be determined by other velocity-measuring devices that measure the coefficient of restitution or percent rebound of the missile.

11.8 ~~Dynamic Hardness Index~~ (relevant only to Procedure A)—Calculate the dynamic hardness index as follows:

$$\text{Dynamic hardness index} = \frac{G_{\max} \times S \times W}{A \times P} \tag{3}$$

where:

S = sample thickness, cm (in.);

W = missile weight, kg (lb);

A = missile area, cm^2 (in.^2), and

P = maximum penetration, cm (in.).

11.3 ~~Conformity of Data Test:~~ The drop test data shall be reviewed at the time of testing and evaluated for G_{max} , velocity, and anomalies in the data, for example large variation in peak from one drop to the other for the same location, that could affect the validity of the data.

11.9.1 Total sum of G values for each 0.05 ms.

11.3.1 ~~Test conformity to following relationship:~~ Where an anomaly is found, the testing shall be terminated and the device brought into compliance prior to proceeding.