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# Standard Test Methods for In-Place Density of Unhardened and Hardened Concrete, Including Roller Compacted Concrete, By Nuclear Methods<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation C1040/C1040M; 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 ( $\epsilon$ ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

## 1. Scope\*

1.1 These test methods cover the determination of the in-place density of unhardened and hardened concrete, including roller compacted concrete, by gamma radiation. For notes on the nuclear test see [Appendix X1](#).

1.2 Two test methods are described, as follows:

	Section
Test Method A—Direct Transmission	8
Test Method B—Backscatter	9

1.3 The values stated in either SI units or inch-pound units are to be regarded separately as standard. 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.

1.4 *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 limitations prior to use.*

## 2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*<sup>2</sup>

[C29/C29M Test Method for Bulk Density \(“Unit Weight”\) and Voids in Aggregate](#)

[C125 Terminology Relating to Concrete and Concrete Aggregates](#)

[C138/C138M Test Method for Density \(Unit Weight\), Yield, and Air Content \(Gravimetric\) of Concrete](#)

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

## 3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions:*

3.1.1 For definitions of terms used in these test methods, refer to Terminology [C125](#).

## 4. Significance and Use

4.1 These test methods are useful as rapid, nondestructive techniques for the in-place determination of the density of unhardened concrete. The backscatter test method is also useful for the same purpose on hardened concrete. The fundamental assumptions inherent in the test methods are that Compton scattering is the dominant interaction and that the material under test is homogeneous.

4.2 These test methods are suitable for control and for assisting in acceptance testing during construction, for evaluation of concrete quality subsequent to construction, and for research and development.

NOTE 1—Care must be taken when using these test methods in monitoring the degree of consolidation, which is the ratio of the actual density achieved to the maximum density attainable with a particular concrete. The test methods presented here are used to determine the actual density. A density

<sup>1</sup> These test methods are under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee C09 on Concrete and Concrete Aggregates and are the direct responsibility of Subcommittee C09.45 on Roller-Compacted Concrete.

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<sup>2</sup> 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

measurement, by any test method, is a function of the components of the concrete and may vary, to some extent, in response to the normal, acceptable variability of those components.

4.3 Test results may be affected by reinforcing steel, by the chemical composition of concrete constituents, and by sample heterogeneity. The variations resulting from these influences are minimized by instrument design and by the user's compliance with appropriate sections of the test procedure. Results of tests by the backscatter test method may also be affected by the density of underlying material. The backscatter test method exhibits spatial bias in that the apparatus's sensitivity to the material under it decreases with distance from the surface of the concrete.

NOTE 2—Typically, backscatter gauge readings represent the density in the top 75 to 100 mm [3 to 4 in.] of material.

## 5. Apparatus

5.1 The exact details of construction of the apparatus may vary, but the apparatus as a whole shall satisfy the requirements for system precision stated in **Annex A1**. The system shall consist of the following:

5.1.1 *Gamma Source*—An encapsulated and sealed radioisotopic source, such as cesium-137 (see **X1.3**).

5.1.2 *Detector*—Any type of gamma detector, such as a Geiger-Müller tube, scintillation crystal, or proportional counter.

5.1.3 *Probe*—For direct transmission measurements, either the gamma source or the detector shall be housed in a probe for inserting in a preformed hole in the material to be tested. The probe shall be marked in increments of 50 mm [2 in.] for tests with probe depths from 50 to 300 mm [2 to 12 in.]. The probe shall be so made mechanically, that when moved manually to the marked depth desired, it will be held securely in position at that depth.

5.1.4 *Readout Instrument*—A suitable scaler or direct readout meter.

5.1.5 *Gauge Housing*—The source, detector, readout instrument and appropriate power supplies shall be in housings of rugged construction that are moisture and dust proof.

5.1.6 *Reference Standard*—A block of uniform, unchanging density provided for checking equipment operation, background count, and count-rate reproducibility.

5.1.7 *Guide Plate and Hole-Forming-Device*—For direct transmission measurements, a guide plate and a device, such as a pin or drill rod, having a nominal diameter slightly larger than the probe, for forming a hole normal to the concrete surface are required.

5.1.8 *Calibration Adjustment Container*—The container shall be rigid and watertight, with minimum inside dimensions large enough to allow the calibration curve adjustment procedure (6.2) to be followed with no effect of the finite size of the container on the instrument's responses. The volume of the container shall be established following the procedure outlined in Test Method **C29/C29M**.

NOTE 3—For backscatter measurements, a container 450 by 450 by 150 mm [18 by 18 by 6 in.] will meet this requirement for most equipment currently available commercially. For 50-mm [2-in.] depth direct transmission measurements, a container 600 by 600 by 100 mm [24 by 24 by 4 in.] will meet this requirement.

5.1.9 *Scale*—The scale shall be accurate to within 0.2 kg [0.5 lb] of the test load at any point within the range of use. The range of use shall be considered to extend from the weight of the calibration adjustment container empty, to the weight of the measure plus the contents at 2600 kg/m<sup>3</sup> [160 lb/ft<sup>3</sup>].

5.1.10 *Strike-Off Plate or Bar*—This shall be a flat metal or glass plate or metal bar with a length at least 50 mm [2 in.] greater than the length, width, or diameter of the calibration adjustment container. The strike-off must be rigid, straight, and smooth enough to finish the concrete surface flat and flush with the edges of the calibration adjustment container.

## 6. Calibration

6.1 Calibration curves are established by determining the nuclear count rate of each of several materials at different and known densities, plotting the count rate (or count ratio) versus each known density, and placing a curve through the resulting points. The method used to establish the curve must be the same as that used to determine the density. The materials used for calibration must be of uniform density.

NOTE 4—Calibration curves are supplied by gauge manufacturers, or can be established using blocks of known density or prepared containers of uniform, unchanging material compacted to known densities. Materials considered satisfactory for use in blocks include granite, aluminum, chalk, limestone, and magnesium.

6.2 *Adjusting Calibration Curves*—Prior to use, adjust the instrument's calibration curve, if necessary, to compensate for chemical composition effects. Such an adjustment is necessary whenever the chemical composition of the concrete to be tested differs significantly from that for which the calibration curve was established. An adjustment is also necessary if the testing equipment has been changed. Adjustment is particularly important for backscatter test method measurements. Determine the necessary adjustments using the same mode of operation and at the same depth (if using direct transmission) as that intended for testing. A recommended procedure for making this adjustment is as follows:

6.2.1 Prepare a concrete mix similar in composition to the material to be tested subsequently.

6.2.2 Fill the calibration adjustment container with concrete and consolidate to produce a uniform, homogeneous material with approximately the density that will be achieved in the construction.

NOTE 5—Consolidation may be achieved by the procedure used for unit weight testing (Test Method **C138/C138M**) or by other methods, such as spading the concrete and then dropping the ends of the container alternately on a rigid surface.

6.2.3 Strike off the container with strike-off plate or bar. Take care to make the concrete surface flat and flush with the container edges.

NOTE 6—A2 mm [ $1/16$  in.] average difference between the concrete surface and the container edges in a 150 mm [6 in.] deep container will produce a 1 to 2 % error in the weighed density of the concrete.

6.2.4 Weigh the concrete in the container to the nearest 0.2 kg [0.5 lb] and determine the weighed density as follows:

$$W = \frac{W_c}{V} \quad (1)$$

where:

$W$  = weighed density of concrete, kg/m<sup>3</sup> [lb/ft<sup>3</sup>],  
 $W_c$  = mass of the concrete, kg [lb], and  
 $V$  = volume of the container, m<sup>3</sup> [ft<sup>3</sup>].

6.2.5 Immediately take three automatically timed direct transmission or backscatter readings with the instrument centered on the surface of the concrete in the container. Rotate the base of the instrument 90° around the vertical axis, with subsequent rotations of 180 and 270° from the original position. Obtain three additional automatically timed counts at each position. The instrument must be centered over the surface of the concrete in each rotated position to prevent edge effects on the instrument reading.

6.2.6 Using the applicable calibration curve, determine the density from the average of the 12 counts obtained in 6.2.5.

6.2.7 Determine the difference between the two density readings obtained in 6.2.4 and 6.2.6.

6.2.8 Repeat 6.2.2 – 6.2.7 on two additional concrete mixes of the same proportions. Determine the adjustment factor by averaging the three values obtained in 6.2.7 and 6.2.8. If one of the three values differs from the average by more than 25 kg/m<sup>3</sup> [1.5 lb/ft<sup>3</sup>], discard it as a statistical outlier and recalculate the adjustment factor as the average of the remaining two values.

6.2.9 Use the adjustment factor determined in 6.2.8 to plot a corrected count-rate calibration curve which shall be parallel to the original calibration curve and offset by the amount indicated in 6.2.8. Alternatively, the value of the adjustment factor shall be attached to the instrument and applied to all density determinations arrived at from an original (unadjusted) calibration curve.

NOTE 7—In some circumstances, for example, where chemical composition changes are minimal, calibration curve adjustments may be established on permanent, uniform, hardened concrete blocks.

## 7. Standardization

7.1 Standardization of the equipment on the reference standard is required at the start of each day and whenever test measurements are suspect.

NOTE 8—In some older instrument models, count rates are strongly influenced by the ambient temperature; frequent standardization may be necessary.

7.2 Warm-up time shall be in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

7.3 Take at least five readings on the reference standard, more if recommended by the manufacturer, or take one 4 min or longer count if the instrument is equipped with automatic standard count storage.

7.4 If more than one of the individual readings is outside the limit set by Eq 2, repeat the standardization. If the second attempt does not satisfy Eq 2, check the system for a malfunction. If no malfunction is found, establish a new  $N_o$  (average count) by taking the average of a minimum of 10 counts on the reference standard.

$$|N_s - N_o| < 1.96 \sqrt{N_o} \quad (2)$$

where:

$N_s$  = count currently measured in checking the instrument operation, and  
 $N_o$  = average count previously established on the reference standard.

In instruments where the count has been prescaled, that is, divided by a constant factor  $k$  before it is displayed, Eq 2 shall be replaced by the following:

$$|N_s - N_o| < 1.96 \sqrt{N_o/k} \quad (3)$$

7.4.1 If automatic standard count storage is used and the newly established count is outside the limit set by Eq 2, repeat the standardization.

7.4.2 If the second attempt does not satisfy Eq 2, check the system for a malfunction.

7.4.3 If no malfunction is found, establish a new  $N_o$  equal to the average count found in 7.4.2.

7.5 If a new  $N_o$  differs by more than 10 % from the standard count at which the calibration curve (6.1) was established, recalibrate the instrument.