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## Standard Test Methods for Measuring Rating Adhesion by Tape Test<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D3359; 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.

~~e<sup>1</sup> NOTE—Footnote 5 and 5.2 were corrected editorially in June 2010.~~

~~e<sup>2</sup> NOTE—Footnote 5 and 5.2 were corrected editorially and moved into Note 4 in 5.3 in July 2010.~~

*This standard has been approved for use by agencies of the U.S. Department of Defense.*

### 1. Scope\*

1.1 These test methods cover procedures for assessing the adhesion of relatively ductile coating films to metallic substrates by applying and removing pressure-sensitive tape over cuts made in the film.

~~NOTE 1—This test method has been reported being used to measure adhesion of organic coatings on soft substrates (for example, wood and plastic). Issues with plastic substrates are noted in Appendix X1. A similar test method, ISO 2409, permits tests on soft substrates (for example, wood and plaster). Precision and bias data on the later is lacking. Test Methods D3359 was developed with metal as the substrate and, in the absence of supporting precision and bias data, is so limited.~~

1.2 Test Method A is primarily intended for use at job sites in the field while Test Method B is more suitable for use in the laboratory, laboratory or shop environments. Also, Test Method B is not considered suitable for films thicker than 5 mils (125  $\mu$ m); 125  $\mu$ m (5 mils)

~~NOTE 2—Subject to agreement between the purchaser and the seller, Test Method B can be used for thicker films if wider spaced cuts are employed, unless wider spaced cuts are employed and there is an explicit agreement between the purchaser and seller.~~

1.3 These test methods are used to establish/evaluate whether the adhesion of a coating to a substrate is at a generally adequate level/adequate for the user's application. They do not distinguish between higher levels of adhesion for which more sophisticated methods of measurement are required.

~~NOTE 3—It should be recognized that differences in adherability of the coating surface can affect the results obtained with coatings having the same inherent adhesion.~~

1.4 This test method is similar in content (but not technically equivalent) to ISO 2409.

1.5 In multicoat systems adhesion failure may occur between coats so that the adhesion of the coating system to the substrate is not determined.

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

1.7 *This standard does not purport to address 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>

[D609 Practice for Preparation of Cold-Rolled Steel Panels for Testing Paint, Varnish, Conversion Coatings, and Related Coating Products](#)

[D823 Practices for Producing Films of Uniform Thickness of Paint, Varnish, and Related Products on Test Panels](#)

[D1000 Test Methods for Pressure-Sensitive Adhesive-Coated Tapes Used for Electrical and Electronic Applications](#)

[D1730 Practices for Preparation of Aluminum and Aluminum-Alloy Surfaces for Painting](#)

<sup>1</sup> These test methods are under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D01 on Paint and Related Coatings, Materials, and Applications and are the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D01.23 on Physical Properties of Applied Paint Films.

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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~~ standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

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

D2092 Guide for Preparation of Zinc-Coated (Galvanized) Steel Surfaces for Painting (Withdrawn 2008)<sup>3</sup>  
 D2370 Test Method for Tensile Properties of Organic Coatings  
 D3330/D3330M Test Method for Peel Adhesion of Pressure-Sensitive Tape  
 D3924 Specification for Environment for Conditioning and Testing Paint, Varnish, Lacquer, and Related Materials (Withdrawn 2016)<sup>3</sup>  
 D4060 Test Method for Abrasion Resistance of Organic Coatings by the Taber Abraser

2.2 *Other Standard:*

ISO 2409 Paint and Varnishes — Cross-cut test<sup>4</sup>

PSTC 101 International Standard for Peel Adhesion of Pressure Sensitive Tape<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.1.1 *adhesion, n*—the molecular attraction and mechanical bonds between a coating and its substrate.

3.1.2 *batch, n*—as it pertains to tape, a unique production run during manufacturing.

3.1.3 *blemish, n*—an obvious surface flaw, such as cracking or discoloration of the coating.

3.1.4 *environmental conditions, n*—the characteristics of the immediate surroundings during the tests, such as temperature, and relative humidity.

3.1.5 *immersion conditions, n*—the characteristics of the fluid to which the test specimen was exposed, such as type of fluid, temperature of fluid and duration of immersion.

3.1.6 *lap, n*—one complete turn of the tape on a roll; the outer exposed layer of tape.

3.1.7 *lattice pattern, n*—one series of parallel lines intersected by another set of parallel lines that are at 90° to and centered on the first set.

3.1.8 *mean, n*—the classification rating that is obtained by adding together the digits of the classification ratings of the tests performed and dividing by the number of tests, frequently rounded to the nearest whole number classification rating.

3.1.9 *pressure-sensitive tape, n*—tape with an adhesive that requires some degree of pressure, and only pressure, to adequately bond to a surface.

3.1.10 *range, n*—the span of classification ratings for a set of tests, from minimum classification rating to maximum classification rating.

3.1.11 *solvent, n*—a liquid agent capable of dissolving or dispersing contaminants from the surface of the coating or film.

3.1.12 *substrate, n*—the structural foundation beneath the coating or film being tested.

3.1.13 *template, n*—a thin, rigid plate containing evenly distributed, parallel slits for use as a guide in generating the lattice pattern when accompanied by a single-blade cutting tool.

3.1.14 *test specimen, n*—the object whose coatings adhesion is of interest.

### 4. Summary of Test Methods

4.1 *Test Method A*—An X-cut is made through the film to the substrate, pressure-sensitive tape is applied over the cut and then removed, and adhesion is assessed qualitatively on the 0 to 5 scale.

4.2 *Test Method B*—A lattice pattern with either six or eleven cuts in each direction is made through the film to the substrate, pressure-sensitive tape is applied over the lattice pattern and then removed, and adhesion is evaluated by comparison with descriptions and illustrations: assessed qualitatively on a 0 to 5 scale.

4.2.1 Subject to agreement between the purchaser and the seller, Test Method B can be used for films thicker than 125 µm (5 mils) if wider spaced cuts are employed.

### 5. Significance and Use

5.1 ~~If~~ In order for a coating is to fulfill its function of protecting or decorating a substrate, it must adhere to it for the expected service life. the coating must remain adhered to the substrate. Because the substrate and its surface preparation (or lack of it) thereof) have a drastic effect on the adhesion of coatings, a method to evaluate adhesion of a coating to different substrates or surface treatments, or of different coatings to the same ~~substrate and treatment,~~ substrate, is of considerable usefulness in the industry.

<sup>3</sup> The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org).

<sup>4</sup> Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036, <http://www.ansi.org>.

<sup>5</sup> Available from the Pressure Sensitive Tape Council (PSTC), 1833 Centre Point Circle, Suite 123, Naperville, IL 60563, <http://www.pstc.org>.

5.2 The limitations of all adhesion methods and the specific limitation of this test method to This test method is limited to evaluating lower levels of adhesion (see 1.3) should be recognized before using it. The intra- and inter-laboratory precision of this test method is similar to other widely-accepted test methods for coated substrates (for example, Test Method D2370 and Test Method D4060), but this is partly the result of it being and is insensitive to all but large differences in adhesion. The limited range of limiting the range of rankings from 0 to 5 was selected deliberately to avoid a false impression of being sensitive reflects the inability of this test method to make fine distinctions between levels of adhesion. Users shall not use intermediate values for ranking adhesion tests within this method.

5.3 Extremes in temperatures or relative humidity may affect the adhesion of the tape or the coating.

5.4 A given tape may not adhere equally well to different coatings due to several factors, including differences in coating composition and topology. As such, no single tape is likely to be suitable for testing all coatings. Furthermore, these test methods do not give an absolute value for the force required for bond rupture, but serves only as an indicator that some minimum value for bond strength was met or exceeded (1, 2).<sup>6</sup>

5.5 Operators performing these test methods must be trained and practiced in order to obtain consistent results. The accuracy and precision of the test result obtained by using these methods depends largely upon the skill of the operator and the operator's ability to perform the test in a consistent manner. Key steps that directly reflect the importance of operator skill include the angle and rate of tape removal and the visual assessment of the tested sample. It is not unexpected that different operators might obtain different results (1, 2).

5.6 The standard requires that the free end of the tape be removed rapidly at as close to a 180° angle as possible. When the peel angle and rate vary, the force required to remove the tape can change dramatically due to the rheological properties of the backing and adhesive. Variation in pull rate and peel angle can effect large differences in test values and must be minimized to assure reproducibility (3).

NOTE 1—These test methods have been reported being used to measure adhesion of organic coatings on non-metallic substrates (for example, wood and plastic), although related precision and bias data is lacking. If testing coatings on non-metallic substrates, either Test Method A or Test Method B may be more appropriate and the method employed should be discussed by interested parties. Issues with plastic substrates are noted in Appendix X1. A similar test method, ISO 2409, permits tests on non-metallic substrates (for example, wood and plaster). Precision and bias data on the latter is lacking. Test Method D3359 was developed with metal as the substrate and, in the absence of supporting precision and bias data, is so limited.

## TEST METHOD A—X-CUT TAPE TEST

### 6. Apparatus and Materials

6.1 *Cutting Tool*—Sharp razor blade, scalpel, knife or other cutting devices. It is of particular importance that the cutting edges fine-edged cutting device. The cutting edges shall be in good condition, preferably new or newly sharpened.

6.2 *Cutting Guide*—Steel or other hard metal straightedge to ensure straight cuts.

6.3 *Tape*—25-mm (1.0-in.) wide transparent or semitransparent pressure-sensitive tape with an adhesion strength agreed upon by the supplier and the user is needed. Because of the variability in adhesion strength from batch-to-batch and with time, it adhesive peel strength between 6.34 N/cm (58 oz/in.) and 7.00 N/cm (64 oz/in.), as tested in accordance with Test Method D3330/D3330M is essential that tape from the same batch be used when tests are to be run in different laboratories. If this is not possible the test method should be used only for ranking a series of test coatings., Test Method A, (equivalent to PSTC 101) and utilizing a 90 second dwell time on a standard steel panel.

6.3.1 Other tapes may be used by agreement between the parties involved.

6.3.2 Due to variability in adhesion strength from batch-to-batch and changes in adhesion properties of tapes over time, tape from the same batch shall be used when tests are to be run in different laboratories. When use of the same batch is not followed the test method shall be used only for ranking a series of test coatings. Refer to X1.5 for additional information

NOTE 4—Permaecl P99 tape, previously identified as suitable for this purpose, was withdrawn from manufacture in July 2009. Current supplies of Permaecl 99 on the market at this time have a shelf life that runs out in July 2010. Subcommittee D01.23 is assessing alternative tapes and a new interlaboratory study is planned to take place in 2010. Alternative tapes with specifications similar to that of Permaecl P99 tape are available. Users of alternative tapes should check whether the alternative tapes give comparable results to the Permaecl P99 tape. If more information is required about the tapes being evaluated in the D01.23 interlaboratory study, please contact the Committee D01 staff manager.

6.4 *Rubber Eraser, Pressure Application Device*—on the end of a pencil. Although other devices may suffice, a rubber eraser or rubber roller is commonly used to ensure good and uniform wetting of the coating with the adhesive of the tape.

6.5 *Illumination*—A light source is helpful in determining whether the cuts have been made through the film to the substrate.

### 7. Test Specimens

7.1 When this test method is used in the field, the specimen is the coated structure or article on which the adhesion is to be evaluated.

<sup>6</sup> The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to the list of references at the end of this test method.

7.2 For laboratory use apply the materials to be tested to panels of the composition and surface conditions on which it is desired to determine the adhesion.

NOTE 2—Applicable test panel description and surface preparation methods are given in Practice D609 and Practices D1730 and D2092.

NOTE 3—Coatings should be applied in accordance with Practice D823, or as agreed upon between the purchaser and the seller.

NOTE 4—If desired or specified, the coated test panels may be subjected to a preliminary exposure such as water immersion, salt spray, or high humidity before conducting the tape test. The conditions and time of exposure will be governed by ultimate coating use or shall be agreed upon between the purchaser and seller.

## 8. Procedure

8.1 Select an area free of blemishes and minor surface imperfections. ~~For tests in the field, ensure that the surface is~~ The area chosen for testing shall be clean and dry. ~~Extremes in temperature or relative humidity may affect the adhesion of the tape or the coating.~~

8.1.1 For specimens which have been immersed: After immersion, clean and wipe the surface with an appropriate solvent which will not harm the integrity of the coating. Then dry or prepare the surface, or both, as agreed upon between the purchaser and the seller.

8.2 Make two cuts in the film each about 40 mm (1.5 in.) long that intersect near their middle with a smaller angle of between 30 and 45°. When making the incisions, use the straightedge and cut through the coating to the substrate in one steady motion.

8.3 Inspect the incisions for reflection of light from the metal substrate to establish that the coating film has been penetrated. If the substrate has not been reached make another X in a different location. Do not attempt to deepen a previous cut as this may affect adhesion along the incision.

8.4 At each day of testing, before initiation of testing, remove two complete laps of the ~~pressure-sensitive~~ tape from the roll and discard. Remove an additional length at a steady (that is, not jerked) rate and cut a piece about 75 mm (3 in.) long.

8.5 Place the center of the tape at the intersection of the cuts with the tape running in the same direction as the smaller angles. Smooth the tape into place by finger in the area of the incisions ~~and then rub firmly with the eraser on the end of a pencil.~~ The color under the transparent tape is a useful indication of when good contact has been made, taking care not to entrap air under the tape. Rub firmly over the surface of the tape with the pressure application device until the color is uniform in appearance. This indicates good, uniform contact between the tape's adhesive and the coating surface.

8.6 Within  $90 \pm 30$  s of application, remove the tape by seizing the free end and pulling it off rapidly (not jerked) back upon itself at as close to an angle of 180° as possible.

8.7 Inspect the X-cut area for removal of coating from the substrate or previous coating and rate the adhesion in accordance with the following scale:

5A	No peeling or removal,
4A	Trace peeling or removal along incisions or at their intersection,
3A	Jagged removal along incisions up to 1.6 mm (1/16 in.) on either side,
2A	Jagged removal along most of incisions up to 3.2 mm (1/8 in.) on either side,
1A	Removal from most of the area of the X under the tape, and
0A	Removal beyond the area of the X.

8.8 Repeat the test in two other locations on ~~each~~ the test panel surface. For large structures make sufficient tests to ensure that the adhesion evaluation is representative of the whole surface.

8.9 After making several cuts examine the cutting edge and, if necessary, remove any flat spots or wire-edge by abrading lightly on a fine oil stone before using again. Discard cutting tools that develop nicks or other defects that tear the film.

## 9. Report

9.1 Report the substrate employed, the type of coating and the method of cure, if known.

9.2 Report the number of tests, their mean and range.

9.3 Report the adhesion strength of the pressure-sensitive tape determined in accordance with Test Method D3330/D3330M, Test Method A, (equivalent to PSTC 101) and utilizing a 90 second dwell time on a standard steel panel.

9.3.1 Where the adhesion strength of the tape has not been determined, report the specific product name of the tape used, the manufacturer and the lot number, if available.

9.4 ~~Report the number of tests, their mean and range, and for coating systems, where the failure occurred that is, between an estimate of the interface at which the coating failure occurred as indicated by visible peeling or removal of the coating. For example, between the first coat and substrate, between the first and second coat, coats, etc.~~

9.5 For field tests, report the type of coating (where known), the structure or article tested, the location and the environmental conditions at the time of testing.

8.3 For test panels report the substrate employed, the type of coating, the method of cure, and the environmental conditions at the time of testing.

8.4 If the adhesion strength of the tape has been determined in accordance with Test Methods **D1000** or **D3330/D3330M**, report the results with the adhesion rating(s). If the adhesion strength of the tape has not been determined, report the specific tape used and its manufacturer.

9.6 If the test is performed after immersion, report immersion ~~conditions and~~ conditions, time between immersion and testing, and method of sample preparation.

## 10. Precision and Bias<sup>7</sup>

10.1 In an interlaboratory study of this test method in which operators in six laboratories made one adhesion measurement on three panels each of three coatings covering a wide range of adhesion, the within-laboratories standard deviation was found to be 0.33 and the between-laboratories 0.44. Based on these standard deviations, the following criteria should be used for judging the acceptability of results at the 95 % confidence level:

10.1.1 *Repeatability*—Provided adhesion is uniform over a large surface, results obtained by the same operator should be considered suspect if they differ by more than 1 rating unit for two measurements.

10.1.2 *Reproducibility*—Two results, each the mean of triplicates, obtained by different operators should be considered suspect if they differ by more than 1.5 rating units.

10.2 Bias cannot be established for these test methods.

## TEST METHOD B—CROSS-CUT TAPE TEST

### 11. Apparatus and Materials

11.1 *Cutting Tool*<sup>8</sup>—Sharp razor blade, scalpel, knife or other cutting device having a cutting edge angle between 15 and 30° that will make either a single cut or several cuts at once. ~~It is of particular importance that the cutting edge or edges~~ The cutting edge shall be in good condition; condition, preferably new or newly sharpened.

11.2 *Cutting Guide*—If cuts are made manually (as opposed to a mechanical apparatus) a steel or other hard metal straightedge or template to ensure straight cuts.

11.3 *Rule*—Tempered steel rule graduated in 0.5 mm for measuring individual cuts.

11.4 *Tape*, as described in **5-36.3**.

11.5 *Rubber Eraser*, *Pressure Application Device*, ~~on the ends described in 6.4 of a pencil.~~

11.6 *Illumination*, as described in **5-56.5**.

11.7 *Magnifying Glass*—An illuminated magnifier to be used while making individual cuts and examining the test area.

### 12. Test Specimens

12.1 Test specimens shall be as described in Section **67**. It should be noted, however, that multitip cutters<sup>9</sup> provide good results only on test areas sufficiently plane that all cutting edges contact the substrate to the same degree. Check for flatness with a straight edge such as that of the tempered steel rule (~~10-311.3~~).

### 13. Procedure

13.1 Where required or when agreed upon, subject the specimens to a preliminary test before conducting the tape test (see **Note 54**). After drying or testing the coating, conduct the tape test at room temperature as defined in Specification **D3924**, unless **D3924** standard temperature is required or agreed.

13.1.1 For specimens which have been immersed: After immersion, clean and wipe the surface with an appropriate solvent which will not harm the integrity of the coating. Then dry or prepare the surface, or both, as agreed upon between the purchaser and the seller.

13.2 Select an area free of blemishes and minor surface imperfections, place on a firm base, and under the illuminated magnifier, make parallel cuts as follows:

<sup>7</sup> Supporting data have been filed at ASTM International Headquarters and may be obtained by requesting Research Report RR:D01-1008. Contact ASTM Customer Service at [service@astm.org](mailto:service@astm.org).

<sup>8</sup> Multiblade cutters are available from a few sources that specialize in testing equipment for the paint industry.

<sup>9</sup> The sole source of supply of the multitip cutter for coated pipe surfaces known to the committee at this time is Paul N. Gardner Co., 316 NE First St., Pompano Beach, FL 33060. If you are aware of alternative suppliers, please provide this information to ASTM International Headquarters. Your comments will receive careful consideration at a meeting of the responsible technical committee,<sup>1</sup> which you may attend.

13.2.1 For coatings having a dry film thickness up to and including 2.0 mils (50 μm) 50 μm (2 mils) space the cuts 1 mm apart and make eleven cuts unless otherwise agreed upon.

13.2.2 For coatings having a dry film thickness between 2.0 mils (50 μm) and 5 mils (125 μm), 50 μm (2 mils) and 125 μm (5 mils), space the cuts 2 mm apart and make six cuts. For films thicker than 5 mils (125 μm), 125 μm (5 mils), it is generally recommended to use Test Method A. Subject to agreement between the purchaser and the seller, Test Method B can be used for films thicker than 125 μm (5 mils) if wider spaced cuts are employed.<sup>10</sup>

13.2.3 Make all cuts about 20 mm (¾ in.) long. Cut through the film to the substrate in one steady motion using just sufficient pressure on the cutting tool to have the cutting edge reach the substrate. When making successive single cuts with the aid of a guide, place the guide on the uncut area.

13.3 After making the required cuts brush the film lightly with a soft brush or tissue to remove any detached flakes or ribbons of coatings.

13.4 Examine the cutting edge and, if necessary, remove any flat spots or wire-edge by abrading lightly on a fine oil stone. Make the additional number of cuts at 90° to and centered on the original cuts.

13.5 Brush the area as before and inspect the incisions for reflection of light from the substrate. If the metal has not been reached make another grid in a different location.

13.6 At each day of testing, before initiation of testing, remove two complete laps of tape from the roll and discard. Remove an additional length at a steady (that is, not jerked) rate and cut a piece about 75 mm (3 in.) long.

13.7 Place the center of the tape over the grid and in the area of the grid smooth grid. Smooth the tape into place by a finger. To ensure good contact with the film rub the tape firmly with the eraser on the end of a pencil. The color under the tape is a useful indication of when good contact has been made. Finger in the area of the incisions taking care not to entrap air under the tape. Rub firmly over the surface of the tape with the pressure application device until the color is uniform in appearance. This indicates good, uniform contact between the tape's adhesive and the coating surface.

13.8 Within 90 ± 30 s of application, remove the tape by seizing the free end and rapidly (not jerked) back upon itself at as close to an angle of 180° as possible.

13.9 Inspect the grid area for removal of coating from the substrate or from a previous coating using the illuminated magnifier. Rate the adhesion in accordance with the following scale illustrated in Fig. 1:

5B	The edges of the cuts are completely smooth; none of the squares of the lattice is detached.
4B	Small flakes of the coating are detached at intersections; less than 5 % of the area is affected.
3B	Small flakes of the coating are detached along edges and at intersections of cuts. The area affected is 5 to 15 % of the lattice.
2B	The coating has flaked along the edges and on parts of the squares. The area affected is 15 to 35 % of the lattice.
1B	The coating has flaked along the edges of cuts in large ribbons and whole squares have detached. The area affected is 35 to 65 % of the lattice.
0B	Flaking and detachment worse than Grade 1.
00	Flaking and detachment worse than Classification 1B.

13.10 Repeat the test in two other locations on each test panel.

## 14. Report

14.1 Report the number of tests, their mean and range, and for coating systems, where the failure occurred, that is, between first coat and substrate, between first and second coat, etc.

14.1 Report the substrate employed, the type of coating and the method of cure, if known.

14.2 Report the number of tests, their mean and range.

14.3 Report the adhesion strength has been of the pressure-sensitive tape determined in accordance with Test Method Method D1000 or D3330/D3330M, report the results with the adhesion rating(s). If the adhesion strength of the tape has not been determined, report the specific tape used and its manufacturer. Test Method A (equivalent to PSTC 101) and utilizing a 90 second dwell time on a standard steel panel.

14.3.1 Where the adhesion strength of the tape has not been determined, report the specific product name of the tape used, the manufacturer and the lot number, if available.

14.4 Report an estimate of the interface at which the coating failure occurred as indicated by visible peeling or removal of the coating. For example, between the first coat and substrate, between the first and second coats, etc.

<sup>10</sup> Test Method B has been used successfully by some people on coatings greater than 5 mils (0.13 mm) 0.13 mm (5 mils) by spacing the cuts 5 mm apart. However, the precision values given in 14.1.1 do not apply as they are based on coatings less than 5 mils (0.13 mm) 0.13 mm (5 mils) in thickness.