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Standard Guide for Selecting Test Methods for Experimental Evaluation of Geosynthetic Durability¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This guide covers a designer/specifier through a systematic determination of those factors of the appropriate application environment that may affect the post-construction service life of a geosynthetic. Subsequently, test methods are recommended to facilitate an experimental evaluation of the durability of geosynthetics in a specified environment so that the durability can be considered in the design process.

1.2 This guide is not intended to address durability issues associated with the manufacturing, handling, transportation, or installation environments.

1.3 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

[D1204](#) Test Method for Linear Dimensional Changes of Nonrigid Thermoplastic Sheeting or Film at Elevated Temperature

[D1987](#) Test Method for Biological Clogging of Geotextile or Soil/Geotextile Filters

[D2990](#) Test Methods for Tensile, Compressive, and Flexural Creep and Creep-Rupture of Plastics

[D3083](#) Specification for Flexible Poly(Vinyl Chloride) Plastic Sheeting for Pond, Canal, and Reservoir Lining (Withdrawn 1998)³

~~[D3895](#) Test Method for Oxidative-Induction Time of Polyolefins by Differential Scanning Calorimetry~~

~~[D4355](#)/[D4355M](#) Test Method for Deterioration of Geotextiles by Exposure to Light, Moisture and Heat in a Xenon Arc Type Apparatus~~

~~[D4439](#) Terminology for Geosynthetics~~

~~[D4594](#)/[D4594M](#) Test Method for Effects of Temperature on Stability of Geotextiles~~

~~[D4716](#)/[D4716M](#) Test Method for Determining the (In-plane) Flow Rate per Unit Width and Hydraulic Transmissivity of a Geosynthetic Using a Constant Head~~

~~[D4833](#)/[D4833M](#) Test Method for Index Puncture Resistance of Geomembranes and Related Products~~

~~[D4886](#) Test Method for Abrasion Resistance of Geotextiles (Sandpaper/Sliding Block Method)~~

~~[D5101](#) Test Method for Measuring the Filtration Compatibility of Soil-Geotextile Systems~~

~~[D5262](#) Test Method for Evaluating the Unconfined Tension Creep and Creep Rupture Behavior of Geosynthetics~~

~~[D5322](#) Practice for Laboratory Immersion Procedures for Evaluating the Chemical Resistance of Geosynthetics to Liquids~~

~~[D5397](#) Test Method for Evaluation of Stress Crack Resistance of Polyolefin Geomembranes Using Notched Constant Tensile Load Test~~

~~[D5496](#) Practice for In Field Immersion Testing of Geosynthetics~~

~~[D5567](#) Test Method for Hydraulic Conductivity Ratio (HCR) Testing of Soil/Geotextile Systems~~

~~[D5885](#)/[D5721](#) Test Method for Oxidative-Induction Time of Polyolefin Geosynthetics by High-Pressure Differential Scanning Calorimetry~~
~~Practice for Air-Oven Aging of Polyolefin Geomembranes~~

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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.

TABLE 1 Functions^A and Other Performance Characteristics^B

Containment^{B(C)} —A geosynthetic provides containment when it encapsulates or surrounds materials such as sand, rocks, and fresh concrete. ^C
Filtration^{A(F)} —A geosynthetic performs the filtration function when the equilibrium geotextile-to-soil system allows for adequate liquid flow with limited soil loss across the plane of the geotextile over a service lifetime compatible with the application under consideration.
Fluid Barrier^{A(FB)} —A geosynthetic performs the fluid barrier function when it essentially eliminates the migration of fluids through it.
Fluid Transmission^A (a.k.a. <i>drainage</i>)—A geosynthetic performs the fluid transmission function when the equilibrium geotextile-to-soil system allows for adequate flow with limited soil loss within the plane of the geotextile over a service lifetime compatible with the application under consideration.
Insulation^{B(I)} —A geosynthetic provides insulation when it reduces the passage of heat, electricity, or sound.
Protection^{A(P)} —A geosynthetic, placed between two materials, performs the protection function when it alleviates or distributes stresses and strains transmitted to the material to be protected.
Reinforcement^{A(R)} —A geosynthetic performs the reinforcement function when it provides often synergistic improvement of a total system's strength created by the introduction of a tensile force into a soil (good in compression but poor in tension) or other disjointed and separated material.
Screening^{B(Scr)} —A geosynthetic, placed across the path of a flowing fluid (ground water, surface water, wind) carrying particles in suspension, provides screening when it retains some or all soil fine particles while allowing the fluid to pass through. After some period of time, particles accumulate against the screen which requires that the screen be able to withstand pressures generated by the accumulated particles and the increasing fluid pressure.
Separation^{A(S)} —A geosynthetic placed between dissimilar materials so that the integrity and functioning of both materials can remain intact or be improved performs the separation function.
Surface Stabilization^{B(SS)} —A geosynthetic, placed on a soil surface, provides surface stabilization when it restricts movement and prevents dispersion of surface soil particles subjected to erosion actions (rain, wind), often while allowing or promoting vegetative growth.
Vegetative Reinforcement^{B(VR)} —A geosynthetic provides vegetative reinforcement when it extends the erosion control limits and performance of vegetation.

^A Functions are used in the context of this guide as terms that can be quantitatively described by standard tests or design techniques, or both.

^B Other performance characteristics are qualitative descriptions that are not yet supported by standard tests or generally accepted design techniques.

^C Note—during the placement of fresh concrete in a geotextile flexible form, the geosynthetic functions temporarily as a filter to allow excess water to escape.

- [D5970/D5970M Test Method for Deterioration of Geotextiles from Outdoor Exposure](#)
- [D6992 Test Method for Accelerated Tensile Creep and Creep-Rupture of Geosynthetic Materials Based on Time-Temperature Superposition Using the Stepped Isothermal Method](#)
- [D7238 Test Method for Effect of Exposure of Unreinforced Polyolefin Geomembrane Using Fluorescent UV Condensation Apparatus](#)
- [D7361 Test Method for Accelerated Compressive Creep of Geosynthetic Materials Based on Time-Temperature Superposition Using the Stepped Isothermal Method](#)
- [D7406 Test Method for Time-Dependent \(Creep\) Deformation Under Constant Pressure for Geosynthetic Drainage Products](#)
- [G160 Practice for Evaluating Microbial Susceptibility of Nonmetallic Materials By Laboratory Soil Burial](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 For definitions relating to geosynthetics used in this standard, refer to Terminology [D4439](#).

4. Summary of Guide

4.1 The effects of a given application environment on the durability of a geosynthetic must be determined through appropriate testing. Selection of appropriate tests requires a systematic determination of the primary function(s) to be performed and the associated degradation processes that should be considered. This guide provides a suitable systematic approach.

4.2 Primary functions of geosynthetics are listed and defined in [Table 1](#). With knowledge of the specific geosynthetic application area and end use, the corresponding primary function(s) is (are) identified. [Table 2](#) gives degradation concerns as they relate to geosynthetic functions. [Table 3](#) gives the environmental elements that relate to the various degradation processes and the currently available ASTM Committee [D-35/D35](#) test method for the experimental evaluation of specific types of geosynthetic degradation. The following appendixes are included to provide background information:

- X1. Terminology
- X2. Application/End Use/Primary Function Tables
- X3. Example of Test Method Selection Procedure
- X4. Design-by-Function Discussion
- X5. Commentary on Geosynthetic Durability
- X6. Bibliography

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Designers/specifiers of geosynthetics should evaluate geosynthetic durability as an integral part of the geosynthetic specification/selection process. This guide is intended to guide a designer/specifier through a systematic determination of degradation concerns based on the intended geosynthetic function or performance characteristic. This guide then provides a guide to select available test methods for experimentally evaluating geosynthetic durability and to identify areas where no suitable test exists.

5.2 This guide does not address the evaluation of degradation resulting from manufacturing, handling, transporting, or installing the geosynthetic.

TABLE 2 Geosynthetic Function/Durability Assessment^A

Function	Potential Degradation Process ^B														Explanations of Primary Long-Term Concerns
	Abbreviation	Bio-logical Degradation	Chem-ical Degradation	Chem-ical Dissol-ution	Clog-ging/ Piping	Creep	Envi-ron-mental Stress Cracking	Hydro-l-ysis	Mechan-ical Damage	Photo-Degra-dation	Plastici-zation	Stress Relax-ation	Temper-ature Insta-bility	Thermal-Degra-dation	
Containment	C	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	S ^F	S ^G	N	S ^H	S ^I	S ^J	N	S ^G	N	S ^K	Remain intact and maintain filtration performance
Filtration	F	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	A ^L	S ^M	N	S ^H	S ^I	S ^J	N	S ^M	N	S ^K	Maintain design filtration and resist deformation and intrusion
Fluid Barrier	FB	S ^C	S ^E	S ^E	N	S ^G	A ^{N,O}	S ^H	S ^I	S ^J	N	S ^G	S ^P	S ^K	Maintain intended level of essential impermeability
Fluid Transmission	FT	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	A ^Q	A ^R	A ^O	S ^H	S ^I	S ^J	N	A ^R	N	S ^K	Maintain flow under compressive loads
Insulation	I	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Minimize temperature losses and gains across geosyn
Protection	P	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	N	S ^S	N	S ^H	N	S ^J	N	S ^S	N	S ^K	Maintain protective performance
Reinforcement	R	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E , P ^T	N	A ^U	P ^O	S ^H	P ^T	S ^J	P ^V	S ^U	S ^U	S ^K	Provide necessary strength, stiffness and soil interaction
Screening	Scr	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	S ^W	N	N	S ^H	S ^I	S ^J	N	N	N	S ^K	Maintain filtration performance and resist deformation
Separation	S	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	N	N	N	S ^H	P ^X	S ^J	N	N	N	S ^K	Remain intact
Surface Stabilization	SS	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	N	N	N	S ^H	A ^Y	A ^Y	N	N	N	S ^K	Remain intact to resist erosive forces until vegetation is established
Vegetative Reinforcement	VR	P ^{C,D}	S ^E	S ^E	N	N	N	S ^H	A ^Y	A ^Y	N	N	N	S ^K	Remain intact throughout vegetation

^A Refer to Appendix X1 for terminology relating to Table 2.

^B M = Not a generally recognized concern; S = Sometimes a concern; A = Almost always a concern; P = Potential concern being researched.

^C Microorganisms have been known to attack and digest additives (plasticizers, lubricants, emulsifiers) used to plasticize some base polymers. This attack will change physical and mechanical properties. Study is needed to determine relevance to polymers incorporated into geosynthetic products. Embrittlement of geosynthetic surfaces may influence interaction properties.

^D Microbial enzymes have been known to initiate and propagate reactions deteriorative to some base polymers. Study is needed to determine relevance to polymers used in geosynthetic products.

^E Chemical degradation or dissolution, or both, including the leaching of plasticizers or additives from the polymer structure, may be a concern for some geosynthetics exposed to liquids containing unusually high concentrations of metals, salts, or chemicals, especially at elevated temperatures.

^F If select fill is not available, then a clogging resistance test should be performed with the job-specific soil.

^G Geosynthetics in containment structures which require long-term strength characteristics should be designed using appropriate creep and stress relaxation criteria.

^H Hydrolysis may be a concern for polyester (PET) and polyamide (PA) geosynthetics exposed to extreme pH conditions, especially at elevated temperatures.

^I When subject to rocking (abrasion), puncture (floating or airborne debris), or cutting (equipment or vandalism).

^J When permanently exposed or in extended construction phases (>2–4 weeks) and in “wrap-around” construction, photo degradation may be a concern for the exposed geosynthetic.

^K Geosynthetics in applications such as dam facings and floating covers which results in exposure to temperatures at or above ambient must be stabilized to resist thermal oxidation.

^L Clogging resistance of geotextiles can only be assessed by testing with site-specific soil and (sometimes) liquid.

^M If a filter geotextile is used with a geonet, it is important to assess short-term extrusion and long-term intrusion into the net.

^N Residual stresses and surface damage may produce synergistic effects with other degradation processes.

^O Polyethylene geosynthetics may experience slow crack growth under long-term loading conditions in certain environmental conditions.

^P Excessive expansion and contraction resulting from temperature changes may be a concern for geosynthetics without fabric reinforcement.

^Q Composite drains must resist clogging due to soil retention problems and intrusion of filter medium.

^R Geosynthetics relying on a 3-D structure to facilitate flow must demonstrate resistance to compression creep.

^S Sufficient thickness must be maintained by a protective layer over an extended period of time.

^T Chemical dissolution of, or mechanical damage to geosynthetic surfaces or coatings may ~~effect~~ affect their interaction properties, i.e. ~~that is,~~ lead to surface or joint slippage.

^U Geosynthetics creep and stress relax at different rates depending primarily on manufacturing process, polymer type, load levels, temperature, and application.

^V Plasticization may be a concern for polyester (PET) geosynthetics exposed to humid conditions or polypropylene and polyethylene geosynthetics exposed to hydrocarbons while under stress.

^W If the screen is expected to operate indefinitely, then clogging should be assessed often. Commonly, screens are considered temporary.

^X Holes resulting from mechanical damage may alter the effectiveness of separators.

^Y Always exposed, therefore resistance to photo oxidation and mechanical damage must be determined.

TABLE 3 Environmental Factors of Degradation

NOTE 1—This table provides the standard test methods current at the time of the writing of this guide. ASTM standards are in constant development, review, revision, and replacement. It is the responsibility of the geosynthetic specifier to identify the most current applicable standard test method. Refer to Appendix X1 for terminology relating to Table 3.

Potential Degradation Process	Environmental Elements Relating to Degradation										Test Methods Relating to Geosynthetics		
	Air Chemistry	Fluid Content	Geometry of Exposure	Liquid Chemistry	Macro-Organisms	Micro-Organisms	Radiation	Soil Chemistry	Stress	Temperature of Exposure		Time of Exposure	
Biological degradation	X	X			X	X		X		X	X	D9083	Microbiological Attack (In-Soil)
Biological degradation	X	X			X	X		X		X	X	G160	Microbiological attack (in soil)
Chemical degradation				X				X		X	X	D5322	Chemical Immersion
Chemical degradation				X				X		X	X	D5496	In-situ Immersion
Chemical degradation				X				X		X	X	D5322	Chemical immersion
Chemical dissolution				X				X		X	X	None	In-situ immersion
Chemical dissolution				X				X		X	X	None	Effect of Solvents
Chemical dissolution				X				X		X	X	None	Effect of solvents
Clogging/piping		X		X		X		X		X	X	D5567	-
Clogging/piping		X		X		X		X		X	X	D5101	Gradient Ratio
Clogging/piping		X		X		X		X		X	X	D1987	Biological Clogging
Clogging/piping		X		X		X		X		X	X	None	Precipitate Clogging
Creep			X					X	X	X	X	None	Tension
Creep			X					X	X	X	X	D5262	Transmissivity
Creep			X					X	X	X	X	D4716	Time-Temperature
Creep			X					X	X	X	X	D2990	Superposition
Creep			X					X	X	X	X	D5262	Tension
Creep			X					X	X	X	X	D2990	Time-temperature superposition
Creep			X					X	X	X	X	D6992	Accelerated tensile creep
Creep			X					X	X	X	X	D7406	Compressive creep
Creep			X					X	X	X	X	D7361	Accelerated compressive creep
Environmental stress cracking	X			X				X	X	X	X	D5397	Stress Cracking and Appendix
Environmental stress cracking	X			X				X	X	X	X	D5397	Stress cracking and appendix
Hydrolysis	X	X		X				X	X	X	X	None	Effect of Water
Hydrolysis	X	X		X				X	X	X	X	None	Effect of water
Mechanical damage			X					X	X	X	X	D4886	Abrasion
Mechanical damage			X					X	X	X	X	None	Fatigue
Mechanical damage			X					X	X	X	X	D4833	Puncture
Mechanical damage			X					X	X	X	X	D4886	Abrasion
Mechanical damage			X					X	X	X	X	None	Fatigue
Mechanical damage			X					X	X	X	X	D4833/	Puncture
Mechanical damage			X					X	X	X	X	D4833M	-
Photo-degradation	X						X		X	X	X	None	Xenon-Arc
Photo-degradation	X						X		X	X	X	D4355	Outdoor Exposure
Photo-degradation	X						X		X	X	X	D5970	Fluorescent UV
Photo-degradation	X						X		X	X	X	D4355/	Xenon arc
Photo-degradation	X						X		X	X	X	D4355M	-
Photo-degradation	X						X		X	X	X	D5970/	Outdoor exposure
Photo-degradation	X						X		X	X	X	D5970M	-
Photo-degradation	X						X		X	X	X	D7238	Fluorescent UV
Plasticization		X		X					X	X	X	None	Effect of Liquids
Plasticization		X		X					X	X	X	None	Effect of liquids
Stress relaxation			X					X	X	X	X	None	-
Temperature instability								X	X	X	X	D4594	Temperature
Temperature instability								X	X	X	X	D1204	Instability
Temperature instability								X	X	X	X	D4594/	Temperature
Temperature instability								X	X	X	X	D4594M	Instability
Temperature instability								X	X	X	X	D1204	Temperature instability
Thermal degradation	X						X		X	X	X	None	Effect of Heat
Thermal degradation	X						X		X	X	X	B3895	OT
Thermal degradation	X						X		X	X	X	B5885	HPOIT

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Potential Degradation Process	Environmental Elements Relating to Degradation										Test Methods Relating to Geosynthetics	
	Air Chemistry	Fluid Content	Geometry of Exposure	Liquid Chemistry	Macro-Organisms	Micro-Organisms	Radiation	Soil Chemistry	Stress	Temperature of Exposure		Time of Exposure
Thermal degradation	X						X			X	X	D5721 Effect of heat

NOTE 1—This table provides the standard test methods current at the time of the writing of this guide. ASTM Standards are in constant development, review, revision, and replacement. It is the responsibility of the geosynthetic specifier to identify the most current applicable standard test method. Refer to Appendix X1 for terminology relating to Table 3.

6. Suggested Procedure

6.1 To utilize a structured procedure for selecting appropriate test methods, the geosynthetic designer/specifier must have knowledge of:

- 6.1.1 The intended geosynthetic application,
- 6.1.2 The end use of the geosynthetic via its primary function(s) or performance characteristic(s), or both,
- 6.1.3 The specific environment to which the geosynthetic will be exposed,
- 6.1.4 The types of geosynthetics that may or will be used, and
- 6.1.5 The duration or time of use (that is, service life).

6.2 With this knowledge, the designer/specifier follows the following procedure:

6.2.1 Identify the primary function(s) or performance characteristic(s), or both, to be performed by the geosynthetic in the specific application and end use intended. Functions and performance characteristics are defined in Table 1. (Tables for guidance in identifying primary function(s) and performance characteristics are given in Appendix X2.)

6.2.2 Using Table 2, identify the potential degradation process(es) that will almost always (denoted as “A”) or sometimes (denoted as “S”) be of concern when a geosynthetic performs the primary function(s) or provides the performance characteristic(s), or both, which were identified in 5.2.16.2.1. Annex Appendix X1 A1 contains associated notes to Table 2 that help to identify the process(es) that is (are) sometimes a concern in the specific expected application environment.

6.2.3 Using Table 3, select the test method(s) that applies to the potential degradation process(es) identified in 5.2.26.2.2 as a concern(s) in the specific application environment expected.

NOTE 1—Guidance is given in Table 3 to identify the most important elements or variables relating to each degradation process.

7. Keywords

- 7.1 aging; degradation; durability; environment; exposure; geosynthetic; long-term performance

APPENDIXES

(Nonmandatory Information)

X1. TERMINOLOGY

X1.1 The application environment in which a geosynthetic is placed can be characterized by the following environmental elements:

- Air Chemistry
- Fluid Content
- Geometry of Exposure
- Liquid Chemistry
- Organisms (micro- and macro-)
- Radiation
- Soil Chemistry
- Stress
- Temperature of Exposure
- Time of Exposure

X1.1.1 Air chemistry shall include the identification of the following characteristics of the gases expected to be present or created, or both:

- Oxygen content

Gaseous pollution (for example, NO_x, SO₂)
 Ozone
 Organics (for example, methane)

X1.1.2 *Fluid content* is a measure of the amount of liquid or vapor, or both, which is in the environment immediately surrounding the geosynthetic.

X1.1.3 *Geometry of exposure* may be described by:
 Angle of exposure
 Degree of exposure (surface versus complete)

X1.1.4 *Liquid chemistry* shall include the identification of the following characteristics of the ground water or leachate:
 pH
 Electrolytic conditions
 Dissolved/suspended minerals
 Chemicals
 B.O.D., C.O.D.
 D.O.

X1.1.5 ~~*Macro-organisms*~~—*Macroorganisms*—Those which are or could be present in the environment shall be identified. Macro-organisms such as insects, rodents and other higher life forms shall be considered.

X1.1.6 ~~*Micro-organisms*~~—*Microorganisms*—Those which are or could be present in the environment shall be identified. Possible micro-organisms included:
 Bacteria
 Fungi
 Algae
 Yeast

X1.1.7 *Radiation* shall be considered as including:
 Ultraviolet Radiation
 Ionizing Radiation
 Infra-Red Infrared and Visible Radiation

X1.1.8 *Soil chemistry* shall include the identification of the following characteristics of the soil or waste:
 Transition Metals
 Soluble Minerals
 Polarizability
 Clay Mineralogy

X1.1.9 *Stress* shall be focused upon mechanical forces applied externally to the geosynthetic/soil system, resulting in tensile compressive or shear stresses, or both, on the geosynthetic. Stresses on the geosynthetic shall be described by:
 Normal stresses
 Planar stresses
 Surface stresses
 Intensity of stresses
 How stresses vary with time (static, dynamic, periodic)
 How stresses are distributed over the geosynthetic

X1.1.10 *Time of exposure* shall be defined by the duration of exposure to any specific set of environmental elements.

X1.1.11 *Temperature of exposure* shall be defined as the temperature of the geosynthetic, which is not necessarily that of the surrounding medium.