

## METHOD OF MAKING AND CURING CONCRETE TEST SPECIMENS IN THE FIELD

### FOP FOR AASHTO T 23

#### Scope

This procedure covers the method for making, initially curing, and transporting concrete test specimens in the field in accordance with AASHTO T 23-18.

**Warning**—Fresh Hydraulic cementitious mixtures are caustic and may cause chemical burns to skin and tissue upon prolonged exposure.

#### Apparatus

- Concrete cylinder molds: Conforming to AASHTO M 205 with a length equal to twice the diameter. Standard specimens shall be 150 mm (6 in.) by 300 mm (12 in.) cylinders. Mold diameter must be at least three times the maximum aggregate size unless wet sieving is conducted according to the FOP for WAQTC TM 2. Agency specifications may allow cylinder molds of 100 mm (4 in.) by 200 mm (8 in.) when the nominal maximum aggregate size does not exceed 25 mm (1 in.).
- Beam molds: Rectangular in shape with ends and sides at right angles to each other. Must be sufficiently rigid to resist warpage. Surfaces must be smooth. Molds shall produce length no more than 1.6 mm (1/16 in.) shorter than that required (greater length is allowed). Maximum variation from nominal cross section shall not exceed 3.2 mm (1/8 in.). Ratio of width to depth may not exceed 1:5; the smaller dimension must be at least 3 times the maximum aggregate size. Standard beam molds shall result in specimens having width and depth of not less than 150 mm (6 in.). Agency specifications may allow beam molds of 100 mm (4 in.) by 100 mm (4 in.) when the nominal maximum aggregate size does not exceed 38 mm (1.5 in.). Specimens shall be cast and hardened with the long axes horizontal.
- Standard tamping rod: 16 mm (5/8 in.) in diameter and 400 mm (16 in.) to 600 mm (24 in.) long, having a hemispherical tip of the same diameter as the rod for preparing 150 mm (6 in.) x 300 mm (12 in.) cylinders.
- Small tamping rod: 10 mm (3/8 in.) diameter and 305 mm (12 in.) to 600 mm (24 in.) long, having a hemispherical tip of the same diameter as the rod for preparing 100 mm (4 in.) x 200 mm (8 in.) cylinders.
- Vibrator: At least 9000 vibrations per minute, with a diameter no more than 1/4 the diameter or width of the mold and at least 75 mm (3 in.) longer than the section being vibrated for use with low slump concrete.
- Scoop: a receptacle of appropriate size so that each representative increment of the concrete sample can be placed in the container without spillage.
- Trowel or float

- Mallet: With a rubber or rawhide head having a mass of  $0.57 \pm 0.23$  kg ( $1.25 \pm 0.5$  lb.).
- Rigid base plates and cover plates: may be metal, glass, or plywood.
- Initial curing facilities: Temperature-controlled curing box or enclosure capable of maintaining the required range of 16 to 27°C (60 to 80°F) during the entire initial curing period (for concrete with compressive strength of 40 Mpa (6000 psi) or more, the temperature shall be 20 to 26°C (68 to 78°F). As an alternative, sand or earth for initial cylinder protection may be used provided that the required temperature range is maintained, and the specimens are not damaged.
- Thermometer: Capable of registering both maximum and minimum temperatures during the initial cure.

### **Procedure – Making Specimens – General**

1. Obtain the sample according to the FOP for WAQTC TM 2.
2. Wet Sieving per the FOP for WAQTC TM 2 is required for 150 mm (6 in.) diameter specimens containing aggregate with a nominal maximum size greater than 50 mm (2 in.); screen the sample over the 50 mm (2 in.) sieve.
3. Remix the sample after transporting to testing location.
4. Begin making specimens within 15 minutes of obtaining the sample.
5. Set molds upright on a level, rigid base in a location free from vibration and relatively close to where they will be stored.
6. Fill molds in the required number of layers, attempting to slightly overfill the mold on the final layer. Add or remove concrete before completion of consolidation to avoid a deficiency or excess of concrete.
7. There are two methods of consolidating the concrete – rodding and internal vibration. If the slump is greater than 25 mm (1 in.), consolidation may be by rodding or vibration. When the slump is 25 mm (1 in.) or less, consolidate the sample by internal vibration. Agency specifications may dictate when rodding or vibration will be used.

### **Procedure – Making Cylinders –Self-Consolidating Concrete**

1. Use the scoop to slightly overfill the mold. Evenly distribute the concrete in a circular motion around the inner perimeter of the mold.
2. Strike off the surface of the molds with tamping rod, straightedge, float, or trowel.
3. Immediately begin initial curing.

### Procedure – Making Cylinders – Rodding

1. For the standard 150 mm (6 in.) by 300 mm (12 in.) specimen, fill each mold in three approximately equal layers, moving the scoop or trowel around the perimeter of the mold to evenly distribute the concrete. For the 100 mm (4 in.) by 200 mm (8 in.) specimen, fill the mold in two layers. When filling the final layer, slightly overfill the mold.
2. Consolidate each layer with 25 strokes of the appropriate tamping rod, using the rounded end. Distribute strokes evenly over the cross section of the concrete. Rod the first layer throughout its depth without forcibly hitting the bottom. For subsequent layers, rod the layer throughout its depth penetrating approximately 25 mm (1 in.) into the underlying layer.
3. After rodding each layer, tap the sides of each mold 10 to 15 times with the mallet (reusable steel molds) or lightly with the open hand (single-use light-gauge molds).
4. Strike off the surface of the molds with tamping rod, straightedge, float, or trowel.
5. Immediately begin initial curing.

### Procedure – Making Cylinders – Internal Vibration

1. Fill the mold in two layers.
2. Insert the vibrator at the required number of different points for each layer (two points for 150 mm (6 in.) diameter cylinders; one point for 100 mm (4 in.) diameter cylinders). When vibrating the bottom layer, do not let the vibrator touch the bottom or sides of the mold. When vibrating the top layer, the vibrator shall penetrate into the underlying layer approximately 25 mm (1 in.)
3. Remove the vibrator slowly, so that no large air pockets are left in the material.

*Note 1:* Continue vibration only long enough to achieve proper consolidation of the concrete. Over vibration may cause segregation and loss of appreciable quantities of intentionally entrained air.

4. After vibrating each layer, tap the sides of each mold 10 to 15 times with the mallet (reusable steel molds) or lightly with the open hand (single-use light-gauge molds).
5. Strike off the surface of the molds with tamping rod, straightedge, float, or trowel.
6. Immediately begin initial curing.

### Procedure – Making Flexural Beams – Rodding

1. Fill the mold in two approximately equal layers with the second layer slightly overfilling the mold.
2. Consolidate each layer with the tamping rod once for every 1300 mm<sup>2</sup> (2 in<sup>2</sup>) using the rounded end. Rod each layer throughout its depth, taking care to not forcibly strike the bottom of the mold when compacting the first layer. Rod the second layer throughout its depth, penetrating approximately 25 mm (1 in.) into the lower layer.

3. After rodding each layer, strike the mold 10 to 15 times with the mallet and spade along the sides and end using a trowel.
4. Strike off the surface of the molds with tamping rod, straightedge, float, or trowel.
5. Immediately begin initial curing.

### **Procedure – Making Flexural Beams – Vibration**

1. Fill the mold to overflowing in one layer.
2. Consolidate the concrete by inserting the vibrator vertically along the centerline at intervals not exceeding 150 mm (6 in.). Take care to not over-vibrate and withdraw the vibrator slowly to avoid large voids. Do not contact the bottom or sides of the mold with the vibrator.
3. After vibrating, strike the mold 10 to 15 times with the mallet.
4. Strike off the surface of the molds with tamping rod, straightedge, float, or trowel.
5. Immediately begin initial curing.

### **Procedure – Initial Curing**

- When moving cylinder specimens made with single use molds support the bottom of the mold with trowel, hand, or other device.
- For initial curing of cylinders, there are two methods, use of which depends on the agency. In both methods, the curing place must be firm, within ¼ in. of a level surface, and free from vibrations or other disturbances.
- Maintain initial curing temperature:
  - 16 to 27°C (60 to 80°F) for concrete with design strength up to 40 Mpa (6000 psi).
  - 20 to 26°C (68 to 78°F) for concrete with design strength of 40 Mpa (6000 psi) or more.
- Prevent loss of moisture.

### **Method 1 – Initial cure in a temperature-controlled chest-type curing box**

1. Finish the cylinder using the tamping rod, straightedge, float, or trowel. The finished surface shall be flat with no projections or depressions greater than 3.2 mm (1/8 in.).
2. Place the mold in the curing box. When lifting light-gauge molds be careful to avoid distortion (support the bottom, avoid squeezing the sides).
3. Place the lid on the mold to prevent moisture loss.
4. Mark the necessary identification data on the cylinder mold and lid.

**Method 2 – Initial cure by burying in earth or by using a curing box over the cylinder**

*Note 2:* This procedure may not be the preferred method of initial curing due to problems in maintaining the required range of temperature.

1. Move the cylinder with excess concrete to the initial curing location.
2. Mark the necessary identification data on the cylinder mold and lid.
3. Place the cylinder on level sand or earth, or on a board, and pile sand or earth around the cylinder to within 50 mm (2 in.) of the top.
4. Finish the cylinder using the tamping rod, straightedge, float, or trowel. Use a sawing motion across the top of the mold. The finished surface shall be flat with no projections or depressions greater than 3.2 mm (1/8 in.).
5. If required by the agency, place a cover plate on top of the cylinder and leave it in place for the duration of the curing period, or place the lid on the mold to prevent moisture loss.

**Procedure – Transporting Specimens**

- Initially cure the specimens for 24 to 48 hours. Transport specimens to the laboratory for final cure. Specimen identity will be noted along with the date and time the specimen was made and the maximum and minimum temperatures registered during the initial cure.
- Protect specimens from jarring, extreme changes in temperature, freezing, or moisture loss during transport.
- Secure cylinders so that the axis is vertical.
- Do not exceed 4 hours transportation time.

**Final Curing**

- Upon receiving cylinders at the laboratory, remove the cylinder from the mold and apply the appropriate identification.
- For all specimens (cylinders or beams), final curing must be started within 30 minutes of mold removal. Temperature shall be maintained at  $23^{\circ} \pm 2^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $73 \pm 3^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). Free moisture must be present on the surfaces of the specimens during the entire curing period. Curing may be accomplished in a moist room or water tank conforming to AASHTO M 201.
- For cylinders, during the final 3 hours before testing the temperature requirement may be waived, but free moisture must be maintained on specimen surfaces at all times until tested.
- Final curing of beams must include immersion in lime-saturated water for at least 20 hours before testing.

**Report**

- On forms approved by the agency
- Pertinent placement information for identification of project, element(s) represented, etc.
- Sample ID
- Date and time molded.
- Test ages.
- Slump, air content, and density.
- Temperature (concrete, initial cure max. and min., and ambient).
- Method of initial curing.
- Other information as required by agency, such as: concrete supplier, truck number, invoice number, water added, etc.