



Designation: D1248 – 16

Standard Specification for Polyethylene Plastics Extrusion Materials for Wire and Cable¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D1248; 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.

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

1. Scope*

1.1 This specification provides for the identification of polyethylene plastics extrusion materials for wire and cable in such a manner that the seller and the purchaser can agree on the acceptability of different commercial lots or shipments. The tests involved in this specification are intended to provide information for identifying materials according to the types, classes, categories, and grades covered. It is not the function of this specification to provide specific engineering data for design purposes.

1.2 This specification does not allow for the use of recycled plastics (see [Note 3](#)).

1.3 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. The values given in parentheses are mathematical conversions to inch-pound units that are provided for information only and are not considered standard.

1.4 The following safety hazards caveat pertains only to the test method portion, Section 12, of this specification: *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.*

NOTE 1—There is no known ISO equivalent to this standard.

NOTE 2—This standard has undergone major revision from the reapproval of 1989 and now covers only polyethylene for wire and cable applications. For information regarding molding and extrusion materials, see Specification [D4976](#). For information regarding plastic pipe materials, see Specification [D3350](#).

NOTE 3—See Guide [D7209](#) and [3.1.2](#) of this standard for information and definitions related to recycled plastics.

¹ This specification is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D20](#) on Plastics and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D20.15](#) on Thermoplastic Materials.

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2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

- [D150 Test Methods for AC Loss Characteristics and Permittivity \(Dielectric Constant\) of Solid Electrical Insulation](#)
- [D257 Test Methods for DC Resistance or Conductance of Insulating Materials](#)
- [D618 Practice for Conditioning Plastics for Testing](#)
- [D638 Test Method for Tensile Properties of Plastics](#)
- [D746 Test Method for Brittleness Temperature of Plastics and Elastomers by Impact](#)
- [D792 Test Methods for Density and Specific Gravity \(Relative Density\) of Plastics by Displacement](#)
- [D1238 Test Method for Melt Flow Rates of Thermoplastics by Extrusion Plastometer](#)
- [D1505 Test Method for Density of Plastics by the Density-Gradient Technique](#)
- [D1531 Test Methods for Relative Permittivity \(Dielectric Constant\) and Dissipation Factor by Fluid Displacement Procedures \(Withdrawn 2012\)³](#)
- [D1603 Test Method for Carbon Black Content in Olefin Plastics](#)
- [D1693 Test Method for Environmental Stress-Cracking of Ethylene Plastics](#)
- [D2565 Practice for Xenon-Arc Exposure of Plastics Intended for Outdoor Applications](#)
- [D2633 Test Methods for Thermoplastic Insulations and Jackets for Wire and Cable](#)
- [D2839 Practice for Use of a Melt Index Strand for Determining Density of Polyethylene](#)
- [D2951 Test Method for Resistance of Types III and IV Polyethylene Plastics to Thermal Stress-Cracking \(Withdrawn 2006\)³](#)

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.

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

- D3182 Practice for Rubber—Materials, Equipment, and Procedures for Mixing Standard Compounds and Preparing Standard Vulcanized Sheets
- D3349 Test Method for Absorption Coefficient of Ethylene Polymer Material Pigmented with Carbon Black
- D3350 Specification for Polyethylene Plastics Pipe and Fittings Materials
- D3636 Practice for Sampling and Judging Quality of Solid Electrical Insulating Materials
- D3892 Practice for Packaging/Packing of Plastics
- D4329 Practice for Fluorescent Ultraviolet (UV) Lamp Apparatus Exposure of Plastics
- D4703 Practice for Compression Molding Thermoplastic Materials into Test Specimens, Plaques, or Sheets
- D4976 Specification for Polyethylene Plastics Molding and Extrusion Materials
- D6360 Practice for Enclosed Carbon-Arc Exposures of Plastics
- D7209 Guide for Waste Reduction, Resource Recovery, and Use of Recycled Polymeric Materials and Products (Withdrawn 2015)³
- E1131 Test Method for Compositional Analysis by Thermogravimetry
- G151 Practice for Exposing Nonmetallic Materials in Accelerated Test Devices that Use Laboratory Light Sources
- G153 Practice for Operating Enclosed Carbon Arc Light Apparatus for Exposure of Nonmetallic Materials
- G154 Practice for Operating Fluorescent Ultraviolet (UV) Lamp Apparatus for Exposure of Nonmetallic Materials
- G155 Practice for Operating Xenon Arc Light Apparatus for Exposure of Non-Metallic Materials

2.2 Federal Specification:⁴

- L-P-390C Plastic, Molding, and Extrusion Materials, Polyethylene and Copolymers (Low, Medium, and High Density)

NOTE 4—In accordance with the DOD: “L-P-390C, dated 10 August 1971, is inactivated for new design and is no longer used, except for replacement purposes. Future acquisition for this product, when used in new design, should refer to ASTM D4976, ‘STANDARD SPECIFICATION FOR POLYETHYLENE PLASTICS MOLDING AND EXTRUSION MATERIALS.’”

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.1.1 polyethylene plastics, *n*—plastics or resins prepared by the polymerization of no less than 50 % ethylene and no less than 95 weight % of total olefins.

3.1.2 recycled plastics, *n*—plastics feedstocks or products composed of recovered plastic material that sometimes includes a percentage of post-consumer material, but not including those materials and by-products generated from, and commonly reused, within an original manufacturing process and, reworked, reprocessed, and regrind plastic and purge from the same manufacturing process.

3.2 Historical usage and user group conventions have resulted in inconsistent terminology used to categorize and describe polyethylene resins and compounds. The following terminology is in use in ASTM specifications pertaining to polyethylene:

3.2.1 Specification D1248:

3.2.1.1 Type (0, I, II, III, IV) = density ranges (same, respectively, as Class in Specification D4976).

3.2.1.2 Class (A, B, C, D) = composition and use.

3.2.1.3 Category (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) = melt index ranges (same as Grade in Specification D4976).

3.2.1.4 Grade (E, J, D, or W followed by one or two digits) = specific requirements from tables.

3.2.2 Specification: D3350

3.2.2.1 Type (I, II, III) = density ranges (same as Types I, II, and III in Specification D1248 and Classes 1, 2, and 3 in Specification D4976).

3.2.2.2 Class = a line callout system consisting of “PE” followed by six cell numbers from Table 1 plus a letter (A, B, C, D, E) denoting color and UV stabilizer.

3.2.2.3 Grade = simplified line callout system using “PE” followed by density and slow crack growth cell numbers from Table 1.

3.2.3 Specification: D4976

3.2.3.1 Group (1, 2) = branched or linear polyethylene.

3.2.3.2 Class (5, 1, 2, 3, 4) = density ranges (same, respectively, as Type in Specification D1248).

3.2.3.3 Grade (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) = melt index ranges (same as Category in Specification D1248).

4. Classification

4.1 This specification recognizes that polyethylene plastics are identified primarily on the basis of two characteristics, namely, density and flow rate (previously identified as melt index). The former is the criterion for assignment as to type, the latter for designation as to category. Other attributes important to the user for certain applications are covered by three general classes and by specifying in greater detail, by grades, a minimum number of key characteristics covered too broadly or not at all by the type, class, and category designations.

4.1.1 Types:

4.1.1.1 This specification provides for the identification of five types of polyethylene plastics extrusion materials for wire and cable by density in accordance with 10.1 and 12.1.1, and the requirements prescribed in Table 1 and Note 5, Note 6, and Note 12.

NOTE 5—It is recognized that some high-density polyethylene plastics

TABLE 1 Classification of Polyethylene Plastics Extrusion Materials for Wire and Cable According to Type

Type	Nominal Density, ^A g/cm ³
0	<0.910
I	0.910 to 0.925
II	>0.925 to 0.940
III	>0.940 to 0.960
IV	>0.960

^AUncolored, unfilled material (see Note 12).

⁴ Available from Standardization Documents Order Desk, DODSSP, Bldg. 4, Section D, 700 Robbins Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19111-5098, http://dodssp.daps.dla.mil.

of very high molecular weight and typically is a density slightly less than 0.960 yet in all other respects they are characteristic of Type IV materials. Similarly, there are other polyethylene plastics of very high molecular weight having densities slightly less than 0.941 which in all other respects are more characteristic of Type III than of Type II materials.

NOTE 6—While the original Type III now has been divided into two ranges of density (Types III and IV), both are still described by the term *high density*.

4.1.1.2 Material supplied under these types shall be of such nominal density, within the ranges given, as agreed upon between the manufacturer and the purchaser subject to the tolerances specified in 4.1.1.3 (**Note 12**).

4.1.1.3 In view of production, sampling, and testing variables, a commercial lot or shipment for which a nominal density has been agreed upon between the seller and the purchaser shall be considered as conforming and commercially acceptable when the density value found on a sample from the lot or shipment falls within the tolerance range of ± 0.004 of the nominal value.

4.1.1.4 If the nominal value is unknown or unspecified, classification shall be based on the tested value without tolerance consideration.

4.1.2 *Classes*—Each of the five types is subdivided into four classes according to composition and use as follows:

4.1.2.1 *Class A*—Natural color only, with or without any antioxidants or other additives in such proportions as agreed upon between the seller and the purchaser.

4.1.2.2 *Class B*—Colors including white and black, with or without any antioxidants or other additives in such proportions as agreed upon between the manufacturer and the purchaser.

4.1.2.3 *Class C*—Black (weather-resistant), containing not less than 2 % carbon black of a kind and particle size (**Note 7**), dispersed by such means and to such degree as necessary to impart weather resistance with or without any antioxidants or other additives in such proportions as agreed upon between the seller and the purchaser.

NOTE 7—Carbon black 35 nm or less in average particle diameter is used as required in black electrical and jacketing materials (Grades E and J) to impart maximum weather resistance.

4.1.2.4 *Class D*—Colored (UV resistant), including black and white, with antioxidants and UV stabilizers to allow electrical insulation and jackets to meet the requirements outlined in 12.1.12.

NOTE 8—The expected service lifetime of Class D materials is very dependent upon the specific material formulation including selected colorants. Contact your supplier for additional information regarding this issue.

4.1.3 *Categories*:

4.1.3.1 The four classes of each type are divided into five categories on the basis of broad ranges of flow rate in accordance with the requirements prescribed in **Table 2**.

NOTE 9—Some Type II and Type III polyethylene plastics of very high molecular weight cannot be categorized by flow rate. Solution viscosity is recommended as a means of distinguishing such materials.

4.1.3.2 Material supplied under these categories shall be of such nominal flow rate, within the ranges given, as agreed upon between the seller and the purchaser subject to the tolerances specified in 4.1.3.3.

TABLE 2 Classification of Polyethylene Plastics Extrusion Materials for Wire and Cable According to Category

Category	Nominal Flow Rate, g/10 min (190°C, 2.16 kg load)
1	>25
2	>10 to 25
3	>1.0 to 10
4	>0.4 to 1.0
5	0.4 max

4.1.3.3 In view of production, sampling, and testing variables, a commercial lot or shipment for which a nominal flow rate has been agreed upon between the seller and the purchaser shall be considered as conforming and commercially acceptable when the flow rate value found on a sample from the lot or shipment falls within the tolerance range of ± 20 % of the nominal flow rate.

4.1.3.4 If the nominal value is unknown or unspecified, classification shall be based on the tested value without tolerance consideration.

4.1.4 *Grades*:

4.1.4.1 If further definition is necessary, one of the grades given in **Tables 3-5** shall be selected.

NOTE 10—**Tables 4 and 5**, are included to correspond with the grades specified in Federal Specification L-P-390C.

NOTE 11—The grade shall be associated with the appropriate type, class, and category designations; for example, IA5-E4 or IC5-J3 as required. Other grades are added as necessary by revision of this specification in established manner. Also, it is anticipated that additional requirements are added as necessary under a given grade designation by future revision to provide more meaningful characterization of the material covered by such designation.

4.1.4.2 If additional requirements specific to the application are necessary, these shall be specified by the purchaser with the agreement of the seller.

5. Basis of Purchase

5.1 The purchase order or inquiry for these materials shall state the specification number, type, class, category, and, if needed, the appropriate grade, for example, D1248-IA5-E4.

5.2 It is acceptable for further definition to be agreed upon between the seller and the purchaser as follows:

5.2.1 Nominal density.

NOTE 12—For Class B, Class C, and Class D material, the nominal density of the base resin will be identified by the manufacturer upon request.

5.2.2 Nominal flow rate.

5.2.3 *Antioxidant(s) or Other Additive(s) and Proportions*:

5.2.3.1 *Class A*—As stated in 4.1.2.1,

5.2.3.2 *Class B*—As stated in 4.1.2.2,

5.2.3.3 *Class C*—As stated in 4.1.2.3, and

5.2.3.4 *Class D*—As stated in 4.1.2.4.

5.2.4 Contamination level (see 6.2).

5.2.5 Other supplementary definition, unless grade is sufficient and is identified (see 4.1.4.1 and 4.1.4.2).

5.3 Inspection (see 13.1).