



Standard Test Method for Soundness of Aggregates by Use of Sodium Sulfate or Magnesium Sulfate¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation C88; 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 test method covers the testing of aggregates to estimate their soundness when subjected to weathering action in concrete or other applications. This is accomplished by repeated immersion in saturated solutions of sodium or magnesium sulfate followed by oven drying to partially or completely dehydrate the salt precipitated in permeable pore spaces. The internal expansive force, derived from the rehydration of the salt upon re-immersion, simulates the expansion of water on freezing. This test method furnishes information helpful in judging the soundness of aggregates when adequate information is not available from service records of the material exposed to actual weathering conditions.

1.2 The values given in parentheses are provided for information purposes only.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address the safety problems 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:*²

[C33 Specification for Concrete Aggregates](#)

[C136 Test Method for Sieve Analysis of Fine and Coarse Aggregates](#)

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

[C702 Practice for Reducing Samples of Aggregate to Testing Size](#)

[D75 Practice for Sampling Aggregates](#)

[E11 Specification for Woven Wire Test Sieve Cloth and Test Sieves](#)

[E100 Specification for ASTM Hydrometers](#)

[E323 Specification for Perforated-Plate Sieves for Testing Purposes](#)

3. Significance and Use

3.1 This test method provides a procedure for making a preliminary estimate of the soundness of aggregates for use in concrete and other purposes. The values obtained may be compared with specifications, for example Specification [C33](#), that are designed to indicate the suitability of aggregate proposed for use. Since the precision of this test method is poor (Section [12](#)), it may not be suitable for outright rejection of aggregates without confirmation from other tests more closely related to the specific service intended.

3.2 Values for the permitted-loss percentage by this test method are usually different for fine and coarse aggregates, and attention is called to the fact that test results by use of the two salts differ considerably and care must be exercised in fixing proper limits in any specifications that include requirements for these tests. The test is usually more severe when magnesium sulfate is used; accordingly, limits for percent loss allowed when magnesium sulfate is used are normally higher than limits when sodium sulfate is used.

NOTE 1—Refer to the appropriate sections in Specification [C33](#) establishing conditions for acceptance of coarse and fine aggregates which fail to meet requirements based on this test.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [C09](#) on Concrete and Concrete Aggregates and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [C09.20](#) on Normal Weight Aggregates.

Current edition approved Aug. 1, 2013. Published August 2013. Originally approved in 1931. Last previous edition approved in 2005 as C88–05. DOI: 10.1520/C0088-13.

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.

4. Apparatus

4.1 *Sieves*—With square openings of the following sizes conforming to Specifications E11 or E323, for sieving the samples in accordance with Sections 6, 7, and 9:

150 μm (No. 100)	8.0 mm (5/16 in.)
	9.5 mm (3/8 in.)
300 μm (No. 50)	12.5 mm (1/2 in.)
	16.0 mm (5/8 in.)
600 μm (No. 30)	19.0 mm (3/4 in.)
	25.0 mm (1 in.)
1.18 mm (No. 16)	31.5 mm (1 1/4 in.)
2.36 mm (No. 8)	37.5 mm (1 1/2 in.)
	50 mm (2 in.)
4.00 mm (No. 5)	63 mm (2 1/2 in.)
	larger sizes by
4.75 mm (No. 4)	12.5-mm (1/2-in.)
	spread

4.2 *Containers*—Containers for immersing the samples of aggregate in the solution, in accordance with the procedure described in this test method, shall be perforated in such a manner as to permit free access of the solution to the sample and drainage of the solution from the sample without loss of aggregate.

NOTE 2—Baskets made of suitable wire mesh or sieves with suitable openings are satisfactory containers for the samples.

4.3 *Temperature Regulation*—Suitable means for regulating the temperature of the samples during immersion in the sodium sulfate or magnesium sulfate solution shall be provided.

4.4 *Temperature Recorder*—With an accuracy of at least 1 °F (0.5 °C) and capable of recording the temperature of the solution at least once every 15 minutes for the duration of the test.

4.5 *Balances*—For fine aggregate, a balance or scale accurate within 0.1 g over the range required for this test; for coarse aggregate, a balance or scale accurate within 0.1 % or 1 g, whichever is greater, over the range required for this test.

4.6 *Drying Oven*—The oven shall be capable of being heated continuously at 230 ± 9 °F (110 ± 5 °C) and the rate of evaporation, at this range of temperature, shall be at least 25 g/h for 4 h, during which period the doors of the oven shall be kept closed. This rate shall be determined by the loss of water from 1-L Griffin low-form beakers, each initially containing 500 g of water at a temperature of 70 ± 3 °F (21 ± 2 °C), placed at each corner and the center of each shelf of the oven. The evaporation requirement is to apply to all test locations when the oven is empty except for the beakers of water.

4.7 *Specific Gravity Measurement*—Hydrometers conforming to the requirements of Specification E100, or a suitable combination of graduated glassware and balance, capable of measuring the solution specific gravity within ± 0.001 .

5. Special Solutions Required

5.1 Prepare the solution for immersion of test samples from either sodium or magnesium sulfate in accordance with 5.1.1 or 5.1.2 (Note 3). The volume of the solution shall be at least five times the solid volume of all samples immersed at any one time.

NOTE 3—Some aggregates containing carbonates of calcium or magnesium are attacked chemically by fresh sulfate solution, resulting in

erroneously high measured losses. If this condition is encountered or is suspected, repeat the test using a filtered solution that has been used previously to test the same type of carbonate rock, provided that the solution meets the requirements of 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 for specific gravity.

5.1.1 *Sodium Sulfate Solution*—Prepare a saturated solution of sodium sulfate by dissolving a USP or equal grade of the salt in water at a temperature of 77 to 86 °F (25 to 30 °C). Add sufficient salt (Note 4), of either the anhydrous (Na_2SO_4) or the crystalline ($\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$) form,³ to ensure not only saturation but also the presence of excess crystals when the solution is ready for use in the tests. Thoroughly stir the mixture during the addition of the salt and stir the solution at frequent intervals until used. To reduce evaporation and prevent contamination, keep the solution covered at all times when access is not needed. Allow the solution to cool to 70 ± 2 °F (21 ± 1 °C). Again stir, and allow the solution to remain at the designated temperature for at least 48 h before use. Prior to each use, break up the salt cake, if any, in the container, stir the solution thoroughly, and determine the specific gravity of the solution. When used, the solution shall have a specific gravity not less than 1.151 nor more than 1.174. Discard a discolored solution, or filter it and check for specific gravity.

NOTE 4—For the solution, 215 g of anhydrous salt or 700 g of the decahydrate per litre of water are sufficient for saturation at 71.6 °F (22 °C). However, since these salts are not completely stable and since it is desirable that an excess of crystals be present, the use of not less than 350 g of the anhydrous salt or 750 g of the decahydrate salt per litre of water is recommended.

5.1.2 *Magnesium Sulfate Solution*—Prepare a saturated solution of magnesium sulfate by dissolving a USP or equal grade of the salt in water at a temperature of 77 to 86 °F (25 to 30 °C). Add sufficient salt (Note 5), of either the anhydrous (MgSO_4) or the crystalline ($\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$) (Epsom salt) form, to ensure saturation and the presence of excess crystals when the solution is ready for use in the tests. Thoroughly stir the mixture during the addition of the salt and stir the solution at frequent intervals until used. To reduce evaporation and prevent contamination, keep the solution covered at all times when access is not needed. Allow the solution to cool to 70 ± 2 °F (21 ± 1 °C). Again stir, and allow the solution to remain at the designated temperature for at least 48 h before use. Prior to each use, break up the salt cake, if any, in the container, stir the solution thoroughly, and determine the specific gravity of the solution. When used, the solution shall have a specific gravity not less than 1.295 nor more than 1.308. Discard a discolored solution, or filter it and check for specific gravity.

NOTE 5—For the solution, 350 g of anhydrous salt or 1230 g of the heptahydrate per litre of water are sufficient for saturation at 73.4 °F (23 °C). However, since these salts are not completely stable, with the hydrous salt being the more stable of the two, and since it is desirable that an excess of crystals be present, it is recommended that the heptahydrate salt be used and in an amount of not less than 1400 g/litre of water.

³ Experience with the test method indicates that a grade of sodium sulfate designated by the trade as dried powder, which may be considered as approximately anhydrous, is the most practical for use. That grade is more economically available than the anhydrous form. The decahydrate sodium sulfate presents difficulties in compounding the required solution on account of its cooling effect on the solution.