Designation: C 31/C 31M – 00

Standard Practice for Making and Curing Concrete Test Specimens in the Field[1]

This standard is issued under the fixed designation C 31/C 31M; 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 Department of Defense.

1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers procedures for making and curing cylinder and beam specimens from representative samples of fresh concrete for a construction project.

1.2 The concrete used to make the molded specimens shall be sampled after all on-site adjustments have been made to the mixture proportions, including the addition of mix water and admixtures. This practice is not satisfactory for making specimens from concrete not having measurable slump or requiring other sizes or shapes of specimens.

1.3 The values stated in either inch-pound units or SI units shall be regarded separately as standard. The SI units are shown in brackets. The values stated may not be exact equivalents; therefore each system must be used independently of the other. Combining values from the two units may result in nonconformance.

1.4 *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.*

1.5 The text of this standard references notes which provide explanatory material. These notes shall not be considered as requirements of the standard.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*

C 138 Test Method for Unit Weight, Yield, and Air Content (Gravimetric) of Concrete[2]

C 143/C 143M Test Method for Slump of Hydraulic Cement Concrete[2]

C 172 Practice for Sampling Freshly Mixed Concrete[2]

C 173 Test Method for Air Content of Freshly Mixed Concrete by the Volumetric Method[2]

C 192/C 192M Practice for Making and Curing Concrete Test Specimens in the Laboratory[2]

C 231 Test Method for Air Content of Freshly Mixed Concrete by the Pressure Method[2]

C 330 Specification for Lightweight Aggregate for Concrete Masonry Units[2]

C 403/C 403M Test Method for Time of Setting of Concrete Mixtures by Penetration Resistance[2]

C 470/C 470M Specification for Molds for Forming Concrete Test Cylinders Vertically[2]

C 511 Specification for Moist Cabinets, Moist Rooms, and Water Storage Tanks Used in the Testing of Hydraulic Cements and Concretes[3]

C 617 Practice for Capping Cylindrical Concrete Specimens[2]

C 1064 Test Method for Temperature of Freshly Mixed Portland-Cement Concrete[2]

2.2 *American Concrete Institute Publication:*[4]

CP-1 Concrete Field Testing Technician, Grade I

309R Guide for Consolidation of Concrete

3. Significance and Use

3.1 This practice provides standardized requirements for making, curing, protecting, and transporting concrete test specimens under field conditions.

3.2 If the specimens are made and standard cured, as stipulated herein, the resulting strength test data when the specimens are tested are able to be used for the following purposes:

3.2.1 Acceptance testing for specified strength,

3.2.2 Checking adequacy of mixture proportions for strength, and

3.2.3 Quality control.

3.3 If the specimens are made and field cured, as stipulated herein, the resulting strength test data when the specimens are tested are able to be used for the following purposes:

3.3.1 Determination of whether a structure is capable of being put in service,

3.3.2 Comparison with test results of standard cured specimens or with test results from various in-place test methods,

3.3.3 Adequacy of curing and protection of concrete in the structure, or

[1] This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee C09 on Concrete and Concrete Aggregatesand is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee C09.61 on Testing Concrete for Strength.

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[2] *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 04.02.

[3] *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 04.01.

[4] Available from American Concrete Institute, P.O. Box 9094, Farmington Hills, MI 48333-9094.

3.3.4 Form or shoring removal time requirements.

4. Apparatus

4.1 *Molds, General*— Molds for specimens or fastenings thereto in contact with the concrete shall be made of steel, cast iron, or other nonabsorbent material, nonreactive with concrete containing portland or other hydraulic cements. Molds shall hold their dimensions and shape under all conditions of use. Molds shall be watertight during use as judged by their ability to hold water poured into them. Provisions for tests of water leakage are given in the Test Methods for Elongation, Absorption, and Water Leakage section of Specification C 470/C 470M. A suitable sealant, such as heavy grease, modeling clay, or microcrystalline wax shall be used where necessary to prevent leakage through the joints. Positive means shall be provided to hold base plates firmly to the molds. Reusable molds shall be lightly coated with mineral oil or a suitable nonreactive form release material before use.

4.2 *Cylinder Molds*— Molds for casting concrete test specimens shall conform to the requirements of Specification C 470/C 470M.

4.3 *Beam Molds*—Beam molds shall be of the shape and dimensions required to produce the specimens stipulated in 5.2. The inside surfaces of the molds shall be smooth. The sides, bottom, and ends shall be at right angles to each other and shall be straight and true and free of warpage. Maximum variation from the nominal cross section shall not exceed ⅛ in. [3 mm] for molds with depth or breadth of 6 in. [150 mm] or more. Molds shall produce specimens at least as long but not more than 1⁄16 in. [2 mm] shorter than the required length in 5.2.

4.4 *Tamping Rod*— A round, straight steel rod with the dimensions conforming to those in Table 1, having the tamping end or both ends rounded to a hemispherical tip of the same diameter as the rod.

4.5 *Vibrators*—Internal vibrators shall be used. The vibrator frequency shall be at least 7000 vibrations per minute [150 Hz] while the vibrator is operating in the concrete. The diameter of a round vibrator shall be no more than one-fourth the diameter of the cylinder mold or one-fourth the width of the beam mold. Other shaped vibrators shall have a perimeter equivalent to the circumference of an appropriate round vibrator. The combined length of the vibrator shaft and vibrating element shall exceed the depth of the section being vibrated by at least 3 in. [75 mm]. The vibrator frequency shall be checked periodically.

NOTE 1—For information on size and frequency of various vibrators and a method to periodically check vibrator frequency see ACI 309.

4.6 *Mallet*—A mallet with a rubber or rawhide head weighing 1.25 ± 0.50 lb [0.6 ± 0.2 kg] shall be used.

4.7 *Small Tools*— Shovels, hand-held floats, scoops, and a vibrating-reed tachometer shall be provided.

TABLE 1 Tamping Rod Requirements

Diameter of Cylinder or Width of Beam in. [mm]	Rod Dimensions[A]	
	Diameter in. [mm]	Length of Rod in. [mm]
<6 [150]	3/8 [10]	12 [300]
6 [150]	5/8 [16]	20 [500]
9 [225]	5/8 [16]	26 [650]

[A] Rod tolerances length ±4 in. [100 mm] and diameter ±1⁄16 in. [2 mm].

4.8 *Slump Apparatus*— The apparatus for measurement of slump shall conform to the requirements of Test Method C 143/C 143M.

4.9 *Sampling Receptacle*—The receptacle shall be a suitable heavy gage metal pan, wheelbarrow, or flat, clean nonabsorbent board of sufficient capacity to allow easy remixing of the entire sample with a shovel or trowel.

4.10 *Air Content Apparatus*—The apparatus for measuring air content shall conform to the requirements of Test Methods C 173 or C 231.

4.11 *Temperature Measuring Devices*—The temperature measuring devices shall conform to the applicable requirements of Test Method C 1064.

5. Testing Requirements

5.1 *Cylindrical Specimens*—Compressive or splitting tensile strength specimens shall be cylinders cast and allow to set in an upright position, with a length equal to twice the diameter. The standard specimen shall be the 6 by 12-in. [150 by 300-mm] cylinder when the nominal maximum size of the coarse aggregate does not exceed 2 in. [50 mm] (Note 2, Note 3). When the nominal maximum size of the coarse aggregate does exceed 2 in. [50 mm], either the concrete sample shall be treated by wet sieving as described in Practice C 172 or the diameter of the cylinder shall be at least three times the nominal maximum size of coarse aggregate in the concrete. For acceptance testing for specified strength, cylinders smaller than 6 by 12 in. [150 by 300 mm] shall not be used, unless another size is specified (Note 4).

NOTE 2—The nominal maximum size is the smallest sieve opening through which the entire amount of aggregate is permitted to pass.

NOTE 3—When molds in SI units are required and not available, equivalent inch-pound unit size mold should be permitted.

NOTE 4—For uses other than acceptance testing for specified strength, a 4 by 8 in. [100 by 200 mm] or 5 by 10 in. [125 by 250 mm] cylinder may be suitable. However, the diameter of any cylinder shall be at least three times the nominal maximum size of the coarse aggregate in the concrete (Note 2). When cylinders smaller than the standard size are used, within-test variability has been shown to be higher but not to a statistically significant degree. The compressive strength results are affected by a number of factors including cylinder size.

5.2 *Beam Specimens*— Flexural strength specimens shall be beams of concrete cast and hardened in the horizontal position. The length shall be at least 2 in. [50 mm] greater than three times the depth as tested. The ratio of width to depth as molded shall not exceed 1.5. The standard beam shall be 6 by 6 in. [150 by 150 mm] in cross section, and shall be used for concrete with nominal maximum size coarse aggregate up to 2 in. [50 mm] (Note 2). When the nominal maximum size of the coarse aggregate exceeds 2 in. [50 mm], the smaller cross sectional dimension of the beam shall be at least three times the nominal maximum size of the coarse aggregate. Unless required by project specifications, beams made in the field shall not have a width or depth of less than 6 in. [150 mm].

5.3 *Field Technicians*—The field technicians making and curing specimens for acceptance testing shall be certified ACI Field Testing Technicians, Grade I or equivalent. Equivalent personnel certification programs shall include both written and performance examinations, as outlined in ACI CP-1.

6. Sampling Concrete

6.1 The samples used to fabricate test specimens under this standard shall be obtained in accordance with Practice C 172 unless an alternative procedure has been approved.

6.2 Record the identification of the sample with respect to the location of the concrete represented and the time of casting.

7. Slump, Air Content, and Temperature

7.1 *Slump*—Measure and record the slump of each batch of concrete from which specimens are made immediately after remixing in the receptacle, as required in Test Method C 143/C 143M.

7.2 *Air Content*— Determine and record the air content in accordance with either Test Method C 173 or Test Method C 231. The concrete used in performing the air content test shall not be used in fabricating test specimens.

7.3 *Temperature*— Determine and record the temperature in accordance with Test Method C 1064.

NOTE 5—Some specifications may require the measurement of the unit weight of concrete. The volume of concrete produced per batch may be desired on some projects. Also, additional information on the air content measurements may be desired. Test Method C 138 is used to measure the unit weight, yield, and gravimetric air content of freshly mixed concrete.

8. Molding Specimens

8.1 *Place of Molding*— Mold specimens promptly on a level, rigid surface, free of vibration and other disturbances, at a place as near as practicable to the location where they are to be stored.

8.2 *Casting Cylinders*—Select the proper tamping rod from 4.4 and Table 1 or the proper vibrator from 4.5. Determine the method of consolidation from Table 2, unless another method is specified. If the method of consolidation is rodding, determine molding requirements from Table 3. If the method of consolidation is vibration, determine molding requirements from Table 4. Select a small tool of a size and shape large enough so each amount of concrete obtained from the sampling receptacle will be representative and small enough so concrete is not lost when being placed in the mold. While placing the concrete in the mold, move the small tool around the perimeter of the mold opening to ensure an even distribution of the concrete and minimize segregation. Each layer of concrete shall be consolidated as required. In placing the final layer, add an amount of concrete that will fill the mold after consolidation.

8.3 *Casting Beams*— Select the proper tamping rod from 4.4 and Table 1 or proper vibrator from 4.5. Determine the method of consolidation from Table 2, unless another method is specified. If the method of consolidation is rodding, determine the molding requirements from Table 3. If the method of consolidation is vibration, determine the molding requirements from Table 4. Determine the number of roddings per layer, one for each 2 in.^{2} [14 cm^2] of the top surface area of the beam. Select a small tool, of the size and shape large enough so each amount of concrete obtained from the sampling receptacle is representative and small enough so concrete is not lost when placed in the mold. Each layer shall be consolidated as required. In placing the final layer, add an amount of concrete that will fill the mold after consolidation. Place the concrete so that it is uniformly distributed within each layer with a minimum of segregation.

TABLE 2 Method of Consolidation Requirements

Slump in. (mm)	Method of Consolidation
<1 [25]	rodding or vibration
≥1 [25]	vibration

TABLE 3 Molding Requirements by Rodding

Specimen Type and Size	Number of Layers of Approximately Equal Depth	Number of Roddings per Layer
Cylinders:		
Diameter, in. [mm]		
4 [100]	2	25
6 [150]	3	25
9 [225]	4	50
Beams:		
Width, in. [mm]		
6 [150] to 8 [200]	2	see 8.3
>8 [200]	3 or more equal depths, each not to exceed 6 in. [150 mm].	see 8.3

TABLE 4 Molding Requirements by Vibration

Specimen Type and Size	Number of Layers	Number of Vibrator Insertions per Layer	Approximate Depth of Layer, in. [mm]
Cylinders:			
Diameter, in. [mm]			
4 [100]	2	1	one-half depth of specimen
6 [150]	2	2	one-half depth of specimen
9 [225]	2	4	one-half depth of specimen
Beams:			
Width, in. [mm]			
6 [150] to 8 [200]	1	see 8.4.2	depth of specimen
over 8 [200]	2 or more	see 8.4.2	8 [200] as near as practicable

8.4 *Consolidation*— The methods of consolidation for this practice are rodding or internal vibration.

8.4.1 *Rodding*—Place the concrete in the mold, in the required number of layers of approximately equal volume. Rod each layer with the rounded end of the rod using the required number of roddings. Rod the bottom layer throughout its depth. Distribute the roddings uniformly over the cross section of the mold. For each upper layer, allow the rod to penetrate through the layer being rodded and into the layer below approximately 1 in. [25 mm]. After each layer is rodded, tap the outsides of the mold lightly 10 to 15 times with the mallet, to close any holes left by rodding and to release any large air bubbles that may have been trapped. Use an open hand to tap light-gage single-use cylinder molds which are susceptible to damage if tapped with a mallet. After tapping, spade each layer of the concrete along the sides and ends of beam molds with a trowel or other suitable tool. Underfilled molds shall be adjusted with representative concrete during consolidation of the top layer. Overfilled molds shall have excess concrete removed.

8.4.2 *Vibration*—Maintain a uniform duration of vibration for the particular kind of concrete, vibrator, and specimen mold involved. The duration of vibration required will depend upon the workability of the concrete and the effectiveness of the vibrator. Usually sufficient vibration has been applied as soon as the surface of the concrete has become relatively smooth and large air bubbles cease to break through the top surface. Continue vibration only long enough to achieve proper consolidation of the concrete (see Note 6). Fill the molds and vibrate in the required number of approximately equal layers. Place all the concrete for each layer in the mold before starting vibration of that layer. In compacting the specimen, insert the vibrator slowly and do not allow it to rest on the bottom or sides of the mold. Slowly withdraw the vibrator so that no large air pockets are left in the specimen. When placing the final layer, avoid overfilling by more than ¼ in. [6 mm].

NOTE 6—Generally, no more than 5 s of vibration should be required for each insertion to adequately consolidate concrete with a slump greater than 3 in. [75 mm]. Longer times may be required for lower slump concrete, but the vibration time should rarely have to exceed 10 s per insertion.

8.4.2.1 *Cylinders*—The number of insertions of the vibrator per layer is given in Table 4. When more than one insertion per layer is required distribute the insertion uniformly within each layer. Allow the vibrator to penetrate through the layer being vibrated, and into the layer below, approximately 1 in. [25 mm]. After each layer is vibrated, tap the outsides of the mold at least 10 times with the mallet, to close holes that remain and to release entrapped air voids. Use an open hand to tap cardboard and single-use metal molds that are susceptible to damage if tapped with a mallet.

8.4.2.2 *Beams*—Insert the vibrator at intervals not exceeding 6 in. [150 mm] along the center line of the long dimension of the specimen. For specimens wider than 6 in., use alternating insertions along two lines. Allow the shaft of the vibrator to penetrate into the bottom layer approximately 1 in. (25 mm). After each layer is vibrated, tap the outsides of the mold sharply at least 10 times with the mallet to close holes left by vibrating and to release entrapped air voids.

8.5 *Finishing*—After consolidation, strike off excess concrete from the surface and float or trowel as required. Perform all finishing with the minimum manipulation necessary to produce a flat even surface that is level with the rim or edge of the mold and that has no depressions or projections larger than ⅛ in. [3.3 mm].

8.5.1 *Cylinders*—After consolidation, finish the top surfaces by striking them off with the tamping rod where the consistency of the concrete permits or with a wood float or trowel. If desired, cap the top surface of freshly made cylinders with a thin layer of stiff portland cement paste which is permitted to harden and cure with the specimen. See section on Capping Materials of Practice C 617.

8.5.2 *Beams*—After consolidation of the concrete, use a hand-held float to strike off the top surface to the required tolerance to produce a flat, even surface.

8.6 *Identification*— Mark the specimens to positively identify them and the concrete they represent. Use a method that will not alter the top surface of the concrete. Do not mark the removable caps. Upon removal of the molds, mark the test specimens to retain their identities.

9. Curing

9.1 *Standard Curing*— Standard curing is the curing method used when the specimens are made and cured for the purposes stated in 3.2.

9.1.1 *Storage*—If specimens cannot be molded at the place where they will receive initial curing, immediately after finishing move the specimens to an initial curing place for storage. The supporting surface on which specimens are stored shall be level to within ¼ in. per ft [20 mm per m]. If cylinders in the single use molds are moved, lift and support the cylinders from the bottom of the molds with a large trowel or similar device. If the top surface is marred during movement to place of initial storage, immediately refinish.

9.1.2 *Initial Curing*— Immediately after molding and finishing, the specimens shall be stored for a period up to 48 h in a temperature range from 60 and 80°F [16 and 27°C] and in an environment preventing moisture loss from the specimens. For concrete mixtures with a specified strength of 6000 psi [40 MPa] or greater, the initial curing temperature shall be between 68 and 78°F [20 and 26°C]. Various procedures are capable of being used during the initial curing period to maintain the specified moisture and temperature conditions. An appropriate procedure or combination of procedures shall be used (Note 7). Shield all specimens from the direct sunlight and, if used, radiant heating devices. The storage temperature shall be controlled by use of heating and cooling devices, as necessary. Record the temperature using a maximum-minimum thermometer. If cardboard molds are used, protect the outside surface of the molds from contact with wet burlap or other sources of water.

NOTE 7—A satisfactory moisture environment can be created during the initial curing of the specimens by one or more of the following procedures: (1) immediately immerse molded specimens with plastic lids in water saturated with calcium hydroxide, (2) store in properly constructed wooden boxes or structures, (3) place in damp sand pits, (4) cover with removable plastic lids, (5) place inside plastic bags, or (6) cover with plastic sheets or nonabsorbent plates if provisions are made to avoid drying and damp burlap is used inside the enclosure, but the burlap is prevented from contacting the concrete surfaces. A satisfactory temperature environment can be controlled during the initial curing of the specimens by one or more of the following procedures: (1) use of ventilation, (2) use of ice, (3) use of thermostatically controlled heating or cooling devices, or (4) use of heating methods such as stoves or light bulbs. Other suitable methods may be used provided the requirements limiting specimen storage temperature and moisture loss are met. For concrete mixtures with a specified strength of 6000 psi [40 MPa] or greater, heat generated during the early ages may raise the temperature above the required storage temperature. Immersion in water saturated with calcium hydroxide may be the easiest method to maintain the required storage temperature. When specimens are to be immersed in water saturated with calcium hydroxide, specimens in cardboard molds or other molds that expand when immersed in water should not be used. Early-age strength test results may be lower when stored at 60°F [16°C] and higher when stored at 80°F [27°C]. On the other hand, at later ages, test results may be lower for higher initial storage temperatures.

9.1.3 *Final Curing:*

9.1.3.1 *Cylinders*—Upon completion of initial curing and within 30 min after removing the molds, cure specimens with free water maintained on their surfaces at all times at a temperature of 73 ± 3°F [23 ± 2°C] using water storage tanks or moist rooms complying with the requirements of Specification C 511, except when capping with sulfur mortar capping compound and immediately prior to testing. When capping with sulfur mortar capping compound, the ends of the cylinder shall be dry enough to preclude the formation of steam or foam pockets under or in cap larger than ¼ in. [6 mm] as described in Practice C 617. For a period not to exceed 3 h immediately prior to test, standard curing temperature is not required provided free moisture is maintained on the cylinders and ambient temperature is between 68 and 86°F [20 and 30°C].

9.1.3.2 *Beams*—Beams are to be cured the same as cylinders (see 9.1.3.1) except that they shall be stored in water saturated with calcium hydroxide at 73 ± 3°F [23 ± 2°C] at least 20 h prior to testing. Drying of the surfaces of the beam shall be prevented between removal from water storage and completion of testing.

NOTE 8—Relatively small amounts of surface drying of flexural specimens can induce tensile stresses in the extreme fibers that will markedly reduce the indicated flexural strength.

9.2 *Field Curing*— Field curing is the curing method used for the specimens made and cured as stated in 3.3.

9.2.1 *Cylinders*—Store cylinders in or on the structure as near to the point of deposit of the concrete represented as possible. Protect all surfaces of the cylinders from the elements in as near as possible the same way as the formed work. Provide the cylinders with the same temperature and moisture environment as the structural work. Test the specimens in the moisture condition resulting from the specified curing treatment. To meet these conditions, specimens made for the purpose of determining when a structure is capable of being put in service shall be removed from the molds at the time of removal of form work.

9.2.2 *Beams*—As nearly as practicable, cure beams in the same manner as the concrete in the structure. At the end of 48 ± 4 h after molding, take the molded specimens to the storage location and remove from the molds. Store specimens representing pavements of slabs on grade by placing them on the ground as molded, with their top surfaces up. Bank the sides and ends of the specimens with earth or sand that shall be kept damp, leaving the top surfaces exposed to the specified curing treatment. Store specimens representing structure concrete as near the point in the structure they represent as possible, and afford them the same temperature protection and moisture environment as the structure. At the end of the curing period leave the specimens in place exposed to the weather in the same manner as the structure. Remove all beam specimens from field storage and store in water saturated with calcium hydroxide at 73 ± 3°F [23 ± 2°C] for 24 ± 4 h immediately before time of testing to ensure uniform moisture condition from specimen to specimen. Observe the precautions given in 9.1.3.2 to guard against drying between time of removal from curing to testing.

9.3 *Structural Lightweight Concrete Curing*—Cure structural lightweight concrete cylinders in accordance with Specification C 330.

10. Transportation of Specimens to Laboratory

10.1 Prior to transporting, cure and protect specimens as required in Section 9. Specimens shall not be transported until at least 8 h after final set. (See Note 9). During transporting, protect the specimens with suitable cushioning material to prevent damage from jarring. During cold weather, protect the specimens from freezing with suitable insulation material. Prevent moisture loss during transportation by wrapping the specimens in plastic, wet burlap, by surrounding them with wet sand, or tight fitting plastic caps on plastic molds. Transportation time shall not exceed 4 h.

NOTE 9—Setting time may be measured by Test Method C 403.

11. Report

11.1 Report the following information to the laboratory that will test the specimens:

11.1.1 Identification number,

11.1.2 Location of concrete represented by the samples,

11.1.3 Date, time and name of individual molding specimens,

11.1.4 Slump, air content, and concrete temperature, test results and results of any other tests on the fresh concrete and any deviations from referenced standard test methods, and

11.1.5 Curing method. For standard curing method, report the initial curing method with maximum and minimum temperatures and final curing method. For field curing method, report the location where stored, manner of protection from the elements, temperature and moisture environment, and time of removal from molds.

12. Keywords

12.1 beams; casting samples; concrete; curing; cylinders; testing