



Designation: C403/C403M – 23

Standard Test Method for Time of Setting of Concrete Mixtures by Penetration Resistance¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation C403/C403M; 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 determination of the time of setting of concrete, with slump greater than zero, by means of penetration resistance measurements on mortar sieved from the concrete mixture.

1.2 This test method is suitable for use only when tests of the mortar fraction will provide the information required.

1.3 This test method may also be applied to prepared mortars and grouts.

1.4 This test method is applicable under controlled laboratory conditions, as well as under field conditions.

1.5 The values stated in either SI units or inch-pound units are to be regarded separately as standard. The values stated in each system may not be exact equivalents; therefore, each system shall be used independently of the other. Combining values from the two systems may result in non-conformance with the standard.

1.6 The text of this standard refers to notes and footnotes that provide explanatory material. These notes and footnotes (excluding those in tables and figures) shall not be considered as requirements of the standard.

1.7 *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, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

1.8 *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.*

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee C09 on Concrete and Concrete Aggregates and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee C09.23 on Chemical Admixtures.

Current edition approved June 1, 2023. Published June 2023. Originally approved in 1957. Last previous edition approved in 2016 as C403/C403M-16. DOI: 10.1520/C0403_C0403M-23.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

- C125 Terminology Relating to Concrete and Concrete Aggregates
- C143/C143M Test Method for Slump of Hydraulic-Cement Concrete
- C172/C172M Practice for Sampling Freshly Mixed Concrete
- C173/C173M Test Method for Air Content of Freshly Mixed Concrete by the Volumetric Method
- C192/C192M Practice for Making and Curing Concrete Test Specimens in the Laboratory
- C231/C231M Test Method for Air Content of Freshly Mixed Concrete by the Pressure Method
- C670 Practice for Preparing Precision and Bias Statements for Test Methods for Construction Materials
- C802 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Test Program to Determine the Precision of Test Methods for Construction Materials
- D1558 Test Method for Moisture Content Penetration Resistance Relationships of Fine-Grained Soils (Withdrawn 2019)³
- E11 Specification for Woven Wire Test Sieve Cloth and Test Sieves
- E2251 Specification for Liquid-in-Glass ASTM Thermometers with Low-Hazard Precision Liquids

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—Definitions are given in Terminology C125.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 A mortar sample is obtained by sieving a representative sample of fresh concrete. The mortar is placed in a container

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

and stored at a specified ambient temperature. At regular time intervals, the resistance of the mortar to penetration by standard needles is measured. From a plot of penetration resistance versus elapsed time, the times of initial and final setting are determined.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Since the setting of concrete is a gradual process, any definition of time of setting must necessarily be arbitrary. In this test method, the times required for the mortar to reach specified values of resistance to penetration are used to define times of setting.

5.2 This test method can be used to determine the effects of variables, such as water content; brand, type and amount of cementitious material; or admixtures, upon the time of setting of concrete. This test method may also be used to determine compliance with specified time-of-setting requirements.

5.3 This test method may also be applied to prepared mortars and grouts. However, when the setting time of concrete is desired, the test shall be performed on mortar sieved from the concrete mixture and not on a prepared mortar intended to simulate the mortar fraction of the concrete; it has been shown that the initial and final setting times may be increased when using the prepared mortar.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Containers for Mortar Specimens*—The containers shall be rigid, watertight, nonabsorptive, free of oil or grease, and either cylindrical or rectangular in cross section. Mortar surface area shall be provided for ten undisturbed readings of penetration resistance in accordance with clear distance requirements specified in Procedure. The lateral dimension shall be at least 6 in. [150 mm] and the height at least 6 in. [150 mm].

6.2 *Penetration Needles*—Needles shall be provided which can be attached to the loading apparatus and which have the following bearing areas: 1, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{10}$, $\frac{1}{20}$, and $\frac{1}{40}$ in.² [645, 323, 161, 65, 32, and 16 mm²]. Each needle shank shall be scribed circumferentially at a distance 1 in. [25 mm] from the bearing area. The length of the $\frac{1}{40}$ in.² [16-mm²] needle shall be not more than $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. [90 mm].

6.3 *Loading Apparatus*—A device shall be provided to measure the force required to cause penetration of the needles. The device shall be capable of measuring the penetration force with an accuracy of ± 2 lbf [10 N] and shall have a capacity of at least 130 lbf [600 N].

NOTE 1—Suitable loading apparatus can be of the spring-reaction type as described in Test Method **D1558**, or of other types with a calibrated force measuring device, such as an electronic load cell or a hydraulic pressure gage.

6.4 *Tamping Rod*—The tamping rod shall be a round, straight, steel rod $\frac{5}{8}$ in. [16 mm] in diameter and approximately 24 in. [600 mm] in length, having the tamping end or both ends rounded to a hemispherical tip, the diameter of which is $\frac{5}{8}$ in. [16 mm].

6.5 *Pipet*—A pipet or other suitable instrument shall be used for drawing off bleed water from the surface of the test specimen.

6.6 *Thermometer*—The thermometer shall be capable of measuring the temperature of the fresh mortar to ± 1 °F [± 0.5 °C]. ASTM liquid-in-glass thermometers having a temperature range from 0 °F to 120 °F [−20 °C to 50 °C], and conforming to the requirements of Thermometer 97F (or 97C) as prescribed in Specification **E2251** are satisfactory. Other thermometers of the required accuracy, including the metal immersion type, are acceptable.

7. Sampling, Test Specimens, and Test Units

7.1 For tests under field conditions, prepare three specimens from each sample of concrete.

7.2 For tests under laboratory conditions, the requirements depend upon the purpose of the tests.

7.2.1 For testing to prove compliance of a material with performance requirements, make at least three separate concrete batches for each variable under investigation. Perform one time of setting test on each batch. Make an equal number of batches for each variable on any one day. When it is impossible to perform at least one test for each variable on any one day, mix the entire series of batches in as few days as possible, and repeat one of the mixtures each day as a standard for comparison.

7.2.2 For other tests, prepare three test specimens from one batch of concrete for each test variable.

7.3 Record the time at which initial contact was made between cement and mixing water.

7.4 For tests under field conditions, obtain a representative sample of the fresh concrete in accordance with Practice **C172/C172M**. For tests under laboratory conditions, make the concrete in accordance with Practice **C192/C192M**. Determine and record the slump (Test Method **C143/C143M**) and air content (Test Method **C173/C173M** or **C231/C231M**) of the fresh concrete.

7.5 From the concrete not used in the slump and air content tests, select a representative portion of sufficient volume to provide enough mortar to fill the test container, or containers, to a depth of at least $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. [140 mm].

7.6 Using the procedure in Practice **C172/C172M**, obtain a mortar sample by wet-sieving the selected portion of concrete through a 4.75-mm sieve⁴ and onto a nonabsorptive surface.

7.7 Thoroughly remix the mortar by hand methods on the nonabsorptive surface. Measure and record the temperature of the mortar. Place the mortar in the container, or containers, using a single layer. Consolidate the mortar to eliminate air pockets in the specimen and level the top surface. This may be accomplished by rocking the container back and forth on a solid surface, by tapping the sides of the container with the tamping rod, by rodding the mortar, or by placing the container on a vibrating table (see **Note 2**). If rodding is used, rod the mortar with the hemispherical end of the tamping rod. Rod the mortar once for each 1 in.² [645 mm²] of top surface area of the specimen and distribute the strokes uniformly over the cross section of the specimen. After completion of the rodding,

⁴ Detailed requirements for this sieve are given in Specification **E11**.