



Designation: D779 – 16 (Reapproved 2022)

## Standard Test Method for Determining the Water Vapor Resistance of Sheet Materials in Contact with Liquid Water by the Dry Indicator Method<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D779; 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 ( $\epsilon$ ) 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 required for water vapor to pass through a sheet membrane in contact with liquid water using the dry-indicator method.

1.2 The method has been used to evaluate water resistive barriers, flexible flashing and other materials used in building construction in order to measure their resistance to water vapor transmission.

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

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

1.5 *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.*

### 2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*<sup>2</sup>

[D585 Practice for Sampling and Accepting a Single Lot of Paper, Paperboard, Fiberboard, and Related Product \(Withdrawn 2010\)](#)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E06 on Performance of Buildings and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E06.55 on Performance of Building Enclosures.

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<sup>2</sup> For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org), or contact ASTM Customer Service at [service@astm.org](mailto:service@astm.org). For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

<sup>3</sup> The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org).

[D685 Practice for Conditioning Paper and Paper Products for Testing](#)

[E122 Practice for Calculating Sample Size to Estimate, With Specified Precision, the Average for a Characteristic of a Lot or Process](#)

[E631 Terminology of Building Constructions](#)

### 3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of general terms related to building construction used in this test method, refer to Terminology [E631](#).

### 4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 This test method consists of bringing one side of the test specimen in contact with water and finding the time required for water vapor to pass through the specimen, as indicated by the development of color in an indicator powder consisting of a mixture of water-soluble dye, sugar, and starch. The sugar serves the two-fold purpose of masking the color of the particles of dye as long as they are dry, and of absorbing the transuded moisture and holding it in close proximity to the dye. The starch increases the stability of the mixture.

4.2 Five tests are made on each side of the test specimen and reported as two separate averages. If the material being tested is intended to be exposed to water on only one side then five tests are to be made on the side specified for water exposure.

### 5. Significance and Use

5.1 The dry indicator used in this test method is so strongly hygroscopic it will change color in a moderate- to high-humidity atmosphere without contacting liquid water. It will also change when in contact with liquid water.

5.2 This test method is of value for materials that come in contact with water on one face and where it is important to evaluate the length of time for water vapor to pass through the material.

### 6. Interferences

6.1 This test method is sometimes not applicable to materials containing large amounts of water-soluble components.

## 7. Apparatus

7.1 Any form of apparatus for applying the test may be used that fulfills the following conditions:

7.1.1 One surface of the specimen is wetted uniformly at the moment the count of time is begun,

7.1.2 The indicator on the opposite surface is continuously visible,

7.1.3 No moisture reaches the indicator except that which passes through the specimen from the wetted surface, and

7.1.4 No moisture that does so reach the indicator escapes from contact with it.

7.1.5 A float arrangement is one apparatus that fulfills the requirements of 7.1 and is made of a thin-walled aluminum pan approximately 5 in. (127 mm) in diameter and 1 in. (25.4 mm) high, with a hole 2 in. (50.8 mm) in diameter cut in the bottom. The surface is coated with paraffin or beeswax to make it more water repellent. The watch glass is clamped over the specimen by means of a wire-frame clamp hinged at one side and fastened under a spring at the opposite side.

7.1.6 Instead of using the float arrangement described in 7.1.5, it is also permissible to form a boat, by folding up the edges of the specimen or by dipping the four edges of the specimen in hot wax, and floating it on the surface of the water. If the specimen does not easily float on its own it can be supported by a hollow cylinder having the upper end barely submerged under the surface of the water in a suitable vessel. The dry indicator powder is applied to the top surface in accordance with Section 12 (with watch glass) or Section 13 (without watch glass) just before floating the specimen on the water.

7.2 *Shaker and Desiccator Assembly (Fig. 1) for the Indicator*—The shaker is prepared from a 10 mL screw-top vial by cutting away most of the metal of the flat portion of the top, fitting a 70 mesh (27.5 mesh/mm) wire screen inside the top, and screwing it back in place. The desiccator is made of a small wide-mouth bottle containing desiccant covered with a layer of glass wool. A hole is bored in the cork stopper just large enough to admit the shaker. The bottle remains on its side and the vial is inserted through the hole with the screened end inside. The assembly is kept in the usual type of laboratory desiccator when not in use.

7.3 *Watch glass*, 2 in. (50 mm) diameter.

7.4 *Stopwatch or electric timer*, reading to 1 s.

## 8. Reagents and Materials

8.1 *Desiccant*—Anhydrous calcium chloride, activated alumina, or silica gel.

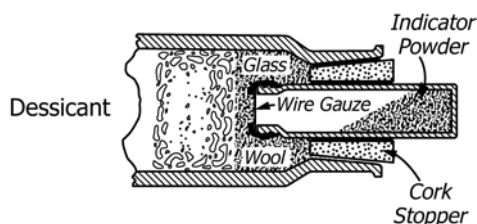


FIG. 1 Longitudinal Section Showing Construction of Desiccator and Shaker

8.2 *Indicator*—The water-transudation indicator is composed of pure, powdered cane sugar (do not use confectioner's sugar, which contains starch), pure soluble starch, and methyl violet dye (Color Index 680). Pass each ingredient separately through a No. 100 screen (39.4 mesh/mm), and completely dry it in a desiccator over a desiccant (see 8.1) before making the mixture. When dry, weigh and mix the following proportions by weight:

|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| Sugar          | 45 |
| Soluble starch | 5  |
| Dye            | 1  |

8.2.1 Mix the ingredients by screening repeatedly through a No. 60 screen (23.6 mesh/mm) until the mixture is uniform. Keep the indicator in a desiccator when it is not being used.

8.3 *Water*—Distilled or demineralized

## 9. Sampling, Test Specimens, and Test Units

9.1 For acceptance purposes, sample the lot of material in accordance with Practice D585.

9.2 When sampling for other purposes, Practice E122 may be used for an alternative.

9.3 From each test unit obtained in accordance with 9.1 or 9.2, cut ten test specimens, free from folds, wrinkles, or other blemishes not commonly inherent in the material. A convenient size is approximately 2.5 in. by 2.5 in. (63 mm by 63 mm).

9.4 Use a suitable code designation such as Side I and Side II, or when there is an obvious difference between the sides, such as Side I, coated, and Side II, uncoated. The side designated is that which is to be in contact with the water.

## 10. Preparation of Apparatus

10.1 The water on which the specimens are floated should be 73.4 °F ± 0.9 °F (23 °C ± 0.5 °C).

## 11. Conditioning

11.1 Condition and test the specimens in a standard atmosphere in accordance with Practice D685.

## 12. Procedure A

12.1 Place a test specimen on a level, smooth surface that will not affect the moisture content of the specimen, and sprinkle the indicator on the specimen by gently tapping the inverted shaker until a thin, even layer is formed, avoiding either a very sparse covering or one in which the powder is piled up. In the former case, the color change produced by too few dye particles may be insufficient to attract attention, unless they are exposed for a longer time than the proper end point. When the powder is placed on too thickly, the upper layer may obscure changes in the indicator in contact with the paper. Also, the greater total quantity of powder may require more time to change, since it would necessitate more moisture to affect all the dye. Handle the test specimen with care once the powder is applied, for jarring or excessive tipping may cause rearrangement of the particles of powder, which then tend to form in clusters, thus destroying the intimate contact and uniform thin layer that is desirable. As soon as the application of the layer of the indicator powder is completed, cover it with