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Standard Practice for Selecting Proportions for Normal, Heavyweight, and Mass Concrete

An ACI Standard

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Describes, with examples, two methods for selecting and adjusting proportions for normal weight concrete, both with and without chemical admixtures, pozzolanic, and slag materials. One method is based on an estimated weight of the concrete per unit volume; the other is based on calculations of the absolute volume occupied by the concrete ingredients. The procedures take into consideration the requirements for placeability, consistency, strength, and durability. Example calculations are shown for both methods, including adjustments based on the characteristics of the first trial batch.

The proportioning of heavyweight concrete for such purposes as radiation shielding and bridge counterweight structures is described in an appendix. This appendix uses the absolute volume method, which is generally accepted and is more convenient for heavyweight concrete.

There is also an appendix that provides information on the proportioning of mass concrete. The absolute volume method is used because of its general acceptance.

Keywords: absorption; admixtures; aggregates; blast-furnace slag; cementitious materials; concrete durability; concretes; consistency; durability; exposure; fine aggregates; fly ash; heavyweight aggregates; heavyweight concretes; mass concrete; mix proportioning; pozzolans; quality control; radiation shielding; silica fume; slump tests; volume; water-cement ratio; water-cementitious ratio; workability.

CONTENTS

* Members of Subcommittee A who prepared this standard. The committee acknowledges the significant contribution of William L. Barringer to the work of the subcommittee.

† Members of Subcommittee A who prepared the 1991 revision.

This standard supersedes ACI 211.1-89. It was revised by the Expedited Standardization procedure, effective Nov. 1, 1991. This revision incorporates provisions related to the use of the mineral admixture silica fume in concrete. Chapter 4 has been expanded to cover in detail the effects of the use of silica fume on the proportions of concrete mixtures. Editorial changes have also been made in Chapters 2 through 4, and Chapters 6 through 8.

CHAPTER 1 - SCOPE

1.1 This Standard Practice describes methods for selecting proportions for hydraulic cement concrete made with and without other cementitious materials and chemical admixtures. This concrete consists of normal and/or high-density aggregates (as distinguished from lightweight aggregates) with a workability suitable for usual cast-in-place construction (as distinguished from special mixtures for concrete products manufacture). Also included is a description of methods used for selecting proportions for mass concrete. Hydraulic cements referred to in this Standard Practice are portland cement (ASTM C 150) and blended cement (ASTM C 595). The Standard does not include proportioning with condensed silica fume.

1.2 The methods provide a first approximation of proportions intended to be checked by trial batches in the laboratory or field and adjusted, as necessary, to produce the desired characteristics of the concrete.

1.3 U.S. customary units are used in the main body of the text. Adaption for the metric system is provided in Appendix 1 and demonstrated in an example problem in Appendix 2.

1.4 Test methods mentioned in the text are listed in Appendix 3.

CHAPTER 2 -- INTRODUCTION

2.1 Concrete is composed principally of aggregates, a portland or blended cement, and water, and may contain other cementitious materials and/or chemical admixtures. It will contain some amount of entrapped air and may also contain purposely entrained air obtained by use of an admixture or air-entraining cement. Chemical admixtures are frequently used to accelerate, retard, improve workability, reduce mixing water requirements, increase strength, or alter other properties of the concrete (see ACI 212.3R). Depending upon the type and amount, certain cementitious materials such as fly ash, (see ACI 226.3R) natural pozzolans, ground granulated blast-furnace (GGBF) slag (see ACI 226.1R) and silica fume may be used in conjunction with portland or blended cement for economy or to provide specific properties such as reduced early heat of hydration, improved late-age strength development, or increased resistance to alkali-aggregate reaction and sulfate attack, decreased permeability, and resistance to the intrusion of aggressive solutions (See ACI 225R and ACI 226.1R).

2.2 The selection of concrete proportions involves a balance between economy and requirements for placeability, strength, durability, density, and appearance. The required characteristics are governed by the use to which the concrete will be put and by conditions expected to be encountered at the time of placement. These characteristics should be listed in the job specifications.

2.3 The ability to tailor concrete properties to job needs reflects technological developments that have taken place, for the most part, since the early 1900s. The use of water-cement ratio as a tool for estimating strength was recognized about 1918. The remarkable improvement in durability resulting from the entrainment of air was recognized in the early 1940s. These two significant developments in concrete technology have been augmented by extensive research and development in many related areas, including the use of admixtures to counteract possible deficiencies, develop special properties, or achieve economy (ACI 212.2R). It is beyond the scope of this discussion to review the theories of concrete proportioning that have provided the background and sound technical basis for the relatively simple methods of this Standard Practice. More detailed information can be obtained from the list of references in Chapter 8.

2.4 Proportions calculated by any method must always be considered subject to revision on the basis of experience with trial batches. Depending on the circumstances, the trial mixtures may be prepared in a laboratory, or, perhaps preferably, as full-size field batches. The latter procedure, when feasible, avoids possible pitfalls of assuming that data from small batches mixed in a laboratory environment will predict performance under field conditions. When using maximum-size aggregates larger than 2 in., laboratory trial batches should be verified and adjusted in the field using mixes of the size and type to be used during construction. Trial batch procedures and background testing are described in Appendix 3.

2.5 Frequently, existing concrete proportions not containing chemical admixtures and/or materials other than hydraulic cement are reproportioned to include these materials or a different cement. The performance of the reproportioned concrete should be verified by trial batches in the laboratory or field.

CHAPTER 3 -- BASIC RELATIONSHIP

3.1 Concrete proportions must be selected to provide necessary placeability, density, strength, and durability for the particular application. In addition, when mass concrete is being proportioned, consideration must be given to generation of heat. Well-established relationships governing these properties are discussed next.

3.2 *Placeability* -- Placeability (including satisfactory finishing properties) encompasses traits loosely accumulated in the terms "workability" and "consistency." For the purpose of this discussion, workability is considered to be that property of concrete that determines its capacity to be placed and consolidated properly and to be finished without harmful segregation. It embodies such concepts as moldability, cohesiveness, and compactability. Workability is affected by: the grading, particle shape, and proportions of aggregate; the amount and qualities of cement and other cementitious materials; the presence of entrained air and chemical admixtures; and the consistency of the mixture. Procedures in this Standard Practice permit these factors to be taken into account to achieve satisfactory placeability economically.

3.3 *Consistency* -- Loosely defined, consistency is the relative mobility of the concrete mixture. It is measured in terms of slump -- the higher the slump the more mobile the mixture -- and it affects the ease with which the concrete will flow during placement. It is related to but not synonymous with workability. In properly proportioned concrete, the unit water content required to produce a given slump will depend on several factors. Water requirement increases as aggregates become more angular and rough textured (but this disadvantage may be offset by improvements in other characteristics such as bond to cement paste). Required mixing water decreases as the maximum size of well-graded aggregate is increased. It also decreases with the entrainment of air. Mixing water requirements usually are reduced significantly by certain chemical water-reducing admixtures.

3.4 *Strength* -- Although strength is an important characteristic of concrete, other characteristics such as durability, permeability, and wear resistance are often equally or more important. Strength at the age of 28 days is frequently used as a parameter for the structural design, concrete proportioning, and evaluation of concrete. These may be related to strength in a general way, but are also affected by factors not significantly associated with strength. In mass concrete, mixtures are generally proportioned to provide the design strength at an age greater than 28 days. However, proportioning of mass concrete should also provide for adequate early strength as may be necessary for form removal and form anchorage.

3.5 *Water-cement or water-cementitious ratio [w/c or w/(c + p)]* -- For a given set of materials and conditions, concrete strength is determined by the net quantity of water used per unit quantity of cement or total cementitious materials. The net water content excludes water absorbed by the aggregates. Differences in strength for a given water-cement ratio *w/c* or water-cementitious materials ratio *w/(c + p)* may result from changes in: maximum size of aggregate; grading, surface texture, shape, strength, and stiffness of aggregate particles; differences in cement types and sources; air content; and the use of chemical admixtures that affect the cement hydration process or develop cementitious properties themselves. To the extent that these effects are predictable in the general sense, they are taken into account in this Standard Practice. In view of their number and complexity, it should be obvious that accurate predictions of strength must be based on trial batches or experience with the materials to be used.

3.6 *Durability* -- Concrete must be able to endure those exposures that may deprive it of its serviceability -- freezing and thawing, wetting and drying, heating and cooling, chemicals, deicing agents, and the like. Resistance to some of these may be enhanced by use of special ingredients: low-alkali cement, pozzolans, GGBF slag, silica fume, or aggregate selected to prevent harmful expansion to the alkali-aggregate reaction that occurs in some areas when concrete is exposed in a moist environment; sulfate-resisting cement, GGBF slag, silica fume, or other pozzolans for concrete exposed to seawater or sulfate-bearing soils; or aggregate composed of hard minerals and free of excessive soft particles where resistance to surface abrasion is required Use of low water-cement or cementitious materials ratio *[w/c or w/(c + p)]* will prolong the life of concrete by reducing the penetration of aggressive liquids. Resistance to severe weathering, particularly freezing and thawing, and to salts used for ice removal is greatly improved by incorporation of a proper distribution of entrained air. Entrained air should be used in all exposed concrete in climates where freezing occurs. (See ACI 201.2R for further details).

3.7 *Density* -- For certain applications, concrete may be used primarily for its weight characteristic. Examples of applications are counterweights on lift bridges, weights for sinking oil pipelines under water, shielding from radiation, and insulation from sound. By using special aggregates, placeable concrete of densities as high as 350 lb/ft^3 can be obtained--see Appendix 4.

3.8 *Generation of heat* -- A major concern in proportioning mass concrete is the size and shape of the completed structure or portion thereof. Concrete placements large enough to require that measures be taken to control the generation of heat and resultant volume change within the mass will require consideration of temperature control measures. As a rough guide, hydration of cement will generate a concrete temperature rise of 10 to 15 F per 100 lb of portland $cement/yd^3$ in 18 to 72 hours. If the temperature rise of the concrete mass is not held to a minimum and the heat is allowed to dissipate at a reasonable rate, or if the concrete is subjected to severe temperature differential or thermal gradient, cracking is likely to occur. Temperature control measures can include a relatively low initial placing temperature, reduced quantities of cementitious materials, circulation of chilled water, and, at times, insulation of concrete surfaces as may be required to adjust for these various concrete conditions and exposures. It should be emphasized that mass concrete is not necessarily large-aggregate concrete and that concern about generation of an excessive amount of heat in concrete is not confined to massive dam or foundation structures. Many large structural elements may be massive enough that heat generation should be considered, particularly when the minimum cross-sectional dimensions of a solid concrete member approach or exceed 2 to 3 ft or when cement contents above 600 lb/yd^3 are being used.

CHAPTER 4--EFFECTS OF CHEMICAL ADMIXTURES, POZZOLANIC, AND OTHER MATERIALS ON CONCRETE PROPORTIONS

4.1 *Admixtures* -- By definition (ACI 116R), an admixture is "a material other than water, aggregates, hydraulic cement, and fiber reinforcement used as an ingredient of concrete or mortar and added to the batch immediately before or during its mixing." Consequently, the term embraces an extremely broad field of materials and products, some of which are widely used while others have limited application. Because of this, this Standard Practice is restricted to the effects on concrete proportioning of air-entraining admixtures, chemical admixtures, fly ashes, natural pozzolans, and ground granulated blast-furnace slags (GGBF slag).

4.2 *Air-entraining admixture* -- Air-entrained concrete is almost always achieved through the use of an air-entraining admixture, ASTM C 260, as opposed to the earlier practice in which an air-entraining additive is interground with the cement. The use of an air-entraining admixture gives the concrete producer the flexibility to adjust the entrained air content to compensate for the many conditions affecting the amount of air entrained in concrete, such as: characteristics of aggregates, nature and proportions of constituents of the concrete admixtures, type and duration of mixing, consistency, temperature, cement fineness and chemistry, use of other cementitious materials or chemical admixtures, etc. Because of the lubrication effect of the entrained air bubbles on the mixture and because of the size and grading of the air voids, air-entrained concrete usually contains up to 10 percent less water than non-air-entrained concrete of equal slump. This reduction in the volume of mixing water as well as the volume of entrained and entrapped air must be considered in proportioning.

4.3 *Chemical admixtures* -- Since strength and other important concrete qualities such as durability, shrinkage, and cracking are related to the total water content and the *w/c* or *w*/(*c* + *p*), water-reducing admixtures are often used to improve concrete quality. Further, since less cement can be used with reduced water content to achieve the same *w/c* or w/(c + p) or strength, water-reducing and set-controlling admixtures are used widely for reasons of economy (ACI 212.2R).

Chemical admixtures conforming to ASTM C 494**,** Types A through G, are of many formulations and their purpose purposes for use in concrete are as follows:

Type A -- Water-reducing
Type B -- Retarding
Type C -- Accelerating
Type D -- Water-reducing and retarding
Type E -- Water-reducing, and accelerating
Type F -- Water-reducing, high-range
Type G -- Water-reducing, high-range, and retarding

The manufacturer or manufacturer's literature should be consulted to determine the required dosage rate for each specific chemical admixture or combination of admixtures. Chemical admixtures have tendencies, when used in large doses, to induce strong side-effects such as excessive retardation and, possibly, increased air entrainment, in accordance with ASTM C 1017. Types A, B, and D, when used by themselves, are generally used in small doses (2 to 7 oz/100 lb of cementitious materials), so the water added to the mixture in the form of the admixture itself can be ignored. Types C, E, F, and G are most often used in large quantities (10 to 90 oz/100 lb of cementitious materials) so their water content should be taken into account when calculating the total unit water content and the *w/c or w/(c + p)*. When Types A, B, and D admixtures are used at higher than normal dosage rates in combination or in an admixture system with an accelerating admixture (Type C or E), their water content should also be taken into account.

Although chemical admixtures are of many formulations, their effect on water demand at recommended dosages is governed by the requirements of ASTM C 494. Recommended dosage rates are normally established by the manufacturer of the admixture or by the user after extensive tests. When used at normal dosage rates, Type A water-reducing, Type D water-reducing and retarding, and Type E water-reducing and accelerating admixtures ordinarily reduce mixing-water requirements 5 to 8 percent, while Type F water-reducing, high-range, and Type G water-reducing, high-range, and retarding admixtures reduce water requirements 12 to 25 percent or more. Types F and G water-reducing, high-range admixtures (HRWR) are often called "superplasticizers."

High-range, water-reducing admixtures are often used to produce flowing concrete with slumps between about $7^{1}/_{2}$ or more with no increase in water demand other than that contained in the admixture itself. Types A, B, or D admixtures at high dosage rates, in combination with Types C or E (for acceleration), may also be used to produce the same effect. When flowing concrete is so produced, it is sometimes possible to increase the amount of coarse aggregate to take advantage of the fluidity of the concrete to flow into place in constricted areas of heavy reinforcement. Flowing concrete has a tendency to segregate; therefore, care must be taken to achieve a proper volume of mortar in the concrete required for cohesion without making the concrete undesirably sticky.

ASTM C 494 lists seven types of chemical admixtures as to their expected performance in concrete. It does not classify chemical admixtures as to their composition. ACI 212.2R lists five general classes of materials used to formulate most water-reducing, set-controlling chemical admixtures. This report, as well as ACI 301 and ACI 318, should be reviewed to determine when restrictions should be