



Designation: D8237 – 21

Standard Test Method for Determining Fatigue Failure of Asphalt-Aggregate Mixtures with the Four-Point Beam Fatigue Device¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D8237; 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.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method provides a procedure for determining a fatigue curve that is developed using three or more strain levels. The resulting data can be used in the fatigue models for mechanistic-empirical pavement design (that is, Pavement ME). Failure points are determined for estimating the fatigue life of 380 mm long by 50 mm thick by 63 mm in breadth (width) asphalt mixture beam (rectangular prism) specimens sawed from laboratory or field-compacted asphalt mixture, which are subjected to repeated flexural bending.

1.2 The largest nominal maximum aggregate size (NMAS) recommended for beams 50 mm thick is 19 mm. Beams made with an NMAS greater than 19 mm might significantly interfere with the material response, thereby affecting the repeatability of the test.

1.3 The text of this standard references notes and footnotes which provide explanatory material. These notes and footnotes (excluding those in tables and figures) shall not be considered as requirements of the standard.

1.4 *Units*—The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard, with the exception of degrees ($^{\circ}$) where angle is specified in accordance with [IEEE/ASTM SI 10](#).

1.5 *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.*

1.6 *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*:²

[D8 Terminology Relating to Materials for Roads and Pavements](#)

[D75/D75M Practice for Sampling Aggregates](#)

[D140/D140M Practice for Sampling Asphalt Materials](#)

[D979/D979M Practice for Sampling Bituminous Paving Mixtures](#)

[D2041/D2041M Test Method for Theoretical Maximum Specific Gravity and Density of Asphalt Mixtures](#)

[D2726/D2726M Test Method for Bulk Specific Gravity and Density of Non-Absorptive Compacted Asphalt Mixtures](#)

[D3203/D3203M Test Method for Percent Air Voids in Compacted Asphalt Mixtures](#)

[D3549/D3549M Test Method for Thickness or Height of Compacted Asphalt Mixture Specimens](#)

[D3666 Specification for Minimum Requirements for Agencies Testing and Inspecting Road and Paving Materials](#)

[D5361/D5361M Practice for Sampling Compacted Asphalt Mixtures for Laboratory Testing](#)

[D7981 Practice for Compaction of Prismatic Asphalt Specimens by Means of the Shear Box Compactor](#)

[D8079 Practice for Preparation of Compacted Slab Asphalt Mix Samples Using a Segmented Rolling Compactor](#)

[E4 Practices for Force Verification of Testing Machines](#)

[E29 Practice for Using Significant Digits in Test Data to Determine Conformance with Specifications](#)

[E2309/E2309M Practices for Verification of Displacement Measuring Systems and Devices Used in Material Testing Machines](#)

[IEEE/ASTM SI 10 American National Standard for Metric Practice](#)

2.2 *AASHTO Standard*:³

[R 30 Standard Practice for Mixture Conditioning of Hot-Mix Asphalt \(HMA\)](#)

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D04 on Road and Paving Materials and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D04.26 on Fundamental/Mechanistic Tests.

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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 Available from American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), 444 N. Capitol St., NW, Suite 249, Washington, DC 20001, <http://www.transportation.org>.

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

- 3.1.1 σ_{p-p} , n —peak-to-peak stress amplitude at load cycle i .
- 3.1.2 σ_p , n —maximum tensile stress at the fiber of the beam.
- 3.1.3 ε_{p-p} , n —peak-to-peak tensile strain at load cycle i .
- 3.1.4 ε_p , n —maximum tensile strain at the bottom fiber of the beam.
- 3.1.5 δ_{p-p} , n —peak-to-peak displacement as determined in Fig. 1.
- 3.1.6 S , n —flexural beam stiffness, which is the stress divided by the strain.
- 3.1.7 S_p , n —the initial beam stiffness determined at 50 load cycles.
- 3.1.8 *failure point*, n —the number of cycles to failure, N_f , which corresponds to the maximum or peak normalized beam stiffness \times normalized cycles when plotted versus number of cycles (9.9).
- 3.1.9 *normalized stiffness \times normalized cycles*, n —see Rowe and Bouldin (1).⁴

3.2 For definitions of other terms used in this standard, refer to Terminology D8.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 The four-point flexural bending test method is conducted on compacted beam specimens to evaluate the fatigue properties of viscoelastic asphalt mixtures using a fixed reference point bending beam fixture. A cyclic sinusoidal loading pattern is initiated having no rest periods from the start

location. A fully executed peak-to-peak displacement (δ_{p-p}) at the articulating H-frame third points of the beam is induced. The outer third points are held in an articulating fixed position about the neutral axis of the beam. The frequency rate has a default frequency of 10 Hertz (Hz) and a test temperature of 20 °C. This produces a constant bending moment over the center third ($L/3$, length between outside clamps divided by 3) span of 119 mm \pm 0.5 mm (distance may vary between manufacturers; check with manufacturers' specifications) between the H-frame contact points on the beam specimen. The level of desired strain is pre-calculated and an input value for the equipment peak-to-peak deflection. The peak-to-peak deflection at mid-length position ($L/2$, length between outside frames divided by 2) of a beam specimen is regulated by the closed-loop control system measured from the mid-height position (neutral axis). The peak-to-peak deflection is measured relative to a fixed reference point located at the outer articulating fixed position.

NOTE 1—Caution should be applied when using frequencies above 10 Hz, Pronk (2).

5. Significance and Use

5.1 The laboratory fatigue life determined by this standard for beam specimens has been used to estimate the fatigue life of asphalt mixture pavement layers under repeated traffic loading. Although the field performance of asphalt mixtures is impacted by many factors (traffic variation, loading rate, and wander; climate variation; rest periods between loads; aging; etc.), it has been more accurately predicted when laboratory properties are known along with an estimate of the strain level induced at the layer depth by the traffic wheel load traveling over the pavement.

NOTE 2—The quality of the results produced by this standard are

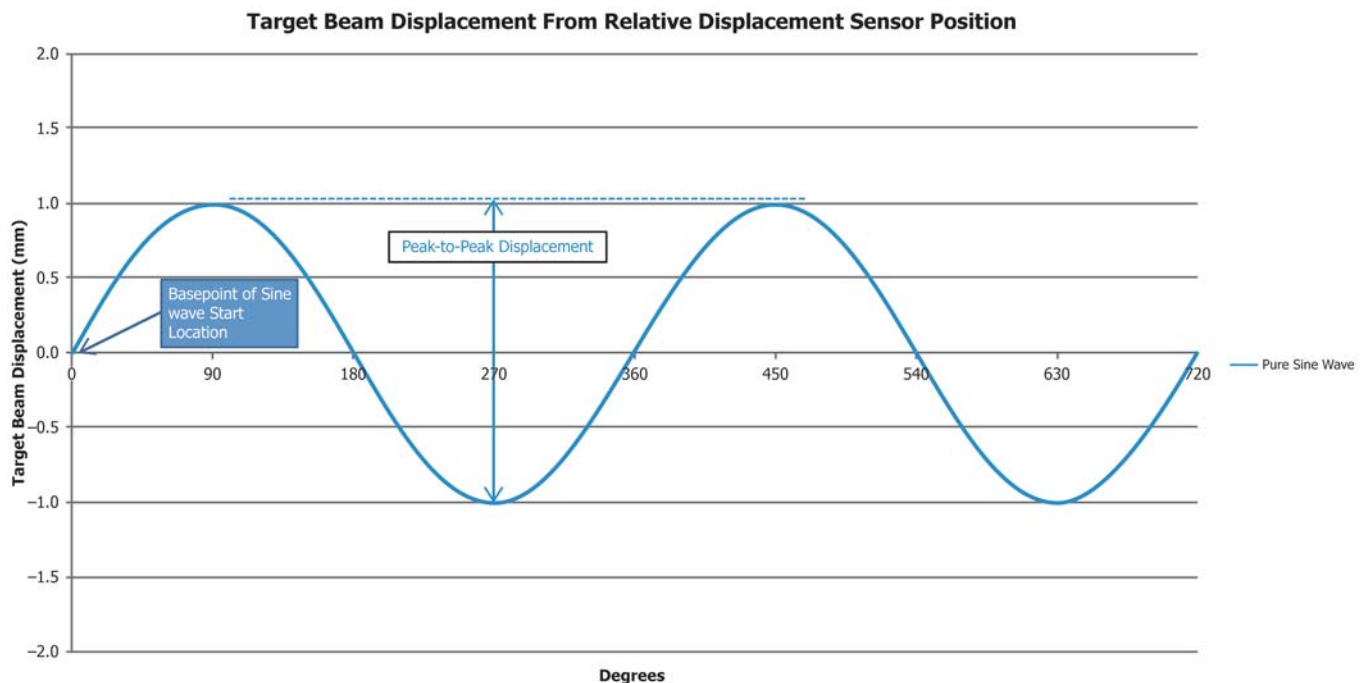


FIG. 1 Illustration of Actuator Response of Repeated Sinusoidal Peak-to-Peak Deflection

dependent on the competence of the personnel performing the procedure and the capability, calibration, and maintenance of the equipment used. Agencies that meet the criteria of Specification **D3666** are generally considered capable of competent and objective testing, sampling, inspection, etc. Users of this standard are cautioned that compliance with Specification **D3666** alone does not completely ensure reliable results. Reliable results depend on many factors; following the suggestions of Specification **D3666** or some similar acceptable guideline provides a means of evaluating and controlling some of those factors.

6. Apparatus

6.1 Test System—The test system shall consist of a load frame, an environmental chamber (temperature control system), and a closed-loop control and data acquisition system. The test system shall include a closed-loop, computer-controlled loading component which, during each load cycle in response to commands from the data processing and control component, adjusts and applies a load such that the specimen experiences a constant level of controlled maximum deflection (and resulting strain) during each load cycle. The test system shall meet the minimum requirements specified in **Table 1**.

NOTE 3—Test system unit calibrations are performed in mm for displacement and kN for load measurements (Practices **E4** and **E2309/E2309M**). Unit conversions will need to be made when applying to calculations in Section 10.

6.1.1 Loading Device—The loading device shall be capable of: (1) providing repeated sinusoidal loading at a frequency range of 5 to 25 Hz, and (2) subjecting specimens to four-point bending with free rotation and horizontal translation at all clamped load and reaction points as shown in **Figs. 2 and 3**. Floating reference point bending beam fixtures are not recognized by this standard.

NOTE 4—The fundamental equations are more viable with dual controlling displacement sensors. The on-specimen displacement sensor controls the peak-to-peak displacement for the waveform loading of the maximum deflection value at the L/2 location, and the frame-mounted displacement sensor controls the H-frame point of origin location. An even better approach is the use of four displacement sensors. Two dual controlling sensors, as listed previously in this note, and two recording the L/6 and 5L/6 locations to better understand the deflections between each of the frames.

6.1.2 Environmental Chamber (Temperature Control System)—The environmental chamber shall enclose the entire

specimen and maintain the specimen at the default test temperature of 20 °C. The temperature shall be within ± 0.5 °C throughout the conditioning and testing times.

NOTE 5—Replacing an incandescent, florescent, or halogen light bulb with light emitting diode (LED) for your environmental chamber reduces the heat signature and improves the chamber's ability to control within ± 0.5 °C. Globe-style bulb design improves illumination of fixture and inside of chamber.

6.1.3 Control and Data Acquisition System—During each load cycle, the control and data acquisition system shall be capable of measuring the peak-to-peak displacement of the beam specimen, and adjusting the load applied by the loading device such that the specimen experiences a constant level of displacement on each load cycle. In addition, it shall be capable of recording load cycles, applied loads, beam displacements, and temperature. Minimum data capture rate and sampling intervals are listed in **Table 2**. The minimum number of data samples for each load cycle is 200.

6.2 Miscellaneous Apparatus and Materials—Means or tools for targeting the displacement sensor to the neutral axis of the specimen and proper glue (cyanoacrylate) are required for attaching the target to the specimen. A saw suitable for cutting the beams with parallel faces to the proper dimensions of 380 mm \pm 3 mm in length, 50 mm \pm 2 mm in height, and 63 mm \pm 2 mm in breadth (width). A clamp alignment gauge is required for setting the proper clamp spacing between the frames, ensuring parallelism and perpendicularity. A rigid material beam having the dimensions specified in **6.2** and tolerance of 0.254 mm across the beam (measured using a straightedge and feeler gauge) will be the required beam gauge for setting the proper clamping height. Yearly verification is required for the beam gauge to be in compliance.

NOTE 6—Hard, high-strength 7075 aluminum is found to be adequate for the beam gauge. The aluminum bar off the shelf will require being cut to a length of 380 mm (McMaster – Carr Item #9055K31).

7. Hazards

7.1 Observe standard laboratory safety precautions when preparing and testing asphalt mixture specimens.

8. Sampling and Test Specimen Preparation

8.1 Laboratory-Mixed and Compacted Specimens—Sample asphalt binder in accordance with Practice **D140/D140M**, and sample aggregate in accordance with Practice **D75/D75M**. If a complete fatigue curve is desired, prepare six to nine replicate asphalt mixture beam specimens, compacted in accordance with Practice **D7981** or **D8079**, or active AASHTO compaction standards for slab(s) or beam(s). Otherwise, prepare as many specimens as desired for individual beam test results. Laboratory-prepared mixtures are conditioned with a short-term oven aging (STOA) process, such as defined in Section 7.2 of AASHTO R 30 (condition loose mixture for 4 h at 135 °C). Determine the theoretical maximum specific gravity in accordance with Test Method **D2041/D2041M**. Determine the bulk specific gravity in accordance with Test Method **D2726/D2726M**. Calculate the percent air voids in accordance with Test Method **D3203/D3203M**. Test at least six replicate asphalt mixture beam specimens at different strain levels in

TABLE 1 Test System Minimum Requirements

Load Measurement and Control	Range: ± 5 kN Resolution: 0.005 N Accuracy: 0.01 N
Displacement Measurement and Control	Range: ± 2.5 mm Resolution: 2.5 μ m Accuracy: 5 μ m
Frequency Measurement and Control	Range: 5 to 25 Hz Resolution: 0.005 Hz Accuracy: 0.01 Hz
Temperature Measurement and Control	Range: 5 to 25 °C Resolution: 0.25 °C Accuracy: ± 0.5 °C
Displacement Sensor	Linear variable differential transducer (LVDT), extensometer, or similar device