



Standard Specification for Chromium Diffusion Coating Applied by Pack Cementation Process¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This specification covers the requirements for chromium diffusion of metals by the pack cementation method. Pack diffusion employs the chemical vapor deposition of a metal which is subsequently diffused into the surface of a substrate at high temperature. The material to be coated (substrate) is immersed or suspended in a powder containing chromium (source), a halide salt (activator), and an inert diluent such as alumina (filler). When the mixture is heated, the activator reacts to produce an atmosphere of chromium halides which transfers chromium to the substrate for subsequent diffusion. The chromium-rich surface enhances corrosion, thermal stability, and wear-resistant properties.

1.2 *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.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

- [B374 Terminology Relating to Electroplating](#)
- [B487 Test Method for Measurement of Metal and Oxide Coating Thickness by Microscopical Examination of Cross Section](#)
- [B602 Test Method for Attribute Sampling of Metallic and Inorganic Coatings](#)
- [B697 Guide for Selection of Sampling Plans for Inspection of Electrodeposited Metallic and Inorganic Coatings](#)
- [B762 Test Method of Variables Sampling of Metallic and Inorganic Coatings](#)
- [C664 Test Methods for Thickness of Diffusion Coating](#)

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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.

[D3951 Practice for Commercial Packaging](#)

[E766 Practice for Calibrating the Magnification of a Scanning Electron Microscope](#)

[E1077 Test Methods for Estimating the Depth of Decarburization of Steel Specimens](#)

[F1330 Guide for Metallic Abrasive Blasting to Descale the Interior of Pipe](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions used in this specification are in accordance with Terminology [B374](#).

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 *diffusion coating*—a diffusion coating is one produced by causing an element to react with or diffuse into, or both, the surface of a metallic substrate, thus, chemically altering the surface of the substrate.

3.2.2 *retorts*—containers in which powder and parts are packed for processing. They can be constructed of carbon, stainless, or high alloys and fabricated in all shapes and sizes to accommodate parts being processed.

3.2.3 *significant surface*—areas that are essential to the serviceability or function of the article. These surfaces must be identified on a drawing or marked-up sample of product. Areas can fall into one of three categories as follows:

3.2.4 *coating required*—these surfaces must be in accordance with all quality requirements of this specification.

3.2.5 *no coating required*—these surfaces are areas where no coating is allowed due to a number of reasons including dimensional, fabrication, and welding, as well as others. Materials used for masking are commercially available.

3.2.6 *optional*—these surfaces do not require coating, but at the same time do not require masking.

4. Classification

4.1 There are four classes of chromium diffusion defined by base (basis) metal category.

4.1.1 *Class I*—Carbon steel.

4.1.2 *Class II*—Low-alloy steels.

4.1.3 *Class III*—Stainless steels.

4.1.4 *Class IV*—Nickel-based alloys.

5. Ordering Information

5.1 In order to make the application of this specification complete, the purchaser shall supply the following information to the vendor through a purchase order and drawings:

5.1.1 Title, ASTM designation number, and date of issue of this specification.

5.1.2 Deposit by classification (see Section 4).

5.1.3 Composition and metallurgical condition of substrate to be coated.

5.1.4 Location of significant surfaces (see 3.2.3).

5.1.5 Samples for destructive metallurgical test (see 8.1).

5.1.6 Any post heat treatment required.

5.1.7 Acceptance inspection procedure to be used (see Section 9).

5.1.8 Any requirement for certification (see Section 11).

6. Processing Requirements

6.1 *Substrate Preparation*—The metal to be chromized shall be free of flaws and defects that will be detrimental to the coating. Thorough cleaning is essential to ensure satisfactory diffusion. Materials used for cleaning should not damage the base metal. Oils, dirt, grease, and stains must be removed. When blasting is also required, use aluminum oxide (90 to 220 mesh) at 60 to 80 psi from 4 to 6 in. standoff. (Refer to Guide F1330.)

6.2 Materials:

6.2.1 *Masteralloy with 50 to 100 % Pure Chromium*—Sold under a number of trade names, in various mesh sizes. Percentage in mix depends on material being processed.

6.2.2 *Activator*—Most commonly used is ammonium chloride, but many others are available. Percentage in mix depends on material and type of activity.

6.2.3 *Inert Filler*—Aluminum oxide or calcined alumina is used and commercially available in numerous mesh sizes. Percentage in mix depends on material being processed and mesh size being used.

NOTE 1—It is important that both proper equipment is used and time established to guarantee uniform blend of pack mix.

NOTE 2—It is common practice to rejuvenate used mixes by addition of coating elements, alloys, and activators. Chemical analysis of used mixes facilitates control of critical constituents. Disposal of used mixes must be performed in compliance with environmental regulations.

6.3 *Loading*—Place pack mix and parts in retorts. Retort size is limited by dimensions of furnace used for processing.

6.4 *Furnace Cycle*—Parts are heated to a temperature between 1900 and 2400°F depending on base material and pack mix and held for amount of time needed to produce desired depth of diffusion.

NOTE 3—Due to the high temperature of the process, a positive pressure of an inert gas, usually argon, must be maintained in retorts throughout the entire furnace cycle.

6.5 *Post-Cleaning*—Retorts should be allowed to cool sufficiently before opening. When parts are removed from retorts, residual pack mix is removed from surfaces by a supplier-approved method.

6.6 *Post-Straightening*—Long tubes may have distortion due to the high temperature of process. Use rotary straightener or hydraulic press to restore straightness and ovality.

6.7 *Visual Inspection*—Inspect in accordance with 7.3.

6.8 *Marking and Packaging*—To be defined by the purchaser in the purchase order. Parts processed for the U.S. government and military, including subcontract, shall be packaged in accordance with Practice D3951.

7. Coating Requirements

7.1 *Diffusion Thickness*—The following are minimums for the different classes of materials based on standard process parameters. Thicker coatings require special processing and must be called out for in the purchase order if required.

Class	Minimum, in.
Class I (carbon)	0.003
Class II (low alloys)	0.003
Class III (stainless steels)	0.002
Class IV (nickel base alloys)	0.001

7.2 *Decarburization*—For certain Class I and Class II materials, the maximum depth of decarburization to be defined by the purchaser.

7.3 *Chromium Content*—The outer 15 % of coating shall contain a minimum of 20 % (by weight) chromium.

7.4 *Appearance*—The diffusion zone shall be nonporous and adherent to the base metal and shall have a uniform surface free from objectionable imperfections. Minor variations in color and surface appearance shall be considered acceptable, providing the requirements of 7.1 and 7.2 are met (see 8.7).

8. Test Methods

8.1 Special Test Specimens:

8.1.1 The permission or the requirements to use special test specimens, the number to be used, the material from which they are to be made, and their shape and size shall be stated by the purchaser.

NOTE 4—Test specimens are often used to represent coated articles in a test if these articles are of a size, shape, or material that is not suitable for the test, or if it is preferred not to submit articles to a destructive test because, for example, the articles are expensive or few in number. The specimen should duplicate the characteristics of the article that influence the property being tested.

8.1.2 Special test specimens used to represent articles in an adhesion, weldability, corrosion resistance, or appearance test shall be made of the same material, shall be in the same metallurgical condition, and shall have the same surface condition as the articles they represent, and they shall be placed and processed in the production lot along with the articles they represent.

8.2 *Thickness*—Perform the destructive test on samples in accordance with Test Methods C664. Read and record the thickness of samples in accordance with Test Method B487.

8.3 *Decarburization*—Determined by metallographic examination in accordance with Test Method E1077.

8.4 *Chromium Content*—Perform by scanning electron microscope (refer to Practice E766).

8.5 *Mechanical Properties* (if required) —Tensile testing on samples from each process batch.

8.6 *Hardness Testing* (if required) —Macrohardness and microhardness testing are both acceptable means.

8.7 *Appearance*—The coating can be examined at up to 5× magnification for conformance to appearance requirements.

9. Sampling

9.1 The sampling plan used for inspection of a quantity of coated articles shall be agreed upon by the purchaser and the supplier.

NOTE 5—Usually, when a collection of coated articles, the inspection lot (9.2), is examined for compliance with the requirements placed on the coating, a relatively small number of the articles, the sample, is selected at random and is inspected. The inspection lot is then classified as complying or not complying with the requirements based on the results of the inspection of the sample. The size of the sample and the criteria of compliance are determined by the application of statistics. This procedure is known as sampling inspection. Three standards, Test Method B602, Guide B697, and Method B762, contain sampling plans that are designed for the sampling inspection of coatings.

Test Method B602 contains four sampling plans, three for use with tests that are nondestructive and one for tests that are destructive. The buyer and seller may agree on the plan or plans to be used. If they do not, Test Method B602 designates the plan to be used.

Guide B697 provides a large number of plans and also gives guidance in the selection of a plan. When Guide B697 is specified, the buyer and the seller need to agree on the plan to be used.

Method B762 can be used only for coating requirements that have a numerical limit, such as a coating thickness. The test must yield a numerical value, and certain statistical requirements must be met. Method B762 contains several plans and also gives instructions for designating plans to meet special needs. The buyer and the seller may agree on the plan or plans to be used. If they do not, Method B762 designates the plan to be used.

NOTE 6—When both destructive and nondestructive tests exist for the measurement of a characteristic, the purchaser needs to state which one is to be used so that the proper sampling plan is selected. A test may destroy the coating, but in a noncritical area; or, although it may destroy the

coating, a tested part may be reclaimed by stripping and recoating. The purchaser needs to state whether the test is to be considered destructive or nondestructive.

9.2 An inspection lot shall be defined as a collection of coated articles of the same kind that have been produced to the same specifications, coated by a single supplier at one time or approximately the same time under essentially identical conditions, and that are submitted for acceptance or rejection as a group.

9.3 If special test specimens are used to represent the coated articles in a test, the number used shall be that required in 8.1.1.

10. Rejection and Rehearing

10.1 Parts that fail to conform to the requirements of this specification may be rejected. Rejection shall be reported to the producer promptly in writing. In the case of dissatisfaction with the results of a test, the producer may make a claim for a rehearing. Coatings that show imperfections may be rejected.

11. Certification

11.1 When specified in the purchase order or contract, the purchaser shall be furnished with certifications that the samples representing each lot have been either tested or inspected as directed by this specification and the requirements have been met. When specified in the purchase order or contract, a report of the test results must be furnished.

12. Record Retention

12.1 The seller is to maintain all job records and samples for a period of two years unless the purchaser requires a longer period.

13. Keywords

13.1 chromizing; corrosion-resistant coatings; diffusion coating; pack cementation

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