



# Standard Test Method for CBR (California Bearing Ratio) of Soils in Place<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D4429; 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 California Bearing Ratio (CBR) of soil tested in place by the penetration load of the soil. This test method covers the evaluation of the relative quality of subgrade soils, but is applicable to subbase and some base-course materials. This test method is designed to test in-situ materials and corresponds to Test Method [D1883](#).

1.2 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.

1.2.1 In the engineering profession it is customary to use units representing both mass and force interchangeably, unless dynamic calculations are involved. This implicitly combines two separate systems of units, that is, the absolute system and the gravitational system. It is scientifically undesirable to combine the use of two separate sets of inch-pound units within a single standard. This test method has been written using the gravitational system of units when dealing with the inch-pound system. In this system, the pound (lbf) represents a unit of force (weight). However, conversions are given in the SI System. The use of balances or scales recording pounds of mass (lbm), or the recording of density in lbm/ft<sup>3</sup> should not be regarded as nonconformance with this test method.

1.3 All observed and calculated values shall conform to the guidelines for significant digits and rounding established in Practice [D6026](#), unless superseded by this standard.

1.3.1 The procedures used to specify how data are collected/recorded or calculated in this standard are regarded as the industry standard. In addition they are representative of the significant digits that generally should be retained. The procedures used do not consider material variation, purpose for

obtaining the data, special purpose studies, or any consideration for the user's objectives; and it is common practice to increase or reduce significant digit of reported data to be commensurate with these considerations. It is beyond the scope of this standard to consider significant digits used in analysis methods or engineering design.

1.4 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety problems, 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:<sup>2</sup>

- [D653 Terminology Relating to Soil, Rock, and Contained Fluids](#)
- [D1556 Test Method for Density and Unit Weight of Soil in Place by Sand-Cone Method](#)
- [D1883 Test Method for CBR \(California Bearing Ratio\) of Laboratory-Compacted Soils](#)
- [D2167 Test Method for Density and Unit Weight of Soil in Place by the Rubber Balloon Method](#)
- [D2216 Test Methods for Laboratory Determination of Water \(Moisture\) Content of Soil and Rock by Mass](#)
- [D2937 Test Method for Density of Soil in Place by the Drive-Cylinder Method](#)
- [D3740 Practice for Minimum Requirements for Agencies Engaged in Testing and/or Inspection of Soil and Rock as Used in Engineering Design and Construction](#)
- [D6026 Practice for Using Significant Digits in Geotechnical Data](#)
- [D6780 Test Method for Water Content and Density of Soil in Place by Time Domain Reflectometry \(TDR\)](#)
- [D6938 Test Method for In-Place Density and Water Content of Soil and Soil-Aggregate by Nuclear Methods \(Shallow Depth\)](#)

<sup>1</sup> This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D18](#) on Soil and Rock and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D18.08](#) on Special and Construction Control Tests.

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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.

\*A Summary of Changes section appears at the end of this standard

### 3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—All definitions are in accordance with Terminology **D653**.

### 4. Significance and Use

4.1 Field in-place CBR tests are used for evaluation and design of flexible pavement components such as base and subbase course and subgrades and for other applications (such as unsurfaced roads) for which CBR is the desired strength parameter. If the field CBR is to be used directly for evaluation or design without consideration for variation due to change in water content, the test should be conducted under one of the following conditions: (a) when the degree of saturation (percentage of voids filled with water) is 80 % or greater, (b) when the material is coarse grained and cohesionless so that it is not significantly affected by changes in water content, or (c) when the soil has not been modified by construction activities during the two years preceding the test. In the last-named case, the water content does not actually become constant, but generally fluctuates within a rather narrow range. Therefore, the field in-place test data may be used to satisfactorily indicate the average load-carrying capacity.

4.2 Any construction activities, such as grading or compacting, carried out subsequent to the bearing ratio test will probably invalidate the results of the test.

4.3 Soils and flexible pavement components at the same location may exhibit significantly different load deflection relationships. No method presently exists to evaluate the precision of a group of non-repetitive plate load tests on soils and flexible pavement components due to the variability of these materials.

NOTE 1—Field in-place tests are used to determine the relative strength of soils, subbase, and some base materials in the condition at which they exist at the time of testing. Such results have direct application in test section work and in some expedient construction, military, or similar operations. Also, as indicated in 4.1, field in-place tests can be used for design under conditions of nominal stability of water, density, and general characteristics of the material tested. However, any significant treating, disturbing, handling, compaction, or water change can affect the soil strength and make the prior to test determination inapplicable, leading to the need for retest and reanalysis.

NOTE 2—Notwithstanding the statements on precision and bias contained in this standard: The precision of this test method is dependent on the competence of the personnel performing it and the suitability of the equipment and facilities used. Agencies which meet the criteria of Practice **D3740** are generally considered capable of competent and objective testing. Users of this method are cautioned that compliance with Practice **D3740** does not in itself assure reliable testing. Reliable testing depends on many factors; Practice **D3740** provides a means of evaluating some of those factors.

### 5. Apparatus

5.1 *Mechanical Screw Jack*—A manually operated mechanical screw jack equipped with a special swivel head for applying the load to the penetration piston, and designed with the following specifications:

- 5.1.1 Minimum capacity of 5950 lb (2700 kg),
- 5.1.2 Minimum lift of 2 in. (50 mm),
- 5.1.3 Detachable handle, 6-in. (150-mm) radius,
- 5.1.4 High-gear ratio, approximately 2.4 revolutions per 0.04 in. (1 mm) of penetration,

5.1.5 Medium-gear ratio, approximately 5 revolutions per 0.04 in. (1 mm) of penetration, and

5.1.6 Low-gear ratio, approximately 14 revolutions per 0.04 in. (1 mm) of penetration.

5.1.7 Other gear ratios may be used as desired if it is found to be more convenient to do so.

5.1.8 Other mechanical jacks with the same maximum load and lift may be utilized, provided that a uniform load-penetration rate of 0.05 in. (1.3 mm)/min can be achieved.

5.2 *Load Measurement*—Two calibrated proving rings or a load cell having the following characteristics:

5.2.1 *Proving Rings*—One proving ring shall have a loading range of approximately 0 to 2000 lbf (8.9 kN), and the other proving ring shall have a loading range of approximately 0 to 5000 lbf (22.2 kN).

5.2.2 *Load Cell*—An electronic load cell with an approximately 0 to 5000 lbf (22.2 kN) loading range readable to 25 lbf (0.1 kN) or better can be used instead of two proving rings.

5.3 *Penetration Piston*—The penetration piston shall be  $2 \pm 0.004$  in. ( $50.8 \pm 0.1$  mm) in diameter (nominal 3 in.<sup>2</sup> (2000 mm<sup>2</sup>)) and approximately 4 in. (102 mm) in length.

5.3.1 *Piston Adapter and Pipe Extensions*— One piston adapter and internally threaded pipe extensions with connectors.

5.3.1.1 Pipe extensions shall be furnished in the following quantities and lengths (or other combinations of lengths totaling 8 ft (2.4 m)):

Number Required	Approximate Length
2	1.5 in. (38 mm)
2	4 in. (102 mm)
8	12 in. (305 mm)

5.4 *Dial Gauges*—Two dial gauges (if proving rings are used) for measuring proving-ring deflections reading to 0.0001 in. (0.0025 mm) and having approximately 0.25-in. (6.4-mm) travel. One dial gauge for measuring the penetration reading to 0.001 in. (0.025 mm) and having approximately 1-in. (25-mm) travel, equipped with an adjustable dial clamp extension.

5.5 *Support for Penetration Dial*—One support made of 3-in. (76.2-mm) aluminum steel or wood channel approximately 5 ft (1.5 m) long.

5.6 *Surcharge Plate*—A circular steel plate  $10 \pm 0.02$  in. ( $254 \pm 0.5$  mm) in diameter with a  $2 \pm 0.02$ -in. ( $50.8 \pm 0.5$ -mm) diameter hole in the center. The plate shall weigh  $10 \pm 0.02$  lb ( $4.54 \pm 0.01$  kg).

5.7 *Surcharge Weights*—Two “10-lb” ( $4.54 \pm 0.01$ -kg) slotted surcharge weights 8.5 in. ( $216 \pm 1$  mm) in diameter, and two “20-lb” ( $9.08 \pm 0.01$ -kg) slotted surcharge weights 8.5 in. in diameter.

5.8 *Truck (Reaction load)*—A truck (or piece of heavy equipment) loaded sufficiently to provide a reaction of approximately 6970 lbf (31 kN). The truck shall be equipped with a suitable metal beam and an attachment, or attachments, at the rear end in order to provide a reaction load for forcing the penetration piston into the soil. Suitable attachments or other provision shall be provided so that the truck may be jacked sufficiently to take the load off of the rear springs in order to permit the penetration test to be carried out without upward

movement of the truck chassis. Approximately 2-ft (0.6-m) ground clearance is required to carry out the penetration test.

5.9 *Jacks*—Two truck-type jacks of 15-ton (14-Mg) capacity and having double-acting combination trip and automatic lowering. Alternatively, hydraulic leveling jacks can be used.

5.10 *Miscellaneous Apparatus*—Other general apparatus such as sample containers for water and density determinations, spatula, straightedge, digging tools, etc.

NOTE 3—Fig. 1 shows a typical field setup for bearing ratio tests. Fig. 2 shows the disassembled bearing ratio apparatus.

**6. Procedure**

6.1 Prepare the general surface area to be tested by removing from the surface loose and dried material which is not representative of the soil to be tested. Produce a test area which is as smooth and horizontal as practicable. Where nonplastic base materials are encountered, extreme care shall be taken not to disturb the test surface. Spacing of the penetration tests shall be such that operations at one point will not disturb the soil at the next point to be penetrated. This spacing may range from a minimum of 7.0 in. (175 mm) in plastic soils to 15 in. (380 mm) in coarse granular soils.

6.2 Locate the truck so that the center of the bearing attachment is directly over the surface to be tested. Install the mechanical screw test jack with the swivel to the underside of the reaction attachment. Place the truck jacks under each side of the truck and lift the truck so that little or no weight rests on the rear springs, making sure that the truck is level across the back.

6.3 Position the mechanical screw jack to the correct position for the test, and connect the proving ring to the end of jack. Then, attach the piston adapter to the bottom of the proving ring, connect the necessary number of extensions to come within 4.9 in. (125 mm) of the surface to be tested, and connect

the penetration piston. Clamp the jack in place. Check the level mounted on the jack to be certain the assembly is vertical and adjust it if necessary.

6.4 Place the “10-lb” (4.5-kg) surcharge plate beneath the penetration piston so that when the piston is lowered it will pass through the center hole.

6.5 Seat the penetration piston under a load of approximately 3 psi (21 kPa). For rapid setting, use the high-gear ratio of the jack. For base materials with an irregular surface, set the piston on the thinnest practical layer of fine limestone screenings (20–40 mesh) or plaster of paris.

6.6 If necessary in order to achieve a smooth surface, raise the surcharge plate while the seating load is on the piston and evenly spread clean fine sand to a depth of 0.12 to 0.24 in. (3 to 6 mm) over the surface to be covered by the plate. This serves to distribute the weight of the surcharge uniformly.

6.7 Add surcharge weights to the surcharge plate so that the unit load is equivalent to the load intensity of the material or pavement which will overlie the subgrade or base, or both, except that the minimum weight applied shall be the “10-lb” (4.5-kg) surcharge plate plus one “20-lb” (9-kg) surcharge weight.

NOTE 4—This minimum weight creates an intensity of loading equal to that created by the “10-lb” surcharge weight used in the 6-in. (150-mm) diameter mold in the laboratory CBR test (Test Method D1883).

6.8 Attach the penetration dial clamp to the piston so that the dial rests upon the dial support.

6.9 Set the dial gauges to zero.

6.10 Apply the load to the penetration piston so that the rate of penetration is approximately 0.05 in. (1.3 mm)/min. By using the low-gear ratio of the jack during the test, a uniform rate of penetration can be maintained by the operator. Record the deflection of the proving ring or load cell reading at each

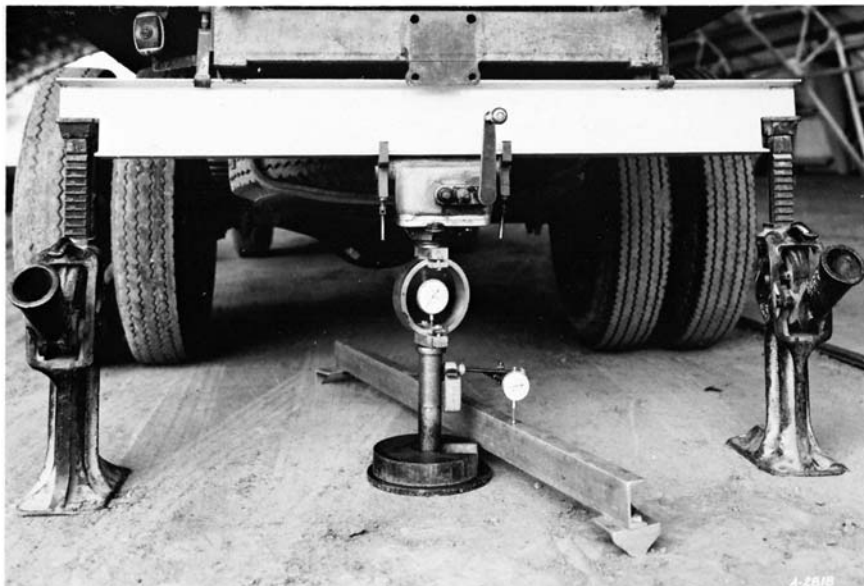
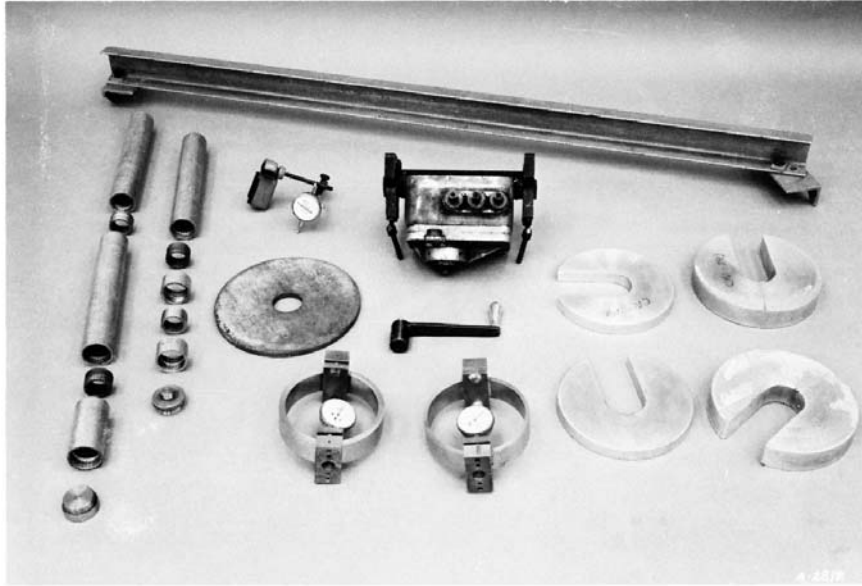


FIG. 1 Setup for Field In-Place Tests



**FIG. 2 Apparatus for Field In-Place Tests**

0.025-in. (0.64-mm) increment of penetration to the nearest 25 lbf (111 kN), to a final depth of 0.500 in. (12.70 mm). In homogeneous soils, penetration depths greater than 0.300 in. (7.62 mm) frequently may be omitted. Compute the stress for each increment of penetration in percent (see Section 7 for calculations).

6.11 At the completion of the test obtain a sample at the point of penetration and determine its water content. A density determination should also be made at a location about 4 to 6 in. (100 to 150 mm) away from the point of penetration. The density and water content shall be determined in accordance with the applicable test methods listed in Section 2 (D1556, D2167, D2216, D2937, D6780, D6938).

## 7. Calculation

7.1 *Stress Penetration Curve*—Calculate the penetration stress for each penetration increment as applied force divided by piston area. Plot the stress versus penetration curve for each increment of penetration, as shown in Fig. 3.

7.1.1 In some instances the stress-penetration curve may be concave upward initially because of surface irregularities or other causes, and in such cases the zero point shall be adjusted as shown in Fig. 3.

7.2 *CBR*—Using corrected stress values taken from the stress-penetration curve for 0.100 in. (2.54 mm) and 0.200-in. (5.08-mm) penetrations, calculate the bearing ratios for each by dividing the corrected stresses by the standard stresses of 1000 psi (6.9 MPa) and 1500 psi (10.3 MPa) respectively, and multiplying by 100. Also, calculate the bearing ratios for the maximum stress, if the penetration is less than 0.200 in., interpolating the standard stress. The CBR reported for the soil mixture is normally the bearing ratio at 0.100-in. (2.54-mm) penetration. When the bearing ratio at 0.200-in. (5.08-mm) penetration (or at maximum penetration if less than 0.200 in.)

is greater, rerun the test. If the check test gives a similar result, the CBR is then taken as the bearing ratio determined at 0.200 in. (5.08 mm) or at maximum penetration. No other bearing ratios may be identified as CBR values.

## 8. Report: Test Data Sheet(s)/Form(s)

8.1 Report the following information on each test:

8.1.1 Test location,

8.1.2 Material,

8.1.3 Depth of test,

8.1.4 Stress-penetration curve,

8.1.5 Corrected bearing ratio at 0.1-in. (2.54-mm) penetration,

8.1.6 Corrected bearing ratio at 0.2-in. (5.08-mm) penetration,

8.1.7 Water content and test method used, and

8.1.8 Density and test method used.

8.1.9 Name(s) of personnel performing test.

NOTE 5—Fig. 4 provides an example form that may be used.

## 9. Precision and Bias

9.1 *Precision*—Test data on precision are not presented. It is either not feasible or too costly at this time to have ten or more agencies participate in an in-situ testing program at a given site.

9.2 *Bias*—There is no accepted reference value for this test method to be compared against, therefore bias cannot be determined.

9.3 The subcommittee is seeking pertinent data from users of this test method which may be used to develop meaningful statements of precision.

## 10. Keywords

10.1 bearing ratio; CBR; deflection ; flexible pavement

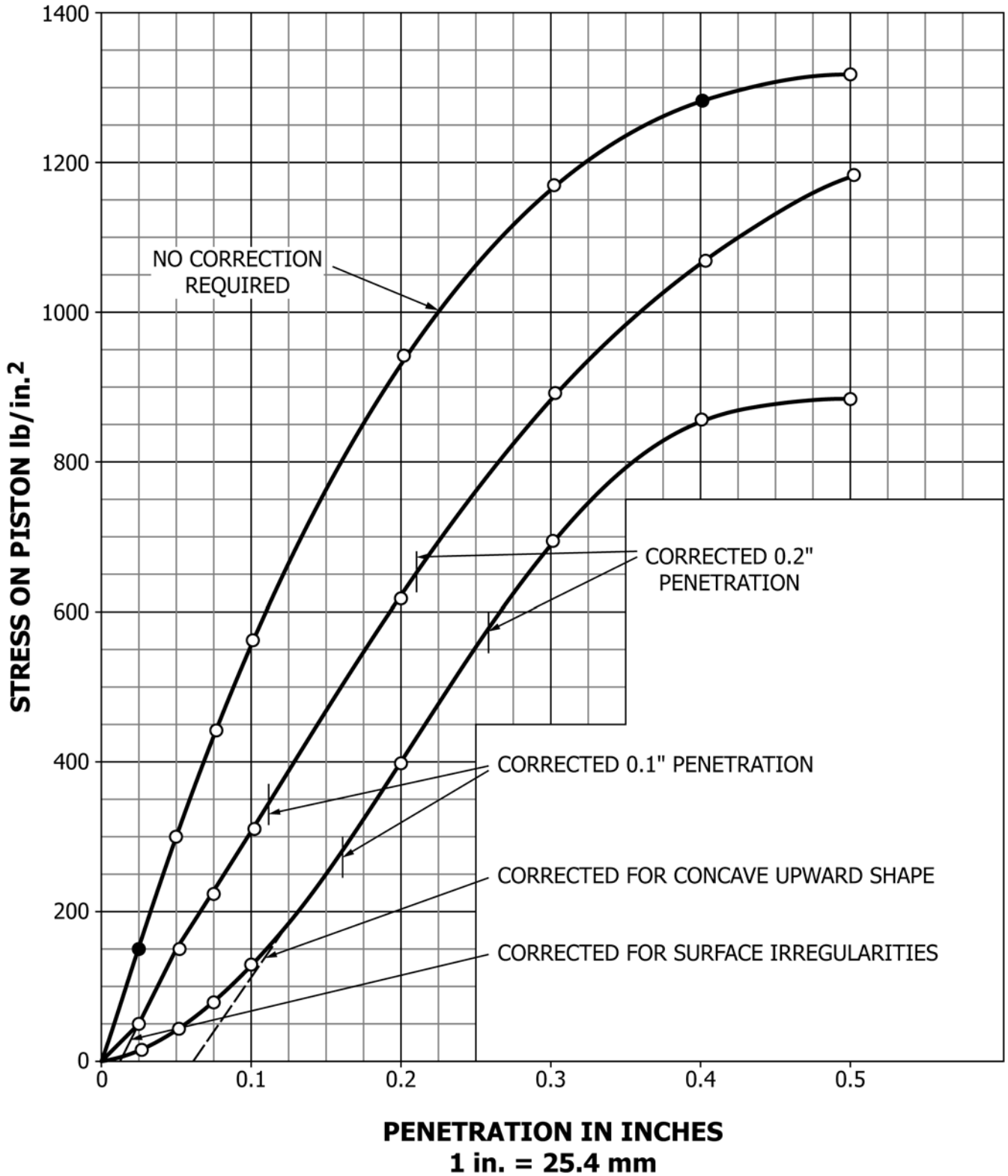


FIG. 3 Correction of Stress-Penetration Curves



**SUMMARY OF CHANGES**

Committee D18 has identified the location of selected changes to this standard since the last issue (D4429 – 09) that may impact the use of this standard. (Approved December 1, 2009.)

(1) Revised Section 5.2 for clarification on Apparatus

Committee D18 has identified the location of selected changes to this standard since the last issue (D4429 – 04) that may impact the use of this standard. (Approved May 15, 2009.)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (1) Added Caveats on Units, Use of Inch/Pound, Significant Digits and Rounding. | (5) Moved information to Significance and Use from prior Precision & Bias section. |
| (2) Added Terminology section.  | (6) Revised Section 8 on Reports/Forms to conform to D18 policies.                 |
| (3) Added note on use of <b>D3740</b> .   | (7) Added Example Form.  |
| (4) Added load cells to Apparatus section.                                      |  |

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