



Standard Test Method for Determination of Time to Burn-Through Using the Intermediate Scale Calorimeter (ICAL) Radiant Panel¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This fire-test-response test method assesses the response of materials, products, and assemblies to controlled levels of heat flux with an external igniter.

1.2 The fire-test-response characteristics determined by this test method include the ignitability and time to burn-through of materials, products, and assemblies under well ventilated conditions.

1.3 Heat, smoke, and mass loss rate are not within the scope of this test method, but are addressed by Test Method E1623.

1.3.1 This test method uses the same burner as that described in Test Method E1623. Two burner types are described (Burner A and Burner B).

1.4 Specimens are exposed to a constant heat flux up to 50 kW/m² in a vertical orientation. Hot wires are used to ignite the combustible vapors from the specimen.

1.5 This test method has been developed for evaluations, design, or research and development of materials, products, or assemblies, or for code compliance. The specimen shall be tested in thicknesses and configurations representative of actual end product or system uses.

1.6 Limitations of the test method are listed in 5.7.

1.7 This test method is used to measure and describe the response of materials, products, or assemblies to heat and flame under controlled conditions, but does not by itself incorporate all factors required for fire hazard or fire risk assessment of the materials, products, or assemblies under actual fire conditions.

1.8 Fire testing is inherently hazardous. Adequate safeguards for personnel and property shall be employed in conducting these tests.

1.9 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard.

1.10 *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. Specific information about hazards is given in Section 7.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

E119 Test Methods for Fire Tests of Building Construction and Materials

E176 Terminology of Fire Standards

E603 Guide for Room Fire Experiments

E906/E906M Test Method for Heat and Visible Smoke Release Rates for Materials and Products Using a Thermopile Method

E1354 Test Method for Heat and Visible Smoke Release Rates for Materials and Products Using an Oxygen Consumption Calorimeter

E1623 Test Method for Determination of Fire and Thermal Parameters of Materials, Products, and Systems Using an Intermediate Scale Calorimeter (ICAL)

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions:*

3.1.1 For definitions of terms used in this test method, refer to Terminology E176.

3.1.2 *heat flux, n*—heat transfer to a surface per unit area, per unit time (see also *initial test heat flux*).

3.1.2.1 *Discussion*—The heat flux from an energy source, such as a radiant heater, can be measured at the initiation of a test (such as Test Method E1354, E1623, or E906/E906M) and then reported as the incident heat flux, with the understanding that the burning of the test specimen can generate additional heat flux to the specimen surface. The heat flux can also be measured at any time during a fire test, for example as described in Guide E603, on any surface, and with measurement devices responding to radiative and convective fluxes. Typical units are kW/m², kJ/(s m²), W/cm², or BTU/(s ft²).

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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.

3.1.3 *initial test heat flux, n*—the heat flux set on the test apparatus at the initiation of the test (see also *heat flux*).

3.1.4 *orientation, n*—the plane in which the exposed face of the specimen is located during testing.

3.1.5 *time to sustained flaming, n*—period of time from start of test to commencement of the first period of flaming lasting long enough to qualify as sustained flaming (see *sustained flaming*).

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 *burn-through, n*—occurrence of sustained flaming on the unexposed side of the test specimen.

3.2.2 *ignitability, n*—the propensity to ignition, as measured by the time to sustained flaming, in seconds, at a specified heat flux.

3.2.3 *sustained flaming, n*—existence of flame on or over the specimen surface for periods of at least 5 s.

3.2.3.1 *Discussion*—Flaming of less than 5 s duration is identified as flashing or transitory flaming.

3.2.4 *time to burn-through, n*—time elapsed from the start of the test until burn-through, in seconds.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 This is a test method designed to measure the time to burn-through (that is, the time to sustained flaming on the unexposed side) of a 1 m² specimen in a vertical orientation. The specimen is exposed on one side to a uniform heat flux from a gas fired radiant panel of up to 50 kW/m². Tests are conducted with piloted ignition. Piloted ignition results from applying wire igniters at the top and bottom of the test specimen.

4.2 Other measurements can be obtained such as time to sustained flaming on the exposed side, surface temperature, and the specimen's interior temperatures at the user's discretion.

4.3 Each specimen shall be exposed to a uniform heat flux on the exposed face using a radiant panel configuration described in Test Method E1623 with a heat flux of 50 kW/m². The time to burn-through shall be recorded for each specimen. Due to potential edge effects introduced by the specimen holder, where surface flames curl around the specimen edges, or heat transfer from the return edges of the metal holder is higher than in the field of the specimen, flaming within 127 mm (5 in.) of the edges of the unexposed specimen shall be allowed (not considered burn-through). These flames can be extinguished using a suitable means that will not affect the field of the unexposed surface of the specimen.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method is used primarily to determine the time to burn-through and the time to ignition of materials, products, and assemblies.

5.2 Representative joints and other characteristics of an assembly shall be included in a specimen when these details are part of normal design.

5.3 This test method is applicable to end-use products not having an ideally planar external surface. The heat flux shall be

adjusted to be that which is desired at the average distance of the surface from the radiant panel.

5.4 In this procedure, the specimens are subjected to one or more specific sets of laboratory test conditions. If different test conditions are substituted or the end-use conditions are changed, it is not always possible by or from this test to predict changes in the fire-test-response characteristics measured. Therefore, the results are valid only for the fire test exposure conditions described in this procedure.

5.5 Representative materials and thicknesses shall be included in a specimen when these details are part of normal design.

5.6 This method can also be used for research and development of various material types to be included in larger-scale fire test assemblies (for example, Test Methods E119).

5.7 Test Limitations:

5.7.1 The test results have limited validity if: (a) the specimen melts sufficiently to overflow the drip tray, or (b) explosive spalling occurs.

5.7.2 Report observations of specimens that sag, deform, or delaminate.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *General*—Two burner designs are permitted (Burner A or Burner B). See Test Method E1623 Section 6 Apparatus for a description of the radiant panel system.

6.2 Although heat and smoke release rates are not measured for this procedure, combustion products shall be collected and exhausted for laboratory safety purposes. Construct the exhaust collection system as described in Test Method E1623 except for the instrumentation.

6.2.1 Ensure that the system for exhausting smoke (which includes gaseous combustion products) is designed in such a way that the combustion products leaving the burning specimen are exhausted.

6.3 *Thermocouples*—(not required - optional - see Annex A1):

6.3.1 Specimen temperature measurements are optional. If specimen temperatures are measured, all thermocouples shall comply with Annex A1.

6.4 *Heat Flux Meter*—The total heat flux meter shall be of the Gardon (foil) or Schmidt-Boelter (thermopile) type³, with a design range of about 50 kW/m². The target receiving radiation, and possibly to a small extent convection, shall be flat, circular, approximately 12.5 mm in diameter, and coated with a durable matt-black finish. The target shall be water cooled. Radiation shall not pass through any window before reaching the target. The instrument shall be robust, simple to set up and use, and stable in calibration. The instrument shall have an accuracy of within ±3 % and a repeatability of within ±0.5 %.

³ These apparatus have been found satisfactory for this purpose.

7. Hazards

7.1 The test procedures involve high temperatures and combustion processes. Therefore the potential exists for burns, ignition of extraneous objects or clothing, and for inhalation of combustion products. The operator shall use protective gloves and clothes while removing the specimen shield and while moving the specimen trolley toward or away from the radiant panels. The construction of a viewing wall with windows is recommended for laboratories with small spaces where the operator and viewers cannot move far enough away from the area of the radiant panel.

7.2 The water cooled shield placed in front of the radiant panel assembly dramatically lowers the heating of the laboratory space and lowers the potential for harm to operators working in the area.

8. Test Specimens

8.1 Size and Preparation:

8.1.1 Test specimen's dimensions shall be 1000 by 1000 mm and up to 152 mm in thickness. Use the specimen holder as described in Test Method [E1623](#). If specimens of thickness greater than 152 mm are to be tested, a specimen holder shall be constructed to accommodate the desired specimen thickness. They shall be representative of the construction of the end-use product. Test materials and assemblies of normal thickness, 152 mm or less, using their full thickness.

8.1.2 If a product is designed to normally have joints in a field application, then that specimen shall incorporate the joint detail. Center the joint in the specimen's vertical or horizontal centerline as appropriate. Also test the specimen without a joint detail if the design does not include a joint.

8.1.3 Cover the edges of the specimen with 12 mm ceramic wool blanket to eliminate the gap between the holder and the specimen.

8.2 *Conditioning*—The test specimen shall be conditioned to a constant weight at a temperature of 23 ± 2.8 °C (73.4 ± 5 °F) and at a relative humidity of 50 ± 5 %.

9. Calibration

9.1 Use calibrated instruments. The instruments required to be calibrated or verified include the infrared pyrometer, heat flux meter, computerized data acquisition system, and thermocouples.

9.2 Heat Flux/Distance Relationship:

9.2.1 Ignite the radiant panel and allow it to come to equilibrium as indicated by its constant heat flux and surface temperature.

9.2.1.1 Use the calibration panel specimen described in Test Method [E1623](#).

9.2.2 Generate a curve of average heat flux measurements over the calibration panel surface versus distance from the radiant panel. Place the calibration panel in the same position as a specimen and insert the flux meter from the unexposed face through the holes. The target face of the flux meter shall extend 15 mm toward the radiant panel from the exposed surface of the calibration panel to minimize the convective heat transfer contribution. After the heat flux has come to

equilibrium, make the heat flux measurements with the target face of the heat flux meter at the following distance away from the radiant panel: 300, 400, 600, 800, 1000, and 2000 mm. If lower heat fluxes than the one corresponding to a 2 m distance are used, continue calibrating until past the needed distance.

9.2.3 No individual heat flux measurement shall deviate from the average at each of the distances by more than ± 6 %. The average heat flux measurements in the bottom row of the calibration panel shall not deviate from that in any of the heat flux values used by more than ± 5 %.

9.2.4 Use the curve generated in [9.2.2](#) to determine the distance from the radiant panel for a desired radiant heat flux exposure.

9.2.5 Perform calibration every three months or more frequently if any significant changes to equipment are made or if calibration is suspect. Check the calibration at the desired target heat flux the day of the test.

9.3 *Heat Flux Meter*—Check the calibration of the heat flux meter whenever a recalibration of the apparatus is carried out by comparison with an instrument (of the same type as the working heat flux meter and of similar range) held as a reference standard and not used for any other purpose. Fully calibrate the reference standard at a standardizing laboratory at yearly intervals.

10. Procedure

10.1 Preparation:

10.1.1 Open the water valve to the steel tubing that support the radiant panel and adjust the water flow sufficiently high such that water exiting the frame will not exceed 100 °C in temperature.

10.1.2 Position the specimen holder assembly remote to the desired test location.

10.1.3 Place the water cooled shield in front of the radiant panel assembly and adjust the water flow sufficiently high such that water exiting the shield will not exceed 100 °C in temperature.

10.1.4 Turn on the flow of gas to each of the radiant panels and ignite them.

10.1.5 Allow the burners to operate for 30 min prior to testing.

10.1.6 Adjust the water flow to the frame and shield as required in [10.1.1](#) and [10.1.3](#).

10.1.7 Turn on all sampling and recording devices.

10.1.8 Insert the specimen into the specimen holder. Place the specimen in the specimen holder by removing the top specimen holder cap section, inserting the specimen and replacing the top cap.

10.1.9 Turn on the wire igniters.

10.1.10 If heat flow through the specimen is to be monitored, attach the thermocouples as described in [6.3](#).

10.2 Test Procedure:

10.2.1 Move the specimen trolley to the location previously calibrated for the desired heat flux exposure to the surface of the specimen.

10.2.2 Remove the water cooled specimen shield in not more than 2 s and start the timer marking the beginning of the test.

10.2.3 Record the times when flashing or transitory flaming occurs. When sustained flaming occurs, record the time and turn off the igniters. If the flame extinguishes after turning off the igniters, turn on the igniters again within 5 s and do not turn the igniters off until the entire test is completed. Report these events in the test report.

10.2.4 If the collection hood is used to exhaust combustion gases from the test room, then adjust the duct flow to a sufficient value as necessary to collect all combustion gases.

10.2.5 Record all important events during the test (for example, cracking, melting, collapse of all or part of the specimen, deformations, and intumescence).

10.2.6 Continue the test until sustained flaming is observed on the unexposed side of the specimen or until 45 min has elapsed.

10.2.6.1 Due to potential edge effects introduced by the specimen holder, where surface flames curl around the specimen edges, or heat transfer from the return edges of the metal holder is higher than in the field of the specimen, flaming within 127 mm (5 in.) of the edges of the unexposed specimen shall be allowed (not considered burn-through). After 5 s, these flames shall be extinguished using a suitable means (for example, water spray bottle) that will not affect the field of the unexposed specimen surface.

10.2.7 Collect the data until 2 min (minimum) after sustained flaming is observed on the unexposed side of the specimen.

10.2.8 Withdraw the specimen trolley and insert the specimen radiation shield.

10.2.9 Unless otherwise specified in the material or performance standard, make three determinations and report as specified in Section 11.

11. Report

11.1 Report the following information:

11.1.1 *Descriptive Information:*

11.1.1.1 Name and address of the testing laboratory.

11.1.1.2 Specimen identification code or number.

11.1.1.3 Date and identification number of the report.

11.1.1.4 Name and address of the test sponsor.

11.1.1.5 Name of product manufacturer or supplier, if known.

11.1.1.6 Composition or generic information.

11.1.1.7 Density, or mass per unit surface area, total mass, thickness of the main components in the specimen, thickness of the specimen, moisture content of hygroscopic materials and mass of combustible portion of specimen, if known.

11.1.1.8 Description of the specimen, if different from the product.

11.1.1.9 Details of specimen preparation by the testing laboratory.

11.1.1.10 Details of special mounting methods used.

11.1.1.11 Heat flux used and statement of which burner was used (Burner A or Burner B).

11.1.1.12 Number of replicates tested testing under the same conditions. (This shall be a minimum of three except for exploratory testing).

11.1.1.13 Conditioning of the specimens.

11.1.1.14 Date of test.

11.1.1.15 Test number and any special remarks.

11.1.2 *Test Results:*

11.1.2.1 Time to sustained flaming on the exposed and unexposed sides.

11.1.2.2 If specimen temperature measurements have been made, time-temperature plots for the thermocouples used shall be reported.

11.1.2.3 Photographs or video of the fire development.

11.1.2.4 Qualitative observations, including physical changes, of the specimen during the test.

12. Precision and Bias

12.1 Information on reproducibility and repeatability is not available at the time of publication of this test method.

13. Keywords

13.1 burn-through; effective specific heat; effective thermal conductivity; emissivity; ICAL; ignitability; intermediate scale calorimeter; surface temperature; sustained ignition

ANNEX

(Mandatory Information)

A1. SPECIMEN TEMPERATURE MEASUREMENTS

A1.1 Specimen temperature measurements are optional. If such temperatures are measured, measurements shall comply with A1.2 – A1.5.

A1.2 If thermocouples are used (see optional thermocouples in 6.3), the locations of thermocouples for measurement of the specimen temperature of homogenous materials shall be at the geometric center of the specimen on the exposed and unexposed surfaces. The exposed surface thermocouple measure-

ment shall be replaced with an optical infrared pyrometer measurement if the pyrometer specified in Test Method E1623 is available, to avoid incorrect thermocouple measurements due to phenomena such as crack formation, material recession, and melting.

A1.3 Other temperatures shall be recorded, as needed, to gain specific information, such as to obtain temperature information at various depths and locations of the specimen.

A1.4 For non-homogenous specimens including sandwich panels and assemblies, temperatures shall be permitted to be recorded on interfaces between layers of materials, or between materials and air pockets, or at any other locations of interest.

A1.5 Thermocouples shall be 0.127 mm (0.005 in. or 5 mils) Type K, Chromel-Alumel. The interior thermocouples shall be inserted in holes that have been predrilled from the unexposed face of the specimen sample toward the face to the desired depth.

A1.6 Thermocouples shall be sheathed with ceramic insulation. The two wires leading up to the junctions of surface thermocouples shall be bared for a distance of no more than

10 mm on both sides of the junction. Each lead shall be positioned so that the bead is contacting the surface and stapled at a point on sheathed each wire 25 mm away from the junction. The bead shall be pushed by thumb with moderate force into the surface if it will penetrate.

A1.7 Place three thermocouples on the unexposed side along the diagonal at the center and quarter-points with the bead in contact with the unexposed surface and stapled at a point on each wire approximately 25 mm away from the bead junction. Each bead shall be covered with a 38 × 38 × 4 mm ceramic pad, stapled to the panel at two opposing corners.

APPENDIX

(Nonmandatory Information)

X1. COMMENTARY

X1.1 Introduction

X1.1.1 This test procedure is being utilized by test laboratories to determine time to sustained flaming on the unexposed side of various products for regulatory purposes. There was a need to standardize this procedure so that it could be referenced. The ASTM task group for Test Method **E1623** asked that this procedure be written and published as a new ASTM standard.

X1.1.2 Data using this procedure does exist but is proprietary. The data that does exist suggests that the time to

sustained flaming of various products ranges between a few minutes to no sustained flaming on unexposed side during the 45-min test duration—the maximum test duration chosen for this procedure.

X1.1.3 The task group decided to make the test method generic as to the scope of specimen types so that it could be applied to a wide range of products—not just the product types currently being tested.

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