

State of Illinois  
Department of Transportation  
Division of Aeronautics

**POLICY MEMORANDUM**

December 3, 2020

Springfield

Number: **87-4**

TO: CONSULTING ENGINEERS

SUBJECT: DETERMINATION OF BULK SPECIFIC GRAVITY (d)  
OF COMPACTED BITUMINOUS MIXES

- A. SCOPE. This method of test covers the determination of the bulk specific gravity and the percent air, of core samples from compacted bituminous mixtures using a saturated surface-dry procedure.
- B. DEFINITIONS.
1. Bulk Specific Gravity ( $G_{mb}$ ) ASTM 2726 or density is the weight per unit volume (gms/cc) of a mixture in its existing state of consolidation. The volume measurement for this specific gravity will include the volume of all the aggregate, asphalt, and air spaces (voids) in the aggregate particles and between the aggregate particles.
  2. Theoretical Maximum Specific Gravity ( $G_{mm}$ ) ASTM 2041 is the weight per unit volume (grams/cc) of a mixture assuming complete consolidation; i.e., all the air spaces (voids) between the aggregate particles are eliminated.
  3. Percent Density is a measure of the degree of compaction in relation to the Theoretical Maximum Specific Gravity.
  4. Percent Air is a measure of the air voids in the compacted pavement.
- C. APPARATUS.
1. Balance - The balance shall be accurate to 0.1 gm throughout the operating range. It may be mechanical or electrical and shall be equipped with a suitable suspension apparatus and holder to permit weighing of the core in water while suspended from the balance. If the balance is a beam type, it shall be set up so that the core is placed in the basket that is suspended from the zero (0) end of the balance arm.
  2. Water bath - The container for immersing the core in water while suspended from the balance shall be equipped with an overflow outlet for maintaining a constant water level. This water bath should be large enough to handle full-depth cores. When testing several cores at the same time, a dish-pan, sink or suitable container may be used for soaking.

#### D. PROCEDURE.

1. Prior to testing, cores shall be sorted on a flat surface in a cool place. The sample(s) shall be brushed with a wire brush and/or other suitable means, to remove all loose and/or foreign materials, such as seal coat, tack coat, foundation material, soil, paper and foil prior to testing.
2. If a core contains binder and surface or multiple lifts, the lifts shall be separated. This may be done in the following manner:
  - a. Mark the separation line between the two lifts.
  - b. Place the core in a freezer for 20-25 minutes.
  - c. Place a 2 or 3-inch wide chisel on the separation line and tap with a hammer. Rotate the core and continue this process until the core separates. Brush loose pieces with a wire brush if needed.
  - d. Allow 2-3 hours for the core to return to ambient temperature before proceeding.
3. Prepare the water baths for soaking and weighing with water at 77<sup>o</sup> F. Water baths should be maintained at this temperature throughout testing. Saturate the cores by submerging in the water for a minimum of 20 minutes.
4. With the balance and water bath properly assembled and zeroed, suspend the sample from the balance and submerge it in the water bath. The core must be placed with the original top and bottom in a vertical position. If necessary, add sufficient water to bring the water level up to the overflow outlet. Permit any excess to overflow. Read and record the Saturated Submerged Weight. Designate this weight as (C).
5. Remove the core from the water bath and blot the excess water from the surface of the core with an absorbent cloth or other suitable material. This must be done quickly to prevent the internal water from escaping.
6. Place the core on the balance and read and record the Saturated Surface-dry Weight in air. Designate this weight as (B).
7. Place the core in a tared pan and dry in an oven. When the core is dry (less than 0.5 gm loss in one hour), record the weight and subtract the pan weight. Designate this weight as (A).

8. The following calculation is used to determine the Bulk Specific Gravity of the core.

$$G_{mb} = \frac{A}{B - C}$$

$G_{mb}$  = Bulk Specific Gravity  
A = Oven dry weight  
B = Saturated surface-dry weight  
C = Saturated submerged weight

- E. PERCENT DENSITY. The following calculation is used to determine the percent density of the core:

$$\% \text{ Density} = 100 \times \frac{G_{mb}}{G_{mm}}$$

$G_{mb}$  = Bulk Specific Gravity  
 $G_{mm}$  = Theoretical Maximum Gravity\*

Note: The Theoretical Maximum Gravity ( $G_{mm}$ ) is determined from the mix design until current Vacuum Pycnometer test are available.

- F. PERCENT AIR. To calculate the percent air, use the following formula:

$$\% \text{ Air} = 100 - \% \text{ Density}$$

- G. WEIGHT PER SQUARE YARD OF COMPACTED MIXTURE. The actual weight per square yard of a compacted mixture can be calculated by using the Bulk Specific Gravity ( $G_{mb}$ ). The volume of a square yard of pavement one (1) inch thick is 0.75 cubic foot. Taking the weight of a cubic foot of water as 62.37 pounds, one square yard of compacted material, one (1) inch thick weighs:

$$\text{Pounds / Sq. Yd. (1" thick)} = 0.75 \times 62.37 \times G_{mb}$$

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Supersedes Policy Memorandum 87-4, dated February 20, 2014