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AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR TESTING AND MATERIALS
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Standard Practice for Dry Preparation of Soil Samples for Particle-Size Analysis and Determination of Soil Constants[1]

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 421; 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.

This standard has been approved for use by agencies of the Department of Defense.

1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers the dry preparation of soil samples as received from the field for particle-size analysis and the determination of the soil constants.

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:*

D 2217 Practice for Wet Preparation of Soil Samples for Particle-Size Analysis and Determination of Soil Constants[2]

E 11 Specification for Wire-Cloth Sieves for Testing Purposes[3]

3. Significance and Use

3.1 This practice can be used to prepare samples for particle-size and plasticity tests where it is desired to determine test values on air-dried samples, or where it is known that air drying does not have an effect on test results relative to samples prepared in accordance with Practice D 2217.

4. Apparatus

4.1 *Balance*, sensitive to 0.1 g.

4.2 *Mortar and Rubber-Covered Pestle*, suitable for breaking up the aggregations of soil particles.

4.3 *Sieves*—A series of sieves, of square mesh woven wire cloth, conforming to Specification E 11. The sieves required are as follows:

No. 4 (4.75-mm)
No. 10 (2.00-mm)
No. 40 (425-µm)

4.4 *Sampler*—A riffle sampler or sample splitter, for quartering the samples.

5. Sampling

5.1 Expose the soil sample as received from the field to the air at room temperature until dried thoroughly. Break up the aggregations thoroughly in the mortar with a rubber-covered pestle. Select a representative sample of the amount required to perform the desired tests by the method of quartering or by the use of a sampler. The amounts of material required to perform the individual tests are as follows:

5.1.1 *Particle-Size Analysis*—For the particle-size analysis, material passing a No. 10 (2.00-mm) sieve is required in amounts equal to 115 g of sandy soils and 65 g of either silt or clay soils.

5.1.2 *Tests for Soil Constants*—For the tests for soil constants, material passing the No. 40 (425-µm) sieve is required in total amount of 220 g, allocated as follows:

Test	Grams
Liquid limit	100
Plastic limit	15
Centrifuge moisture equivalent	10
Volumetric shrinkage	30
Check tests	65

6. Preparation of Test Sample

6.1 Select that portion of the air-dried sample selected for purpose of tests and record the mass as the mass of the total test sample uncorrected for hygroscopic moisture. Separate the test sample by sieving with a No. 10 (2.00-mm) sieve. Grind that fraction retained on the No. 10 sieve in a mortar with a rubber-covered pestle until the aggregations of soil particles are broken up into the separate grains. Then separate the ground soil into two fractions by sieving with a No. 10 sieve.

6.2 Wash that fraction retained after the second sieving free of all fine material, dry, and weigh. Record this mass as the mass of coarse material. Sieve the coarse material, after being washed and dried, on the No. 4 (4.75-mm) sieve and record the mass retained on the No. 4 sieve.

7. Test Sample for Particle-Size Analysis

7.1 Thoroughly mix together the fractions passing the No. 10 (2.00-mm) sieve in both sieving operations, and by the method of quartering or the use of a sampler, select a portion

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[2] *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 04.08.

[3] *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 14.02.

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weighing approximately 115 g for sandy soils and approximately 65 g for silt and clay soil for particle-size analysis.

8. Test Sample for Soil Constants

8.1 Separate the remaining portion of the material passing the No. 10 (2.00-mm) sieve into two parts by means of a No. 40 (425-µm) sieve. Discard the fraction retained on the No. 40 sieve. Use the fraction passing the No. 40 sieve for the determination of the soil constants.

9. Keywords

9.1 dry preparation; particle-size analysis; soil

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