



Standard Practice for Safeguarding Against Embrittlement of Hot-Dip Galvanized Structural Steel Products and Procedure for Detecting Embrittlement¹

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

1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers procedures that can be followed to safeguard against the possible embrittlement of steel hot-dip galvanized after fabrication, and outlines test procedures for detecting embrittlement. Conditions of fabrication may induce a susceptibility to embrittlement in certain steels that can be accelerated by galvanizing. Embrittlement is not a common occurrence, however, and this discussion does not imply that galvanizing increases embrittlement where good fabricating and galvanizing procedures are employed. Where history has shown that for specific steels, processes and galvanizing procedures have been satisfactory, this history will serve as an indication that no embrittlement problem is to be expected for those steels, processes, and galvanizing procedures.

1.2 This practice is applicable in either inch-pounds or SI units. Inch-pounds and SI units are not necessarily exact equivalents. Within the text of this practice and where appropriate, SI units are shown in brackets.

1.3 *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:

F 606 Test Methods for Determining the Mechanical Properties of Externally and Internally Threaded Fasteners,

Washers, and Rivets²

3. Terminology

3.1 Definition:

3.1.1 *embrittlement, n*—the loss or partial loss of ductility in a steel where an embrittled product characteristically fails by fracture without appreciable deformation; types of embrittlement usually encountered in galvanized steel are related to aging phenomena, cold working, and absorption of hydrogen.

4. Factors in Embrittlement

4.1 Embrittlement or loss of ductility in steel is often associated with strain-aging. Strain-aging refers to the delayed increase in hardness and strength, and loss of ductility and impact resistance which occur in susceptible steels as a result of the strains induced by cold working. The aging changes proceed slowly at room temperature, but proceed at an accelerated rate as the aging temperature is raised and may occur rapidly at the galvanizing temperature of approximately 850°F [455°C].

4.2 Hydrogen embrittlement may also occur due to the possibility of atomic hydrogen being absorbed by the steel. The susceptibility to hydrogen embrittlement is influenced by the type of steel, its previous heat treatment, and degree of previous cold work. In the case of galvanized steel, the acid pickling reaction prior to galvanizing presents a potential source of hydrogen. However, the heat of the galvanizing bath partially expels hydrogen that may have been absorbed. In practice hydrogen embrittlement of galvanized steel is usually of concern only if the steel exceeds approximately 150 ksi [1100 MPa] in ultimate tensile strength, or if it has been severely cold worked prior to pickling.

4.3 Loss of ductility of cold-worked steels is dependent on many factors including the type of steel (strength level, aging characteristics), thickness of steel, and degree of cold work, and is accentuated by areas of stress concentration such as caused by notches, holes, fillets of small radii, sharp bends, etc.

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee A05 on Metallic Coated Iron and Steel Products and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee A05.13 on Structural Shapes and Hardware Specifications.

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² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 15.08.