



Standard Test Method for Determination of Water (Moisture) Content of Soil by Microwave Oven Heating¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D4643; 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 U.S. Department of Defense.

1. Scope*

1.1 This test method outlines procedures for determining the water (moisture) content of soils by incrementally drying soil in a microwave oven.

1.2 This test method can be used as a substitute for Test Method D2216 when more rapid results are desired to expedite other phases of testing and slightly less accurate results are acceptable.

1.3 When questions of accuracy between this test method and Test Method D2216 arise, Test Method D2216 shall be the referee method.

1.4 This test method is applicable for most soil types. For some soils, such as those containing significant amounts of halloysite, mica, montmorillonite, gypsum or other hydrated materials, highly organic soils, or soils in which the pore water contains dissolved solids (such as salt in the case of marine deposits), this test method may not yield reliable water content values.

1.5 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. No other units of measurement are included in this test method.

1.6 Refer to Practice D6026 for guidance concerning the use of significant figures. This is especially important if the water content will be used to calculate other relationships such as moist mass to dry mass or vice versa, wet unit weight to dry unit weight or vice versa, and total density to dry density or vice versa. For example, if four significant digits are required in any of the above calculations, then the water content has to be recorded to the nearest 0.1 %. This occurs since 1 plus the water content (not in percent) will have four significant digits regardless of what the value of the water content is; that is, 1 plus 0.1/100 = 1.001, a value with four significant digits. While, if three significant digits are acceptable, then the water content can be recorded to the nearest 1 %.

1.7 *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. See Section 7.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

D653 Terminology Relating to Soil, Rock, and Contained Fluids

D2216 Test Methods for Laboratory Determination of Water (Moisture) Content of Soil and Rock by Mass

D3740 Practice for Minimum Requirements for Agencies Engaged in Testing and/or Inspection of Soil and Rock as Used in Engineering Design and Construction

D4753 Guide for Evaluating, Selecting, and Specifying Balances and Standard Masses for Use in Soil, Rock, and Construction Materials Testing

D6026 Practice for Using Significant Digits in Geotechnical Data

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions:*

3.1.1 All definitions are in accordance with Terminology D653.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.2.1 *microwave heating*—a process by which heat is induced within a material due to the interaction between dipolar molecules of the material and an alternating, high frequency electric field. Microwaves are electromagnetic waves with 1 mm to 1 m wavelengths.

3.2.2 *water (moisture) content*—the ratio, expressed as a percentage, of the mass of “pore” or “free” water in a given mass of soil to the mass of the solid particles.

¹ 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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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. DOI: 10.1520/D4643-08.