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FIRE TESTS OF ROOF COVERINGS 1976

NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

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See Inside Back Cover for Official NFPA Definitions

Standard Methods of

Fire Tests of Roof Coverings

NFPA No. 256 — 1976

1976 Edition of No. 256

This edition of Standard Methods of Fire Tests of Roof Coverings was officially adopted by the National Fire Protection Association at its Annual Meeting on May 19, 1976. This edition represents a complete revision of the standard which supersedes the 1970 edition.

Origin and Development of 256

The test procedure covered by this standard was developed prior to 1920 by Underwriters Laboratories Inc. The test procedure was put in standard form by the E5 Committee of the American Society for Testing and Materials, adopted by ASTM as a tentative standard in 1955 and revised in 1956. It was adopted by the NFPA May 22, 1958, on recommendation of the Committee on Fire Tests and was subsequently published as NFPA No. 256 — May 1958. It was adopted by ASTM as a standard later in 1958 and published by ASTM as E108–58. It was also published by Underwriters Laboratories Inc., as No. 790, September 1958. Revised NFPA editions have been published in 1964, 1970, and 1976.

Report of Committee on Fire Tests

Jack A. Bono, *Chairman*
Underwriters Laboratories Inc., 333 Pfingsten Rd., Northbrook, IL 60062

M. S. Abrams, Portland Cement Association
Irwin A. Benjamin, National Bureau of Standards
James R. Bercaw, duPont Company, Wilmington, DE (rep. Man-Made Fiber Producers Assoc.)
John A. Blair, E. I. duPont de Nemours & Co., Plastics Dept., Society of the Plastics Industry
Herbert B. Carlsen, Gypsum Assn.
Robert W. Dougherty, M & M Protection Consultants
Buell B. Dutton (rep. Building Officials & Code Administrators International, Inc.)
Richard G. Gewain, American Iron & Steel Institute
George B. Krumholz, Jr., U.S. Testing Co., Inc. (vote restricted to matters pertaining to textiles)
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T. P. Pritsker, The Dallas Laboratories
Dr. A. F. Robertson, Institute of Applied Technology, National Bureau of Standards
John Ed Ryan, National Forest Products Assn.
Louis Segal, Office of State Fire Marshal, Los Angeles, CA (rep. Fire Marshals Assn. of North America)
Herman Spaeth, ISO
K. Sumi, National Research Council of Canada
Louis W. Vaughan, Canadian Sheet Steel Building Institute

Alternates

J. S. Barritt, Industrial Risk Insurers (Alternate to E. E. Miller)
David E. Brackett, Gypsum Assn. (Alternate to Herbert B. Carlsen)
R. Buchan, National Forest Products Assn. (Alternate to John Ed Ryan)
B. J. Callahan, Factory Mutual Engineering (Alternate to W. F. Maroni)
Peter McOrmand, ISO (Alternate to Herman Spaeth)
G. M. Watson, American Insurance Assn. (Alternate to Gerald E. Lingenfelter)

Nonvoting Member

A. J. Bartosic, Rohm & Haas Co.

This list represents the membership at the time the Committee was balloted on the text of this edition. Since that time, changes in the membership may have occurred.

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Interpretation Procedure of the Committee on Fire Tests

Those desiring an interpetation shall supply the Chairman with five identical copies of a statement in which shall appear specific reference to a single problem, paragraph, or section. Such a statement shall be on the business stationery of the inquirer and shall be duly signed.

When applications involve actual field situations they shall so state and all parties involved shall be named.

The Interpretation Committee will reserve the prerogative to refuse consideration of any application that refers specifically to proprietary items of equipment or devices. Generally inquiries should be confined to interpretation of the literal text or the intent thereof.

Requests for interpretation should be addressed to the National Fire Protection Association, 470 Atlantic Avenue, Boston, MA 02210.

Standard Methods of
Fire Tests of Roof Coverings

NFPA 256–1976

Chapter 1 General

1-1 Scope.

1-1.1 These methods are intended to measure the relative fire characteristics of roof coverings under simulated fire originating outside the building. They shall be applicable to roof coverings intended for installation on either combustible or noncombustible decks, when applied as intended for use. The following methods are included:

(a) Intermittent Flame Exposure Test (*see Chapter 5*).

(b) Spread of Flame Test (*see Chapter 6*).

(c) Burning Brand Test (*see Chapter 7*).

(d) Flying Brand Test (*see Chapter 8*).

(e) Rain Test[1] (*see Chapter 9*).

1-1.2 Three classes of fire test exposure are described:

1-1.2.1 Class A tests shall be applicable to roof coverings which are effective against severe test exposure, afford a high degree of fire protection to the roof deck, do not slip from position, and do not present a flying brand hazard.

1-1.2.2 Class B tests shall be applicable to roof coverings which are effective against moderate test exposure, afford a moderate degree of fire protection to the roof deck, do not slip from position, and do not present a flying brand hazard.

1-1.2.3 Class C tests shall be applicable to roof coverings which are effective against light test exposure, afford a light degree of fire protection to the roof deck, do not slip from position, and do not present a flying brand hazard.

1-1.3 It is the intent of the tests to indicate relative performance of materials under the test exposure involved. These tests shall not be construed as having determined suitability for use after fire exposure.

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[1]The rain test shall be conducted where the fire retardant characteristics of the roof covering may be adversely affected by prolonged exposure to the weather. See Appendix A.

Chapter 2 Equipment and General Test Procedures

2-1 Apparatus.

2-1.1 The essential elements of the fire test apparatus are illustrated in Fig. 1. These shall include a test roof deck A, an adjustable frame B (*see Fig. 2*) on which the test roof deck is mounted, a gas burner C as a source of flame, a wind tunnel D, an air velocity meter[1], a gas pressure gauge, a control valve, and a variable speed blower.

2-1.2 Figure 3 illustrates the essential elements of the rain test apparatus.

2-2 Test Flame. Control of the shape and size of the flame depends upon minimizing air turbulence in the immediate vicinity of the apparatus. To do this it is important that:

(a) Free outlet to outside air beyond and above the test apparatus so as to exhaust air introduced into the test room by the blower shall be provided, and

(b) All openings into the test room other than those mentioned in 2-1.1, such as doors and windows shall be closed.

2-3 Supply Air. The temperature of the air supplied by the blower shall be maintained between 50° and 90°F.

[1]Any instrument which permits reading velocity directly without the use of a timing device shall be suitable.

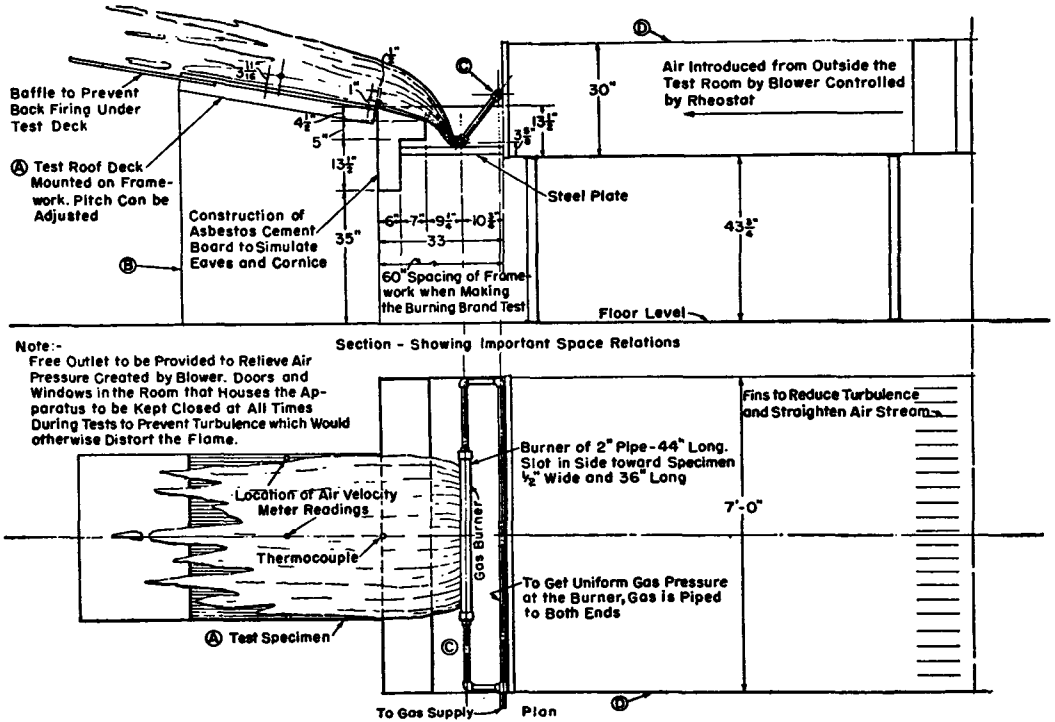


Fig. 1. Schematic Drawing of Fire Test Apparatus.

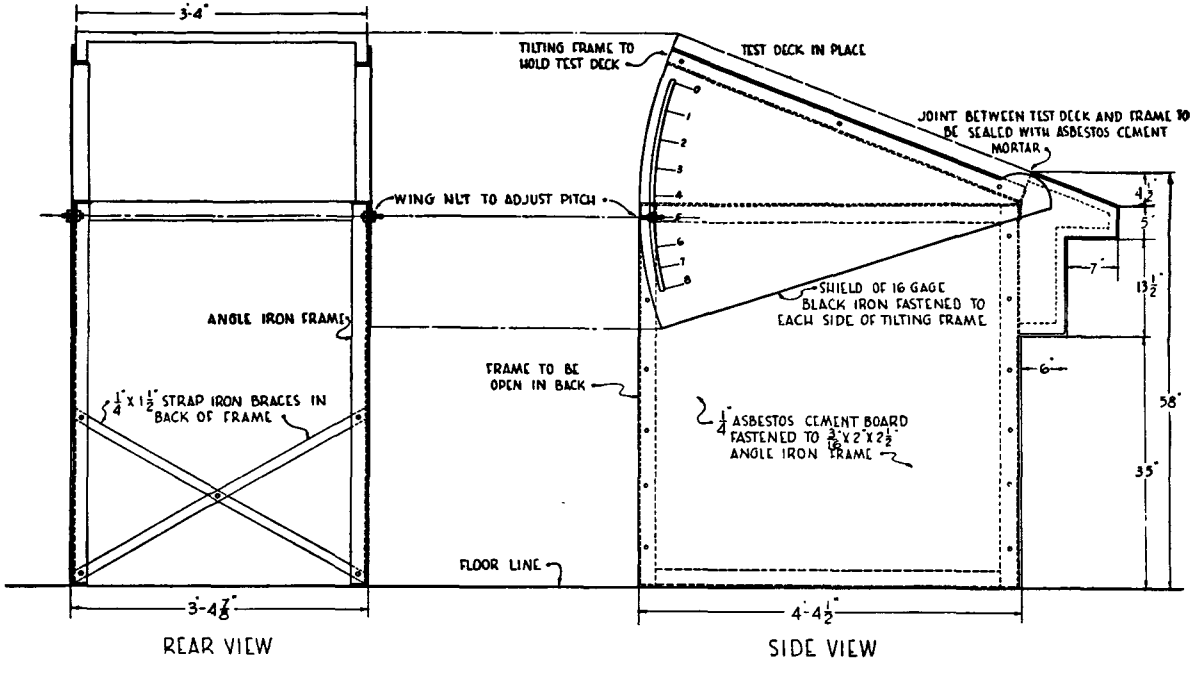


Fig. 2. Detail of Tilting Frame to Hold Test Roof Deck.

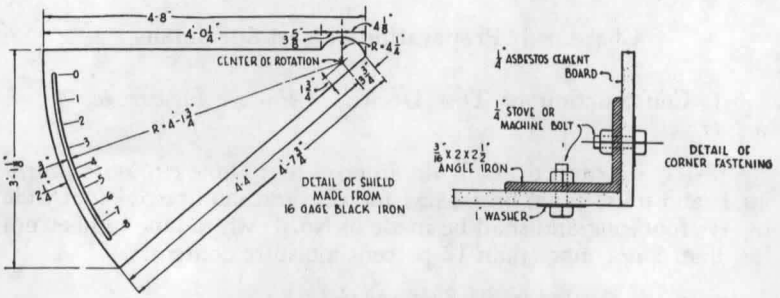


Fig. 2. (Continued). Detail of Tilting Frame to Hold Test Roof Deck.

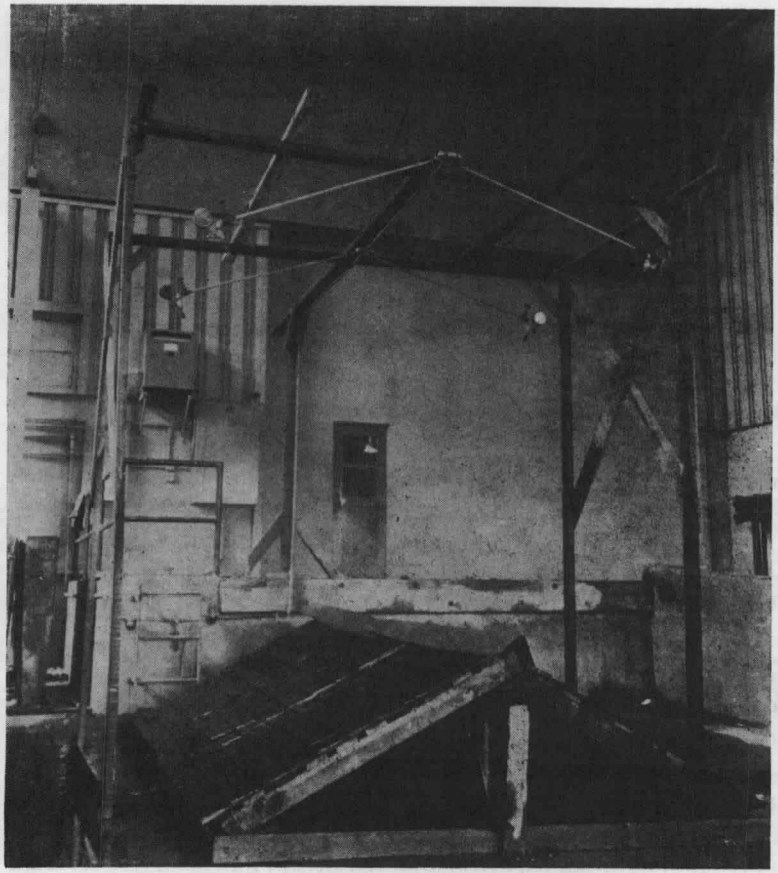


Fig. 3. Rain Test Apparatus.

Chapter 3 Preparation of Test Specimens

3-1 Construction of Test Decks. (*Also see Figures 4a, 4b, 4c and 4d.*)

3-1.1 The test deck for the intermittent flame exposure, burning brand tests, flying brand test and rain test shall be 3⅓ foot wide by 4⅓ foot long and shall be made of No. 1, white pine lumber not less than 8 nor more than 12 percent moisture content.

Exception: As specified in 3-1.2 through 3-1.5.

3-1.1.1 The lumber shall be free from large or loose knots, sapwood, rot, or pitchpockets, and shall contain no edge knots.

3-1.1.2 Individual deck boards shall be of nominal 1 by 8 inch lumber (S4S).

3-1.1.3 The boards shall be laid across the shorter dimension of the test deck space ¼ inch apart and shall be securely nailed to two nominal 2- by 4-inch wood battens located under and flush with the outer edges of the deck (Figure 4).

3-1.1.4 Decks so constructed shall be even and uniform.

3-1.2 Where the roof covering is intended to be installed over other than solid deck, the test decks shall be constructed of nominal 1- by 4-inch lumber (S4S) spaced a minimum of 1⅝ inches apart and shall be securely nailed to two nominal 2- by 4-inch wood battens. The lumber shall be of the same quality as specified in 3-1.1.

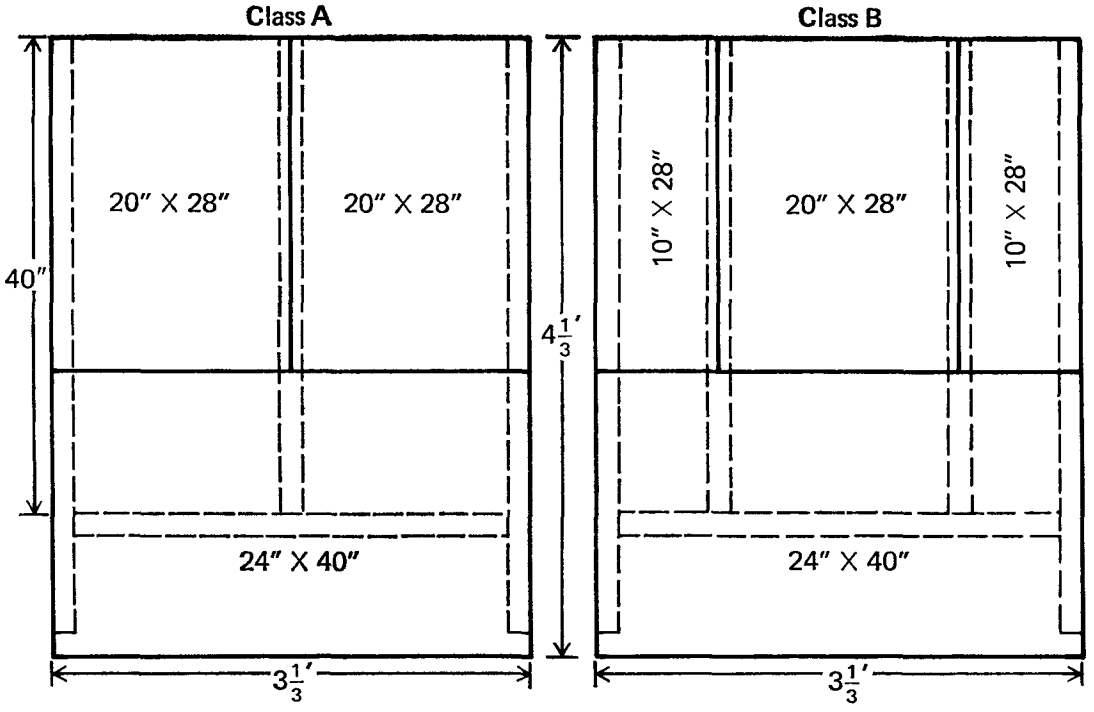
3-1.3 Roof covering may be applied to other test decks of the minimum thickness recommended by the manufacturer. *This deviation shall be noted in the report.*

3-1.3.1 Plywood, if used, shall be Exterior Type C-C Plugged or higher grade, conforming to U.S. Product Standard PS1-74 for Construction and Industrial Plywood.

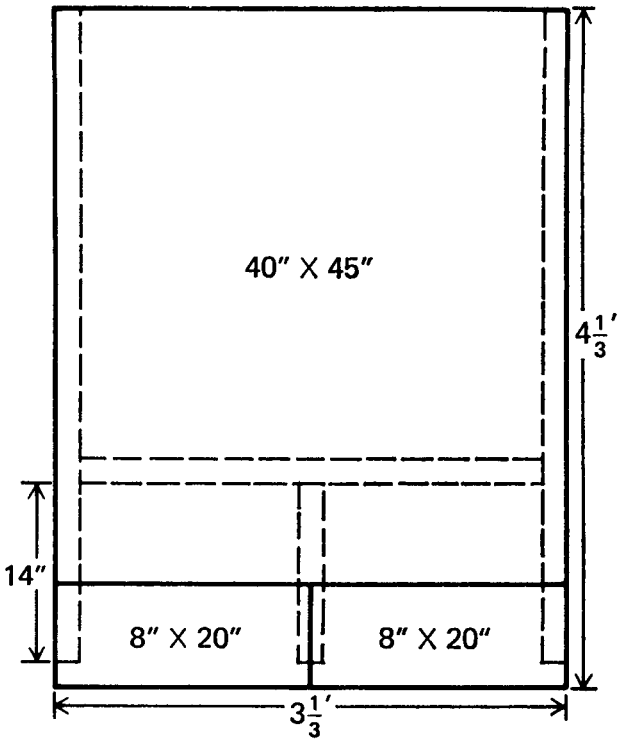
3-1.3.2 These decks shall have ⅛-inch vertical and horizontal joints located as specified in 3-1.1.3 with all vertical joints centered on nominal 2- by 4-inch wood battens.

3-1.3.3 If wood battens or tongue and groove joints are specified for horizontal joints, this shall be so noted in reporting the tests.

3-1.4 The decks for intermittent flame tests shall have a ⅛-inch horizontal joint 8 inches from and parallel to the 3⅓ foot long leading edge.



Figs. 4(a) and 4(b). Plywood Decks — Burning Brand Tests.
Plywood overhangs 2 x 4s by 1¼ inches at leading edge. 2 x 4 supports are indicated by dotted lines.
Plywood joint width — ⅛ inch.



Plywood overhangs 2 x 4s by 1¼ inches at leading edge.
2 x 4 supports are indicated by dotted lines.
Plywood joint width — ⅛ inch.

Fig. 4(c). Plywood Deck — Intermittent Flame Test Class A or Class B.

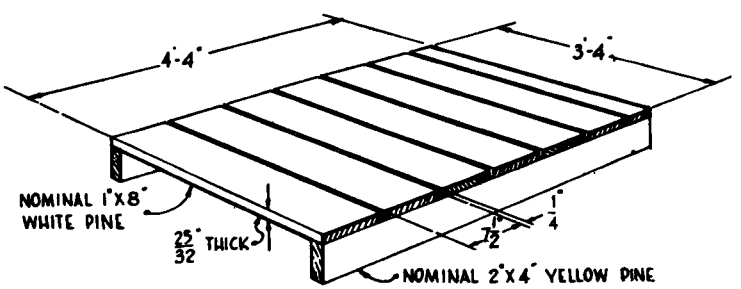


Fig. 4(d). Construction of Test Deck for other than Wood Shingles and Shakes.

3-1.4.1 In addition, a ⅛-inch vertical joint centered on the deck and extending from the leading edge of the deck to the ⅛-inch horizontal joint shall be provided.

3-1.4.2 Since the lower 1½ inches of this joint are not protected by the 2- by 4-inch batten, due to the mounting arrangement on the carriage, the underside of this joint shall be covered from the end of the 2 by 4 to the leading edge of the deck by a piece of sheet steel, 2 inches in width.

3-1.5 For Class A and Class B burning brand tests on decks other than 1- by 8-inch nominal lumber, the ⅛-inch horizontal joint shall be 24 inches from and parallel to the leading edge of the deck.

3-1.5.1 Class A test decks shall have a ⅛-inch vertical joint centered on the deck which extends above the horizontal joint.

3-1.5.2 For Class B test decks, two ⅛-inch vertical joints, extending above the horizontal joint with each vertical joint located 10 inches from and parallel to the edge of the deck shall be provided.

3-1.5.3 For Class C burning brand test, five evenly spaced horizontal joints, with a minimum width of ⅛ inch between joints in the plywood shall be provided.

3-1.6 For the spread of flame test, the test deck shall be constructed in the same manner as specified for the intermittent flame test, and shall be 3⅓ feet wide and 13 feet long. If the roof covering is intended to be applied only to plywood decks, two vertical joints, ⅛ inch wide, centered vertically on the deck and extending from 8 feet above the leading edge to 12 feet above the leading edge shall be provided.

3-2 Application of Roofing on Test Roof Deck.

3-2.1 Representative samples of roof covering materials for Class A tests shall be applied to 16 test decks (two each for intermittent flame, spread of flame, and flying brand tests, four for the burning brand test and six for the rain test).

3-2.2 Representative samples of roof covering materials for Class B or Class C tests shall be applied to 14 test decks (two each for the spread of flame, intermittent flame, burning brand and flying brand tests and six for the rain test).

3-2.3 The roof covering materials under investigation shall be applied in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and shall extend to and shall be flush with the edges of the deck.

Exception: A 1-inch overhang is permitted at the leading edge.

3-2.4 The materials shall be applied to the test decks not less than 30 days nor more than 60 days after their manufacture into a finished product.

3-3 Storage and Conditioning of Test Roof Decks.

3-3.1 The completed test roof deck shall be stored indoors for not more than 60 days at temperatures not lower than 60°F nor more than 90°F.

3-3.2 In order to insure conformance with moisture content, a piece of lumber of the same sheathing stock from which the test was constructed shall be tacked to the assembly in such a manner that it can be easily removed just before the deck is tested; it shall be large enough to be oven tested for moisture content[1] in accordance with Section 3-1.1.

3-3.3 The test roof decks shall be stored so that each will be surrounded by freely circulating air.

[1]The moisture determination shall be made on two pieces about 3 in. square cut from the selected sample, after at least 2 in. has been removed from the end. These shall be dried at 212°F to 220°F for not less than 16 nor more than 24 hours. The weight of the sample before and after drying shall be recorded. The moisture content shall be calculated on the basis of the dried weight.

Chapter 4 General Conditions

4-1 The intermittent flame exposure test, the spread of flame test, the burning brand test, the rain test, and the flying brand test shall be conducted on all roof coverings. (*See Chapter 9 for rain test requirements.*)

4-2 In all of the fire tests described below, mortar (asbestos-fibered gypsum and water) shall be troweled into the joint formed by the leading edge of the roof covering material and the framework of the carriage. This is to prevent air or the test flame from traveling under the material being tested.

4-3 In these tests, all decks shall be subjected to an air current which flows uniformly over the top surface of the roof covering. The velocity of the air current shall be $12 \pm \frac{1}{2}$ miles per hour at points midway up the surface of the roof covering.

4-4 Prepared roof coverings shall be tested at a slope of 5 inches per horizontal foot.

4-5 Built-up roof coverings shall be tested at the maximum slope recommended by the manufacturer but not to exceed 5 inches per horizontal foot.

4-6 The slope used shall be noted in the report.

Chapter 5 Intermittent Flame Exposure Test

5-1 General. This test shall be performed on a minimum of two test decks.

NOTE: Where the roof covering materials exhibit a variable performance, more than two test decks shall be required.

5-2 Procedure.

5-2.1 A test deck 4 feet 4 inches long shall be mounted on the framework at the required incline (*see 4-4 through 4-6*) and the blower shall be adjusted to produce the specified air current.

5-2.2 The test deck shall be subjected to a luminous gas flame which is approximately the width of the deck at its bottom edge and which uniformly bathes the top surface of the material being tested.

Exception: The two upper corners of the top surface may not be uniformly bathed by the luminous gas flame.

5-2.3 The gas supply shall be regulated so that the flame develops a temperature of 1400 ± 50°F in Class A and Class B tests and 1300 ± 50°F in Class C tests.

5-2.4 The temperature shall be determined by a No. 14 B&S gauge chromel-alumel wire thermocouple located 1 inch above the surface and ½ inch toward the source of flame from the lower edge of the first board of the test deck.

5-2.5 If the conditions in 5-2.1 through 5-2.4 are satisfied, the flame will extend approximately to the upper edge of the test deck with licks of flame extending approximately another 1 to 2 feet.

5-3 Application of Flame. The flame shall be applied intermittently for the specified periods and specified time intervals between applications, as indicated below.

Method of Test	Flame On, min.	Flame Off, min.	No. of Test Cycles
Class A	2	2	15
Class B	2	1	8
Class C	1	2	3

5-4 Air Current. The air current shall be maintained throughout the test and after the last application of flame until all evidence of flame, glow and smoke has disappeared from both the exposed surface of the material being tested and the underside of the test deck, or until failure occurs.

5-5 Observations. During and after the intermittent flame test, including "on" and "off" periods of flame application, observations shall be made for the appearance of sustained flaming on the underside of the test deck, production of flaming or glowing brands, displacement of portions of the test sample, and exposure or falling away of portions of the roof deck.

Chapter 6 Spread of Flame Test

6-1 General. This test shall be performed on a minimum of two test decks.

NOTE: Where the roof covering materials exhibit a variable performance, more than two test decks shall be required.

6-2 Procedure. A 13 foot long test deck shall be mounted in the same manner, and a luminous gas flame shall be used as described for both in 5-2 for the intermittent flame tests.

6-3 Application of Flame.

6-3.1 For Class A and Class B tests, the gas flame shall be applied continuously for 10 min. or until the flame (actual flaming of the material being tested) permanently recedes from a point of maximum spread, whichever is the shorter.

6-3.2 For Class C test the gas flame shall be applied for a period of 4 minutes and then removed.

6-4 Observations. During and after the application of the test flame, observations of the test sample shall be made for the distance to which flaming of the material has spread, production of flaming or glowing brands, and displacement of portions of the test sample.

Chapter 7 Burning Brand Test

7-1 General. This test shall be performed on a minimum of four test decks for Class A fire test exposure and two test decks for Class B or Class C fire test exposure.

NOTE: Where the roof covering materials exhibit a variable performance, more than the minimum number of test decks shall be required.

7-2 Procedure. A 4⅓ foot long test deck shall be mounted in the same manner as described in 5-2 for the intermittent flame test.

Exception: The framework shall be 60 inches from the air duct outlet (see Figure 1) and the gas piping and burner shall be removed so as not to obstruct the air flow.

7-3 Size and Construction of Brands.

7-3.1 General. The brands (as shown by Figure 5) shall be constructed as follows, and shall be conditioned in an oven at 105°F to 120°F for at least 24 hours.

7-3.2 Class A Test Brand.

7-3.2.1 The Class A test brand shall consist of a grid 12 inches square and approximately 2¼ inches thick, made of dry Douglas fir lumber free from knots and pitchpockets.

7-3.2.2 Thirty-six (36), nominal 1- by 1- by 12-inch strips, dressed on all four sides to ¾ by ¾ inch and placed in three layers of 12 strips each, with strips spaced ¼ inch apart shall be used.

7-3.2.3 These strips shall be placed at right angles to those in adjoining layers and shall be nailed[1] at each end of each strip on one face and in a diagonal pattern (as shown in Figure 5) on the other face.

7-3.2.4 The dry weight of the finished brand shall be 2000±150 grams at time of test.

7-3.3 Class B Test Brand.

7-3.3.1 The Class B brand shall consist of a grid 6 inches square and approximately 2¼ inches thick, made of dry Douglas fir lumber free from knots and pitchpockets.

[1]Nails used in the construction of Class A and B brands shall be No. 16, 1½ inches long bright, flat head, diamond-point, wire nails. Sixty-eight nails weighing approximately 42 g. shall be used for Class A brand and 32 nails weighing approximately 21 g. shall be used for the Class B brand.

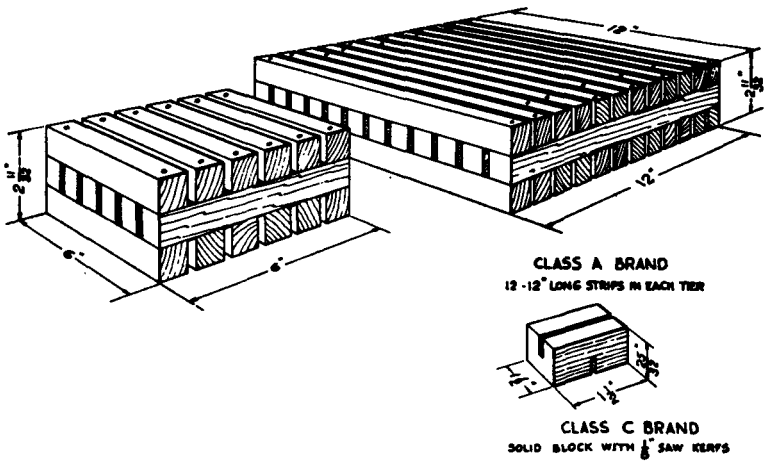


Fig. 5. Brands for Classes A, B, and C Tests.

7-3.3.2 Eighteen (18), nominal 1- by 1- by 6-inch strips, dressed on all four faces to ¾ by ¾ inch and placed in three layers of six strips each, with strips placed ¼ inch apart shall be used.

7-3.3.3 These strips shall be placed at right angles to those in adjoining layers and shall be nailed[1] at each end of each strip on one face and in a diagonal pattern (as shown in Figure 5) on the other face.

7-3.4 Class C Test Brand.

7-3.4.1 The Class C test brand shall consist of a piece of dry nonresinous white pine lumber, free from knots and pitchpockets, 1½ by 1½ by $^{25}/_{32}$ inch thick with a saw kerf ⅛ inch wide, ½ the thickness of the brand across the center of the top and bottom faces.

7-3.4.2 The saw kerf on opposite faces shall be at right angles to each other.

7-3.4.3 The dry weight of the finished brand shall be 9¼±1¼ gram at time of test.

7-4 Ignition of Brands.

7-4.1 Before application to the test deck, the brands shall be ignited so as to burn freely in still air.

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[1]Nails used in the construction of Class A and B brands shall be No. 16, 1½ inches long bright, flat head, diamond-point, wire nails. Sixty-eight nails weighing approximately 42 g. shall be used for Class A brand and 32 nails weighing approximately 21 g. shall be used for the Class B brand.

7-4.2 They shall be considered to be free burning after they have been subjected to the flame of a gas burner of such size that, during the process of ignition, the brands are nearly enveloped in the burner flame.

7-4.3 The flame temperature of the igniting flame shall be 1630±50°F and shall be measured 2 5/16 inches above the top of the burner, which shall be shielded from drafts.

7-4.4 The test brands shall be subjected to the required size of flame of the gas burner for the following required periods of time:

(a) Class A test brands shall be exposed to the flame for 5 minutes, during which time they shall be rotated so as to present each surface to the flame in the following manner and sequence:

Each 12- by 12-inch face for 30 seconds.

Each 2¼- by 12-inch face for 45 seconds.

Each 12- by 12-inch face again for 30 seconds.

(b) Class B test brands shall be exposed to the flame for 4 minutes, during which time they shall be rotated so as to present each surface to the flame in the following manner and sequence:

Each 6- by 6-inch face for 30 seconds.

Each 2¼- by 6-inch face for 30 seconds.

Each 6- by 6-inch face again for 30 seconds.

(c) Class C test brands shall be exposed to the flame for 2 minutes, during which time they shall be rotated so as to present each of the 1½- by 1½-inch faces to the flame for 1 minute.

7-5 Test Conditions.

7-5.1 Class A Tests.

7-5.1.1 A brand shall be placed on the surface of each test deck at the location considered most vulnerable (point of minimum coverage over deck joint) with respect to ignition of the deck but in no case shall it be closer than 4 inches from either side or 12 inches from the top or bottom edge of the deck.

7-5.1.2 The brand shall be placed so that the strips in both the upper and lower layers are parallel to the direction of air flow and the upper edge of the brand shall be located 3 inches above the horizontal joint in the test deck.

7-5.1.3 The brand shall be secured to the deck by a No. 18 B&S gauge soft iron wire.

7-5.1.4 If the roof covering is being investigated as applied to plywood or other panel type decks, the brand shall be placed so that it is centered laterally with respect to the vertical panel joint in the test deck, and the upper edge of the brand shall be located 3 inches above the horizontal panel joint in the test deck.

7-5.2 Class B Tests.

7-5.2.1 A brand shall be placed on the surface of the test deck at each of the two locations considered most vulnerable (point of minimum coverage over deck joint) with respect to ignition of the deck.

7-5.2.2 Each brand shall be positioned with its upper edge 1½ inches above the selected joint in the deck boards, but in no case shall it be closer than 6 inches from each side or 12 inches from the top or bottom edge of the deck.

7-5.2.3 The brands shall be placed so that the strips in both the upper and lower layers are parallel to the direction of air flow.

7-5.2.4 The brands shall be secured to the deck by a No. 18 B&S gauge soft iron wire.

7-5.2.5 The second brand shall be applied 30 minutes after placing of the first brand or sooner if all burning resulting from the first brand has ceased.

7-5.2.6 If the roof covering is applied to plywood or other panel type decks, the brands shall be placed so that they are centered laterally with respect to the vertical panel joints in the test deck, and the upper edge of the brands shall be located 1½ inches above the horizontal panel joint in the test deck.

7-5.3 Class C Tests.

7-5.3.1 At 1- to 2-minute intervals, a brand shall be placed on the surface of the test deck at each of 25 locations considered most vulnerable (points of minimum coverage over deck joints) with respect to ignition of the deck.

7-5.3.2 Each brand shall be positioned with its upper edge ½ inch above the selected joint in the deck boards but in no case shall it be closer than 6 inches from each side or 12 inches from the top or bottom edge of the deck.

7-5.3.3 No brand shall be placed closer than 4 inches to the point where a previous brand was located.

7-5.3.4 The brands shall be secured by a No. 18 B &S gauge soft iron wire stretched across the width of the deck and placed in the saw kerf of the brand; the saw kerf on the deck side of the brand shall be parallel to the direction of air flow.

7-5.3.5 In addition to the above, when the roof covering is comprised of the lapped courses, no brand shall be placed closer than ½ inch from the bottom edge of the lapped course above nor shall it be closer than 2 inches to a joint in the roof covering material in the same course. Loose or unfastened portion of the roof covering which can be bent up to 90 degrees without injury to fastenings holding other portions of roof covering shall be cut away.

7-5.3.6 If the roof covering is applied to plywood or other panel type decks, the brands shall be placed so that as many of the 25 brands as possible are centered over panel joints in the test deck.

7-6 Duration of the Test. Each individual test, whether it be a Class A, Class B, or Class C, shall be continued until the brand is totally consumed and until all evidence of flame, glow, and smoke has disappeared from both the exposed surface of the material being tested and the underside of the test deck, or until failure occurs.

7-7 Test Results.

7-7.1 The results of tests shall be disregarded in which the brands do not show progressive and substantially complete consumption after application to the test deck.

7-7.2 If brands are replaced, they shall not be located in the same area as the disregarded brand.

7-8 Observations. During and after the burning brand tests, observations for the appearance of sustained flaming on the underside of the test deck, production of flaming or glowing brands of roof covering material, displacement of the test sample, and the exposure or falling away of portions of the roof deck shall be made.

Chapter 8 Flying Brand Test

8-1 General. This test shall be performed on a minimum of two test decks.

8-2 Procedure. A test deck, 4 feet 4 inches long, shall be mounted in the same manner and luminous gas flame shall be used as described in 5-2 for the intermittent flame test.

8-3 Application of Flame.

8-3.1 The Class A and Class B test gas flame shall be applied continuously for 10 minutes.

8-3.2 The Class C test flame shall be applied continuously for 4 minutes.

8-4 Air Current. Maintain the 12 mph air current until all evidence of flame, glow, and smoke has disappeared from the exposed surface of the material being tested to determine if flying brands will be developed.