DETERMINING THE ASPHALT BINDER CONTENT OF ASPHALT MIXTURES BY THE IGNITION METHOD
FOP FOR AASHTO T 308

Scope

This procedure covers the determination of asphalt binder content of asphalt mixtures by ignition of the binder in accordance with AASHTO T 308-18.

Overview

The sample is heated in a furnace at 538°C (1000°F) or less; samples may be heated by convection or direct infrared irradiation (IR). The aggregate remaining after burning can be used for sieve analysis using the FOP for AASHTO T 30.

Some agencies allow the use of recycled asphalt mixtures. When using recycled asphalt mixtures, check with the agency for specific correction procedures.

Asphalt binder in the asphalt mixture is ignited in a furnace. Asphalt binder content is calculated as the percentage difference between the initial mass of the asphalt mixture and the mass of the residual aggregate, with the asphalt binder correction factor, and moisture content subtracted. The asphalt binder content is expressed as percent of moisture-free mix mass.

Two methods, A and B, are presented.

Apparatus

Note 1: The apparatus must be calibrated for the specific mix design. See "Correction Factors" at the end of this FOP.

The apparatus for the Methods A and B is the same except that the furnace for Method A requires an internal balance.

- Ignition Furnace: A forced-air ignition furnace that heats the specimens by either the convection or direct IR irradiation method. The convection-type furnace must be capable of maintaining the temperature at $538 \pm 5°C$ ($1000 \pm 9°F$).

  For Method A, the furnace will be equipped with an internal scale thermally isolated from the furnace chamber and accurate to 0.1 g. The scale shall be capable of determining the mass of a 3500 g sample in addition to the sample baskets. A data collection system will be included so that mass can be automatically determined and displayed during the test. The furnace shall have a built-in computer program to calculate the change in mass of the sample baskets and provide for the input of a correction factor for aggregate loss. The furnace shall provide a printed ticket with the initial specimen mass, specimen mass loss, temperature compensation, correction factor, corrected asphalt binder content, test time, and test temperature. The furnace shall

provide an audible alarm and indicator light when the sample mass loss does not exceed 0.01 percent of the total sample mass for three consecutive minutes. Perform lift test according to manufacturer's instructions weekly during use, if applicable.

Note 2: The furnace shall be designed to permit the operator to change the ending mass loss percentage from 0.01 percent to 0.02 percent.

For both Method A and Method B, the furnace chamber dimensions shall be adequate to accommodate a 3500 g sample. The furnace door shall be equipped so that it cannot be opened during the ignition test. A method for reducing furnace emissions shall be provided and the furnace shall be vented so that no emissions escape into the laboratory. The furnace shall have a fan to pull air through the furnace to expedite the test and to eliminate the escape of smoke into the laboratory.

- Sample Basket Assembly: consisting of sample basket(s), catch pan, and basket guards. Sample basket(s) will be of appropriate size allowing samples to be thinly spread and allowing air to flow through and around the sample particles. Sets of two or more baskets shall be nested. A catch pan: of sufficient size to hold the sample basket(s) so that aggregate particles and melting asphalt binder falling through the screen mesh are caught. Basket guards will completely enclose the basket and be made of screen mesh, perforated stainless steel plate, or other suitable material.

- Thermometer, or other temperature measuring device, with a temperature range of 10 - 260°C (50-500°F).

- Oven capable of maintaining 110 ±5°C (230 ±9°F).

- Balance or scale: Capacity sufficient for the sample mass and conforming to the requirements of M 231, Class G2.

- **Safety equipment**: Safety glasses or face shield, high temperature gloves, long sleeved jacket, a heat resistant surface capable of withstanding 650°C (1202°F), a protective cage capable of surrounding the sample baskets during the cooling period, and a particle mask for use during removal of the sample from the basket assembly.

- Miscellaneous equipment: A pan larger than the sample basket(s) for transferring sample after ignition, spatulas, bowls, and wire brushes.

Sampling

1. Obtain samples of asphalt mixture in accordance with the FOP for AASHTO T 168.

2. Reduce asphalt mixture samples in accordance with the FOP for AASHTO R 47.

3. If the mixture is not sufficiently soft to separate with a spatula or trowel, place it in a large flat pan in an oven at 110 ±5°C (230 ±9°F) until soft enough.

4. Test sample size shall conform to the mass requirement shown in Table 1.

> *Note 3:* When the mass of the test specimen exceeds the capacity of the equipment used or for large samples of fine mixes, the test specimen may be divided into suitable increments, tested, and the results appropriately combined through a weighted average for calculation of the asphalt binder content.

Table 1

Nominal Maximum Aggregate Size* mm (in.)	Minimum Mass Specimen g	Maximum Mass Specimen g
37.5 (1 ½)	4000	4500
25.0 (1)	3000	3500
19.0 (3/4)	2000	2500
12.5 (1/2)	1500	2000
9.5 (3/8)	1200	1700
4.75 (No. 4)	1200	1700

* One sieve larger than the first sieve to retain more than 10 percent of the material using an agency specified set of sieves based on cumulative percent retained. Where large gaps in specification sieves exist, intermediate sieve(s) may be inserted to determine nominal maximum size.

Procedure – Method A (Internal Balance)

1. For the convection-type furnace, preheat the ignition furnace to $538 \pm 5°C$ ($1000 \pm 9°F$) or to the temperature determined in the "Correction Factor" section, Step 9 of this method. Manually record the furnace temperature (set point) before the initiation of the test if the furnace does not record automatically. For the direct IR irradiation-type furnace, use the same burn profile as used during the correction factor determination.

2. Dry the sample to constant mass, according to the FOP for AASHTO T 329; or determine the moisture content of a companion sample in accordance with the FOP for AASHTO T 329.

3. Determine and record the mass to the nearest 0.1 g of the sample basket assembly.

4. Evenly distribute the sample in the sample basket assembly, taking care to keep the material away from the edges of the basket. Use a spatula or trowel to level the sample.

5. Determine and record the total mass of the sample and sample basket assembly at room temperature to the nearest 0.1 g. Calculate and record the initial mass of the sample (total mass minus the mass of the sample basket assembly) to the nearest 0.1 g. Designate this mass as (M_i).

6. Record the correction factor or input into the furnace controller for the specific asphalt mixture.

7. Input the initial mass of the sample (M_i) into the ignition furnace controller. Verify that the correct mass has been entered.

    CAUTION: Operator should wear safety equipment – high temperature gloves, face shield, fire-retardant shop coat – when opening the door to load or unload the sample.

8. Open the chamber door and gently set the sample basket assembly in the furnace. Carefully position the sample basket assembly so it is not in contact with the furnace wall. Close the chamber door and verify that the sample mass displayed on the furnace scale equals the total mass of the sample and sample basket assembly recorded in Step 5 within ±5 g.

    Note 4: Furnace temperature will drop below the set point when the door is opened, but will recover when the door is closed and ignition begins. Sample ignition typically increases the temperature well above the set point – relative to sample size and asphalt binder content.

9. Initiate the test by pressing the start button. This will lock the sample chamber and start the combustion blower.

    Safety note: Do not attempt to open the furnace door until the asphalt binder has been completely burned off.

10. Allow the test to continue until the stable light and audible stable indicator indicate that the change in mass does not exceed 0.01 percent for three consecutive minutes. Press the stop button. This will unlock the sample chamber and cause the printer to print out the test results.

    Note 5: An ending mass loss percentage of 0.02 may be used, if allowed by the agency, when aggregate that exhibits an excessive amount of loss during ignition testing is used.

11. Open the chamber door, remove the sample basket assembly, and place on the cooling plate or block. Place the protective cage over the sample basket assembly and allow it to cool to room temperature (approximately 30 minutes).

12. Determine and record the total after ignition mass to the nearest 0.1 g. Calculate and record the mass of the sample, after ignition (total after ignition mass minus the mass of the sample basket assembly) to the nearest 0.1 g. Designate this mass as M_f.

13. Use the asphalt binder content percentage from the printed ticket. Subtract the moisture content from the printed ticket asphalt binder content and report the difference as the corrected asphalt binder content.

    Asphalt binder content percentage can also be calculated using the formula from "Method B" Step 16.

Calculation

Corrected asphalt binder content:

$$P_b = BC - MC - C_f{}^*$$

*If correction factor is not entered into the furnace controller

where:

P_b = the corrected asphalt binder content as a percent by mass of the asphalt mixture

BC = asphalt binder content shown on printed ticket

MC = moisture content of the companion asphalt mixture sample, percent, as determined by the FOP for AASHTO T 329 (if the specimen was oven-dried before initiating the procedure, MC=0)

C_f = correction factor as a percent by mass of the asphalt mixture sample

Procedure – Method B (External Balance)

1. Preheat the ignition furnace to 538 ± 5°C (1000 ± 9°F) or to the temperature determined in the "Correction Factor" section, Step 9 of this method. Manually record the furnace temperature (set point) before the initiation of the test if the furnace does not record automatically.

2. Dry the sample to constant mass, according to the FOP for AASHTO T 329; or determine the moisture content of a companion sample in accordance with the FOP for AASHTO T 329.

3. Determine and record the mass of the sample basket assembly to the nearest 0.1 g.

4. Place the sample basket(s) in the catch pan. Evenly distribute the sample in the sample basket(s), taking care to keep the material away from the edges of the basket. Use a spatula or trowel to level the sample.

5. Determine and record the total mass of the sample and sample basket assembly at room temperature to the nearest 0.1 g. Calculate and record the initial mass of the sample (total mass minus the mass of the sample basket assembly) to the nearest 0.1 g. Designate this mass as (M_i).

6. Record the correction factor for the specific asphalt mixture.

7. Open the chamber door and gently set the sample basket assembly in the furnace. Carefully position the sample basket assembly so it is not in contact with the furnace wall. Burn the asphalt mixture sample in the furnace for 45 minutes or the length of time determined in the "Correction Factors" section.

8. Open the chamber door, remove the sample basket assembly, and place on the cooling plate or block. Place the protective cage over the sample and allow it to cool to room temperature (approximately 30 min).

9. Determine and record the total after ignition mass to the nearest 0.1 g. Calculate and record the mass of the sample, after ignition (total after ignition mass minus the mass of the sample basket assembly) to the nearest 0.1 g.

10. Place the sample basket assembly back into the furnace.

11. Burn the sample for at least 15 minutes after the furnace reaches the set temperature.

12. Open the chamber door, remove the sample basket assembly, and place on the cooling plate or block. Place the protective cage over the sample basket assembly and allow it to cool to room temperature (approximately 30 min.).

13. Determine and record the total after ignition mass to the nearest 0.1 g. Calculate and record the mass of the sample, after ignition (total after ignition mass minus the mass of the sample basket assembly) to the nearest 0.1 g.

14. Repeat Steps 10 through 13 until the change in measured mass of the sample after ignition does not exceed 0.01 percent of the previous sample mass after ignition.

   Note 6: An ending mass loss percentage of 0.02 may be used, if allowed by the agency, when aggregate that exhibits an excessive amount of loss during ignition testing is used.

15. Determine and record the total after ignition mass to the nearest 0.1 g. Calculate and record the mass of the sample, after ignition (total after ignition mass minus the mass of the sample basket assembly) to the nearest 0.1 g. Designate this mass as M_f.

16. Calculate the asphalt binder content of the sample.

Calculations

Calculate the asphalt binder content of the sample as follows:

$$P_b = \frac{M_i - M_f}{M_i} \times 100 - MC - C_f$$

where:

P_b = the corrected asphalt binder content as a percent by mass of the asphalt mixture sample

M_f = the final mass of aggregate remaining after ignition

M_i = the initial mass of the asphalt mixture sample before ignition

MC = moisture content of the companion asphalt mixture sample, percent, as determined by the FOP for AASHTO T 329 (if the specimen was oven-dried before initiating the procedure, $MC = 0$).

C_f = correction factor as a percent by mass of the asphalt mixture sample

Example

Correction Factor	= 0.42%
Moisture Content	= 0.04%
Initial Mass of Sample and Basket	= 5292.7 g
Mass of Basket Assembly	= 2931.5 g
M_i	= 2361.2 g
Total Mass after First ignition + basket	= 5154.4 g
Sample Mass after First ignition	= 2222.9 g
Sample Mass after additional 15 min ignition = 2222.7 g	

$$\frac{2222.9\ g - 2222.7\ g}{2222.9\ g} \times 100 = 0.009\%$$

Not greater than 0.01 percent, so **M_f =**   2222.7 g

$$P_b = \frac{2361.2\ g - 2222.7\ g}{2361.2\ g} \times 100 - 0.42\% - 0.04\% = 5.41\%$$

P_b= 5.41%

Gradation

1. Empty contents of the basket(s) into a flat pan, being careful to capture all material. Use a small wire brush to ensure all residual fines are removed from the baskets.

    Note 7: Particle masks are a recommended safety precaution.

2. Perform the gradation analysis in accordance with the FOP for AASHTO T 30.

Report

- Results on forms approved by the agency

- Sample ID

- Method of test (A or B)

- Corrected asphalt binder content, P_b, per agency standard

- Correction factor, C_f, to 0.01 percent

- Temperature compensation factor (Method A only)

- Total percent loss

- Sample mass

- Moisture content to 0.01%

- Test temperature

Attach the original printed ticket with all intermediate values (continuous tape) to the report for furnaces with internal balances.

Annex – Correction Factors

(Mandatory Information)

Asphalt Binder and Aggregate

Asphalt binder content results may be affected by the type of aggregate in the mixture and by the ignition furnace. Asphalt binder and aggregate correction factors must, therefore, be established by testing a set of correction specimens for each Job Mix Formula (JMF) mix design. Each ignition furnace will have its own unique correction factor determined in the location where testing will be performed.

This procedure must be performed before any acceptance testing is completed, and repeated each time there is a change in the mix ingredients or design. Any changes greater than 5 percent in stockpiled aggregate proportions should require a new correction factor.

Historical data or scientific studies may be used to determine the correction factor(s) in lieu of using this testing procedure if the testing agency provides reference to the studies/data. All correction samples will be prepared by a central / regional laboratory unless otherwise directed.

Asphalt binder correction factor: A correction factor must be established by testing a set of correction specimens for each Job Mix Formula (JMF). Certain aggregate types may result in unusually high correction factors (> 1.00 percent). Such mixes should be corrected and tested at a lower temperature as described below.

Aggregate correction factor: Due to potential aggregate breakdown during the ignition process, a correction factor will need to be determined for the following conditions:

   a.　Aggregates that have a proven history of excessive breakdown

   b.　Aggregate from an unknown source.

This correction factor will be used to adjust the acceptance gradation test results obtained according to the FOP for AASHTO T 30.

Procedure

1. Obtain samples of aggregate in accordance with the FOP for AASHTO R 90.

2. Obtain samples of asphalt binder in accordance with the FOP for AASHTO R 66.
   Note 8: Include other additives that may be required by the JMF.

3. Prepare an initial, or "butter," mix at the design asphalt binder content. Mix and discard the butter mix before mixing any of the correction specimens to ensure accurate asphalt content.

4. Prepare two correction specimens at the JMF design asphalt binder content. Aggregate used for correction specimens shall be sampled from material designated for use on the project. An agency approved method will be used to combine aggregate. An additional "blank" specimen shall be batched and tested for aggregate gradation in accordance with the FOP for AASHTO T 30. The gradation from the "blank" shall fall within the agency specified mix design tolerances.

5. Place the freshly mixed specimens directly into the sample basket assembly. If mixed specimens are allowed to cool before placement in the sample basket assembly, the specimens must be dried to constant mass according to the FOP for AASHTO T 329. Do not preheat the sample basket assembly.

6. Test the specimens in accordance with Method A or Method B of the procedure.

7. Once both of the correction specimens have been burned, determine the asphalt binder content for each specimen by calculation or from the printed oven tickets, if available.

8. If the difference between the asphalt binder contents of the two specimens exceeds 0.15 percent, repeat with two more specimens and, from the four results, discard the high and low result. Determine the correction factor from the two original or remaining results, as appropriate. Calculate the difference between the actual and measured asphalt binder contents for each specimen to 0.01 percent. The asphalt binder correction factor, C_f, is the average of the differences expressed as a percent by mass of asphalt mixture.

9. If the asphalt binder correction factor exceeds 1.00 percent, the test temperature must be lowered to $482 \pm 5°C$ ($900 \pm 9°F$) and new samples must be burned. The temperature for determining the asphalt binder content of asphalt mixture samples by this procedure shall be the same temperature determined for the correction samples.

10. For the direct IR irradiation-type burn furnaces, the **default** burn profile should be used for most materials. The operator may select burn-profile Option 1 or Option 2 to optimize the burn cycle. The burn profile for testing asphalt mixture samples shall be the same burn profile selected for correction samples.

    Option 1 is designed for aggregate that requires a large asphalt binder correction factor (greater than 1.00 percent) – typically very soft aggregate (such as dolomite).

    Option 2 is designed for samples that may not burn completely using the **default** burn profile.

11. Perform a gradation analysis on the residual aggregate in accordance with the FOP for AASHTO T 30, if required. The results will be utilized in developing an "Aggregate Correction Factor" and should be calculated and reported to 0.1 percent.

12. From the gradation results subtract the percent passing for each sieve, for each sample, from the percent passing each sieve of the "Blank" specimen gradation results from Step 4.

13. Determine the average difference of the two values. If the difference for any single sieve exceeds the allowable difference of that sieve as listed in Table 2, then aggregate gradation correction factors (equal to the resultant average differences) for all sieves shall be applied to all acceptance gradation test results determined by the FOP for AASHTO T 30. If the 75 µm (No. 200) is the only sieve outside the limits in Table 2, apply the aggregate correction factor to only the 75 µm (No. 200) sieve.

Table 2
Permitted Sieving Difference

Sieve	Allowable Difference
Sizes larger than or equal to 2.36 mm (No.8)	± 5.0%
Sizes larger than to 75 µm (No.200) and smaller than 2.36 mm (No.8)	± 3.0%
Sizes 75 µm (No.200) and smaller	± 0.5%

Examples:

Sieve Size mm (in.)	Correction Factor Blank Sample % Passing	Correction Factor Sample #1 % Passing	Correction Factor Sample #2 % Passing	Difference 1 / 2	Avg. Diff.	Sieves to adjust
19.0 (3/4)	100	100	100	0/0	0.0	
12.5 (1/2)	86.3	87.4	86.4	-1.1/-0.1	-0.6	
9.5 (3/8)	77.4	76.5	78.8	+0.9/-1.4	-0.3	
4.75 (No. 4)	51.5	53.6	55.9	-2.1/-4.4	-3.3	
2.36 (No. 8)	34.7	36.1	37.2	-1.4/-2.5	-2.0	
01.18 (No. 16)	23.3	25.0	23.9	-1.7/-0.6	-1.2	
0.600 (No. 30)	16.4	19.2	18.1	-2.8/-1.7	-2.3	
0.300 (No. 50)	12.0	11.1	12.7	+0.9/-0.7	+0.1	
0.150 (No. 100)	8.1	9.9	6.3	-1.8/+1.8	0.0	
75 µm (No. 200)	5.5	5.9	6.2	-0.4/-0.7	-0.6	**- 0.6**

In this example, all gradation test results performed on the residual aggregate (FOP for AASHTO T 30) would have an aggregate correction factor applied to the percent passing the 75 µm (No. 200) sieve. The correction factor must be applied because the average difference on the 75 µm (No. 200) sieve is outside the tolerance from Table 2.

In the following example, aggregate correction factors would be applied to each sieve because the average difference on the 4.75 mm (No. 4) is outside the tolerance from Table 2.

Sieve Size mm (in.)	Correction Factor Blank Sample % Passing	Correction Factor Sample #1 % Passing	Correction Factor Sample #2 % Passing	Difference 1 / 2	Avg. Diff.	Sieves to adjust
19.0 (3/4)	100	100	100	0/0	0.0	0.0
12.5 (1/2)	86.3	87.4	86.4	-1.1/-0.1	-0.6	**-0.6**
9.5 (3/8)	77.4	76.5	78.8	+0.9/-1.4	-0.3	**-0.3**
4.75 (No. 4)	51.5	55.6	57.9	-4.1/-6.4	-5.3	**-5.3**
2.36 (No. 8)	34.7	36.1	37.2	-1.4/-2.5	-2.0	**-2.0**
01.18 (No. 16)	23.3	25.0	23.9	-1.7/-0.6	-1.2	**-1.2**
0.600 (No. 30)	16.4	19.2	18.1	-2.8/-1.7	-2.3	**-2.3**
0.300 (No. 50)	12.0	11.1	12.7	+0.9/-0.7	+0.1	**+0.1**
0.150 (No. 100)	8.1	9.9	6.3	-1.8/+1.8	0.0	0.0
75 µm (No. 200)	5.5	5.9	6.2	-0.4/-0.7	-0.6	**-0.6**