THEORETICAL MAXIMUM SPECIFIC GRAVITY (G_{mm}) AND DENSITY OF ASPHALT MIXTURES
FOP FOR AASHTO T 209

Scope

This procedure covers the determination of the maximum specific gravity (G_{mm}) of uncompacted asphalt mixtures in accordance with AASHTO T 209-25. Two methods using different containers – bowl and pycnometer / volumetric flask– are covered.

Specimens prepared in the laboratory shall be cured according to agency standards.

Apparatus

- Balance or scale: 10,000 g capacity, readable to 0.1 g, meeting AASHTO M 231, Class G2
- Container: A glass, metal, or plastic bowl, pycnometer or volumetric flask between 2000 and 10,000 mL as required by the minimum sample size requirements in Table 1 sample and capable of withstanding full vacuum applied
- Pycnometer / volumetric flask cover: A glass plate or a metal or plastic cover with a vented opening
- Vacuum lid: A transparent lid with a suitable vacuum connection, with a vacuum opening to be covered with a fine wire mesh
- Vacuum pump or water aspirator: Capable of evacuating air from the container to a residual pressure of 3.4 kPa (25 mm Hg)
- Vacuum measurement device: Residual pressure manometer or vacuum gauge, capable of measuring residual pressure down to 3.4 kPa (25 mmHg) or less and readable to at least 0.2 kPa (2 mmHg)
- Suspension apparatus: Suitable apparatus and holder to permit determining the mass of the sample while suspended below the balance. The wire suspending the holder shall be the smallest practical size to minimize any possible effects of a variable immersed length for Bowl Method.
- Water bath: A constant-temperature water bath (optional for Pycnometer or Volumetric Flask Method)

Note 1: The water bath may be equipped with a circulator and heater or chiller to maintain constant temperatures throughout the bath. If a circulator is used, turn it off before any masses are recorded.

- Thermometer: An immersion thermometer readable to at least 0.5°C (1°F) and with a temperature range of at least 20 to 45°C (68 to 113°F).
- Bleeder valve to adjust vacuum
- Automatic vacuum control unit (optional)

- Timer
- Towel

Standardization

Use a container that has been standardized according to the Annex. Record the standardized container mass for use in subsequent calculations.

The container shall be standardized periodically in conformance with procedures established by the agency.

Test Sample Preparation

1. Obtain samples in accordance with the FOP for AASHTO R 97 and reduce according to the FOP for AASHTO R 47.
2. Test sample size shall conform to the requirements of Table 1. Samples larger than the capacity of the container may be tested in two or more increments. Results will be combined by calculating the weighted average ($G_{mm\ (avg)}$.). If the increments have a specific gravity difference greater than 0.013, the test must be re-run.
3. Plant-produced samples may be short-term conditioned according to AASHTO R 30 as specified by the agency.

Note 2: Short-term conditioning at the specified temperature is especially important when absorptive aggregates are used. This short-term conditioning will ensure the computation of realistic values for the amount of asphalt absorbed by the aggregate and void properties of the mix. Plant-produced asphalt mixtures should be evaluated to make sure short-term conditioning has taken place during production and delivery.

Table 1
Test Sample Size for G_{mm}

Nominal Maximum* Aggregate Size mm (in.)	Minimum Mass g
37.5 or greater (1½)	4000
19 to 25 (3/4 to 1)	2500
12.5 or smaller (1/2)	1500

*Nominal maximum size: 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.

Procedure – General

Two procedures – bowl and pycnometer / volumetric flask – are covered. The first 11 steps are the same for both.

1. Separate the particles of the sample, taking care not to fracture the mineral particles, so that the particles of the fine aggregate portion are not larger than 6.3 mm (1/4 in.). If the mixture is not sufficiently soft to be separated manually, place it in a large flat pan and warm in an oven (do not exceed Job Mix Formula (JMF) compaction temperature) until it is pliable enough for separation.

2. Cool the sample to room temperature.
3. Determine and record the mass of the dry container to the nearest 0.1 g.
4. Place the sample in the container.
5. Determine and record the mass of the dry container and sample to the nearest 0.1 g.
6. Determine and record the mass of the sample by subtracting the mass determined in Step 3 from the mass determined in Step 5. Designate this mass as "A."
7. Add sufficient water at approximately 25° C (77° F) to cover the sample by about 25 mm (1 in.).

Note 3: The release of entrapped air may be facilitated by the addition of a wetting agent. Check with the agency to see if this is permitted and, if it is, for a recommended agent.

8. Place the lid on the container and attach the vacuum line. To ensure a proper seal between the container and the lid, wet the O-ring or use a petroleum gel.
9. Remove entrapped air by subjecting the sample to a partial vacuum of 4.0 ±0.6 kPa (30 ±5 mmHg) residual pressure for 15 ±1 minutes.
10. Agitate the container and sample, either continuously by mechanical device or manually by vigorous shaking at 2-minute intervals. This agitation facilitates the removal of air.
11. Release the vacuum. Increase the pressure to atmospheric pressure in 10 to 15 seconds if the vacuum release is not automated. Turn off the vacuum pump and remove the lid.

Procedure – Bowl

12A. Fill the water bath to overflow level with water at 25 ±1°C (77 ±2°F) and allow the water to stabilize.

13A. Zero or tare the balance with the immersion apparatus attached, ensuring that the device is not touching the sides or the bottom of the water bath. Immerse the suspension apparatus sufficiently to cover both it and the bowl.

14A. Suspend and immerse the bowl and sample in water at 25 ±1°C (77 ±2°F) for 10 ±1 minute.

15A. Determine and record the submerged weight of the bowl and sample to the nearest 0.1 g. Designate as "C."

Procedure – Pycnometer or Volumetric Flask

Complete steps 12B through 16B within 10 ±1 min.

12B. Immediately fill the pycnometer / volumetric flask with water without reintroducing air.

13B. Stabilize the temperature of the pycnometer / volumetric flask and sample so that the final temperature is within 25 ±1°C (77 ±2°F).

14B. Finish filling the pycnometer / volumetric flask with water that is 25 ±1°C (77 ±2°F), place the cover or a glass plate on the pycnometer / volumetric flask, and eliminate all air.

Note 4: When using a metal pycnometer and cover, place the cover on the pycnometer and push down slowly, forcing excess water out of the hole in the center of the cover. Use care when filling the pycnometer to avoid reintroducing air into the water.

15B. Towel dry the outside of the pycnometer / volumetric flask and cover.

16B. Determine and record the mass of the pycnometer / volumetric flask, cover, de-aired water, and sample to the nearest 0.1 g. within 10 ±1 minute of completion of Step 11. Designate this mass as "E."

Procedure – Mixtures Containing Uncoated Porous Aggregate

If the pores of the aggregates are not thoroughly sealed by an asphalt binder film, they may become saturated with water during the vacuuming procedure, resulting in an error in G_{mm} and theoretical maximum density. To determine if this has occurred, complete the general procedure and then:

1. Carefully drain water from sample through a towel held over the top of the container to prevent loss of material.
2. Spread sample in a flat shallow pan and place before an electric fan to remove surface moisture.
3. Determine the mass of the sample when the surface moisture appears to be gone.
4. Continue drying and determine the mass of the sample at 15-minute intervals until less than a 0.5 g loss is found between determinations.
5. Record the mass as the saturated surface dry mass to the nearest 0.1 g. Designate this mass as "A_{SSD}."
6. Calculate, as indicated below, G_{mm} using "A" and "A_{SSD}," and compare the two values.

Calculation

Calculate the G_{mm} to three decimal places as follows:

Bowl Procedure

$$G_{mm} = \frac{A}{A + B - C} \qquad or \qquad G_{mm} = \frac{A}{A_{SSD} + B - C}$$

(for mixes containing uncoated aggregate materials)

Where:

A = mass of dry sample in air, g

A_{SSD} = mass of saturated surface dry sample in air, g

B = standardized submerged weight of the bowl, g (see Annex)

C = submerged weight of sample and bowl, g

Example:

$$G_{mm} = \frac{1432.7\ g}{1432.7\ g + 286.3\ g - 1134.9\ g} = 2.453 \quad or$$

$$G_{mm} = \frac{1432.7\ g}{1434.2\ g + 286.3\ g - 1134.9\ g} = 2.447$$

Given:

A = 1432.7 g

A_{SSD} = 1434.2 g

B = 286.3 g

C = 1134.9 g

Pycnometer / Volumetric Flask Procedure

$$G_{mm} = \frac{A}{A + D - E} \qquad or \qquad G_{mm} = \frac{A}{A_{SSD} + D - E}$$

(for mixtures containing uncoated materials)

Where:

A = mass of dry sample in air, g

A_{SSD} = mass of saturated surface-dry sample in air, g

D = standardized mass of pycnometer / volumetric flask filled with water at 25°C (77°F), g, (See Annex)

E = mass of pycnometer / volumetric flask filled with water and the test sample at test temperature, g

Example (two increments of a large sample):

$$G_{mm_1} = \frac{2200.3\ g}{2200.3\ g + 7502.5\ g - 8812.0\ g} = 2.470$$

$$G_{mm_2} = \frac{1960.2\ g}{1960.2\ g + 7525.5\ g - 8690.8\ g} = 2.466$$

Given:

Increment 1	Increment 2
A_1 = 2200.3 g	A_2 = 1960.2 g
D_1 = 7502.5 g	D_2 = 7525.5 g
E_1 = 8812.0 g	E_2 = 8690.8 g

Variation = 2.470 - 2.466 = 0.004, which is < 0.013

Allowable variation is: 0.013. The values may be used.

Weighted average

For large samples tested a portion at a time, calculate the $G_{mm\ (avg)}$ by multiplying the dry mass of each increment by its G_{mm}, add the results together (Σ) and divide by the sum (Σ) of the dry masses.

$$G_{mm(avg)} = \frac{\sum(A_x \times G_{mm_x})}{\sum A_x}$$

or

$$G_{mm(avg)} = \frac{(A_1 \times G_{mm_1}) + (A_2 \times G_{mm_2})}{A_1 + A_2}\ etc.$$

Where:

A_x = mass of dry sample increment in air, g

G_{mmx} = theoretical maximum specific gravity of the increment

Example:

$$G_{mm(avg)} = \frac{(2200.3\ g \times 2.470) + (1960.2\ g \times 2.466)}{2200.3\ g + 1960.2\ g} = \frac{10{,}268.6}{4160.5\ g} = 2.468$$

Theoretical Maximum Density

To calculate the theoretical maximum density at 25°C (77°F) use one of the following formulas. The density of water at 25°C (77°F) is 997.1 kg/ m^3 in Metric units or 62.245 lb/ft^3 in English units.

Theoretical maximum density kg/m^3 = G_{mm} × 997.1 kg/ m^3

2.468 × 997.1 kg/ m^3 = 2461 kg/ m^3

or

Theoretical maximum density lb/ft^3 = G_{mm} × 62.245 lb/ft^3

2.468 × 62.245 lb/ft^3 = 153.6 lb/ft^3

Report

- On forms approved by the agency
- Sample ID
- G_{mm} to the nearest 0.001
- Theoretical maximum density to the nearest 1 kg/m^3 (0.1 lb/ft^3)

ANNEX – STANDARDIZATION OF BOWL AND PYCNOMETER OR VOLUMETRIC FLASK

(Mandatory Information)

Bowl – Standardization

1. Fill the water bath to overflow level with 25 ±1°C (77 ±2°F) water and allow the water to stabilize.
2. Zero or tare the balance with the immersion apparatus attached, ensuring that the device is not touching the sides or the bottom of the water bath. Immerse the suspension apparatus sufficiently to cover both it and the bowl.
3. Suspend and completely immerse the bowl for 10 ±1 minute.
4. Determine and record the submerged weight of the bowl to the nearest 0.1 g.
5. Refill the water bath to overflow level.
6. Perform Steps 2 through 5 two more times for a total of three determinations.
7. If the range of the three determinations is less than or equal to 0.3 g., average the determinations. Designate as "B."
8. If the range of the three determinations is greater than 0.3 g., take corrective action and perform the standardization procedure again.

Bowl – Check

1. Fill the water bath to overflow level 25 ±1°C (77 ±2°F) water and allow the water to stabilize.
2. Zero or tare the balance with the immersion apparatus attached, ensuring that the device is not touching the sides or the bottom of the water bath. Immerse the suspension apparatus sufficiently to cover both it and the bowl.
3. Suspend and completely immerse the bowl for 10 ±1 minute.
4. Determine and record the submerged weight of the bowl to the nearest 0.1 g.
5. If this determination is within 0.3 g of the standardized value, use the standardized value for "B."
6. If it is not within 0.3 g, take corrective action and perform the standardization procedure again.
7. For labs that check the bowl standardization frequently (such as daily), calculate the moving average and range of the last three mass determinations. Designate the average of the last three masses as "B."
8. If the moving range exceeds 0.3 g at any time, take corrective action and perform the standardization procedure again.

Pycnometer or Volumetric Flask – Standardization

1. Fill the pycnometer / volumetric flask with water at approximately 25°C (77°F).
2. Place the metal or plastic cover, or a glass plate on the pycnometer / volumetric flask and eliminate all air. (See Note 4.)
3. Stabilize the pycnometer / volumetric flask at 25 ± 1ºC (77 ± 2ºF) for 10 ± 1 min.
4. Towel dry the outside of the pycnometer / volumetric flask and cover.
5. Determine and record the mass of the pycnometer / volumetric flask, water, and cover or plate to the nearest 0.1 g.
6. Perform Steps 2 through 5 two more times for a total of three determinations.
7. If the range of the three determinations is less than or equal to 0.3 g, average the three determinations. Designate as "D."
8. If the range of the determinations is greater than 0.3 g., take corrective action and perform the "Pycnometer or Volumetric Flask – Standardization" again.

Pycnometer or Volumetric Flask – Check

1. Fill the pycnometer / volumetric flask with water at approximately 25°C (77°F).
2. Place the metal or plastic cover or a glass plate on the pycnometer / volumetric flask and eliminate all air. (See Note 4.)
3. Stabilize the pycnometer / volumetric flask at 25 ± 1ºC (77 ± 2ºF) for 10 ± 1 min.
4. Towel dry the outside of the pycnometer / volumetric flask and cover.
5. Determine and record the mass of the pycnometer / volumetric flask, water, and cover or plate.
6. If this determination is within 0.3 g of the standardized value, use the standardized value for "D."
7. If it is not within 0.3 g, perform the standardization procedure again.