



# Standard Guide for Crevice Corrosion Testing of Iron-Base and Nickel-Base Stainless Alloys in Seawater and Other Chloride-Containing Aqueous Environments<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation G 78; 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 ( $\epsilon$ ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

## INTRODUCTION

Crevice corrosion of iron-base and nickel-base stainless alloys can occur when an occlusion or crevice limits access of the bulk environment to a localized area of the metal surface. Localized environmental changes in this stagnant area can result in the formation of acidic/high chloride conditions that may result in initiation and propagation of crevice corrosion of susceptible alloys.

In practice, crevices can generally be classified into two categories: (a) naturally occurring, that is, those created by biofouling, sediment, debris, deposits, etc. and (b) man-made, that is, those created during manufacturing, fabrication, assembly, or service. Crevice formers utilized in laboratory and field studies can represent actual geometric conditions encountered in some service applications. Use of such crevice formers in service-type environments are not considered accelerated test methods.

The geometry of a crevice can be described by the dimensions of crevice gap and crevice depth. Crevice gap is identified as the width or space between the metal surface and the crevice former. Crevice depth is the distance from the mouth to the center or base of the crevice.

## 1. Scope

1.1 This guide provides information for conducting crevice-corrosion tests and identifies factors that may affect results and influence conclusions.

1.2 These procedures can be used to identify conditions most likely to result in crevice corrosion and provide a basis for assessing the relative resistance of various alloys to crevice corrosion under certain specified conditions.

1.3 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. The values given in parentheses are for information only.

1.4 *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.* For a specific precautionary statement, see 7.1.1.

## 2. Referenced Documents

### 2.1 ASTM Standards:

G 1 Practice for Preparing, Cleaning, and Evaluating Cor-

rosion Test Specimens<sup>2</sup>

G 4 Guide for Conducting Corrosion Coupon Tests in Field Applications<sup>2</sup>

G 15 Terminology Relating to Corrosion and Corrosion Testing<sup>2</sup>

G 46 Guide for Examination and Evaluation of Pitting Corrosion<sup>2</sup>

G 48 Test Methods for Pitting and Crevice Corrosion Resistance of Stainless Steels and Related Alloys by Use of Ferric Chloride Solution<sup>2</sup>

## 3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions of related terms can be found in Terminology G 15.

## 4. Significance and Use

4.1 This guide covers procedures for crevice-corrosion testing of iron-base and nickel-base stainless alloys in seawater. The guidance provided may also be applicable to crevice-corrosion testing in other chloride containing natural waters and various laboratory prepared aqueous chloride environments.

4.2 This guide describes the use of a variety of crevice formers including the nonmetallic, segmented washer design referred to as the multiple crevice assembly (MCA) as described in 9.2.2.

<sup>1</sup> This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee G01 on Corrosion of Metals and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee G01.09 on Corrosion in Natural Waters.

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<sup>2</sup> Annual Book of ASTM Standards, Vol 03.02.

4.3 In-service performance data provide the most reliable determination of whether a material would be satisfactory for a particular end use. Translation of laboratory data from a single test program to predict service performance under a variety of conditions should be avoided. Terms, such as immunity, superior resistance, etc., provide only a general and relatively qualitative description of an alloy's corrosion performance. The limitations of such terms in describing resistance to crevice corrosion should be recognized.

4.4 While the guidance provided is generally for the purpose of evaluating sheet and plate materials, it is also applicable for crevice-corrosion testing of other product forms, such as tubing and bars.

4.5 The presence or absence of crevice corrosion under one set of conditions is no guarantee that it will or will not occur under other conditions. Because of the many interrelated metallurgical, environmental, and geometric factors known to affect crevice corrosion, results from any given test may or may not be indicative of actual performance in service applications where the conditions may be different from those of the test.

**5. Apparatus**

5.1 Laboratory tests utilizing filtered, natural seawater, or other chloride containing aqueous environments are frequently conducted in tanks or troughs under low velocity (for example, ~0.5 m/s (1.64 ft/s) or less) or quiescent conditions. Containers should be resistant to the test media.

5.2 Fig. 1 shows a typical test apparatus for conducting crevice-corrosion tests under controlled temperature conditions with provisions for recirculation or refreshment of the aqueous environment, or both, at a constant level.

5.3 The apparatus should be suitably sized to provide complete immersion of the test panel. Vertical positioning of the crevice-corrosion specimens facilitates visual inspection without the need to remove them from the environments.

**6. Test Specimens**

6.1 Because of the number of variables which may affect the test results, a minimum of three specimens are suggested for

each set of environmental, metallurgical, or geometric conditions to be evaluated. If reproducibility is unsatisfactory, additional specimens should be tested.

6.2 Dimensions of both the test specimen and crevice former should be determined and recorded.

6.3 Variations in the boldly exposed (crevice-free) to shielded (crevice) area ratio of the test specimen may influence crevice corrosion. All specimens in a test series should have the same nominal surface area. While no specific specimen dimensions are recommended, test panels measuring up to 300 by 300 mm (11.81 × 11.81 in.) have been used in seawater tests with both naturally occurring and man-made crevice formers. For laboratory studies, the actual size of the specimen may be limited by the dimensions of the test apparatus and this should be taken into consideration in making comparisons.

6.3.1 A test program may be expanded to assess any effect of boldly exposed to shielded area ratio.

6.3.2 If crevice geometry aspects, such as crevice depth, are to be studied, the adoption of a constant boldly exposed to shielded area ratio is recommended to minimize the number of test variables.

6.4 When specimens are cut by shearing, it is recommended that the deformed material be removed by machining or grinding. Test pieces that are warped or otherwise distorted should not be used. The need to provide parallel surfaces between the crevice former and the test specimen is an important consideration in providing maximum consistency in the application of the crevice former.

6.5 Appropriate holes should be drilled (and deburred) in the test specimen to facilitate attachment of the crevice former. Punched holes are not recommended since the punching process may contribute to specimen distortion or work hardening, or both. The diameter of the holes should be large enough to allow clearance of the fastener (and insulator) otherwise additional crevice sites may be introduced.

6.6 Specimens should be identified by alloy and replication. Mechanical stenciling or engraving are generally suitable, provided that the coding is on surfaces away from the intended crevice sites. Identification markings should be applied prior to

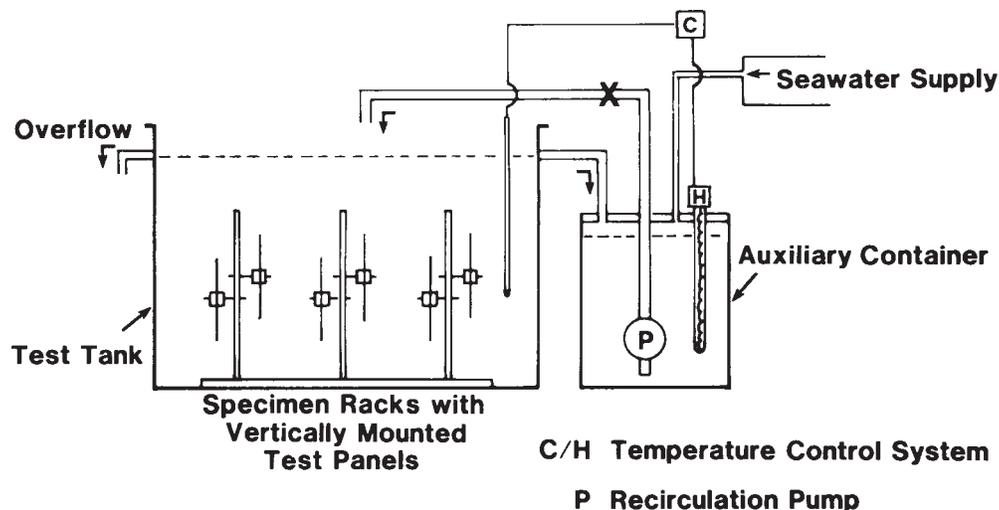


FIG. 1 Positioning of Crevice-Corrosion Test Specimens—Typical Arrangement in Controlled Environment Apparatus

the final specimen cleaning before test. Marking the samples may affect the test results. See the Identification of Test Specimens section of Guide G 4.

6.7 Depending on the test objectives, mill-produced surfaces may be left intact or specimens may be prepared by providing a surface definable in terms of a given preparation process.

6.7.1 Because of the possible variations between “as-produced” alloy surface finishes, the adoption of a given surface finish is recommended if various alloys are to be compared. This will tend to minimize the variability of crevice geometry in contact areas.

6.7.2 While some specific alloys may have proprietary surface conditioning, some uncertainty may exist with regard to the actual end use surface finish. It is recommended that more than one surface condition be examined to assess any effect of surface finish on an individual alloy’s crevice corrosion behavior.

6.7.3 Surface grinding with 120-grit SiC abrasive paper is a suitable method for preparing laboratory test specimens. Wet grinding is preferred to avoid any heating. Depending on the surface roughness of the mill product, machining may be required prior to final grinding.

6.8 Cut lengths of pipe and tubing can be used as specimens to test the crevice corrosion resistance of these product forms in the as-manufactured or surface treated condition. Other cylindrical products can be tested in the as-produced or finished condition.

6.8.1 The selection of cylindrical sample sizes should be made with the knowledge of the availability of appropriately sized crevice formers, as described in 9.5.

6.8.2 The type of crevice former selected may dictate the length of the cylindrical test specimens. Lengths of 4 to 12 in. (10 cm × 30 cm) and longer have been used.

## 7. Cleaning

### 7.1 Pre-Test Cleaning:

7.1.1 Cleaning procedures shall be consistent with Practice G 1. Typically, this may include degreasing with a suitable solvent, followed by vigorous brush scrubbing with pumice powder, followed by water rinse, clean solvent rinse, and air drying. (**Warning**—Solvent safety and compatibility with the test material should be investigated and safe practices followed).

7.1.2 For the most part, commercially produced stainless alloys and surface ground materials do not require a pre-exposure pickling treatment. The use of acid cleaning or pretreatments shall be considered only when the crevice-corrosion test is designed to provide guidance for a specific application.

7.1.3 Any use of chemical pretreatments shall be thoroughly documented and appropriate safety measures followed.

## 8. Mass Loss Determinations

8.1 Mass loss data calculated from specimen weighing before and after testing may provide some useful information in specific cases. However, comparisons of alloy performance based solely on mass loss may be misleading because highly

localized corrosion, which is typical of crevice corrosion, can often result in relatively small mass losses.

## 9. Crevice Formers

### 9.1 General Comments:

9.1.1 The severity of a crevice-corrosion test in a given environment can be influenced by the size and physical properties of the crevice former.

9.1.2 Both metal-to-metal and nonmetal-to-metal crevice components are frequently used in laboratory and field studies.

9.1.3 Nonmetallic crevice formers often have the capacity for greater elastic deformation and may produce tighter crevices which are generally considered to more readily promote crevice-corrosion initiation. Acrylic plastic, nylon, polyethylene, PTFE-fluorocarbons, and acetal resin are a few of the commonly used nonmetallics.

9.1.4 The properties of the nonmetallic crevice former must be compatible with the physical and environmental demands of the test.

9.1.5 Regardless of the material or type of crevice former, contacting surfaces should be kept as flat as possible to enhance reproducibility of crevice geometry.

### 9.2 Various Designs for Flat Specimens:

9.2.1 Fig. 2 shows the shapes of a few popular crevice former designs, such as coupons, strips, O-rings, blocks, continuous and segmented washers. In many cases, two crevice formers are fastened to a flat specimen, that is, one on each side.

9.2.2 Multiple crevice assemblies (MCA) consist of two nonmetallic segmented washers, each having a number of grooves and plateaus. The design shown in Figs. 3 and 4 is only one of a number of variations of the multiple crevice assembly which are in use. Each plateau, in contact with the metal surface, provides a possible site for initiation of crevice corrosion. Multiple crevice assemblies fabricated of acetal resin<sup>3</sup> have been shown to be suitable for seawater exposures. Other nonmetallics, such as PTFE-fluorocarbon and ceramic, have also been used (see 9.1.4).

9.2.3 For metal-to-metal crevice-corrosion tests, flat washers or coupons are often fastened to a larger test specimen. All components should be of the same material and prepared for exposure in the same manner.

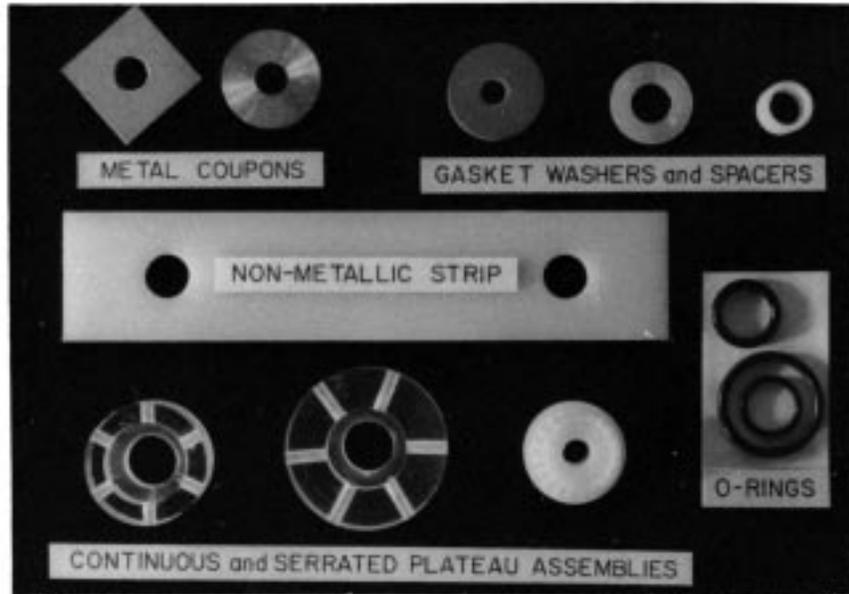
9.2.3.1 Crevice testing with metal to metal components assembled with either nonmetal or metal fasteners (with insulator) will necessarily result in the formation of secondary crevice sites where the fastener contacts the metallic crevice former. In some cases, the geometry of these secondary sites may be more severe than the intended primary crevice site.

### 9.3 Method of Attachment:

9.3.1 Either metallic or nonmetallic fasteners, for example, nut- and bolt-type, can be used to secure the crevice formers to the test panel.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Delrin has been found satisfactory for this purpose.

<sup>4</sup> While it is recognized that rubber bands may be used in the 72 h ferric chloride test method covered by Test Methods G 48, rubber bands are not recommended for long term tests. Potential crevice sites formed by rubber bands on specimen edges may not be desirable for tests beyond the scope of Test Methods G 48.



NOTE 1—Various crevice former designs utilized in laboratory and field test crevice-corrosion studies. Severity of the test may vary as a function of crevice geometry, that is, size of the crevice former and degree of tightness

FIG. 2 Crevice Former Designs

9.3.2 Metallic fasteners are often preferable because of their greater strength advantage over nonmetallics. Corrosion resistant alloys should be selected for the fastener material. Titanium, Alloy 625 (UNS No. N06625) and Alloy C-276 (UNS No. N10276) have proven corrosion resistance in marine environments and are frequently utilized for crevice-corrosion tests.

9.3.3 When metallic fasteners are used, they should be electrically insulated from the test specimen.

9.3.4 The use of a torque wrench is recommended to help provide consistency in tightening. All crevice assemblies in a given series should be tightened to the same torque, preferably by the same individual in order to minimize variability.

9.3.4.1 A torque of 8.5 N·m (75 in.-lbs) on an acetal resin MCA (using a 1/4-20 metallic fastener) for example, will routinely result in crevice corrosion for AISI Type 304 (UNS No. 530400) stainless steel in 25°C (77°F) seawater within 30 days.<sup>5</sup>

9.4 In order to more fully characterize the crevice-corrosion resistance of iron-base and nickel-base stainless alloys, it is recommended that more than one set of geometric conditions be considered. For example, deeper or tighter crevices, or both, may be required for initiation of crevice corrosion in environments containing chloride concentrations below that typical of seawater.

9.4.1 Effects of crevice tightness can be assessed by evaluating materials over a range of crevice assembly torque levels. The physical properties of the crevice former and fastener may limit the range of study.

#### 9.5 Various Designs for Cylindrical Specimens:

9.5.1 A number of off-the-shelf devices may be suitable for forming crevices on cylindrical specimens; examples include, O-rings, packings, nylon ferrule and sleeve type compression fittings, PVC compression fittings with rubber glands, plastic or nylon hose clamps, etc.

9.5.2 Crevice formers have also been fashioned from cut lengths of flexible vinyl type or rubber tubing to form sleeves which can be snugly fitted to the specimen outer surface.

NOTE 1—Crevice corrosion testing of cylindrical specimens is described, for example, in ASTM STP 1300.<sup>6</sup>

9.5.3 The use of pipe and/or tubing samples with the above mentioned sleeves and compression fitting can facilitate testing under dynamic flow conditions. This can be accomplished by using the devices to join, end-to-end, a series of specimens in a continuous line or loop. Additional clamping may be necessary.

9.5.4 An attempt should be made to minimize variability by selecting test specimens with common dimensions, and by sizing the crevice former to approximate the specimen OD.

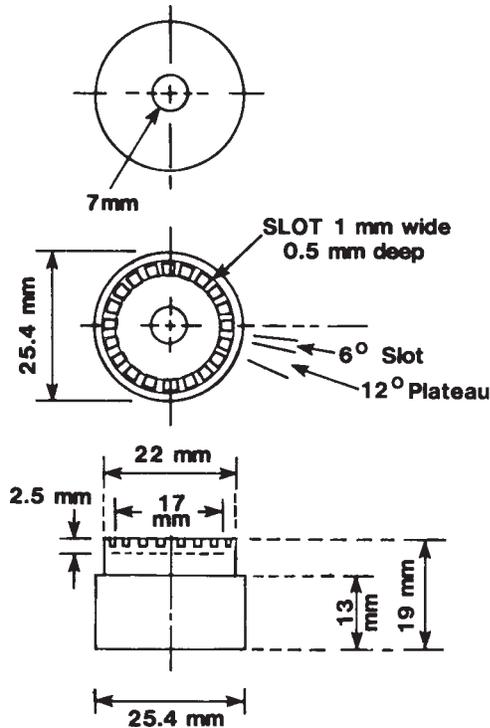
#### 9.6 Coatings—Another Type of Crevice Former:

9.6.1 Field experience and laboratory testing (ASTM STP 1399<sup>7</sup>) has demonstrated the susceptibility of some stainless steels and Ni-base alloys to crevice corrode beneath epoxy type coatings.

<sup>6</sup> Zeuthen, Albert W., and Kain, Robert M., "Crevice Corrosion Testing of Austenitic, Superaustenitic, Superferritic, and Superduplex Stainless Type Alloys in Seawater," pp. 91–108, and Kain, Robert M., Adamson, Wayne L., and Weber, Brian, "Corrosion Coupon Testing in Natural Waters: A Case History Dealing with Reverse Osmosis Desalination of Seawater," pp. 122–142, *Corrosion Testing in Natural Waters*, ASTM STP 1300, ASTM, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Kain, Robert M., "Use of Coatings to Assess the Crevice Corrosion Resistance of Stainless Steels in Warm Seawater," *Marine Corrosion in Tropical Environments*, ASTM STP 1399, ASTM, 2000, pp. 284–299.

<sup>5</sup> Supporting data available from ASTM Headquarters. Request RR: G-1-1001.



NOTE 1—Inch-pound equivalents for SI units:  
 0.5 mm = 0.0197 in.  
 1 mm = 0.039 in.  
 2.5 mm = 0.098 in.  
 7 mm = 0.25 in.  
 13 mm = 0.512 in.  
 17 mm = 0.669 in.  
 19 mm = 0.748 in.  
 22 mm = 0.866 in.  
 25.4 mm = 1 in.

FIG. 3 Details of Multiple Crevice Washer (not to scale)

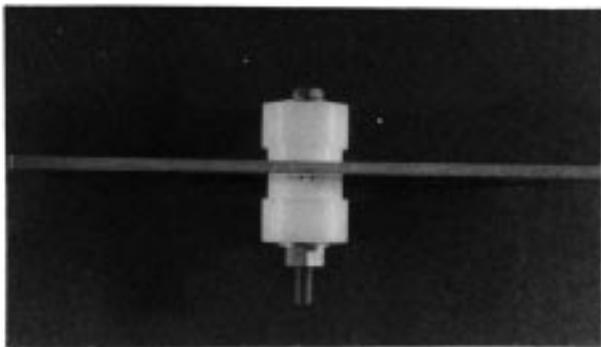


FIG. 4 Multiple Crevice Assembly with Sheet Specimen

9.6.2 Epoxy and perhaps other paint can be applied to sections of flat as well as cylindrical shaped test specimens. In addition, the use of a coating enables the creation of crevice sites on irregular surfaces such as weldments.

9.6.3 Coating can be applied to various sized specimens and may be useful for assessing the influence of other test variables such as exposed or coated surface area, and surface finishes.

## 10. Specimen Supports

10.1 Specimens should be supported in a manner that will not introduce additional crevice sites. One method is to mount the specimen on an acrylic plastic strip using the free end of the crevice fastener (see Fig. 1).

## 11. Environment

### 11.1 General Comments:

11.1.1 For seawater and other media, the chemical characteristics of the environment (for example,  $Cl^-$ , pH, dissolved  $O_2$  levels) should be periodically monitored and recorded. Any modifications to the natural environments should also be monitored and recorded. The frequency of chemical analyses will be dependent upon the duration of the test and if any environmental parameters are being controlled. Daily analyses may be warranted in short term tests where weekly or monthly analyses may be appropriate for tests of several months duration.

11.1.2 The volume of test solution and the pre-established or required replenishment rates should be maintained to ensure the quality of the environment.

11.1.3 Temperature control ( $\pm 2^\circ C \pm (3.6^\circ F)$ ) is recommended for laboratory tests. A series of tests at various temperatures covering an anticipated service range should be considered. For natural seawater tests under ambient conditions, temperatures should be monitored (for example, a minimum frequency of daily monitoring may be warranted in a test of 30 days duration) and recorded.

### 11.2 Seawater Tests:

11.2.1 The use of man-made crevice formers provides an opportunity for some control in crevice geometry and eliminates any time dependency for the formation of the crevice site from an attachment of biofouling organisms in seawater.

11.2.1.1 Man-made crevice formers may or may not represent conditions established by the attachment of some marine growths.

11.2.2 Assessment of alloy performance under conditions of natural fouling can be made by the appropriate exposure in natural seawater. However, some type of man-made crevice will always exist at specimen support sites.

11.2.2.1 In long term tests, biofouling may accumulate on the test panels to a significant extent. If the biofouling completely covers the test specimens, then it is possible that the cathodic reaction processes (for example, oxygen reduction on the bold surface) controlling crevice corrosion may be affected. These accumulations may influence the corrosion behavior at both man-made or natural (for example, barnacle) crevice sites.

11.2.3 Location of natural fouling crevice tests can be varied to study any effect of seawater velocity or depth.

11.2.4 Filtered seawater can be used for more controlled studies where interest lies beyond ambient conditions and fouling. Such investigation may consider, for example, effects of crevice geometry or variation in the environmental parameters of velocity or temperature.

11.2.4.1 Dependent upon the degree of seawater filtration, biofouling on a macroscopic scale can be eliminated.

## 12. Inspections

12.1 Periodic visual inspections to determine any initiation of crevice corrosion are suggested. Accumulations of corrosion product at the crevice former and specimen interface are a sign of ongoing corrosion.

12.2 If inspections are possible, these should be done with minimal disturbance to the specimen. Removal from the bulk environment is not recommended.

12.3 Removal or any disturbance of the crevice former terminates the test.

12.4 Observed time to initiation and progression of any corrosion should be recorded.

12.5 The translucent nature of some crevice formers, for example, polished acrylic and clear vinyl, facilitates early detection of crevice corrosion.

## 13. Test Duration

13.1 The initiation of crevice corrosion is highly dependent on many factors—alloy composition, crevice geometry, and bulk chloride content. The test duration should be sufficient to allow for initiation to occur and to allow time for propagation of any crevice corrosion.

13.2 A test duration of at least 30 days is suggested. Exposure of multiple sets of specimens provides the opportunity for intermediate and longer term removals.

13.3 For natural crevice formation conditions in seawater, the rate of biofouling is dependent on seasonal variation in temperature and test periods should be planned accordingly.

## 14. Terminations

14.1 At the conclusion of the test, photography of the assembly may be desirable. Remove the specimens and immediately disassemble the crevice components. Clean specimens as outlined in Practice G 1.

## 15. Evaluation

15.1 A photograph of the specimen surfaces may be useful in some cases.

15.2 Inspect and record the general appearance of the specimens. Note any increase in the corroded area beyond that first indicated by the presence of corrosion products during the test. For some alloys, localized corrosion may have occurred on specimen edges or elsewhere during the exposure. Probe crevice and other areas with a pointed instrument to determine whether corrosion tunneling has occurred.

15.3 If specimen mass was initially determined, redetermine mass at this time (see 8.1).

15.4 For MCA tests, determine the maximum depth of corrosion for each crevice site (see Practice G 46 for methods).

15.5 Other types of crevice formers may produce continuous areas of corrosion. Determine depth of corrosion at a number of areas to provide a representative indication of severity. Record the location of deepest penetrations, for example, outer edges of crevice former.

15.5.1 Depth of attack measurement on cylindrical samples can be facilitated by holding the sample in the chuck of a non-operating lathe or similar holding device.

15.5.2 The area of attack can also be used as an evaluation tool. Areas can be quickly estimated by overlaying a transparent grid and counting the number of units, for example, mm<sup>2</sup>.

15.6 Depths of corrosion are often reported to the nearest 0.01 mm. Areas showing only slight etching (below the limit of a needlepoint dial gauge, for example) can be recorded as <0.01 mm.

15.7 Because of the number of factors affecting crevice-corrosion initiation, a certain degree of variability is to be anticipated. Test-to-test or specimen-to-specimen data scatter may be attributed to small, but nonetheless critical differences in crevice geometry, variability in surface film characteristics, inclusions, and other metallurgical inhomogeneities. Some stainless-type alloys may be more sensitive to these factors than others, hence, more variability may be observed.

15.8 In some cases, maximum depth of corrosion may be an important parameter to consider. However, caution may be exercised in ranking alloys solely on the basis of maximum penetration measurements. Measured depths of penetration indicate the depth to which corrosion progressed from the time of initiation to the termination of the test. Variations in the time to initiation could affect the extent of crevice-corrosion penetration.

15.9 Variations in observed times to initiation may be due to differences in alloy composition or variations in the crevice gap, or both.

15.10 In the overall ranking of alloys that are susceptible to crevice corrosion, one must consider all of the above factors including the maximum depth of crevice corrosion, the number of specimens or sites showing crevice corrosion, or both, the relative extent of crevice corrosion compared to other alloys, susceptibility of the alloy to tunneling, the extent to which localized corrosion occurred outside the intended crevice site and how these characteristics relate to the intended use of the alloy if there is a specific intended use.

## 16. Keywords

16.1 aqueous; chloride; corrosion; crevice; iron-base; nickel-base; testing

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