

BULLETIN #1: SAMPLING READY MIXED CONCRETE

Where and Why

The point where ready mixed concrete should be sampled for testing is an issue that is often surrounded by confusion and misunderstanding; at times it may even become a point of contention. Usually this centers around whether to sample the concrete at the discharge of the ready mixed truck or at the point of placement such as at the end of a pump line. To clarify this issue, one must examine the codes, specifications, and test method requirements related to sampling concrete, as well as understand the purpose that the subsequent tests are intended to address.

Relevant Documents *(listed by their hierarchy)*

- Uniform Statewide Building Code of Virginia
- International Building Code
- ACI 318, Building Code Requirements for Structural Concrete
- ASTM C 94, Standard Specification for Ready-Mixed Concrete
- ASTM C 172, Standard Practice for Sampling Freshly Mixed Concrete

In most states, uniform standards for design and construction have been mandated by legislation. In Virginia, the Office of the Uniform Statewide Building Code was established in 1973 to develop the mechanisms to foster and enforce this legislation. To establish uniform minimum standards for design and construction, the Office of the Statewide Uniform Building Code chose to adopt the Building Officials and Code Administrators *BOCA Building Code* as a model code that would be applied statewide. BOCA has since merged with other code writing organizations to form the International Code Council (ICC) and the model codes that exist are the *International Building Code* and *International Residential Code*. Therefore, the requirements within these codes serve as a legal foundation by which design, and construction activities must abide.

The two International Building Codes have specific text addressing numerous subjects and utilize industry standards as an integral part of the Code by adoption of the respective standards. Both ACI 318 and ASTM C 94 are incorporated as a part of the “Code” by this system of adoption.

ACI 318 and ASTM C94 both have specific requirements related to obtaining a sample of ready mixed concrete for testing when the purpose of the tests on the sample are for the “evaluation and acceptance of the concrete.” As stated in ACI 318, “Sampling of concrete for strength test specimens shall be in accordance with ASTM C 172.” Nearly identical wording is used in ASTM C 94. This applies to samples for both laboratory and field cured test cylinders.

ASTM C 172 details the methods and requirements for obtaining samples of concrete from a “revolving drum truck mixer” or ready mixed truck. The Scope of ASTM C 172 clearly identifies that “this practice covers the procedures for obtaining representative samples of fresh concrete as delivered to the project site . . .” The types of delivery units included in this standard are truck mixers, and both agitating and non-agitating equipment used to transport central mixed concrete. ASTM C 172 does not cover sampling at other locations, such as from a pump or at point of placement. One source of confusion arises from Note 2 within ASTM C 172, which states “however, specifications

may require other points of sampling, such as the discharge of a concrete pump.” It must be understood that a Note in ASTM does not alter the requirements set forth in the standard. In the case of Note 2, it merely acknowledges that additional, not alternate points of sampling may be referenced in project specifications.

Naturally, there will be occasions where it is desirable to obtain additional samples of concrete for testing purposes other than that required for “evaluation and acceptance” as stipulated in the Code. Conveying and placing techniques may alter the properties of concrete such as slump, air content, and subsequent strength. There may be legitimate reasons to evaluate the properties of the concrete at the point of placement, which can then be compared to the properties of the concrete as sampled in the standard manner, in accordance with ASTM C 172. As an example, ACI 301 Standard Specification for Structural Concrete requires concrete samples to be obtained in accordance with ASTM C 172 but also has a provision to sample concrete at the point of placement under the section on additional testing and inspection services. However, the additional sampling and testing cannot be used in place of the sampling and testing necessary for evaluation and acceptance of the concrete, as mandated by the Code.

With the enormous amount of information contained in the Code and reference standards it is no surprise that confusion and misunderstandings arise related to many issues. However, this review of the Code should clarify that it is mandatory to sample ready mixed concrete at the discharge of the truck when the purpose of the subsequent testing is to determine compliance with the strength requirements of the project specifications and as set forth by the Code.

The Technical Committee of the Virginia Ready Mixed Concrete Association has supplied this information as a service to the concrete construction industry.

References

- International Building Code 2015, International Code Council, Inc. Falls Church, VA, 2015.
- ACI 318-14 Building Code Requirements for Structural Concrete, American Concrete Institute, Farmington Hills, MI, 2014.
- ACI 301-10 Specifications for Structural Concrete, American Concrete Institute, Farmington Hills, MI, 2010.
- ASTM C94-14, Standard Specification for Ready-Mixed Concrete, ASTM International, 100 Bar Harbor Drive, West Conshohocken, PA 19428, 2014.
- ASTM C 172-14, Standard Practice for Sampling Ready Mixed Concrete, ASTM International, 100 Bar Harbor Drive, West Conshohocken, PA 19428, 2014.