



Standard Practices for Preserving and Transporting Soil Samples¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 4220; 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 (ε) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope *

1.1 These practices cover procedures for preserving soil samples immediately after they are obtained in the field and accompanying procedures for transporting and handling the samples.

1.2 *Limitations*—These practices are not intended to address requirements applicable to transporting of soil samples known or suspected to contain hazardous materials.

1.3 *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. See Section 7.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:

- D 420 Guide to Site Characterization for Engineering, Design, and Construction Purposes²
- D 653 Terminology Relating to Soil, Rock, and Contained Fluids²
- D 1452 Practice for Soil Investigation and Sampling by Auger Borings²
- D 1586 Test Method for Penetration Test and Split-Barrel Sampling of Soils²
- D 1587 Practice for Thin-Walled Tube Sampling of Soils²
- D 2488 Practice for Description and Identification of Soils (Visual-Manual Procedure)²
- D 3550 Practice for Ring-Lined Barrel Sampling of Soils²
- D 4564 Test Method for Density of Soil in Place by the Sleeve Method²
- D 4700 Guide for Soil Sampling from the Vadose Zone²

3. Terminology

3.1 Terminology in these practices is in accordance with Terminology D 653.

4. Summary of Practices

4.1 The various procedures are given under four groupings as follows:

4.1.1 *Group A*—Samples for which only general visual identification is necessary.

4.1.2 *Group B*—Samples for which only water content and classification tests, proctor and relative density, or profile logging is required, and bulk samples that will be remolded or compacted into specimens for swell pressure, percent swell, consolidation, permeability, shear testing, CBR, stabilimeter, etc.

4.1.3 *Group C*—Intact, naturally formed or field fabricated, samples for density determinations; or for swell pressure, percent swell, consolidation, permeability testing and shear testing with or without stress-strain and volume change measurements, to include dynamic and cyclic testing.

4.1.4 *Group D*—Samples that are fragile or highly sensitive for which tests in Group C are required.

4.2 The procedure(s) to be used should be included in the project specifications or defined by the designated responsible person.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Use of the various procedures recommended in these practices is dependent on the type of samples obtained (Practice D 420), the type of testing and engineering properties required, the fragility and sensitivity of the soil, and the climatic conditions. In all cases, the primary purpose is to preserve the desired inherent conditions.

5.2 The procedures presented in these practices were primarily developed for soil samples that are to be tested for engineering properties, however, they may be applicable for samples of soil and other materials obtained for other purposes.

6. Apparatus

6.1 The type of materials and containers needed depend upon the conditions and requirements listed under the four groupings A to D in Section 4, and also on the climate and transporting mode and distance.

6.1.1 *Sealing Wax*, includes microcrystalline wax, paraffin, beeswax, ceresine, carnaubawax, or combinations thereof.

6.1.2 *Metal Disks*, about 1/16 in. (about 2 mm) thick and having a diameter slightly less than the inside diameter of the tube, liner, or ring and to be used in union with wax or caps and tape, or both.

6.1.3 *Wood Disks*, prewaxed, 1 in. (25 mm) thick and having a diameter slightly less than the inside diameter of the liner or tube.

¹ These practices are under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D18 on Soil and Rock and are the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D18.02 on Sampling and Related Field Testing for Soil Investigations.

Current edition approved April 15, 1995. Published June 1995. Originally published as D 4220 – 83. Last previous edition D 4220 – 89.

² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 04.08.

*A Summary of Changes section appears at the end of this standard.

6.1.4 *Tape*, either waterproof plastic, adhesive friction, or duct tape.

6.1.5 *Cheesecloth*, to be used in union with wax in alternative layers.

6.1.6 *Caps*, either plastic, rubber or metal, to be placed over the end of thin-walled tubes (Practice D 1587), liners and rings (Practice D 3550), in union with tape or wax.

6.1.7 *O'ring (Sealing End Caps)*, used to seal the ends of samples within thin-walled tubes, by mechanically expanding an O'ring against the tube wall.

NOTE 1—Plastic expandable end caps are preferred. Metal expandable end caps seal equally well; however, long-term storage may cause corrosion problems.

6.1.8 *Jars*, wide mouthed, with rubber-ringed lids or lids lined with a coated paper seal and of a size to comfortably receive the sample, commonly ½ pt (250 mL), 1 pt (500 mL) and quart-sized (1000 mL).

6.1.9 *Bag*, either plastic, burlap with liner, burlap or cloth type (Practice D 1452).

6.1.10 *Packing Material*, to protect against vibration and shock.

6.1.11 *Insulation*, either granule (bead), sheet or foam type, to resist temperature change of soil or to prevent freezing.

6.1.12 *Sample Cube Boxes*, for transporting cube (block) samples. Constructed with ½ to ¾ in. (13 to 19 mm) thick plywood (marine type).

6.1.13 *Cylindrical Sample Containers*, somewhat larger in dimension than the thin-walled tube or liner samples, such as cylindrical frozen food cartons.

6.1.14 *Shipping Containers*, either box or cylindrical type and of proper construction to protect against vibration, shock, and the elements, to the degree required.

NOTE 2—The length, girth and weight restrictions for commercial transportation must be considered.

6.1.15 *Identification Material*—This includes the necessary writing pens, tags, and labels to properly identify the sample(s).

7. Precautions

7.1 Special instructions, descriptions, and marking of containers must accompany any sample that may include radioactive, chemical, toxic, or other contaminant material.

7.2 Interstate transportation containment, storage, and disposal of soil samples obtained from certain areas within the United States and the transportation of foreign soils into or through the United States are subject to regulations established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal, and Plant Health Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine Programs, and possibly to regulations of other federal, state, or local agencies.

7.2.1 Samples shipped by way of common carrier or U.S. Postal Service must comply with the Department of Transportation Hazardous Materials Regulation, 49CFR Part 172.

7.3 Sample traceability records (see Fig. 1) are encouraged and should be required for suspected contaminated samples.

7.3.1 The possession of all samples must be traceable, from collection to shipment to laboratory to disposition, and should be handled by as few persons as possible.

7.3.2 The sample collector(s) should be responsible for

initiating the sample traceability record; recording the project, sample identification and location, sample type, date, and the number and types of containers.

7.3.3 A separate traceability record shall accompany each shipment.

7.3.4 When transferring the possession of samples the person(s) relinquishing and receiving the samples shall sign, date, record the time, and check for completeness of the traceability record.

8. Procedure

8.1 *All Samples*—Properly identify samples with tags, labels, and markings prior to transporting them as follows:

8.1.1 Job name or number, or both,

8.1.2 Sampling date,

8.1.3 Sample/boring number and location,

8.1.4 Depth or elevation, or both,

8.1.5 Sample orientation,

8.1.6 Special shipping or laboratory handling instructions, or both, including sampling orientation, and

8.1.7 Penetration test data, if applicable (Test Method D 1586).

8.1.8 Subdivided samples must be identified while maintaining association to the original sample.

8.1.9 If required, sample traceability record.

8.2 *Group A*—Transport samples in any type of container by way of available transportation. If transported commercially, the container need only meet the minimum requirements of the transporting agency and any other requirements necessary to assure against sample loss.

8.3 *Group B*:

8.3.1 Preserve and transport these samples in sealed, moistureproof containers. All containers shall be of sufficient thickness and strength to ensure against breakage and moisture loss. The container types include: plastic bags or pails, glass or plastic (provided they are waterproof) jars, thin walled tubes, liners, and rings. Wrap cylindrical and cube samples in suitable plastic film or aluminum foil, or both, (Note 3) and coat with several layers of wax, or seal in several layers of cheesecloth and wax.

8.3.2 Transport these samples by any available transportation. Ship these samples as prepared or placed in larger shipping containers, including bags, cardboard, or wooden boxes or barrels.

NOTE 3—Some soils may cause holes to develop in aluminum foil, due to corrosion. Avoid direct contact where adverse affects to sample composition are a concern.

8.3.3 *Plastic Bags*—Place the plastic bags as tightly as possible around the sample, squeezing out as much air as possible. They shall be 3 mil or thicker to prevent leakage.

8.3.4 *Glass-Plastic Jars*—If the jar lids are not rubber ringed or lined with new waxed paper seals, seal the lids with wax.

8.3.5 *Plastic Pails*—If the plastic pail lids are not air tight, seal them with wax or tape.

8.3.6 *Thin-Walled Tubes*:

8.3.6.1 *Expandable Packers*—The preferred method of

**Sample Identification/Traceability Record
(Controlled Document)**

Project: _____ W.O. # _____

Shipped by: _____

Shipped to: _____ Attention of: _____

Comments: _____ Hazardous materials suspected?
(yes/no)

Sampling Point	Location	Field ID #	Date	Sample Type	No. of Containers	Analysis/Test Required	(optional) Lab ID

Sampler(s) (signature) _____

Field ID	Relinquished by: (signature)	Date/Time	Received by: (signature)	Date/Time	Comments

Shipment prepared by: (signature) _____ Date/Time _____ Shipment method: _____

Received for Lab by: (signature) _____ Date/Time _____ Comments _____

Receiving Laboratory: Please return original form after signing for receipt of samples. _____

FIG. 1 Example Layout of Record Form

sealing sample ends within tubes is with plastic, expandable packers.

8.3.6.2 *Wax With Disks*—For short-term sealing, paraffin wax is acceptable. For long term sealing (in excess of 3 days) use microcrystalline waxes or combine with up to 15 % beeswax or resin, for better adherence to the wall of the tube and to reduce shrinkage. Several thin layers of wax are preferred over one thick layer. The minimum final thickness shall be 0.4 in. (10 mm).

8.3.6.3 *End Caps*—Seal metal, rubber, or plastic end caps with tape. For long term storage (longer than 3 days), also dip them in wax, applying two or more layers of wax.

8.3.6.4 *Cheesecloth and Wax*—Use alternating layers (a minimum of two each) of cheesecloth and wax to seal each end of the tube and stabilize the sample.

NOTE 4—Where necessary, spacers or appropriate packing materials, or both, must be placed prior to sealing the tube ends to provide proper confinement. Packing material must be nonabsorbent and must maintain its properties to provide the same degree of continued sample support.

8.3.7 *Liners and Rings*—Refer to 8.3.6.3 or 8.3.6.4.

8.3.8 *Exposed Samples:*

8.3.8.1 *Cylindrical, Cubical or Other Samples Wrapped in*

Plastic, such as polyethylene and polypropylene, or foil should be further protected with a minimum of three coats of wax.

8.3.8.2 *Cylindrical and Cube Samples Wrapped in Cheesecloth and Wax*, shall be sealed with a minimum of three layers of each, placed alternatively.

8.3.8.3 *Carton Samples (Frozen Food Cartons)*—Samples placed in these containers must be situated so that wax can be poured completely around the sample. The wax should fill the void between the sample and container wall. The wax should be sufficiently warm to flow, but not so hot that it penetrates the pores of the soil. Generally, the samples should be wrapped in plastic or foil before being surrounded with wax.

8.4 *Group C:*

8.4.1 Preserve and seal these samples in containers as covered in 8.3. In addition, they must be protected against vibration and shock, and protected from extreme heat or cold.

8.4.2 Samples transported by the sampling or testing agency personnel on seats of automobiles and trucks need only be placed in cardboard boxes, or similar containers into which the sealed samples fit snugly, preventing bumping, rolling, dropping, etc.

8.4.3 For all other methods of transporting samples, including automobile trunk, bus, parcel services, truck, boat, air, etc., place the sealed samples in wood, metal, or other type of suitable shipping containers that provide cushioning or insulation, or both, for each sample and container. Avoid transporting by any agency whose handling of containers is suspect.

8.4.4 The cushioning material (sawdust, rubber, polystyrene, urethane foam, or material with similar resiliency) should completely encase each sample. The cushioning between the samples and walls of the shipping containers should have a minimum thickness of 1 in. (25 mm). A minimum thickness of 2 in. (50 mm) shall be provided on the container floor.

8.4.5 When required, the samples should be shipped in the same orientation in which they were sampled. Otherwise, special conditions shall be provided such as freezing, controlled drainage, or sufficient confinement, or a combination thereof, to maintain sample integrity.

8.5 *Group D:*

8.5.1 The requirements of 8.4 must be met, in addition to the following:

8.5.1.1 Samples should be handled in the same orientation in which they were sampled, including during transportation or shipping, with appropriate markings on the shipping container.

8.5.1.2 For all modes of private or commercial transportation, the loading, transporting and unloading of the shipment containers should be supervised as much as possible by a qualified person.

NOTE 5—A qualified person may be an engineer, geologist, soil scientist, soils technician or responsible person designated by the project manager.

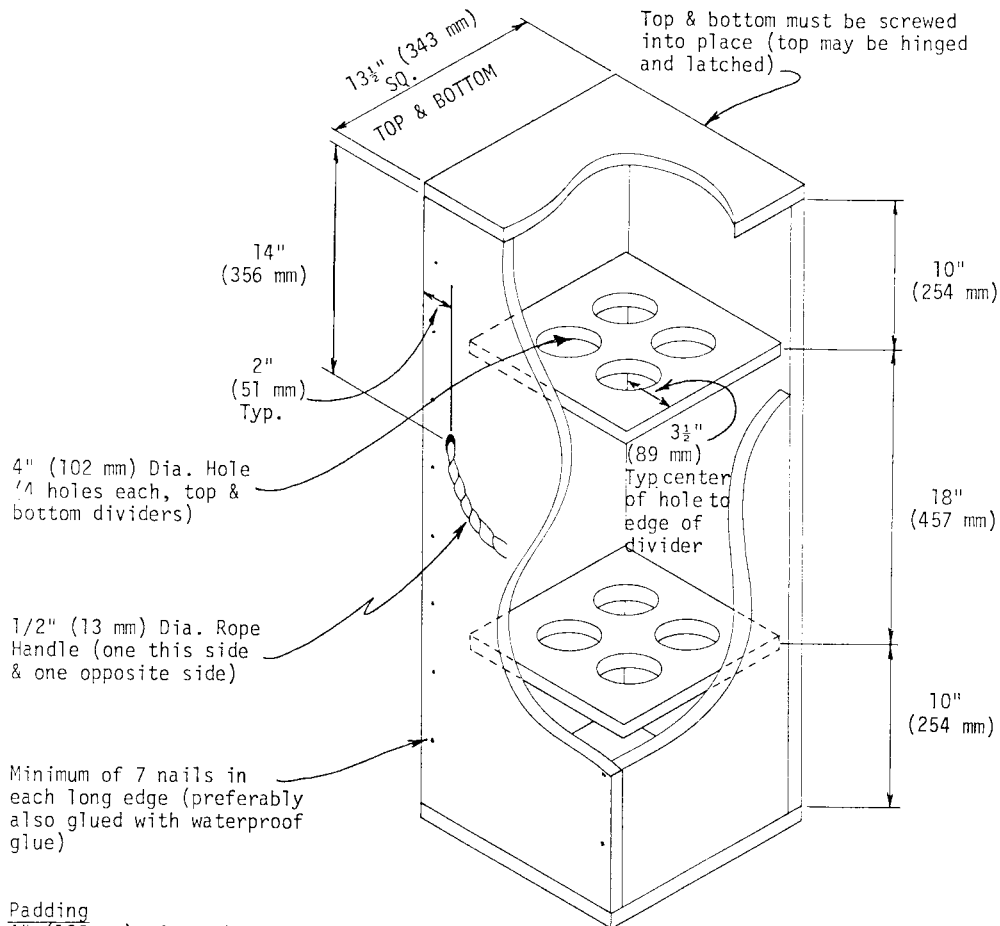
8.6 *Shipping Containers* (see Figs. 2-7 for typical containers):

8.6.1 The following features should be included in the design of the shipping container for Groups C and D.

8.6.1.1 It should be reusable,

8.6.1.2 It should be constructed so that the samples can be maintained, at all times, in the same position as when sampled or packed, or both,

8.6.1.3 It should include sufficient packing material to



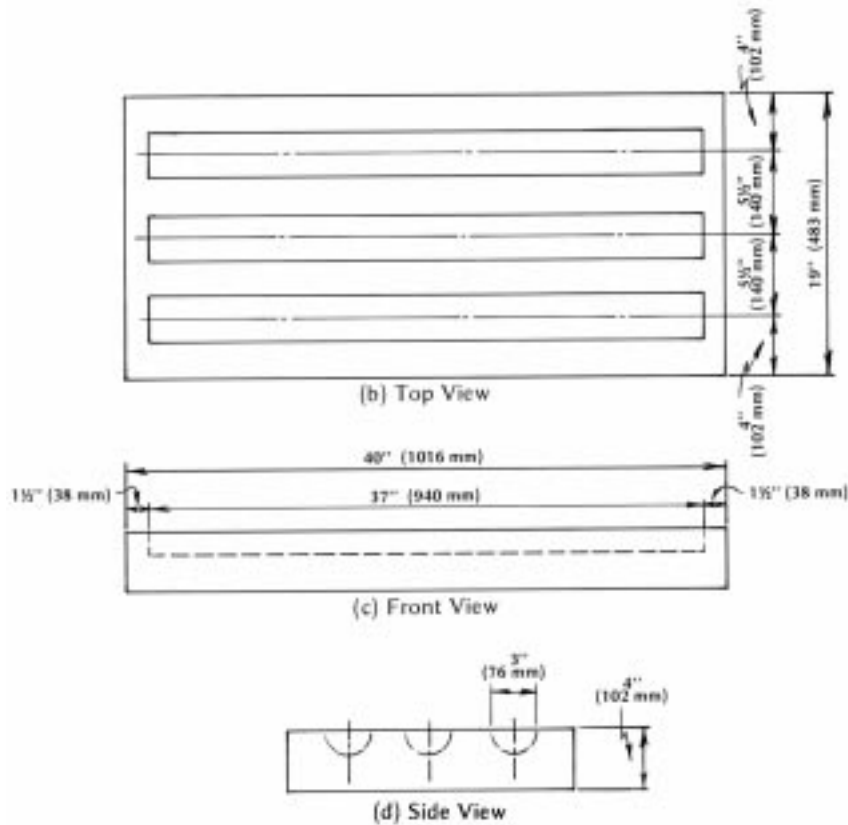
Padding
 4" (102 mm) of urethane foam (or equivalent) in the bottom of the box. 1" (25 mm) around the tubes and on top.

Material
 3/4" (19 mm) thick plywood (exterior grade)

FIG. 2 Shipping Box for 3-in. (76-mm) Thin-Walled Tubes



(a) Photo of Open Box For 5" (127 mm) Tubes



NOTE 1—Top and bottom halves are identical.

FIG. 3 Styrene Shipping Container for 3-in. (76-mm) Thin-Walled Tubes

cushion or isolate, or both, the tubes from the adverse effect of vibration and shock, and

8.6.1.4 It should include sufficient insulating material to prevent freezing, sublimation and thawing, or undesirable temperature changes.

8.6.2 *Wood Shipping Containers:*

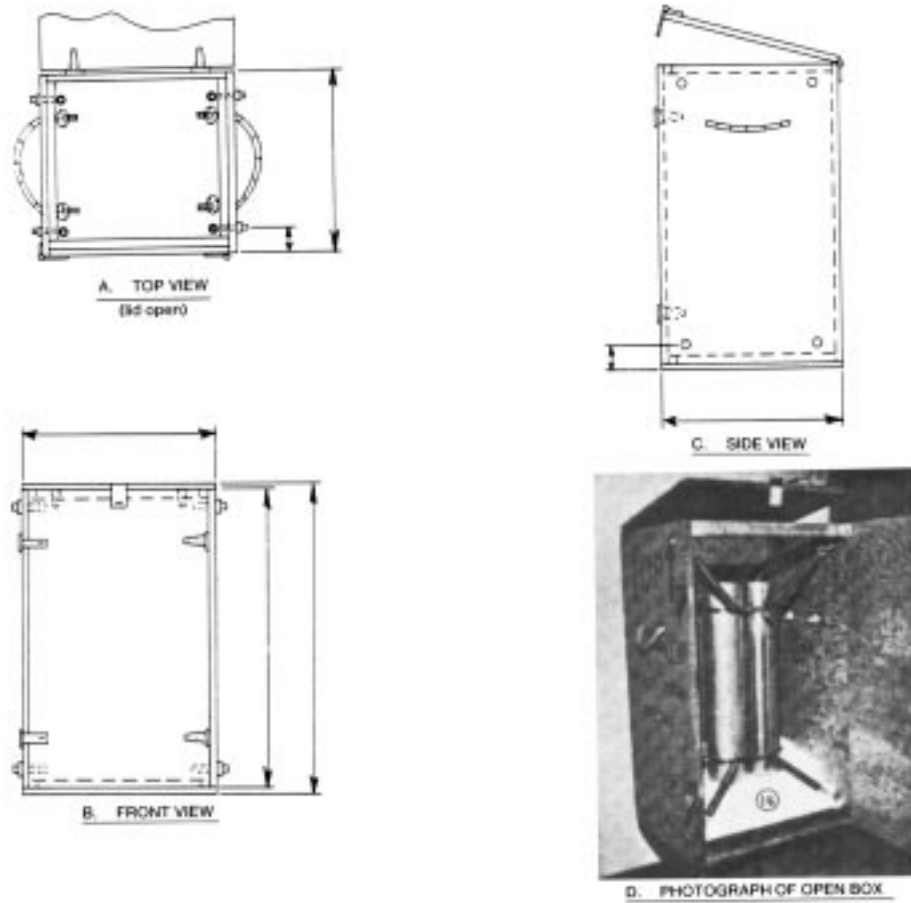
8.6.2.1 Wood is preferred over metal. Outdoor (marine) plywood having a thickness of 1/2 and 3/4 in. (13 to 19 mm) may

be used. The top (cover) should be hinged and latched, or fastened with screws.

8.6.2.2 The cushioning requirements are given in 8.4.4.

8.6.2.3 For protection against freezing or extreme temperature variation, the entire shipping container should be lined with a minimum insulation thickness of 2 in. (50 mm).

8.6.3 *Metal Shipping Containers*—The metal shipping containers must incorporate cushioning and insulation material to



BILL OF MATERIALS

Item No.	Description of Item	Quantity	Item No.	Description of Item	Quantity
1	Plywood, 4 ft by 8 ft by 3/4 in. (1220 mm by 2440 mm by 19.1 mm) exterior, Grade AC	1 Sheet	13	Rope, nylon, 1/2-in. (12.7-mm) diameter, solid braided	5 ft (1524 mm)
2	Hinge, strap, 4 in. (102 mm), heavy duty with screws	4 Each	14	Cushioning Material, expanded polystyrene foam	10 ft ³ (0.28 m ³)
3	Hasp, hinged, 4 1/2 in. (114 mm), with screws	3 Each	Notes— (a) All wooden components can be sawed from one sheet of plywood.		
4	Screw, Wood, Steel, Flathead, No. 10 by 1 3/4 in. (44.5 mm)	72 Each	(b) This shipping box will accommodate approximately three 3-in. (76-mm) diameter tubes or two 5-in (127-mm) diameter tubes up to 30 in. (762 mm) in length. For longer tubes the inside height of the box must be a minimum of 6-in. (152 mm) greater than the length of the tube.		
5	Bolt, Machine, 3/8 in. (9.5 mm), with nut to secure hasps	3 Each	(c) All joints to be glued and fastened with screws.		
6	Washer, flat, 3/8 in. (9.5 mm)	3 Each	(d) Stencil all sides as follows (See Views B and C).		
7	Eye Bolt, 1/2 by 2 in. (6.4 mm by 51 mm), zinc-plated, with nut	8 Each	TO PROTECT FROM FREEZING		
8	Washer, flat, 1/4 in. (6.4 mm), for hasp bolt	8 Each	(e) After suspending samples as indicated above, all void space must be filled with a suitable resilient packing material.		
9	S Hooks, 2 in. (51 mm), open, zinc-plated	8 Each			
10	Clamp, adjustable, hose, steel, worm screw adjustment	2 Each			
11	Spring, expansion	8 Each			
12	Adhesive, woodworking	1 lb (454 g)			

FIG. 4 Suspension System Container for Thin-Walled Tubes

minimum thicknesses in accordance with 8.6.2, although slightly greater thicknesses would be appropriate. Alternatively, the cushion effect could be achieved with a spring suspension system, or any other means that would provide similar protection.

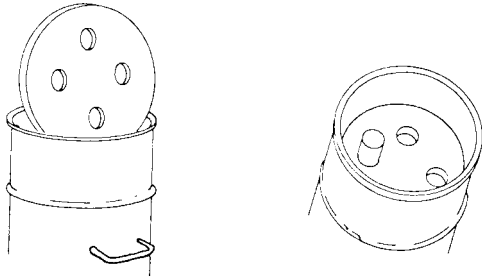
8.6.4 *Styrene Shipping Containers*—Bulk styrene with slots cut to the dimensions of the sample tube or liner. A protective outer box of plywood or reinforced cardboard is recommended.

8.6.5 *Other Containers*—Containers constructed with laminated fiberboard, plastic or reinforced cardboard outer walls, and properly lined, may also be used.

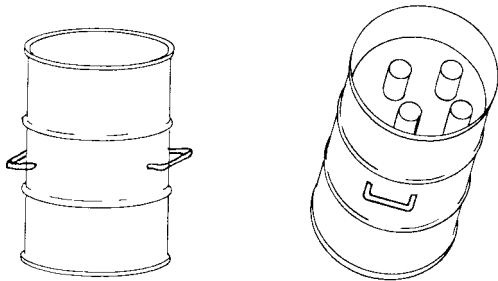
9. Reporting

9.1 The data obtained in the field shall be recorded and should include the following:

- 9.1.1 Job name or number, or both,
- 9.1.2 Sampling date(s),
- 9.1.3 Sample/boring number(s) and location(s),
- 9.1.4 Depth(s) or elevation(s), or both,
- 9.1.5 Sample orientation,
- 9.1.6 Groundwater observation, if any,
- 9.1.7 Method of sampling, and penetration test data, if applicable,



(a) 55-gallon (0.21 m³) oil barrels with sections of styrofoam insulation; welded handles on each side.



(b) Same as (a) showing barrel ready for shipment. Steel lids bolted on to provide tight seal.

NOTE 1—Two in. (51 mm) of foam rubber covers 2 in. of styrofoam at the base. One in. (25 mm) of foam rubber overlays the top of the tubes, and the remaining space to the lid is filled with styrofoam.

FIG. 5 Shipping Barrel for Thin-Walled Tubes

- 9.1.8 Sample dimensions,
- 9.1.9 Soil description (Practice D 2488),

- 9.1.10 Names of technician/crewman, engineer, project chief, etc.,
- 9.1.11 Comments regarding contaminated or possible contaminated samples,
- 9.1.12 If used, a copy of traceability records,
- 9.1.13 Weather conditions, and
- 9.1.14 General remarks.

10. Precision and Bias

10.1 This practice provides qualitative and general information only. Therefore, a precision and bias statement is not applicable.

11. Keywords

11.1 preservation; soil samples; transportation

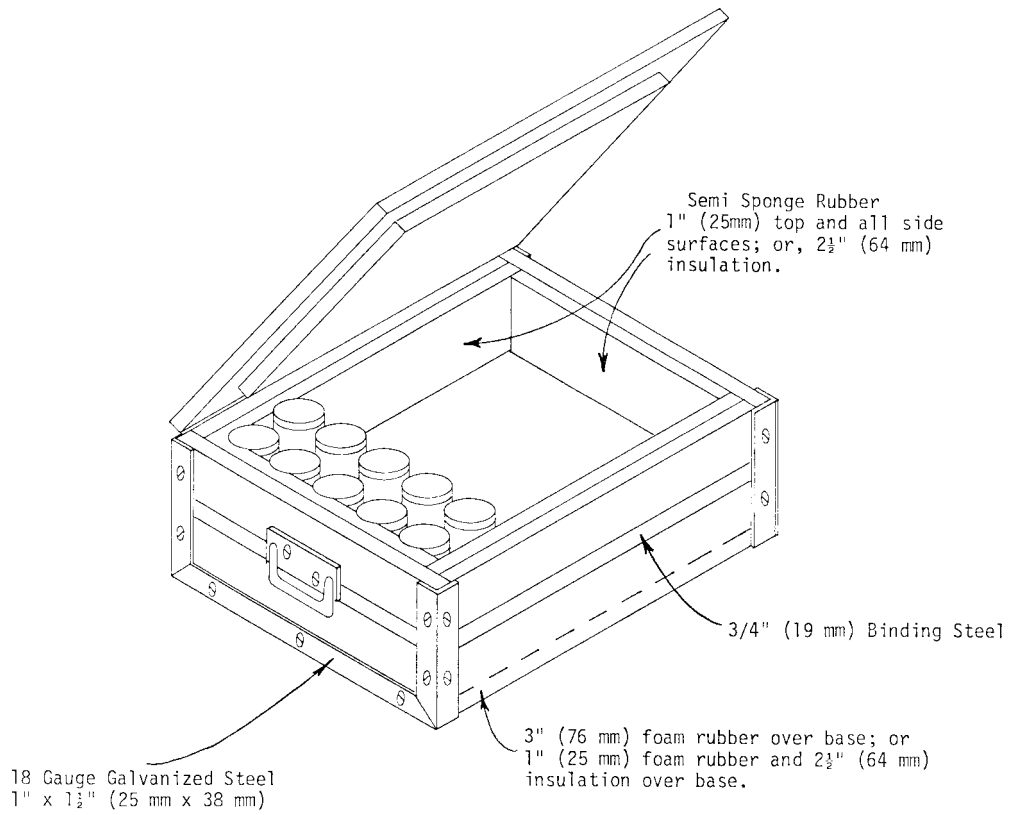
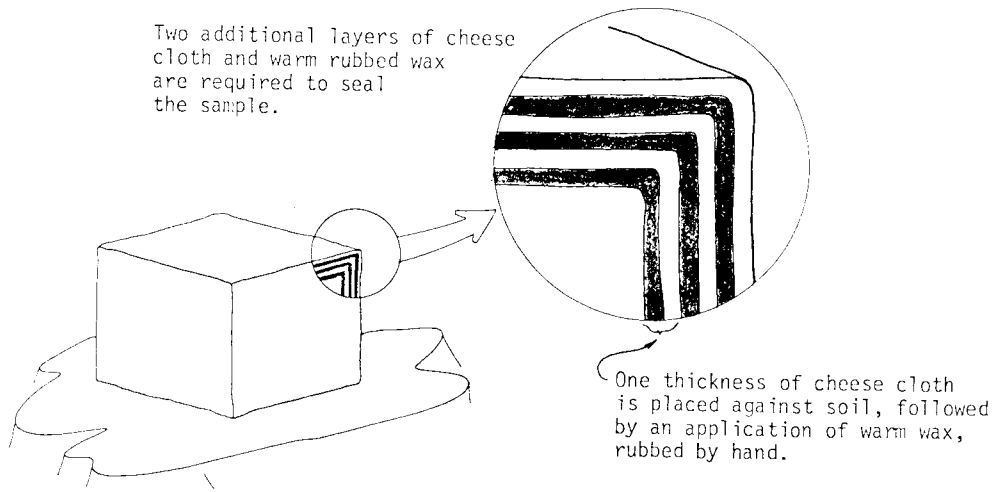
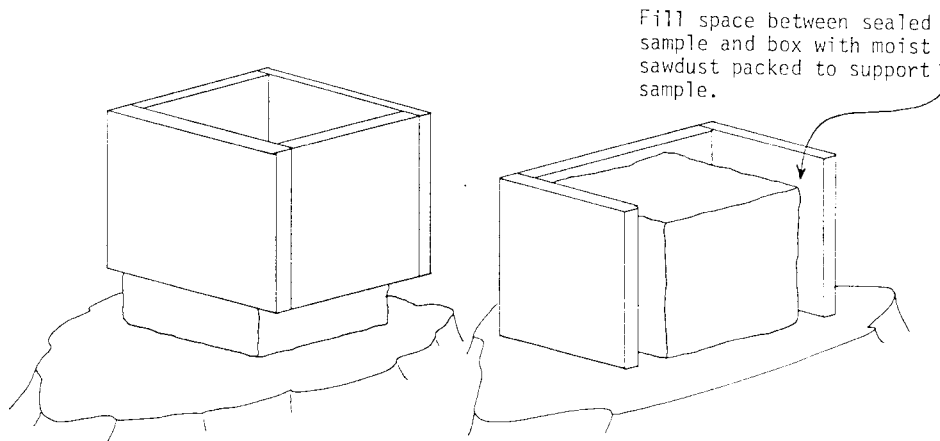


FIG. 6 Shipping Box for Liner (Short Tube) or Ring Samples



A. METHOD FOR SEALING HAND-CUT UNDISTURBED SAMPLES



B. ENCASE EASILY DISTURBED SAMPLES IN BOX PRIOR TO CUTTING

Box constructed with 1/2"-3/4" (13 - 19 mm) exterior plywood.

FIG. 7 Preparing and Packaging a Block Sample

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This section identifies the location of changes to these practices that have been incorporated since the last issue. Committee D-18 has highlighted those changes that affect the technical interpretation or use of these practices.

- (1) Section 11 was added since the last revision.
- (2) Section 2 was expanded since the last revision.

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