



SELF-DESICCATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN CONCRETE TECHNOLOGY

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PREFACE

This is the fourth Research Seminar Building Materials Division of Lunds in 1997¹, 1999², and 2002.³ While National Institute of Standards and of the participants and the high characterized the first three seminars

RILEM TC 196-ICC has defined se humidity of a sealed system when chemical shrinkage takes place at the supportive skeleton, and the che shrinkage." While self-desiccation v conditions, its effects are quite dep These pore sizes in turn are depen particle size distributions of the b hydration. The continuing trends t significantly reduced the capillary po the fresh concrete, and have often re of self-desiccation are all to visi minimizing the detrimental effects o and strains that may lead to early providing a "sacrificial" set of microstructure that will empty first v will remain saturated. It must be kep always detrimental, as exemplified l of an earlier RH reduction for floori damage.

As this volume of proceedings con different countries, it is obvious that research on this topic exhibited understanding of the mechanisms by scientific foundation, and thus the basic to an applied phase, from the researchers to concrete practitioners strength and durability to this techno Gaithersburg, MD USA, May 2005

Dale Bentz

¹ Persson, B., Fagerlund, G. (Eds.), Self-Desic TVBM-3075, Div. Building Materials, Lund I

² Persson, B., Fagerlund, G. (Eds.), Self-Desic TVBM-3085, Div. Building Materials, Lund I

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CURRENT AND FUTURE TRENDS IN THE APPLICATION OF INTERNAL CURING OF CONCRETE

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Abstract

The concept of Internal Curing (IC) has come into the marketplace after 50 years of unobtrusively improving concrete [1, 2] through the use of lightweight aggregate (which was absorbent) in many different applications for purposes other than that of providing absorbed water for the hydration of cement. For instance, lightweight block have sharper edges, and bridges have less cracking through the incorporation of lightweight aggregates in their concrete mixtures.

Observations, as a result of successful and recent tests and research [3-19], have recently put IC in the forefront of breakthroughs of ideas of how to make good concrete better. It improves the results obtained by low water/cement (w/c) ratios, the use of silica fume, the advent of high-performance concrete, and the benefits from certain admixtures.

In the last 100 years [20] there has been placed a certain amount of long-lasting, good performing and economical concrete. However, the deficiencies of much of the concrete have been obvious. In the last 75 years [20] there has been a great amount of knowledge generated of how to make concrete better through the incorporation of specifically engineered ingredients and methods of batching and mixing. There have even been studies of the best means of curing. ACI Committee 308 has studied the subject since Bryant Mather [8, 21, 22] called the industry's attention to "self-curing." It was he who reconstituted and chaired the Committee on Curing. The Guide to Curing Concrete (ACI 308R-01) is being rewritten to recognize the value of internal curing as an adjunct to external curing.

Internal curing can make good concrete better [23]. It can make up for some of the deficiencies brought on by human beings' not following the best practices with external curing. It can even make up for some of the problems brought on by hot or windy weather. For very low w/c (≤ 0.35) concretes, IC may be a necessity [24], but research makes it obvious that there are benefits from IC in many low w/c ratio (≤ 0.43) mixtures. The need for it became obvious with the advent of high performance concrete (HPC). Because of it, more of the cement in a mixture is hydrated in a timely fashion. It results in greater early age strength, much lower autogenous shrinkage and cracking, lower permeability, greater internal relative humidity with elimination of self-desiccation, and other beneficial characteristics. It can benefit many different applications, among which the most obvious are bridges, parking structures, high performance concrete, pavements, precast concrete and high fly-ash concrete. Because its benefits are unique to different applications, other uses will be developed.

In order to use the optimum amount of internal curing agent, a rationale has been developed for mixture proportioning for Internal Curing [25], based on the chemical shrinkage and desorption of readily available water as it migrates to the hydrating cement.

Because of the deficiencies occurring in normal weight concrete, a number of candidates (applications, uses) for internal curing have been identified [26]. These may benefit in accordance with their needs for internal water and in accordance with the amount of IC vehicle used. It is envisioned that in the 21st Century some method of internal curing will be incorporated in all better quality concrete.

1. Introduction and objectives of Internal Curing

1.1 General

What are the purposes of Internal Curing (IC)? What is the present status of internal curing in the market place? The more we delve into how IC improves concrete, the more we have answers to the questions and the more we understand the magnitude of the list of potential applications. Preordained usage is insignificant in 2004, but interest is high and usage will grow because there are many problems involved with concrete that internal curing can resolve.

Internal Curing (Purposes):

A. A means to provide the water to hydrate all the cement [10, 23], accomplishing what the mixing water alone cannot do. In low w/c ratio mixes (under 0.43 and increasingly those below 0.40) absorptive lightweight aggregate, replacing some of the sand, provides water that is desorbed into the mortar fraction (paste) to be used as additional curing water. The cement, not hydrated by the low amount of mixing water, has more water available to it.

B. Provides water to keep the relative humidity (RH) high, keeping self-desiccation from occurring.

C. Largely eliminates autogenous shrinkage [10, 25].

D. Keeps the strength of the mortar and the concrete in the early age (12 to 72 hrs.) above the level where internally induced and externally induced strains can cause cracking [10, 25].

E. Makes up for some of the deficiencies of external curing, both human related (because the most critical time that curing is required is the first 12 to 72 hours) and hydration related (because hydration products clog the passageways needed for the fluid curing water to travel to the cement particles thirsting for water).

Internal curing works, because the thirst for water by the hydrating cement particles is so intense, because the capillary action of the pores in the concrete is so strong, and because the water in the properly distributed particles of lightweight aggregate sand is so fluid [27]. These factors establish the dynamics of water movement to the unhydrated cement particles.

1.2. Internal Curing (present status)

Although we have inadvertently used (in the last 50 years [1] with lightweight concrete carriers) to bring water into the concrete (by using absorptive lightweight aggregate) the characteristics of normal weight concrete with lightweight aggregate in the mix

2. Concrete deficiencies that internal curing can resolve

The applications that benefit from internal curing can provide passageways which improve low early-age strength and increase the elasticity of the finished product. Internal curing can help reduce the amount of water consumed and aid in the GREEN building process by reducing construction time (ACTT), providing lower maintenance cost and providing greater durability.

3. Procedures for optimum internal curing

3.1 General

Internal curing results depend on the amount of other ingredients (including cement, water, and admixtures) used, and how the vehicle is incorporated into the mixture with the materials which are used. The material must be predictably reliable. The material must be uniform in its characteristics.

The material must be able to be stored and transported without degradation. The material must be water until needed for internal curing. The material incorporated should be as easy to use as possible material.

The purpose of the whole IC process is to provide the water needed for the concrete to cure satisfactorily.

Whether the absorbed water is provided by absorptive lightweight aggregate or superabsorbent polymers, it should be available instant the water is needed. When the concrete is plastic, in its hardening, and in its setting, the engineer/designer/specifier must provide a method to satisfactorily cure the concrete, and

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1.2. Internal Curing (present status)

Although we have inadvertently cured concrete from the inside for the past fifty (50) years [1] with lightweight concrete, now we must consciously use agents (vehicles, carriers) to bring water into the concrete mixture on purpose by providing it through absorbent lightweight aggregate sand (LWAS) [28]. In doing so we will improve the characteristics of normal weight concrete by using a small amount of absorbent lightweight aggregate in the mixture.

2. Concrete deficiencies that IC can address

The applications that benefit from IC include those in which cracking of the concrete can provide passageways which result in the deterioration of the reinforcing steel, in which low early-age strength is a problem, where permeability or durability must be improved, and even where the rheology of the concrete mixture, the modulus of elasticity of the finished product or the durability of high fly-ash concretes are considerations. IC can help them all. IC can even help reduce the amount of cement consumed and aid in the GREEN effect, such as that promulgated by LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). IC can contribute to the elimination of excessive construction time (ACTT), provide quicker turnaround time in precast plants, lower maintenance cost and provide greater performance and predictability.

3. Procedures for optimum Internal Curing

3.1 General

Internal curing results depend on the agent used, the procedure, the methodology, the other ingredients (including cement, aggregates and admixtures), the amount of vehicle used, and how the vehicle is incorporated into the mixture. The key is to design the mixture with the materials which will assist in making the entire process simple and predictably reliable. The material used, itself, needs to be predictable in its effects and uniform in its characteristics.

The material must be able to be batched easily. The concrete must be able to be mixed and transported without degradation of the IC agent. The agent needs to not release its water until needed for internal curing purposes. The concrete with the IC material incorporated should be as easily pumped, placed and finished as without the IC material.

The purpose of the whole IC process is to make good concrete better.

Whether the absorbed water is supplied by the inclusion in normal weight concrete of absorptive lightweight aggregate, (with strong, cubical particle shape) or of superabsorbent polymers, it should have the characteristic of desorbing its water at the instant the water is needed. Whichever is used, the objective is to have concrete in its plastic, in its hardening, and in its service condition with the characteristics desired by the engineer/designer/specifier. To achieve this, it must have sufficient internal water to satisfactorily cure the concrete, reduce autogenous shrinkage to an allowable minimum

and retain relative humidity (RH) at a level needed to eliminate self desiccation.

Lightweight aggregate sand (LWAS), as the material providing absorbed water, is in the forefront in 2005 [29]. As more and more projects are designed and constructed, the amount of the LWAS per cubic yard of concrete will be revised to achieve certain purposes. Additionally, other appropriate IC agents or even admixtures might be included, either separately or absorbed into the lightweight sand. Choices will be made for certain uses and others specified for general use. For instance, to further improve the characteristics of the outside millimeter or two, where outside curing might not be sufficient, additional lightweight aggregate sand might provide the additional absorbed water needed to provide the curing necessary near the surface. The relationship of the carrier of water for internal curing with admixtures is important. Admixtures have their own mission; water carriers have theirs. Combined, the absorption of the water and admixtures together can have a salient effect on the final result. Aggregate, silica fume, fly ash, water/binder ratios, and cement/aggregate ratios have their own effects and even limitations. Internal curing can have a beneficial effect on them all. Their relationship with each other, brought about by internal curing, can optimize the influence each has and bring about a synergistic effect on the concrete end product.

3.2 Mixture proportioning for Internal Curing

The paper authored by Bentz, Lura and Roberts in the February issue of Concrete International [25] sets forth the rationale for a methodology for "Mixture Proportioning for Internal Curing." The rationale is based on the chemical shrinkage and the desorption of readily available water as it migrates to the hydrating cement. A formula of Bentz and Snyder [10] is presented for the Internal Curing Water that is required:

3.3. Required Internal Curing water

$$M_{LWA} = \frac{C_f \cdot CS \cdot \alpha_{max}}{S \cdot \Phi_{LWA}}$$

Where

M_{LWA} = mass of (dry) LWA needed per unit of volume of concrete (kg/m^3 or lb/yd^3)

C_f = cement factor (content) for concrete mixture (kg/m^3 or lb/yd^3)

CS = chemical shrinkage of cement (g of water/g of cement or lb/lb)

α_{max} = maximum expected degree of hydration of cement

S = degree of saturation of aggregate (0 to 1)

Φ_{LWA} = absorption of lightweight

The cement factor (C_f) is known easily computed from its composition, maximum expected degree of hydration available. The other two factors, optimum lightweight aggregate volume and amount of hydration of the cement unable to achieve saturation or absorption has a time of 24 hours and final setting stages, an absorption of early availability of absorbed aggregate is concerned, each has its own characteristic expansion are large, some infinitesimally small is that 24 hour absorptions vary same mass of lightweight aggregate for the hydration of the cement.

The formula is designed for a specific characteristics of the lightweight aggregate ascertained through ASTM C129, 1, 2, 4 hours, 15 hours rate and effective degree of saturation equation for a particular lightweight aggregate of the range of 5 to 25% and a desired maximum degree of hydration per yard of concrete with a water/cement ratio of 0.15.

$$M = \frac{588 \cdot 0.065 \cdot 0.94}{0.95 \cdot 0.15}$$

= 252 lbs. LWAS

The required lightweight sand for this example 252 pounds or 114 pounds or 17.1 kg. This internal curing adds to the water which the cement absorbs. The internal absorbed water permeability, strength or durability characteristics.

It is recommended that the practical ingredients of the concrete mixture of the other aggregates and admixtures 1% or more it has been shown

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oving absorbed water, is in the e designed and constructed, the ll be revised to achieve certain or even admixtures might be ight sand. Choices will be made r instance, to further improve the re outside curing might not be provide the additional absorbed surface. The relationship of the mportant. Admixtures have their the absorption of the water and al result. Aggregate, silica fume, s have their own effects and even t on them all. Their relationship optimize the influence each has product.

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Φ_{LWA} = absorption of lightweight aggregate (kg water/kg dry LWA or lb/lb)

The cement factor (C_p) is known, and the chemical shrinkage (CS) of the cement is easily computed from its composition. These two parts of the equation are fixed. The maximum expected degree of hydration of the cement (α_{max}) depends on the water available. The other two factors vary with different lightweight aggregates. A less than optimum lightweight aggregate will desorb water at a lower rate such that the maximum amount of hydration of the cement is not achieved. Certain lightweight aggregates are unable to achieve saturation or desorption quickly enough. The ASTM C128 test for absorption has a time of 24 hours. Since desorption is especially important in the initial and final setting stages, an absorption at 30 minutes [29] has been accepted as a measure of early availability of absorbed water. As far as the absorption of the lightweight aggregate is concerned, each shale, clay or slate out of which the aggregate is made has its own characteristic expansion with resulting void or pore configuration. Some voids are large, some infinitesimally small, some are interconnecting, some are not. The result is that 24 hour absorptions vary from 5% or less to 25% or more. Consequently, the same mass of lightweight aggregate might have widely varying ability to provide water for the hydration of the cement.

The formula is designed for a simple computation. All that is necessary is to know the characteristics of the lightweight aggregate sand through testing. The absorption is ascertained through ASTM C128 and it is suggested that aggregate be tested for 30 minutes, 1, 2, 4 hours, 15 hours (AASHTO) and 24 hours (ASTM) so the desorption rate and effective degree of saturation can be ascertained. Substituting numbers in the equation for a particular lightweight aggregate sand, whose absorption is in the middle of the range of 5 to 25% and a degree of saturation of 95%, we obtain the following for a maximum degree of hydration of 0.94 for 588 pounds (267 kg) of cement per cubic yard of concrete with a water/cement ratio of 0.34.

$$M = \frac{588 \cdot 0.065 \cdot 0.94}{0.95 \cdot 0.15}$$

$$= 252 \text{ lbs. LWAS}$$

$$M = \frac{267 \cdot 0.065 \cdot 0.94}{0.95 \cdot 0.15}$$

$$= 114 \text{ kg LWAS}$$

The required lightweight sand that is to be substituted for the natural sand is therefore in this example 252 pounds or 114 kg. The absorbed water that can be desorbed is 37.8 pounds or 17.1 kg. This internal water does not affect the w/c ratio amount, but instead adds to the water which the cement needs for hydration, and is in addition to the mixing water. The internal absorbed and desorbed water has no adverse effect on the permeability, strength or durability but instead has a beneficial effect on all these characteristics.

It is recommended that the practitioner determine the required parameters of all of the ingredients of the concrete mixture, not only of those involved in the formula, but also of the other aggregates and admixtures. For instance, if the stone has an absorption of 1% or more it has been shown that the shrinkage of the concrete made from it is

improved [30]. Absorbent lightweight aggregate is a proven benefit to curing, but there are other materials that also might have an added beneficial effect.

It is important that the absorbed water be distributed throughout the concrete (use sand size rather than coarse), that the LWAS have particle shape, mechanical strength and grading which can improve the characteristics of the mortar rather than detract from them, and that the LWAS be completely saturated (SSD) when incorporated into the mixture [29].

4. Candidates (applications, uses) for IC

4.1 General

We can no longer not address curing of concrete in all its facets. For 100 years we have addressed curing "after the fact," after the concrete is mixed and placed and finished. That is too late.

There are few concrete applications that cannot benefit from IC. Those obvious candidates were addressed in the paper "The 2004 Practice and Potential of Internal Curing of Concrete Using Lightweight Sand" presented at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois March 2004 at "Advances in Concrete through Science and Engineering" [26]. Identified in that paper were the following applications that would benefit from IC:

Architectural Concrete	Precast
Bridges	Pavements
Concrete Pipe	Parking Structures
High Performance Concrete	Self Consolidating Concrete
High Fly-ash Concrete	Tilt-up
Mass concrete	Walls

4.2 Benefits and drawbacks of IC

Thinking "outside the box," in order to predict the potential benefits from internal curing, we can review the list of concrete problems and ascertain which of them IC can address. Proper curing, including having the water in the proper place at the proper time, can and does benefit even the best engineered concrete, the best mixture design, and the best and even the less-than-best ingredients. Internal curing enables the practitioner to have the proper amount of water in the proper place at the proper time. Huge benefits result from adding a small amount of saturated surface dry (SSD) lightweight aggregate sand to conventional concrete.

The list of improvements to concrete because of optimum internal curing:

- reduces autogenous cracking,
- largely eliminates autogenous shrinkage,
- reduces permeability,
- protects reinforcing steel,

- increases
- increases
- provides
- higher 3-
- 7 day cor
- lower tur
- improved
- greater ut
- lower ma
- use of hig
- higher m
- through n
- sharper e
- greater c
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- does not
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Some of these are interrelated & the hydration of the cement not relative humidity imparted to th

There are potential drawback. However, if the materials have intended, and if the procedures can be achieved. The realization

4.3. Applications where IC is

The applications for internal practiced for the last 100 years few extra dollars the proven te Certain uses need certain ben benefits, but they are especia addressed. Almost all applicatio shrinkage, and permeability. Se day [26].

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- increases mortar strength,
- increases early age strength sufficient to withstand strain,
- provides greater durability,
- higher 3-day flexural strength
- 7 day compressive strength in 3 days,
- lower turnaround time,
- improved rheology
- greater utilization of cement,
- lower maintenance,
- use of higher levels of fly ash,
- higher modulus of elasticity, or
- through mixture designs, lower modulus
- sharper edges,
- greater curing predictability,
- higher performance,
- improves contact zone,
- does not adversely affect finishability,
- does not adversely affect pumpability,
- reduces effect of insufficient external curing.

Some of these are interrelated and have a synergistic effect. All of them occur through the hydration of the cement not hydrated by the mixing water and/or through the higher relative humidity imparted to the concrete by IC.

There are potential drawbacks, as have been pointed out in the research [3-41]. However, if the materials have been chosen wisely for the purposes (uses, applications) intended, and if the procedures outlined have been followed, the characteristics wanted can be achieved. The realization will be to make good concrete better.

4.3. Applications where IC is critically needed

The applications for internal curing are many. We know that external curing, as practiced for the last 100 years and improved for the last decade, is not sufficient. For a few extra dollars the proven technology will pay off. IC is an investment, not a cost. Certain uses need certain benefits. Properly chosen IC agents can provide all the benefits, but they are especially needed for the critical problems that need to be addressed. Almost all applications need IC for its beneficial effect on strength, cracking, shrinkage, and permeability. Seven-day compressive strengths may be achieved in three day [26].

High performance concrete (HPC) is being used in increasingly more applications.

IC can make it H⁺PC. The proper IC agent will help optimize concrete's dimensional stability, and reduce its autogenous shrinkage.

Silica fume has been used in many instances to densify and provide earlier strength. IC should be able to reduce the amount required per cubic yard, and at the same time

impart the desired characteristics.

The 21st Century of Concrete will be the century of curing concrete, inside as well as outside; of not leaving curing to chance, but by incorporating curing in the mixture ingredients, by not leaving it up to the finishing foreman at midnight.

The life cycle of normal weight concrete structures, for instance parking garages, and outside walls, can be lengthened by making the concrete more durable, and durability is linked to low permeability and absence of cracking. IC with structural lightweight aggregate sand is a solution, Table 1.

Society wants the materials used to be ecologically correct, making the cement used be totally effective and not just serve as a filler, and making the structure last longer. Both support the Green effect.

Mass concrete is not cured appreciably by external curing. Internal curing will hydrate the interior cement by providing water when and where it is needed.

Concrete pipe and reinforced structural concrete need low permeability. The hydration of the cement not hydrated by the mixing water fills the pores and reduces the permeability. Desorbed water from LWAS can reduce the permeability 25% [27,29].

In most applications, the mortar is the weakest link in the strength of the concrete. Consequently, it is well to improve the mortar. This can be done through internal curing and can be further accomplished by using an IC agent that improves the rheology and the mortar strength. The choice of the optimum LWAS can assure both of these objectives. The object is to improve rather than detract from the mortar characteristics through the choice of the agent bringing IC water into the concrete mixture. Uses such as bridges, parking structures, pavements, walls and high-performance concrete are candidates for improvement of the mortar.

Table 1 – Applications of Intern

APPLICATIONS (I
USES
ARCHITECTURAL CONCRETE
BRIDGES
CONCRETE BLOCK
CONCRETE PIPE
HIGH PERFORMANCE CONCRETE
HIGH FLY-ASH CONCRETE
MASS CONCRETE
PAVEMENTS
PARKING STRUCTURES
PRECAST
PRESTRESSED
SELF-CONSOLIDATING CONCRETE
TILT-UP
WALLS
All 14 uses receive all 16

Table 1 – Applications of Internal Curing.

APPLICATIONS (USES) BENEFITTED BY INTERNAL CURING																
USES	BENEFITS															
	LOW AUTOGENOUS SHRINKAGE	LESS CRACKING	HIGHER EARLY AGE STRENGTH	HIGHER 3-DAY FLEXURAL STRENGTH	7-DAY COMPRESSIVE STRENGTH IN 3 DAYS	LOWER TURNAROUND TIME	LOWER PERMEABILITY	IMPROVED RHEOLOGY	UTILIZATION OF CEMENT	LOWER MAINTENANCE	GREATER DURABILITY	USE OF HIGHER LEVELS OF FLY ASH	HIGHER MODULUS OF ELASTICITY	SHARPER EDGES	GREATER CURING PREDICTABILITY	HIGHER PERFORMANCE
ARCHITECTURAL CONCRETE		*					*	*	*					*	*	
BRIDGES	*	*	*				*	*	*	*	*				*	*
CONCRETE BLOCK		*	*				*	*						*	*	
CONCRETE PIPE				*		*	*									
HIGH PERFORMANCE CONCRETE	*	*	*		*		*	*	*	*	*				*	*
HIGH FLY-ASH CONCRETE					*			*	*	*	*				*	
MASS CONCRETE												*				
PAVEMENTS		*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*				*	*
PARKING STRUCTURES	*	*	*				*	*	*	*	*				*	*
PRECAST		*	*	*		*		*							*	*
PRESTRESSED			*				*	*	*						*	
SELF-CONSOLIDATING CONCRETE							*									
TILT-UP			*		*								*			
WALLS	*	*					*	*		*						

All 14 uses receive all 16 benefits. The (*) indicates the most critical.

5. Summary and conclusions

IC can contribute to accelerated construction technology transfers (ACTT), quicker turnaround times, higher performance, lower maintenance cost and more predictability. There is a pronounced trend away from prescriptive specifications for concrete to performance specifications (P2P). Since curing is an integral part of concrete performance, decision makers will incorporate internal curing in their requirements. Prime applications are concrete pavements, precast concrete operations, parking structures, bridges, Jersey barriers, HPC projects, and architectural concrete.

Concrete, in the 21st century, will be more controlled through the choice of ingredients rather than the uncertainties of construction practices and the weather. Instead of after-the-fact curing of concrete through external applications of water, concrete quality will be engineered through the incorporation of water absorbed within the internal curing agent. In the future, some lightweight aggregate will be incorporated in all better quality concrete.

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