

Hot-Dip Galvanizing for Corrosion Protection of Steel Products

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Cover Photos: Port of Everett Public Access and Transient Moorage, Everett, Wash., a hot-dip galvanized wind turbine and the Black Sea Export Terminal, Constanta, Romania.

THE HOT-DIP GALVANIZING PROCESS

The galvanizing process consists of three basic steps: surface preparation, galvanizing and inspection.

SURFACE PREPARATION

Surface preparation is the most important step in the application of any coating. In most instances incorrect or inadequate surface preparation is generally the cause of a coating failing before its expected service lifetime.

The surface preparation step in the galvanizing process has its own built-in means of quality control in that zinc simply will not metallurgically react with a steel surface that is not perfectly clean. Any failures or inadequacies in surface preparation will immediately be apparent when the steel is withdrawn from the molten zinc because the unclean areas will remain uncoated and immediate corrective action must be taken.

Once a job has been delivered and accepted at the galvanizer's plant, there is one point of responsibility for ensuring that the material leaves the plant properly galvanized. That point of responsibility is the galvanizer. On-site painting or other field-applied systems of corrosion protection may involve the use of different subcontractors and/or work groups to prepare the surface and to apply the coating. Paint can only be applied under certain weather conditions. This can result in problems in coordinating activities, that lead to costly and time-consuming delays, errors, and disputes concerning responsibility and financial liability.

Surface preparation for galvanizing typically consists of three steps: caustic cleaning, acid pickling and fluxing.

Caustic Cleaning - A hot alkali solution often is used to remove organic contaminants such as dirt, paint markings, grease and oil from the metal surface. Epoxies, vinyls, asphalt or welding slag must be removed before galvanizing by grit-blasting, sand-blasting or other mechanical means.

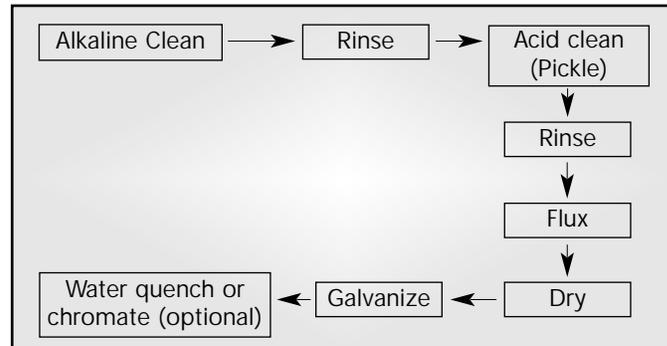
Pickling - Scale and rust normally are removed from the steel surface by pickling in a dilute solution of hot sulfuric acid or ambient temperature hydrochloric acid.

Surface preparation also can be accomplished using abrasive cleaning as an alternative to or in conjunction with chemical cleaning. Abrasive cleaning is a process whereby sand, metallic shot or grit is propelled against the steel material by air blasts or rapidly rotating wheels.

Fluxing - Fluxing is the final surface preparation step in the galvanizing process. Fluxing removes oxides and prevents further oxides from forming on the surface of the metal prior to galvanizing. The method for applying the flux depends upon whether the galvanizer uses the wet or dry galvanizing process.

In the dry galvanizing process (see Figure 4), the steel or iron is dipped or pre-fluxed in an aqueous solution of zinc ammonium chloride. The material is then dried prior to immersion in molten zinc. In the wet galvanizing process, a blanket of liquid zinc ammonium chloride is floated on top of the molten zinc. The iron or steel being galvanized passes through the flux on its way into the molten zinc.

Figure 4: Dry galvanizing process



GALVANIZING

In this step, the material is completely immersed in a bath consisting of a minimum of 98% pure molten zinc. The bath chemistry is specified by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) in Specification B 6. The bath temperature is maintained at about 840 F (449 C).

Fabricated items are immersed in the bath until they reach bath temperature. The zinc metal then reacts with the iron on the steel surface to form a zinc/iron intermetallic alloy. The articles are withdrawn slowly from the galvanizing bath and the excess zinc is removed by draining, vibrating and/or centrifuging.

The metallurgical reactions that result in the formation and structure of the zinc/iron alloy layers continue after the articles are withdrawn from the bath, as long as these articles are near the bath temperature. The articles are cooled in either water or ambient air immediately after withdrawal from the bath.

Because the galvanizing process involves total material immersion, it is a complete process; all surfaces are coated. Galvanizing provides both outside and inside protection for hollow structures. Hollow structures that are painted have no interior corrosion protection.

Galvanizing is performed at the factory under any weather or humidity conditions. Most brush- and spray-applied coatings depend upon proper weather and humidity conditions for correct application. This dependence on atmospheric conditions often translates into costly construction delays.

The galvanizer's ability to work in any type of weather allows a higher degree of assurance of on-time delivery. Working under these circumstances, galvanizing can be completed quickly and with short lead times. Two- or three-day turnaround times for galvanizing are common.

INSPECTION

The two properties of the hot-dip galvanized coating that are closely scrutinized after galvanizing are coating thickness and coating appearance. A variety of simple physical and laboratory tests may be performed to determine thickness, uniformity, adherence and appearance.

Products are galvanized according to long-established, well-accepted, and approved standards of ASTM, the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). These standards cover everything from minimum required coating thicknesses for various categories of galvanized items to the composition of the zinc metal used in the process.

The inspection process for galvanized items is simple and fast, and requires minimal labor. This is important because the inspection process required to assure the quality of many brush- and spray-applied coatings is highly labor-intensive and uses expensive skilled labor.

PHYSICAL PROPERTIES OF GALVANIZED COATINGS

THE METALLURGICAL BOND

Galvanizing forms a metallurgical bond between the zinc and the underlying steel or iron, creating a barrier that is part of the metal itself. During galvanizing, the molten zinc reacts with the iron in the steel to form a series of zinc/iron alloy layers. *Figure 5* is a photomicrograph of a galvanized steel coating's cross-section and shows a typical coating microstructure consisting of three alloy layers and a layer of pure metallic zinc.

The galvanized coating is adherent to the underlying steel on the order of several thousand pounds per square inch (psi). Other coatings typically offer adhesion rated at several hundred psi, at best.

IMPACT AND ABRASION RESISTANCE

Below the name of each layer in *Figure 5* appears its respective hardness, expressed by a Diamond Pyramid Number (DPN). The DPN is a progressive measure of hardness. The higher the number the greater the hardness. Typically, the Gamma, Delta, and Zeta layers are harder than the underlying steel. The hardness of these inner layers provides exceptional protection against coating damage through abrasion. The Eta layer of the galvanized coating is quite ductile, providing the coating with some impact resistance.

Hardness, ductility and adherence combine to provide the galvanized coating with unmatched protection against damage caused by rough handling during transportation to and/or at the job site as well during its service life. The toughness of the galvanized coating is extremely important since barrier protection is dependent upon coating integrity.

Other coatings damage easily during shipment or through rough handling on the job site. Experts will argue that all organic forms of barrier protection (such as paint) by their nature are permeable to some degree. Correctly applied galvanized coatings are impermeable.

If the galvanized coating is physically damaged, it will continue to provide cathodic protection to the exposed steel. If individual areas of underlying steel or iron become exposed by up to 1/4"-diameter spot, the surrounding zinc will provide these areas with cathodic protection for as long as the coating lasts.

Figure 5: Photomicrograph of galvanized coating

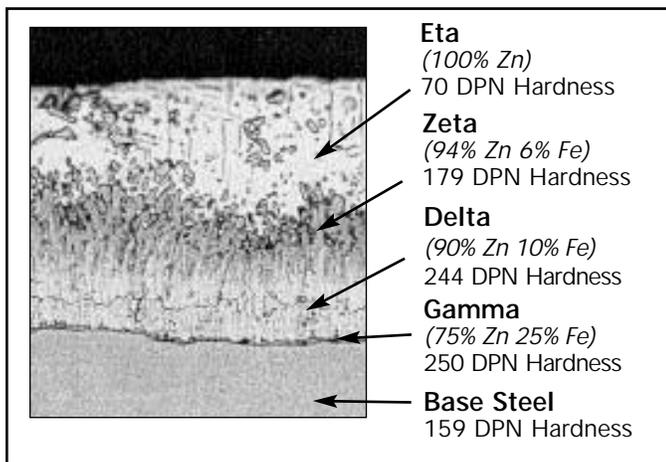


Figure 6 shows how corrosion will begin and immediately progress at a scratch or gap in a paint coating. Figure 7 shows how corrosion will be prevented at a scratch or gap in a zinc coating.

Figure 6: Rust undercuts scratched paint

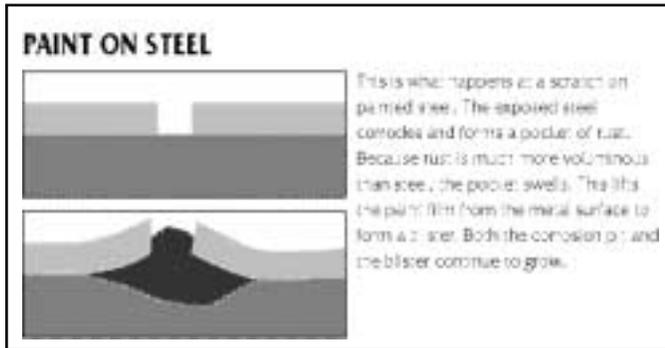
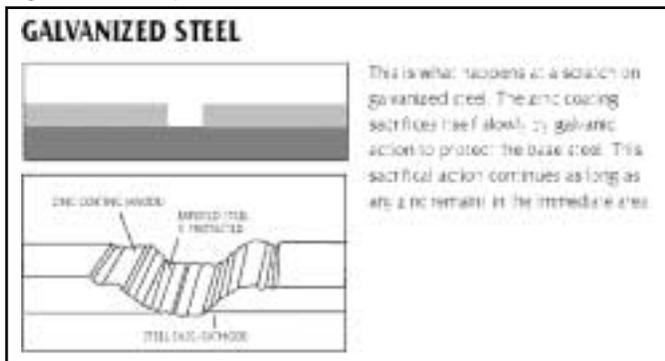


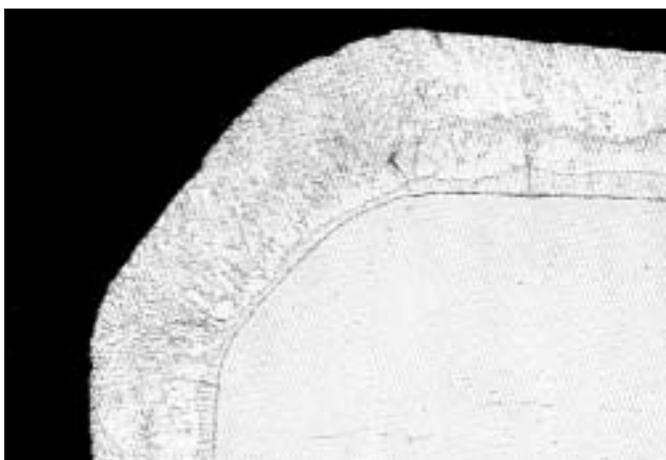
Figure 7: Zinc protects base steel, even when scratched



CORNER AND EDGE PROTECTION

The galvanizing process naturally produces coatings that are at least as thick at the corners and edges as the coating on the rest of the article. As coating damage is most likely to occur at edges, this is where added protection is needed most. Brush- or spray-applied coatings have a natural tendency to thin at corners and edges. Figure 8 is a photomicrograph showing a cross-section of an edge of a piece of galvanized steel.

Figure 8: Full corner protection



PERFORMANCE OF GALVANIZED COATINGS

Galvanized coatings have a proven performance under numerous environmental conditions. The corrosion resistance of zinc coatings is determined primarily by the thickness of the coating but varies with the severity of environmental conditions.

The predictability of the lifetime of a coating is important for planning and financing required maintenance. Measurements of the actual rate of consumption of the galvanized coating during the first few years of service often provide good data for projecting remaining life until first maintenance. Due to the build-up of zinc corrosion products, which in many environments are adherent and fairly insoluble, the corrosion rate may slow as time progresses. Therefore, predictions of service life to first maintenance that are based on initial corrosion rates of zinc coatings are often conservative.

Environments in which galvanized steel and iron are commonly used include indoor and outdoor atmospheres, the storage of hundreds of different chemicals, in fresh water, sea water, soils, and/or concrete. Because of the many years galvanizing has been used for corrosion protection, a wealth of real-world, long-term exposure data on zinc coating performance in a wide variety of environments is available.

ATMOSPHERIC EXPOSURE

Zinc oxide is the initial corrosion product of zinc in relatively dry air. This is formed by a reaction between the zinc and atmospheric oxygen. In the presence of moisture, this can be converted to zinc hydroxide. The zinc hydroxide and zinc oxide further react with carbon dioxide in the air to form zinc carbonate. The zinc carbonate film is tightly adherent and relatively insoluble. It is primarily responsible for the excellent and long-lasting corrosion protection provided by the galvanized coating in most atmospheric environments.

Since 1926, ASTM Committees A05 (Metallic Coated Iron and Steel Products), G01 (Corrosion of Metals) and others have been collecting records of zinc coating behavior under various categories of atmospheric conditions. These atmospheric exposure tests are conducted throughout North America to obtain corrosion rate data for zinc exposed in various atmospheres (Figure 9 - page 6). Precise comparison of the corrosion behavior of the galvanized coating in various atmospheric environments is influenced by many factors. Such factors include prevailing wind direction, type and density of corrosive fumes and pollutants, amount of sea spray, number of wetting and drying cycles, and the duration of exposure to moisture. Although there is a

Figure 9: Comparative rankings of 38 locations based on steel and zinc losses

Performance Ranking			2-Year Exposure Grams Lost *		Steel:Zinc Loss Ratio
Zinc	Steel	Location	Zinc	Steel	
1	1	Norman Wells, N.W.T., Canada	0.07	0.73	10.3
2	2	Phoenix, Ariz.	0.13	2.23	17.0
3	3	Saskatoon, Sask., Canada	0.13	2.77	21.0
4	4	Esquimalt, Vancouver Island, Canada	0.21	6.50	31.0
5	6	Fort Amidor Pier, Panama, C.Z.	0.28	7.10	25.2
6	8	Ottawa, Ontario, Canada	0.49	9.60	19.5
7	22	Miraflores, Panama, C.Z.	0.50	20.9	41.8
8	28	Cape Kennedy, 1/2 mile from Ocean	0.50	42.0	84.0
9	11	State College, Pa.	0.51	11.17	22.0
10	7	Morenci, Mich.	0.53	7.03	18.0
11	15	Middletown, Ohio	0.54	14.00	26.0
12	9	Potter County, Pa.	0.55	10.00	18.3
13	20	Bethlehem, Pa.	0.57	18.3	32.4
14	5	Detroit, Mich.	0.58	7.03	12.2
15	36	Point Reyes, Calif.	0.67	244.0	364.0
16	19	Trail, B.C. Canada	0.70	16.90	24.2
17	14	Durham, N.H.	0.70	13.30	19.0
18	13	Halifax (York Redoubt), N.S.	0.70	12.97	18.5
19	18	South Bend, Pa.	0.78	16.20	20.8
20	27	East Chicago, Ind.	0.79	41.1	52.1
21	29	Brazos River, Texas	0.81	45.4	56.0
22	23	Monroeville, Pa.	0.84	23.8	28.4
23	34	Daytona Beach, Fla.	0.88	144.0	164.0
24	32	Kure Beach, N.C. 800-toot Lot	0.89	71.0	80.0
25	17	Columbus, Ohio	0.95	16.00	16.8
26	12	Montreal, Quebec, Canada	1.05	11.44	10.9
27	16	Pittsburgh, Pa.	1.14	14.90	13.1
28	10	Waterbury, Conn.	1.12	11.00	9.8
29	25	Limon Bay, Panama, C.Z.	1.17	30.3	25.9
30	21	Cleveland, Ohio	1.21	19.0	15.7
31	24	Newark, N.J.	1.63	24.7	15.1
32	33	Cape Kennedy, 60 yds. from Ocean, 30-ft. Elev.	1.77	80.2	45.5
33	35	Cape Kennedy, 60 yds. from Ocean, Ground Level	1.83	215.0	117.0
34	31	Cape Kennedy, 60 yds. from Ocean, 60-ft. Elev.	1.94	64.0	33.0
35	26	Bayonne, N.J.	2.11	37.7	17.9
36	37	Kure Beach, N.C. 80-ft Lot	2.80	260.0	93.0
37	30	Halifax (Federal Building) N.S.	3.27	55.3	17.0
38	38	Galeta Point Beach, Panama, C.Z.	6.80	336.0	49.4

* Total weight loss for 4" x 6" (10cm x 15cm approx.) test specimens

Source: "Corrosiveness of Various Atmospheric Test Sites as Measured by Specimens of Steel and Zinc, Metal Corrosion in the Atmosphere," ASTM STP 435 (1968).

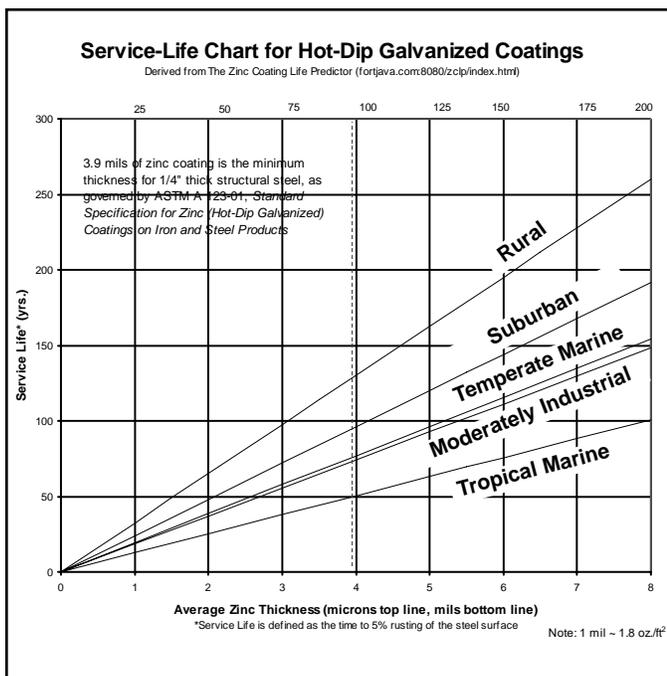
range in observed corrosion rates, actual observed rates rarely exceed 0.3 mils per year. It is also worthwhile to note that when exposed indoors, the life of the galvanized coating will be at least two to three times that expected with outdoor exposure in the same environment.

Figure 10 is a plot of the thickness of the galvanized coating against the expected service life of the coating under outdoor exposure conditions. This data is a compilation of many life tests of zinc-coated steel since the 1920s. Today's atmosphere has substantially improved through anti-pollution campaigns, so the data curves represent a conservative portrayal of the life of zinc coatings in the 21st century. **The expected service life is defined as the life until 5% of the surface is showing iron oxide (red rust).** At this stage it is unlikely that the underlying steel or iron has been weakened or that the integrity of the structures protected by the galvanized coating have been compromised through corrosion. Enough of the galvanized coating remains to provide a good substrate for implementation of an appropriately selected brush- or spray-applied corrosion protection system.

Exposure atmospheres may be divided into five types. They are:

Moderately Industrial - These environments generally are the most aggressive in terms of corrosion. Air emissions may contain some sulfides and phosphates that cause the most rapid zinc coating consumption. Automobile, truck and plant exhaust are examples of these emissions. Most city or urban area atmospheres are classified as moderately industrial.

Figure 10: Life of protection vs. thickness of zinc and type of atmosphere



Suburban - These atmospheres are generally less corrosive than moderately industrial areas. As the term suggests, they are found in the largely residential perimeter communities of urban or city areas.

Temperate Marine - The service life of galvanized coatings in marine environments is influenced by proximity to the coastline and prevailing wind direction and intensity. In marine air, zinc corrosion follows a different mechanism, chlorides from sea spray can react with the normally protective zinc corrosion products to form soluble zinc chlorides. When these chlorides are washed away, fresh zinc is exposed to corrosion. The addition of calcium or magnesium salts to the surface of the zinc can extend the service life of the coating.

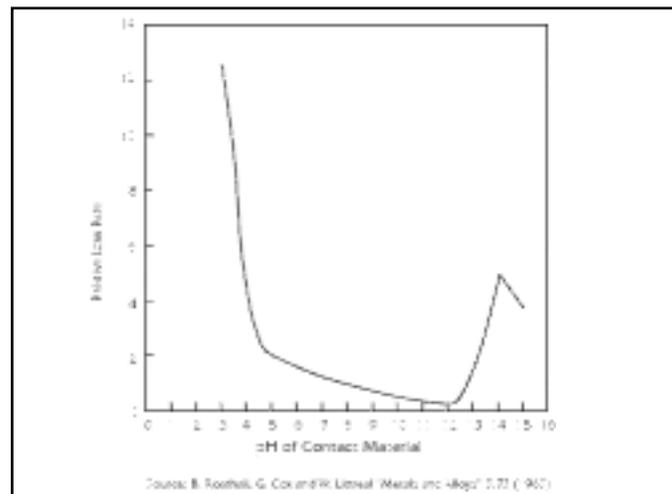
Tropical Marine - These environments are similar to temperate marine atmospheres except they are found in warmer climates. Possibly because many tropical areas are often relatively far removed from heavy industrial or even moderately industrial areas, tropical marine climates tend to be somewhat less corrosive than temperate marine climates.

Rural - These are usually the least aggressive of the five atmospheric types. This is primarily due to the relatively low level of sulfur and other emissions found in such environments.

CORROSION PERFORMANCE IN LIQUIDS

A primary factor governing galvanized coating corrosion behavior in liquid chemical environments is the solution's pH. Galvanizing performs well in solutions of pH above 4.0 and below 12.5 (see Figure 11). This should not be considered a hard and fast rule because factors such as agitation, aeration, temperature, polarization, and the presence of inhibitors also may change the corrosion rate. Within the pH range of 4.0 to 12.5 a protective film forms on the zinc surface and the galvanized coating protects the steel by slowing corrosion to a very low rate. The protective film's exact

Figure 11: Effect of pH on corrosion of zinc



chemical composition is somewhat dependent upon the specific chemical environment.

Since many liquids fall within the pH range of 4.0 - 12.5, galvanized steel containers are widely used in storing and transporting many chemical solutions.

Figure 12 shows an abbreviated list of some commonly used chemicals that have been successfully stored in galvanized containers.

CORROSION PERFORMANCE IN FRESH WATER

Galvanizing is successfully used to protect steel in fresh water exposure. "Fresh water" refers to all forms of water except sea water. Fresh water may be classified according to its origin or application. Included are hot and cold domestic, industrial, river, lake and canal waters. Corrosion of zinc in fresh water is a complex process controlled largely by impurities in the water. Even rain water contains oxygen, nitrogen, carbon dioxide and other dissolved gases, in addition to dust and smoke particles.

Ground water carries microorganisms, eroded soil, decaying vegetation, dissolved salts of calcium, magnesium, iron, and manganese, and suspended colloidal matter. All of these substances and other factors such as pH, temperature and motion affect the structure and composition of the corrosion products formed on the exposed zinc surface. Relatively small differences in fresh water content or conditions can produce relatively substantial changes in corrosion products and rate. Thus, there is no simple rule governing the corrosion rate of zinc in fresh water.

Figure 12: Chemicals successfully stored in galvanized containers (partial list)

Hydrocarbons Benzene (benzole) Toluene (toluole) Xylene (xylol) Cyclohexene Petroleum ethers Heavy naphtha Solvent naphtha	Nitriles (cyanides) Diphenylacetoneitrile p-chlorobenzglycyanides	Butyl	butyrate sobutyrate caproate propionate succinate titanate*	Amine and Amine Salts Pyridine Pyrrolidine Methylpiperazine Dicarbethoxypiperazine 1-benzhydryl-4-methylpiperazine 2-4-diamino-5-(4-chlorphenyl-6) ethyl- pyrimidine Hydroxyethylmorpholine (hydrox- yethyl-diethylenimideoxide) p-aminobenzenesulphonylguanidine Butylamine oleate Piperazine hydrochloride monohydrate Carbethoxypiperazine hydrochloride (dry)
Alcohols Methyl parafynol (methyl pentynol) Morpholinoisopropanol Glycerol (glycerin)	Esters Allyl butyrate caproate formate propionate butyrate Ethyl sobutyrate caproate caprylate propionate succinate	Propyl	isobutyrate caproate formate propionate benzoate butyrate caproate formate propionate	Amides Formamide Dimethylformamide
Halides Carbon tetrachloride Amyl bromide Butyl bromide Butyl chloride Cyclohexyl bromide Ethyl bromide Propyl bromide Propyl chloride Trimethylene bromide (1,3-dibromopropane) Bromobenzene Chlorobenzene Aroclors & Pyroclors chlorobiphenyls)	Amyl butyrate sobutyrate caproate caprylate butyrate Methyl butyrate caproate propionate succinate Benzyl butyrate sobutyrate propionate succinate Octyl butyrate caproate	Iso- Butyl Iso- Propyl Cyclohexyl	benzoate butyrate caproate formate propionate butyrate *and other unspecified titanates	Miscellaneous Glucose (liquid) Benzilideneacetone p-chlorbenzophenone Sodium azobenzensulphonate Melamine resin solutions Crude cascara extract Creosote Chloroflourocarbons
			Phenols Phenol Cresols (mehtylphenols) Xylenols (dimethylphenols) Biphenol (dihydroxybiphenyl) 2,4-dichlorophenol p-chloro-o-cresol Chloroxylenols	

Figure 13: Corrosion of zinc in different types of water

Water Type	Attacking substances	Passivating substances	Corrosion Products		Relative corrosion rate
			solubility	adhesion	
Hard	O ₂ + CO ₂	Ca + Mg	Very low	Very good	Very low
Sea	O ₂ + CO ₂ + Cl	Mg + Ca	Low	Very good	Moderate
Soft, with free air supply	O ₂ + CO ₂	-	High	Good	High
Soft or distilled, with poor air supply	O ₂	-	Very high	Very poor	Very high
<p>Note: The different compositions of the corrosion products have not been included here since they are complex and dependent upon different compounds (i.e. salts) that are present in all natural waters.</p>					

Hard water is much less corrosive than soft water. Under conditions of moderate or high water hardness, a natural scale of insoluble salts tends to form on the galvanized surface. These combine with zinc to form a protective barrier of calcium carbonate and basic zinc carbonate.

CORROSION PERFORMANCE IN SEA WATER AND SALT SPRAY

Galvanized coatings provide considerable protection to steel immersed in sea water and exposed to salt spray. The factors that influence the corrosion of zinc in fresh water also apply to sea water. However, it is the dissolved salts (primarily sulfides and chlorides) in sea water that are the principal determinants of the corrosion behavior of zinc immersed in sea water. Given the high level of chloride in sea water, a very high rate of zinc corrosion might be expected. However, the presence of magnesium and calcium ions in sea water has a strong inhibiting effect on zinc corrosion in this type of environment. Accelerated laboratory test results that sometimes use a simple sodium chloride (NaCl) solution to simulate the effects of sea water exposure on galvanized steel should be viewed skeptically. Real world results often differ significantly from accelerated laboratory tests. (See *Figure 13* for comparison of zinc corrosion in different types of water.)

CORROSION PERFORMANCE IN SOILS

More than 200 different types of soils have been identified and are categorized according to texture, color and natural drainage. Coarse and textured soils, such as gravel and sand, permit free circulation of air, and the process of corrosion may closely resemble atmospheric corrosion. Clay and silt soils have a fine texture and hold water, resulting in poor aeration and drainage. The corrosion process in such soils may resemble the corrosion process in water.

The National Bureau of Standards has conducted an extensive research program on the corrosion of metals in soils. Some of its research on galvanized steel pipe dates back to 1924. The results from the NBS study shown in *Figure 14* are based on tests started in 1937 using 1 1/2" (38mm) steel pipe with a nominal 3 oz. per square foot (5.3 mil) zinc coating. The table shows annual metal loss in ounces per square foot in a number of soils tested. Data collected (but not displayed here) also show that the galvanized coating will prevent pitting of steel in soil, just as it does in atmospheric exposure. Even in instances where the zinc coating was completely consumed, the corrosion of the underlying steel was much less than that of bare steel specimens exposed to identical conditions.

Figure 14: Corrosion of galvanized steel pipe in contact with a variety of soils

Soil Type	Nominal weight of coating - 3 oz/sq ft (915g/m ²) of exposed area (a)			
	Total Weight Loss (oz/ft) After Burial Period			
	2.1 yrs oz/ft ²	4.0 yrs oz/ft ²	9.0 yrs oz/ft ²	12.7 yrs oz/ft ²
Inorganic Oxidizing Acid Soils				
Cecil clay loam	0.3	1.4	0.6	0.6
Hagerstown loam	0.3	1.2	0.7	0.6
Susquehanna clay	1.0	2.3	0.9	0.8
Inorganic Oxidizing Alkaline Soils				
Chino silt loam	1.1	2.3	1.6	1.1
Mohave fine gravelly loam	1.6	3.3	1.1	1.1
Inorganic Reducing Acid Soils				
Sharkey clay	0.6	1.5	0.7	1.1
Acadia clay	3.3	--	4.8	--
Inorganic Reducing Alkaline Soils				
Docas clay	3.2	1.6	1.6	1.6
Merced silt loam	2.1	4.5	0.1	1.3
Lake Charles clay	3.7	3.9	5.5	13.8
Organic Reducing Acid Soils				
Carlisle muck	1.2	3.4	3.0	3.4
Tidal marsh	1.2	2.1	2.0	4.8
Muck	4.3	5.4	9.0	10.7
Rifle peat	4.3	7.2	19.6	19.5
Cinders				
Cinders	6.7	5.4	5.6	11.9

(a) This is weight of coating on one side of the pipe. 1 oz sq ft (305 g/m²) is equivalent to approximately 1.72 mil (43.7 um) thickness of coating.

CORROSION PERFORMANCE IN CONCRETE

Concrete is an extremely complex material. The use of various types of concrete in construction has made the chemical, physical and mechanical properties of concrete and their relationship to metals a topic of ongoing studies. Steel wire or reinforcing bars (rebar) often are embedded in concrete to provide added strength.

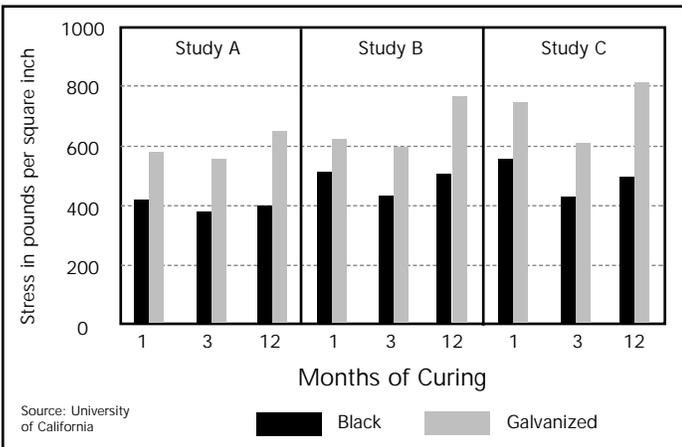
Since rebar is not visible after it is embedded in concrete, corrosion protection is very important to retain structural integrity. Galvanized rebar has demonstrated corrosion protection for many years in corrosive atmospheres such as Bermuda. As the corrosion products of zinc are much less voluminous than those of steel, the

cracking, delamination and spalling cycle of concrete is greatly reduced when using galvanized rebar. Laboratory data support, and field test results confirm, that reinforced concrete structures exposed to aggressive environments have a substantially longer service life when galvanized rebar is used as opposed to bare steel rebar.

The bond strength between galvanized rebar and concrete is excellent. However, it often takes slightly longer to develop than the bond between bare rebar and concrete. According to laboratory and field tests, the bond between galvanized rebar and concrete is in fact stronger than the bond between bare rebar and concrete or epoxy-coated rebar and concrete (see Figure 15).

A comparison of the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of galvanized reinforcing steel and epoxy-coated rebar is shown in Figure 16.

Figure 15: Bond strength to concrete black vs. galvanized reinforcing steel



Information and additional studies about the uses and behavior of galvanized reinforcement in concrete can be found in:

- *Galvanizing for Corrosion Protection: A Specifier's Guide to Reinforcing Steel*
- *Rebar: A Processing and Inspection Guide for Quality Hot Dip Galvanized Reinforcing Steel*

These publications are available from the AGA or your local galvanizer.

Figure 16: Comparison of epoxy-coated and hot-dip galvanized reinforcing steel

Comment	Hot-Dip Galvanized	Epoxy Coated
1. Earliest use	Early 1900's	1977
2. Requires care in handling	No	Yes
3. Can be dragged on ground	Yes	No
4. MUST be touched up	No	Yes
5. Has barrier protection	Yes	Yes
6. Has cathodic protection	Yes	No
7. Bond strength to concrete	Excellent	Poor
8. UV Resistance	Good	Questionable
9. After fabrication application	Simple	Difficult
10. Widely used	Yes	Yes
11. Cost	Comparable	Comparable*
12. Lead time	1-3 days	3 weeks
13. Availability of coating for other embedded items	Readily available	Scarce

* Epoxy prices vary widely throughout U.S. and Canada and wide variations should be expected.

GALVANIC BEHAVIOR OF ZINC IN CONTACT WITH OTHER METALS

Where zinc comes into contact with another metal, the potential for corrosion through a bi-metallic couple exists. The extent of the corrosion depends upon the position of the other metal relative to zinc in the galvanic series.

The behavior of galvanized coatings in contact with various metals is summarized in *Figure 17 (page 12)*. The information given is provided as a guide to avoid situations where corrosion may occur when galvanized surfaces are in contact with another metal.

Contact With Copper and Brass

If an installation requires contact between galvanized materials and copper or brass in a moist or humid environment, rapid corrosion may occur. Even runoff water from copper or brass surfaces can contain enough dissolved copper to cause rapid corrosion. If the use of copper or brass in contact with galvanized items is unavoidable, precautions should be taken to prevent electrical contact between the two metals. Joint faces should be insulated with non-conducting gaskets; connections should be made with insulating, grommet-type fasteners. The design should ensure that water is not recirculated and that water flows from the galvanized surface towards the copper or brass surface and not the reverse.

Contact With Aluminum and Stainless Steel

Under atmospheric conditions of moderate to mild humidity, contact between a galvanized surface and aluminum or stainless steel is unlikely to cause substantial incremental corrosion. However, under very humid conditions, the galvanized surface may require electrical isolation through the use of paint or joining compounds.

Contact With Weathering Steel

When galvanized bolts are used on weathering steel, the zinc will initially sacrifice itself until a protective layer of rust develops on the weathering steel. Once this rust layer develops, it forms an insulating layer that prevents further sacrificial action from the zinc. The zinc coating has to be thick enough to last until the rust layer forms, usually several years. Most hot-dip galvanized bolts have enough zinc coating to last until the protective rust layer develops on the weathering steel, with only a minimal loss in coating life.

CORROSION RESISTANCE OF FULLY ALLOYED GALVANIZED COATINGS

The corrosion protection and service life of galvanized coatings are not affected by differences in surface appearances. While some steels may produce freshly galvanized coatings with matte gray or mottled appearances, their corrosion protection is not impaired. Even when a reddish-brown discoloration prematurely develops upon exposure of the coatings, it is an aesthetic effect and should not be mistaken for corrosion of underlying steel.

Premature staining is a surface effect caused by corrosion of iron contained in the zinc-iron alloy layers of a galvanized coating. Such a condition is more likely to develop when reactive steels (such as those containing relatively high silicon) are galvanized. While steel chemistry may result in the zinc-iron alloy phase extending throughout the galvanized coating, corrosion protection is not reduced. Long-term exposure testing has shown that for equal coating thickness and identical exposure conditions, the corrosion protection provided by the coating on more reactive, silicon-containing steels is similar to that of less reactive steels.

PERFORMANCE AT ELEVATED TEMPERATURES

Galvanized coatings perform well under continuous exposure to temperatures up to 392 F (200 C). Exposure to temperatures above this can cause the outer free zinc layer to peel from the underlying zinc-iron alloy layer. However, the remaining zinc-iron alloy layer will provide good corrosion resistance and will continue to protect the steel for a long time, depending upon its thickness.

Figure 17: Additional corrosion of zinc and galvanized steel resulting from contact with other metals

METAL IN CONTACT	ENVIRONMENT				
	ATMOSPHERIC			IMMERSED	
	RURAL	INDUSTRIAL/ URBAN	MARINE	FRESH WATER	SEA WATER
Aluminum and aluminum alloys	0	0 to 1	0 to 1	1	1 to 2
Aluminum bronzes and silicon bronzes	0 to 1	1	1 to 2	1 to 2	2 to 3
Brasses including high tensile (HT) brass (manganese bronze)	0 to 1	1	0 to 2	1 to 2	2 to 3
Cadmium	0	0	0	0	0
Cast irons	0 to 1	1	1 to 2	1 to 2	2 to 3
Cast iron (austenitic)	0 to 1	1	1 to 2	1 to 2	1 to 3
Chromium	0 to 1	1 to 2	1 to 2	1 to 2	2 to 3
Copper	0 to 1	1 to 2	1 to 2	1 to 2	2 to 3
Cupro-nickels	0 to 1	0 to 1	1 to 2	1 to 2	2 to 3
Gold	(0 to 1)	(1 to 2)	(1 to 2)	(1 to 2)	(2 to 3)
Gunmetals, phosphor bronzes and tin bronzes	0 to 1	1	1 to 2	1 to 2	2 to 3
Lead	0	0 to 1	0 to 1	0 to 2	(0 to 2)
Magnesium and magnesium alloys	0	0	0	0	0
Nickel	0 to 1	1	1 to 2	1 to 2	2 to 3
Nickel copper alloys	0 to 1	1	1 to 2	1 to 2	2 to 3
Nickel-chromium-iron alloys	(0 to 1)	(1)	(1 to 2)	(1 to 2)	(1 to 3)
Nickel-chromium-molybdenum alloys	(0 to 1)	(1)	(1 to 2)	(1 to 2)	(1 to 3)
Nickel silvers	0 to 1	1	1 to 2	1 to 2	1 to 3
Platinum	(0 to 1)	(1 to 2)	(1 to 2)	(1 to 2)	(2 to 3)
Rhodium	(0 to 1)	(1 to 2)	(1 to 2)	(1 to 2)	(2 to 3)
Silver	(0 to 1)	(1 to 2)	(1 to 2)	(1 to 2)	(2 to 3)
Solders hard	0 to 1	1	1 to 2	1 to 2	2 to 3
Solders soft	0	0	0	0	0
Stainless steel (austenitic and other grades containing approximately 18% chromium)	0 to 1	0 to 1	0 to 1	0 to 2	1 to 2
Stainless steel (martensitic grades containing approximately 13% chromium)	0 to 1	0 to 1	0 to 1	0 to 2	1 to 2
Steels (carbon and low alloy)	0 to 1	1	1 to 2	1 to 2	1 to 2
Tin	0	0 to 1	1	1	1 to 2
Titanium and titanium alloys	(0 to 1)	(1)	(1 to 2)	(0 to 2)	(1 to 3)

Key 0 Zinc and galvanized steel will suffer either no additional corrosion, or at the most only very slight additional corrosion, usually tolerable in service.

1 Zinc and galvanized steel will suffer slight or moderate additional corrosion which may be tolerable in some circumstances.

2 Zinc and galvanized steel may suffer fairly severe additional corrosion and protective measures usually will be necessary.

3 Zinc and galvanized steel may suffer severe additional corrosion. Contact should be avoided.

General notes: Ratings in brackets are based on very limited evidence and are less certain than other values shown. The table is in terms of additional corrosion and the symbol 0 should not be taken to imply that the metals in contact need no protection under all conditions of exposure.

Source: British Standards institution pp. 6484:1979 Table 23

PERTINENT SPECIFICATIONS

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR TESTING AND MATERIALS

- A 123/A 123M-2000 Standard Specification for Zinc (Hot-Dip Galvanized) Coatings on Iron and Steel Products
- A 143-74 Standard Practice for Safeguarding Against Embrittlement of Hot-Dip Galvanized Structural Steel Products and Procedure for Detecting Embrittlement
- A 153/A 153M-98 Standard Specification for Zinc Coating (Hot-Dip) on Iron and Steel Hardware
- A 384-76 Standard Practice for Safeguarding Against Warpage and Distortion During Hot-Dip Galvanizing of Steel Assemblies
- A 385-98 Standard Practice for Providing High Quality Zinc Coatings (Hot-Dip)
- A 767/A 767M-97 Standard Specification for Zinc Coated (Galvanized) Steel Bars for Concrete Reinforcement
- A 780-93A Specification for Repair of Damaged and Uncoated Areas of Hot-Dip Galvanized Coatings
- B 6-98 Standard Specification for Zinc
- D 6386-99 Standard Practice for Preparation of Zinc (Hot-Dip Galvanized) Coated Iron and Steel Product and Hardware Surfaces for Painting
- E 376-89 Standard Practice for Measuring Coating Thickness by Magnetic Field or Eddy-Current (Electromagnetic) Test Methods

CANADIAN STANDARDS ASSOCIATION

- G 164-M 92 Hot Dip Galvanizing of Irregularly Shaped Articles



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