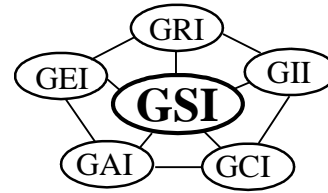


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Original: February 28, 2002  
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Revision schedule is on pg. 12

## **GRI -GM19a Standard Specification\***

Standard Specification for

### **“Seam Strength and Related Properties of Thermally Bonded Homogeneous Polyolefin Geomembranes/Barriers”<sup>SM</sup>**

This specification was developed by the Geosynthetic Research Institute (GRI), with the cooperation of the member organizations for general use by the public. It is completely optional in this regard and can be superseded by other existing or new specifications on the subject matter in whole or in part. Neither GRI, the Geosynthetic Institute, nor any of its related institutes, warrant or indemnifies any materials produced according to this specification either at this time or in the future.

## **1. Scope**

- 1.1 This specification addresses the required seam strength and related properties of thermally bonded homogeneous, i.e., nonreinforced, polyolefin geomembranes. Included herein are high density polyethylene (HDPE), linear low density polyethylene (LLDPE) and flexible polypropylene (fPP).

Note 1: See GRI Standard GM19b for reinforced geomembrane seams of all types including scrim reinforced LLDPE-R and fPP-R.

- 1.2 Numeric values of seam strength and related properties are specified in both shear and peel modes.

Note 2: This specification does not address the test method details or specific testing procedures. It refers to the relevant ASTM test methods where applicable.

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\*This GRI standard specification is developed by the Geosynthetic Research Institute through consultation and review by the member organizations. This specification will be reviewed at least every 5-years, or on an as-required basis. In this regard it is subject to change at any time. The most recent revision date is the effective version and it is kept current on the Institute's Website <<geosynthetic-institute.org>>.

- 1.3 The thermal bonding methods focused upon are hot wedge (single and dual track) and extrusion fillet.

Note 3: Other acceptable, but less frequently used, methods of seaming are hot air and ultrasonic methods. They are inferred as being a subcategory of hot wedge seaming.

- 1.4 This specification does not suggest a specific distance between destructive seam samples to be taken in the field, i.e., the sampling interval. Two separate GRI Standard Practices are focused on this issue, see GRI-GM14 and GRI-GM20.
- 1.5 This specification is only applicable to laboratory testing.
- 1.6 This specification 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.

## **2. Referenced Documents**

### **2.1 ASTM Standards**

- D6392 Standard Test Method for Determining the Integrity of Nonreinforced Geomembrane Seams Produced Using Thermo-Fusion Methods
- D7747 Standard Test Method for Determining Integrity of Seams Produced Using Thermo-Fusion Methods for Reinforced Geomembranes by the Strip Tensile Method

### **2.2 EPA Standards**

- EPA 600/2.88/052 (NTIS PB-89-129670)  
Lining of Waste Containment and Other Containment Facilities

### **2.3 GRI Standards**

- GM13 Test Properties and Testing Frequency for High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) Smooth and Textured Geomembranes
- GM14 Guide for Selecting Variable Intervals for Taking Geomembrane Destructive Seam Samples Using the Method of Attributes
- GM17 Test Properties and Testing Frequency for Linear Low Density Polyethylene (LLDPE) Smooth and Textured Geomembranes
- GM18 Test Properties and Testing Frequency for Flexible Polypropylene (fPP and fPP-R) Geomembranes
- GM20 Guide for Selecting Variable Intervals for Taking Geomembrane Destructive Seam Samples Using Control Charts

### 3. Definition

- 3.1 Geomembrane, n – An essentially impermeable geosynthetic composed of one or more synthetic sheets used for the purpose of liquid, gas or solid containment.

Note 4: This specification addresses homogeneous, or nonreinforced, geomembranes. GRI-GM19b addresses scrim, or fabric, reinforced geomembranes.

- 3.2 Hot Wedge Seaming – A thermal technique which melts the two opposing geomembrane surfaces to be seamed by running a hot metal wedge or knife between them. Pressure is applied to the top or bottom geomembrane, or both, to form a continuous bond. Seams of this type can be made with dual bond tracks separated by a nonbonded gap. These seams are referred to as dual hot wedge seams or double-track seams.
- 3.3 Hot Air Seaming – This seaming technique introduces high-temperature air or gas between two geomembrane surfaces to facilitate localized surface melting. Pressure is applied to the top or bottom geomembrane, forcing together the two surfaces to form a continuous bond.
- 3.4 Ultrasonic Seaming - A thermal technique which melts the two opposing geomembrane surfaces to be seamed by running a ultrasonically vibrated metal wedge or knife between them. Pressure is applied to the top or bottom geomembrane, or both, to form a continuous bond. Some seams of this type are made with dual bond tracks separated by a nonbonded gap. These seams are referred to as dual-track seams or double-track seams.
- 3.5 Extrusion Fillet Seaming – This seaming technique involves extruding molten resin at the edge of an overlapped geomembrane on another to form a continuous bond. A depreciated method called “extrusion flat” seaming extrudes the molten resin between the two overlapped sheets. In all types of extrusion seaming the surfaces upon which the molten resin is applied must be suitably prepared, usually by a slight grinding or buffing.

### 4. Significance and Use

- 4.1 The various methods of field fabrication of seams in homogeneous, or nonreinforced, polyolefin geomembranes are covered in existing ASTM standards mentioned in the referenced document section. What is not covered in those documents is the numeric values of strength and related properties that the completed seam must meet, or exceed. This specification provides this information insofar as minimum, or maximum, property values are concerned when the field fabricated seams are sampled

and laboratory tested in shear and peel. Separate GRI standards, GM14 and GM20, provide guidance as to the spacing that destructive samples should be taken in typical field installation projects.

## 5. Sample and Specimen Preparation

- 5.1 The spacings for taking field seam samples for destructive testing can be a fixed, or variable, interval or can be statistically related as provided in GRI-GM14 and GRI-GM20. These statistical processes describe a progression from the most restrictive interval of 1 per 500 feet (1 per 150 m) to the complete use and reliance of the electrical leak location survey (ELLS) method. Intermediate between these extremes are variations depending upon the installers experience and performance.

Note 5: The job-specific spacing is decided upon the design engineer or CQA organization.

- 5.2 The size of field seam samples is to be according to the referenced test method, e.g., ASTM D6392 or site-specific CQA plan.
- 5.3 The individual test specimens taken from the field seam samples are to be tested according to the referenced test method, i.e., ASTM D6392 for HDPE, LLDPE and fPP. The specimens are to be conditioned prior to testing according to these same test methods and evaluated accordingly.

## 6. Assessment of Seam Test Results

- 6.1 HDPE seams – For HDPE seams (both smooth and textured), the strength of all five out of five 1.0 inch (25 mm) wide strip specimens in shear should meet or exceed the values given in Tables 1(a) and 1(b). In addition, all five specimens should meet the shear percent elongation, calculated as follows, and exceed the values given in Tables 1(a) and 1(b):

$$E = \frac{L}{L_o}(100) \quad (1)$$

where

E = elongation (%)

L = extension at end of test (in. or mm)

L<sub>o</sub> = original average length (usually 1.0 in. or 25 mm)

Note 6: The assumed gage length is considered to be the unseamed sheet material on either side of the welded area. It generally will be 1.0 in. (25 mm) from the edge of the seam to the grip face.

For HDPE seams (both smooth and textured), the strength of all five out of five 1.0 in. (25 mm) wide strip specimens tested in peel should meet or exceed the values given in Tables 1(a) and 1(b).

In addition, the peel separation (or incursion) should not exceed the values given in Tables 1(a) and 1(b) for all five out of five specimens. The value shall be based on the proportion of area of separated bond to the area of the original bonding as follows:

$$S = \frac{A}{A_o}(100) \quad (2)$$

where

S = separation (%)

A = average area of separation, or incursion (in<sup>2</sup> or mm<sup>2</sup>)

A<sub>0</sub> = original bonding area (in<sup>2</sup> or mm<sup>2</sup>)

Note 7: The area of peel separation can occur in a number of nonuniform patterns across the seam width. The estimated dimensions of this separated area is visual and must be done with care and concern. The area must not include squeeze-out which is part of the welding process.

Regarding the locus-of-break patterns of the different seaming methods in shear and peel, the following are unacceptable break codes per their description in ASTM D6392 (in this regard, SIP is an acceptable break code);

Hot Wedge: AD and AD-Brk > 25%

Extrusion Fillet: AD1, AD2 and AD-WLD

Note 8: Separation-in-plane (SIP) is a locus-of-break where the failure surface propagates within one of the seamed sheets during destructive testing (usually in the peel mode). It is not merely a surface skin effect producing a few ductile fibrils (sometimes called ductile drawdown). SIP is acceptable if the required strength, shear elongation and peel separation criteria are met.

In this regard, five out of five specimens shall result in acceptable break patterns.

6.2 LLDPE seams – For LLDPE seams (both smooth and textured), the strength all five out of five 1.0 in. (25 mm) wide strip specimens in shear should meet or exceed the values given in Tables 2(a) through 2(d). Note that the unreinforced specimens are 1.0 in. (25 mm) wide strips. In addition, the shear percent elongation, calculated as follows, should exceed the values given in Tables 2(a) through 2(d). All five specimens should meet the shear elongation requirement.

$$E = \frac{L}{L_o}(100) \quad (1)$$

where

E = elongation (%)

L = extension at end of test (in. or mm)

L<sub>o</sub> = original average length (usually 1.0 in. or 25 mm)

Note 6 (Repeated): The assumed gage length is considered to be the unseamed sheet material on either side of the welded area. It generally will be 1.0 in. (25 mm) from the edge of the seam to the grip face.

For LLDPE seams (smooth, textured and scrim reinforced), the strength of all five 1.0 in. (25 mm) wide strip specimens tested in peel should meet or exceed the values given in Tables 2(a) through 2(d).

In addition, the peel separation (or incursion) should not exceed the values given in Tables 2(a) through 2(d). All five out of five specimens shall meet the peel separation value. The value shall be based on the proportion of area of separated bond to the area of the original bonding as follows:

$$S = \frac{A}{A_o}(100) \quad (2)$$

where

S = separation (%)

A = average area of separation, or incursion (in.<sup>2</sup> or mm<sup>2</sup>)

A<sub>o</sub> = original bonding area (in.<sup>2</sup> or mm<sup>2</sup>)

Note 6 (Repeated): The area of peel separation can occur in a number of nonuniform patterns across the seam width. The estimated dimensions of this separated area is visual and must be done with care and concern. The area must not include squeeze-out which is part of the welding process.

Regarding the locus-of-break patterns of the different seaming methods in shear and peel, the following are unacceptable break codes per their description in ASTM D6392 (in this regard, SIP is an acceptable break code);

Hot Wedge: AD and AD-Brk > 25%

Extrusion Fillet: AD1, AD2 and AD-WLD

Note 8 (Repeated): Separation-in-plane (SIP) is a locus-of-break where the failure surface propagates within one of the seamed sheets during destructive testing (usually in the peel mode). It is not merely a

surface skin effect producing a few ductile fibrils (sometimes called ductile drawdown). SIP is acceptable if the required strength, shear elongation and peel separation criteria are met.

In this regard, all five specimens shall result in acceptable break patterns.

- 6.3 fPP Seams – For fPP seams, the strength all five out of five specimens in shear should meet or exceed the values given in Tables 3(a) and 3(b). Note that the specimens are 1.0 in. (25 mm) wide strips. In addition, the shear percent elongation on the specimens, calculated as follows, should exceed the values given in Tables 3(a) and 3(b). All five out of five specimens should meet the shear elongation requirement.

$$E = \frac{L}{L_o}(100) \quad (1)$$

where

E = elongation (%)

L = extension at end of test (in. or mm)

L<sub>o</sub> = original gauge length (usually 1.0 in. or 25 mm)

Note 4 (Repeated): The assumed gage length is considered to be the unseamed sheet material on either side of the welded area. It generally will be 1.0 in. (25 mm) from the edge of the seam to the grip face.

For fPP seams, the strength of all five out of five specimens in peel should meet or exceed the values given in Tables 3(a) and 3(b). Note that the unreinforced specimens are 1.0 in. (25 mm) wide strips. In addition, the peel percent separation (or incursion) should not exceed the values given in Tables 3(a) and 3(b). All five out of five specimens should meet the peel separation value. The values should be based on the proportion of area of separated bond to the area of the original bonding as follows.

$$S = \frac{A}{A_o}(100) \quad (2)$$

where

S = separation in (%)

A = average area of separation, or incursion (in.<sup>2</sup> or mm<sup>2</sup>)

A<sub>o</sub> = original bonding area (in.<sup>2</sup> or mm<sup>2</sup>)

Note 7 (Repeated): The area of peel separation can occur in a number of nonuniform patterns across the seam width. The estimated dimensions of this separated area is visual and must be done with care and concern. The area must not include squeeze-out which is part of the welding process.

Regarding the locus-of-break patterns of the different seaming methods in shear and peel, the following are unacceptable break codes per their description in ASTM D6392 (in this regard, SIP is an acceptable break code);

Hot Wedge: AD and AD-Brk > 25%

Extrusion Fillet: AD1, AD2 and AD-WLD

Note 8 (Repeated): Separation-in-plane (SIP) is a locus-of-break where the failure surface propagates within one of the seamed sheets during destructive testing (usually in the peel mode). It is not merely a surface skin effect producing a few ductile fibrils (sometimes called ductile drawdown). SIP is acceptable if the required strength, shear elongation and peel separation criteria are met.

In this regard, five out of five specimens shall result in acceptable break patterns.

## **7. Retest and Rejection**

- 7.1 If the results of the testing of a sample do not conform to the requirements of this specification, retesting to determine conformance or rejection should be done in accordance with the construction quality control or construction quality assurance plan for the particular site under construction.

## **8. Certification**

- 8.1 Upon request of the construction quality assurance officer or certification engineer, an installer's certification that the geomembrane was installed and tested in accordance with this specification, together with a report of the test results, shall be furnished at the completion of the installation.



**Table 1(a) – Seam Strength and Related Properties of Thermally Bonded Smooth and Textured  
High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) Geomembranes (English Units)**

Geomembrane Nominal Thickness	30 mils	40 mils	50 mils	60 mils	80 mils	100 mils	120 mils
<b>Hot Wedge Seams<sup>(1)</sup></b>							
shear strength, lb/in.	57	80	100	120	160	200	240
shear elongation at break <sup>(2)</sup> , %	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
peel strength, lb/in.	45	60	76	91	121	151	181
peel separation, %	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
<b>Extrusion Fillet Seams</b>							
shear strength, lb/in.	57	80	100	120	160	200	240
shear elongation at break <sup>(2)</sup> , %	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
peel strength, lb/in.	39	52	65	78	104	130	156
peel separation, %	25	25	25	25	25	25	25

Notes for Tables 1(a) and 1(b):

1. Also for hot air and ultrasonic seaming methods
2. Elongation measurements should be omitted for field testing

**Table 1(b) – Seam Strength and Related Properties of Thermally Bonded Smooth and Textured  
High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) Geomembranes (S.I. Units)**

Geomembrane Nominal Thickness	0.75 mm	1.0 mm	1.25 mm	1.5 mm	2.0 mm	2.5 mm	3.0 mm
<b>Hot Wedge Seams<sup>(1)</sup></b>							
shear strength, N/25 mm.	250	350	438	525	701	876	1050
shear elongation at break <sup>(2)</sup> , %	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
peel strength, N/25 mm	197	263	333	398	530	661	793
peel separation, %	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
<b>Extrusion Fillet Seams</b>							
shear strength, N/25 mm	250	350	438	525	701	876	1050
shear elongation at break <sup>(2)</sup> , %	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
peel strength, N/25 mm	170	225	285	340	455	570	680
peel separation, %	25	25	25	25	25	25	25

**Table 2(a) – Seam Strength and Related Properties of Thermally Bonded **Smooth and Textured**  
Linear Low Density Polyethylene (LLDPE) Geomembranes (English Units)**

Geomembrane Nominal Thickness	20 mils	30 mils	40 mils	50 mils	60 mils	80 mils	100 mils	120 mils
<b>Hot Wedge Seams<sup>(1)</sup></b>								
shear strength, lb/in.	30	45	60	75	90	120	150	180
shear elongation <sup>(2)</sup> , %	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
peel strength, lb/in.	25	38	50	63	75	100	125	150
peel separation, %	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
<b>Extrusion Fillet Seams</b>								
shear strength, lb/in.	30	45	60	75	90	120	150	180
shear elongation <sup>(2)</sup> , %	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
peel strength, lb/in.	22	34	44	57	66	88	114	136
peel separation, %	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25

Notes for Tables 2(a) and 2(b):

1. Also for hot air and ultrasonic seaming methods
2. Elongation measurements should be omitted for field testing

**Table 2(b) – Seam Strength and Related Properties of Thermally Bonded **Smooth and Textured**  
Linear Low Density Polyethylene (LLDPE) Geomembranes (S.I. Units)**

Geomembrane Nominal Thickness	0.50 mm	0.75 mm	1.0 mm	1.25 mm	1.5 mm	2.0 mm	2.5 mm	3.0 mm
<b>Hot Wedge Seams<sup>(1)</sup></b>								
shear strength, N/25 mm	131	197	263	328	394	525	657	788
shear elongation <sup>(2)</sup> , %	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
peel strength, N/25 mm	109	166	219	276	328	438	547	657
peel separation, %	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
<b>Extrusion Fillet Seams</b>								
shear strength, N/25 mm	131	197	263	328	394	525	657	788
shear elongation <sup>(2)</sup> , %	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
peel strength, N/25 mm	95	150	190	250	290	385	500	595
peel separation, %	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25

Table 3(a) – Seam Strength and Related Properties of Thermally Bonded **Nonreinforced** Flexible Polypropylene (fPP) Geomembranes (English Units)

Geomembrane Nominal Thickness	30 mil	40 mil
Hot Wedge Seams <sup>(1)</sup>		
shear strength, lb/in. (NR); lb (R)	25	30
shear elongation <sup>(2)</sup> , %	50	50
peel strength, lb/in. (NR); lb (R)	20	25
peel separation, %	25	25
Extrusion Fillet Seams		
shear strength, lb/in. (NR); lb (R)	25	30
shear elongation <sup>(2)</sup> , %	50	50
peel strength, lb/in. (NR); lb (R)	20	25
peel separation, %	25	25

1. Also for hot air and ultrasonic seaming methods

2. Elongation measurements should be omitted for field testing

Table 3(b) – Seam Strength and Related Properties of Thermally Bonded **Nonreinforced and Scrim Reinforced** Flexible Polypropylene (fPP) Geomembranes (S.I. Units)

Geomembrane Nominal Thickness	0.75 mm	1.0 mm
Hot Wedge Seams <sup>(1)</sup>		
shear strength, N/25 mm (NR); N (R)	110	130
shear elongation <sup>(2)</sup> , %	50	50
peel strength, N/25 mm (NR); N (R)	85	110
peel separation, %	25	25
Extrusion Fillet Seams		
shear strength, N/25 mm (NR); N (R)	110	130
shear elongation <sup>(2)</sup> , %	50	50
peel strength, N/25 mm (NR); N (R)	85	110
peel separation, %	25	25

1. Also for hot air and ultrasonic seaming methods

2. Elongation measurements should be omitted for field testing

**Adoption and Revision Schedule  
for  
Seam Specification per GRI-GM19**

“Seam Strength and Related Properties of Thermally Bonded Polyolefin Geomembranes”

Adopted: February 18, 2002

Revision 1: May 15, 2003; Increased selected shear and peel test requirements, per the following:

Material	Test	Seam Type	Current GM19	Proposed GM19	Difference
HDPE	Shear	Hot Wedge Extrusion	95% yield 95% yield	95% yield 95% yield	no change no change
	Peel	Hot Wedge Extrusion	62% yield 62% yield	72% yield 62% yield	16% increase no change
LLDPE	Shear	Hot Wedge Extrusion	1300 psi break 1300 psi break	1500 psi break 1500 psi break	15% increase 15% increase
	Peel	Hot Wedge Extrusion	1100 psi break 1100 psi break	1250 psi break 1100 psi break	14% increase no change

Revision 2: January 28, 2005; added Note 6 (in three locations) stating that incursion is measured on an area basis and not depth as in ASTM D6392.

Revision 3: June 4, 2010; Removed Note 6 on peel incursion since ASTM D6392 (2008) now uses area of incursion whereas previously they used linear length of incursion. Thus ASTM is now in agreement with GM19 in this regard.

Revision 4: November 15, 2010; Added Note 6 (in three locations) stating what separation-in-plane (SIP) is, and is not, and that it is acceptable if the required strength, shear elongation and peel separation criteria are met.

Revision 5: July 12, 2011; AD1 and AD2 breaks are now unacceptable even if strength is achieved.

Revision 6: October 3, 2011; Added LLDPE-R to the various geomembrane types, in particular, Tables 2(c) and 2(d) and made editorial changes.

Revision 7: November 3, 2013; clarified issues of 4 out of 5 passing strength and 5 out of 5 passing locus-of-break, shear elongation and peel separation.

Revision 8: February 12, 2015; upgraded standards and terminology

- Revision 9: July 28, 2017: eliminated reinforced LLDPE-R and fPP-R geomembranes in deference to GRI-GM19b which includes them and other scrim-reinforced geomembranes and barriers. Also now required are 5 out of 5 passing strength tests for all materials.
- Revision 10: March 18, 2021: Removed AD-WLD exception in multiple locations as a result of the point being mute due to Revision 9.