

NFPA
257

**FIRE TESTS OF
WINDOW
ASSEMBLIES
1980**



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4M-1-81-FP
Printed in U.S.A.

NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION, INC.
Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02269

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Standard for
Fire Tests of Window Assemblies

NFPA 257-1980

1980 Edition of NFPA 257

This 1980 edition of NFPA 257, *Standard for Fire Tests of Window Assemblies*, was prepared by the Committee on Fire Tests and was adopted by the National Fire Protection Association, Inc. on November 19, 1980, at its Fall Meeting in San Diego, California. It was released for publication by the Standard Council on December 10, 1980.

Changes from the 1975 edition included in this 1980 edition are a table of contents, and a new section which outlines the significance and limitations of the Test Method. In addition, a new Chapter 5 has been added to provide a standard report format, and a new Appendix has been included which provides background information on the development of the standard and its application.

Origin and Development of NFPA 257

This standard was tentatively adopted by NFPA in 1969, and officially adopted in 1970. In 1975, the standard was substantively reconfirmed with editorial changes in conformance with the NFPA Manual of Style, and a revised edition was released in 1980.

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Standard for Fire Tests of Window Assemblies

NFPA 257-1980

Chapter 1 General

1-1 Scope.

(a) These methods of fire tests are applicable to window assemblies, including glass block and other light transmitting assemblies, for use in wall openings to retard the passage of fire.

NOTE: It should be noted that assemblies classified in accordance with the provisions of this standard afford only limited protection from the transmission of heat or against radiation hazard.

(b) Tests made in conformity with these test methods will register performance during the test exposure and develop data to enable regulatory bodies to determine the suitability of window assemblies for use in wall openings where fire protection is required. Such tests shall not be construed as determining suitability of window assemblies for continued use after fire exposure.

1-2 Significance. These methods are intended to evaluate the ability of a window or other light transmitting assembly to remain in an opening during a predetermined test exposure of 45 minute duration.

1-2.1 The tests expose a specimen to a standard fire exposure controlled to achieve specified temperatures throughout a specified time period, followed by the application of a specified standard fire hose stream. The exposure, however, may not be representative of all fire conditions, which may vary with changes in the amount, nature and distribution of fire loading, ventilation, compartment size and configuration, and heat sink characteristics of the compartment. It does, however, provide a relative measure of fire performance of window assemblies under these specified fire exposure conditions.

1-2.2 Any variation from the construction or conditions that are tested may substantially change the performance characteristics of the assembly.

1-2.3 These methods do not provide the following:

1-2.3.1 Full information as to performance of all window assemblies in walls constructed of materials other than that tested.

1-2.3.2 Evaluation of the degree by which the window assembly contributes to the fire hazard by generation of smoke, toxic gases, or other products of combustion.

1-2.3.3 Measurement of the unexposed surface temperature of windows.

1-2.3.4 Measurement of the degree of control or limitation of smoke or products of combustion passage through the window assembly.

1-2.4 These methods permit loss of glass lights, and through openings, provided such loss and openings do not exceed specified limits.

1-3 Definition.

Shall. Indicates a mandatory requirement.

Chapter 2 Control of Fire Tests

2-1 Time-Temperature Curve. (See Figure 2-1.1.)

2-1.1 The fire exposure of window assemblies shall be controlled to conform to the standard time-temperature curve shown in Figure 2-1.1. The points on the curve that determine its character are:

1000° F (538° C)	.....	at 5 minutes
1300° F (704° C)	.....	at 10 minutes
1399° F (760° C)	.....	at 15 minutes
1462° F (795° C)	.....	at 20 minutes
1510° F (821° C)	.....	at 25 minutes
1550° F (843° C)	.....	at 30 minutes
1584° F (868° C)	.....	at 35 minutes
1613° F (878° C)	.....	at 40 minutes
1638° F (892° C)	.....	at 45 minutes

2-2 Furnace Temperatures.

(a) The temperatures of the test exposure shall be the average temperature obtained from the readings of not less than nine thermocouples symmetrically disposed and distributed to show the temperature near all parts of the test assembly. The thermocouples shall be protected by sealed porcelain tubes having $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. (19 mm) outside diameter and $\frac{1}{8}$ -in. (3 mm) wall thickness or, as an alternate in the case of base-metal thermocouples, protected by sealed $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. (13 mm) wrought-steel or wrought-iron pipe of standard weight. The exposed length of the thermocouple protection tube in the furnace chamber shall be not less than 12 in. (304.8 mm). The junction of the thermocouples shall be 6 in. (152.4 mm) from the exposed face of the test assembly or from the masonry in which the assembly is installed, during the entire test exposure.

(b) The temperatures shall be read at intervals not exceeding 5 minutes.

(c) The furnace shall be controlled so that the maximum temperature at individual points shall not exceed 1650°F (900°C) and the area under the time-temperature curve, obtained by averaging the results from the temperature readings, is within 10 percent of the corresponding area under the standard time-temperature curve shown in Figure 2-1.1.

(d) In case the temperature at any point does exceed 1650°F (900°C) the performance of the glass in that area shall be disregarded.

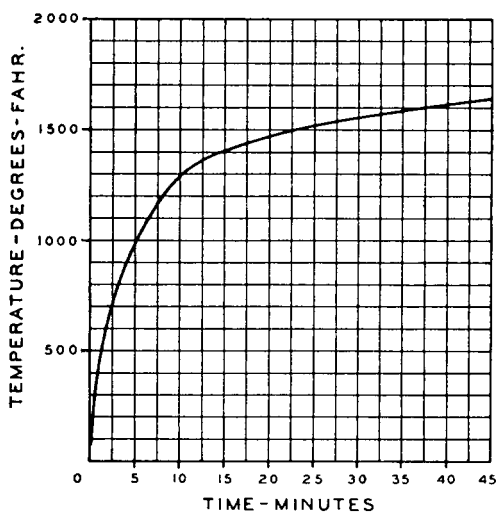


Figure 2-1.1 Time Temperature Curve

Chapter 3 Test Assemblies

3-1 Construction and Size.

(a) The design, construction, material, workmanship, and hardware of the test window assembly shall be representative of that for which approval is desired. A record of materials and construction details adequate for identification shall be made.

(b) The area of the test assembly shall be not less than 100 sq ft (9.29 m²), with neither dimension less than 9 ft (2.75 m). If the conditions of use limit the construction to smaller dimensions, a proportionate reduction may be made in the dimensions of the test assembly for tests qualifying them for such restricted use.

3-2 Mounting. The test assembly shall be installed in masonry or reinforced concrete frames in the manner in which it is to be used. It shall be mounted so that the latches and fasteners other than hinges shall be on the unexposed side, and the mounting shall not prevent the free and easy operation of all openable components such as ventilators and sash.

Chapter 4 Conduct of Tests

4-1 Time of Testing. Masonry shall have sufficient strength to retain the assembly securely in position throughout the fire and hose stream test.

4-2 Fire Endurance Test.

(a) The pressure in the furnace chamber shall be maintained as nearly equal to the atmospheric pressure as possible.

(b) The test shall be continued for 45 minutes unless the conditions of acceptance set forth in Chapter 5 are exceeded in a shorter period.

4-3 Hose Stream Test.

(a) Immediately following the fire endurance test and within 1½ minutes, the fire exposed side of the test assembly shall be subjected to the impact, erosion, and cooling effects of the hose stream.

(b) The hose stream shall be delivered through a 2½-in. (62 mm) hose discharging through a National Standard playpipe of corresponding size equipped with 1½-in. (28 mm) discharge tip of the standard-taper smooth-bore pattern without shoulder at the orifice.

(c) The tip of the nozzle shall be located 20 ft (6.1 m) from and on a line normal to the center of the test assembly. If impossible to be so located, the nozzle may be on a line deviating not more than 30 degrees from the line normal to the center of the test door. When so located, the distance from the plane of the surface to the test assembly shall be less than 20 ft (6.1 m) by an amount equal to 1 ft (0.31 m) for each 10 degrees of deviation from the normal.

(d) The hose stream shall be directed around the periphery of the test assembly, starting upward from a lower corner. When the circuit is about 1 ft (0.31 m) from the starting point, the hose stream shall be applied in paths about 1 ft (0.31 m) apart up and down the assembly across the entire width and then back and forth horizontally across the entire height.

(e) The water pressure at the base of the nozzle shall be 30 lb per sq in., and the hose stream shall be applied ½ sec for each sq ft of area of the test assembly.

Chapter 5 Reports

5-1 Report results in accordance with the performance in the tests as prescribed in these test methods. The report shall include but shall not be limited to the following:

(a) A description of the wall in which the unit is mounted for testing.

(b) The temperature measurements of the furnace on a comparative graph with the standard time-temperature curve (Section 2-2).

(c) All observations of the reaction to fire of the test assembly that may have a bearing on its performance, during both the fire and hose stream tests.

(d) Condition of the window and its fastenings after the tests.

(e) The amount and nature of the movement of any openable components from the initial closed position.

(f) The condition of the individual glass lights, including movement of the edges, and the percentage of fragments dislodged during the tests.

(g) For glass blocks, report any loosening of the blocks in the frame and any through openings.

(h) The materials and construction of the fire window assembly and details of installation, including latches, hinges and fasteners used for mounting, shall be recorded or referenced to assure positive identification or duplication in all respects.

(i) Pressure measurements made in the furnace and their location relative to the top of the window.

Chapter 6 Conditions of Acceptance

6-1 Window Assemblies. (*See Figure 6-1.*) A window assembly shall be considered as meeting the requirements for acceptable performance when it remains in the opening during the fire endurance test and hose stream test within the following limitations:

- (a) The window assembly shall not be loosened from its fastenings.
- (b) Movement at the perimeter of openable components, from the initial closed position, shall not exceed the thickness of the frame member at any point.
- (c) At least 70 percent of the edges of the individual glass lights shall remain in position throughout the hose stream test. The dislodging of small fragments from the central areas of individual lights shall be disregarded.

6-2 Glass Block Assemblies. (*See Figure 6-2.*)

A glass block assembly shall be considered as meeting the requirements for acceptable performance when it remains in the opening during the fire endurance and hose stream tests within the following limitations:

- (a) The glass block assembly shall not be loosened from the frame.
- (b) At least 70 percent of the glass blocks shall not develop through openings.



Figure 6-1 Unexposed side of window assembly after fire exposure and hose stream application.

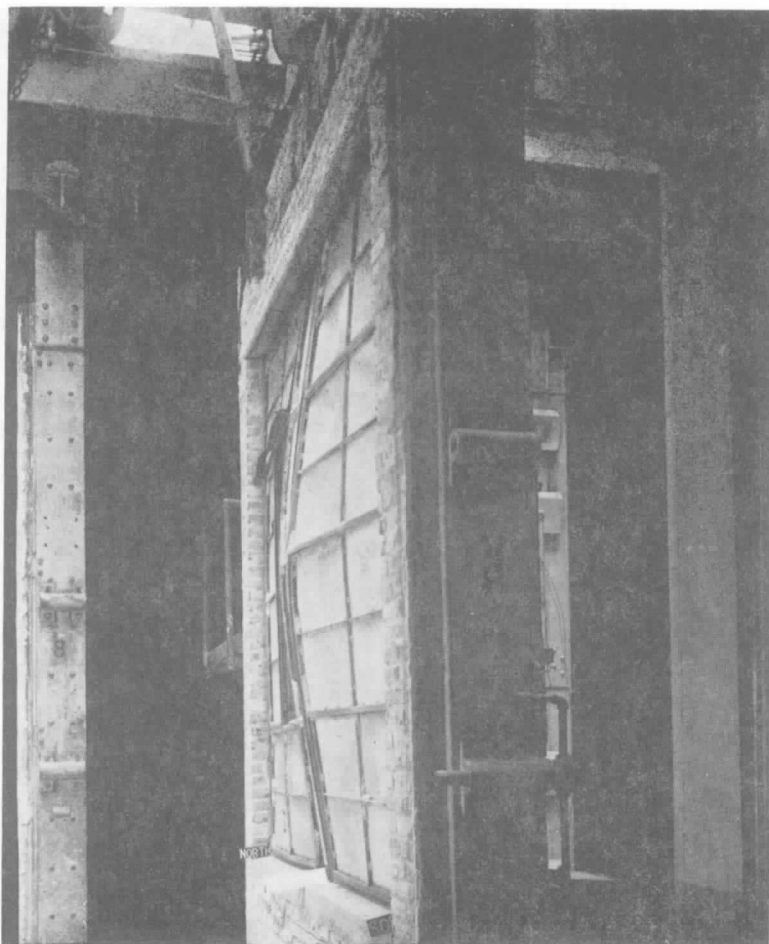


Figure 6-2 Exposed side of window assembly after fire exposure and hose stream application.

Appendix A Commentary — Background and Development

Introduction. This commentary has been prepared to provide the user of NFPA 257 with background information on the development of the standard and its application in fire protection of buildings. It also provides guidance in the planning and performance of fire tests and in the reporting of results. No attempt has been made to incorporate all the available information on fire testing in this commentary. The serious student of fire testing should review the referenced documents for a better appreciation of the intricate problems associated with testing and with interpretation of test results.

Application. Openings in the exterior walls of buildings have contributed to the spread of fire. Fire protection standards¹ and building codes² recognize the hazard of exterior wall openings caused by inadequate spatial separation between buildings. Where the spatial separation is not adequate and the expected fire exposure is moderate or light, these regulations allow protected window openings. This protection may be provided by properly designed windows and glass block assemblies. Where sustained severe exposures are possible, the openings should be protected with fire door assemblies.³

To protect paths of egress from interior fires, fire window assemblies may be specified for openings abutting exterior stairs and fire escapes and in corridors where wall openings are used to provide natural lighting of the corridor from adjacent rooms.

Scope and Significance. NFPA 257 provides a method for evaluating the effectiveness of light-transmitting opening protectives.

The window assembly is exposed in a closed position to predetermined fire conditions for a period of 45 minutes and then subjected to a standard hose stream impact test. The standard does not measure or evaluate the heat transmission or radiation through the assembly. The reader is urged to consult NFPA 80A, *Protection of Buildings from Exterior Fire Exposures*¹, for information on exterior fire exposure problems.

Openings in walls, even when protected, provide lower fire protection than the wall, and the designed protection cannot be expected if combustibles are located directly in front of or behind the protectives. Therefore, clear spaces should be provided on both sides of openings in fire rated walls and partitions.

Furnace. The method provides details on the operating characteristics and temperature measurement requirements of the test furnace. The walls of the furnace should be typically of furnace

refractory materials and should be sufficiently rugged to maintain the overall integrity of the furnace during the fire exposure period.

The thermocouples in the furnace are located 6 in. (152 mm) from the face of the door or the wall in which the window assembly is installed. Otherwise no furnace depth is specified. A depth of 8 to 18 in. (203 to 457 mm) has been considered desirable by most laboratories. The reader is urged to consult reference documents for a more comprehensive review of furnace design and performance.^{4,5}

Time-Temperature Curve. A specified time-temperature relationship for the test fire is defined in the standard. The actual recorded time-temperature condition obtained in the furnace during the test as measured by the area under the time-temperature curve is required to be within specified percentages of those of the standard curve. The number and type of temperature measuring devices are outlined in the standard. Specific standard practices for location and use of these temperature measuring devices are also outlined in the standard.

The standard time-temperature curve is considered to represent a relatively severe building fire.⁴ The curve was adopted in 1918 as a result of several conferences by eleven technical organizations, including testing laboratories, insurance underwriters, fire protection associations and technical societies.^{6,7,8} It should be recognized that the time-temperature relationship of this test method represents only one real fire situation.^{9,10,11,12,13,14,15}

Furnace Control. The standard contains specific instruction for measuring temperatures in the furnace and for the selection of required thermocouples. Thermocouples of the design specified are sufficiently rugged to retain accuracy throughout anticipated test periods. However, their massive construction results in a significant time delay in response to temperature change and results in temperatures exceeding the indicated temperatures during the early stages of the test period when the temperature rises rapidly. The iron or porcelain tubes surrounding the junction and leads of the thermocouple provide a shield against degradation of the junction and increase the thermal inertia. It is customary for laboratories to replace furnace thermocouples after three or four accumulated hours of use.

Unexposed Surface Temperature. Conditions of acceptance for fire-resistive walls specify that the temperature increase on the unexposed side of the wall not exceed 250°F (139°C) average for the various thermocouples and that there be no passage of flame and gases hot enough to ignite combustibles. It is obvious that the very nature of a fire window (or wire glass or glass block) precludes the use of these criteria.

Test Assemblies. Fire window assemblies are tested in relatively large sizes compared with most doors, i.e., 100 sq ft (9.3 m²) in area. Individual panes of glass or units are determined by the designer. Window assemblies 150 sq ft (13.9 m²) in area have been tested. When assemblies are less than 100 sq ft in size, this fact must be reported as an exception.

Conduct of the Tests. The test frame or wall in which a window assembly is installed should be rugged enough to endure the exposed fire during the time period, without affecting the window assembly. Traditionally, this wall has been of masonry construction. Today, fire windows are installed in other than masonry walls and have been tested in these walls.

Furnace Pressures. A fire in a building compartment will create both negative and positive pressures on window assemblies depending upon atmospheric conditions, height above ground, wind conditions and ventilation of the compartment at the beginning and during the fire.

NFPA 257 specifies that the pressure in the furnace be maintained as nearly equal to atmospheric pressure as possible. Experience has shown this practice to be acceptable. The pressure in the furnace is required to be reported but the method of measuring it is optional with the laboratory.

Hose Stream Test. Immediately following a fire test, the test frame is removed from the furnace and the window assembly is subjected to the impact, erosion and cooling effects of a stream of water from a 2-½ in. (63.5 mm) hose discharging through a standard playpipe equipped with a 1-⅛ in. (28 mm) tip under specified pressures. The application of water produces stresses in the assembly and provides a measure of its structural capabilities. Weights were once used to provide a measure of the ability of the assembly to withstand impact. The hose stream is considered to be an improvement in uniformity and accuracy over the weights.

Conditions of Acceptance. During the 45-minute fire exposure and the hose stream test, the fire window assembly must stay in place and not be loosened from the test frame. Wire glass is permitted to have small fragments dislodged from the center of each pane but the edges of at least 70 percent of the glass lights or panes shall remain in position to continue to retard fire passage. Small center fragments may be destroyed. At least 70 percent of the glass blocks shall not develop through openings.

Appendix B Bibliography and Additional References

B-1 Bibliography.

¹NFPA 80A-1980, *Recommended Practice for Protection of Buildings from Exterior Fire Exposure*, National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA 02269.

²*Basic Building Code*, Building Officials & Code Administrators International, Inc.

Uniform Building Code, International Conference of Building Officials, Inc.

Standard Building Code, Southern Building Code Congress.

National Building Code, American Insurance Association.

³NFPA 80-1979, *Fire Doors and Windows*, National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA 02269.

⁴Seigel, L.G., "Effects of Furnace Design on Fire Endurance Test Results," ASTM STP 464, American Society for Testing & Materials, 1970, pp. 57-67.

⁵Harmathy, T.Z., "Design of Fire Test Furnaces," *Fire Technology*, Vol. 5, No. 2, May 1969, pp. 146-150.

⁶Babrauskas, Vytenis and Williamson, Robert Brad, "Historical Basis of Fire Resistance Testing," Part I and Part II, *Fire Technology*, Vol. 14, No. 3 and No. 4, 1978, pp. 184-194; 304-316.

⁷*Fire Protection Handbook*, Fourteenth Edition, National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA 1969.

⁸Harmathy, T.Z., "Designer's Option: Fire Resistance or Ventilation," Technical Paper No. 436, Division of Building Research, National Research Council of Canada, Ottawa, NRCC 14746.

⁹Seigel, L.G., "The Severity of Fires in Steel-Framed Buildings," Symposium No. 2, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1968, London; proceedings of the Symposium held at the Fire Research Station, Boreham Woods, Herts (England) on January 24, 1967.