

Ask the Engineer:

PROPER BEDDING FOR PVC PRESSURE PIPE

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Various parameters must be considered when designing a buried piping system. Two of the main considerations should be the pipe properties and the soil envelope around the pipe.

To the layman, the word "soil" can mean different things. To engineers involved in pipe burial, soil is any earthen material excluding bedrock.

Soil has been used as a construction material throughout history. Soil is important not only as a material upon which the structure rests, but also for support and load transfer. The soil envelope transfers surface and gravity loads to, from, and around the structure.

Historically, a flexible pipe has been defined as a conduit that will deflect at least two percent without any sign of structural distress, such as injurious cracking. However, for a conduit to truly behave as a flexible pipe when buried, it is required that the pipe be more yielding than the embedment soil surrounding it. This is the source

of the arching action over the pipe. When the horizontal diameter expands, it engages the passive resistance of the soil support at the sides of the pipe. At the same time, the compression of the vertical diameter relieves the pipe of the major portion of the vertical soil load, which is then carried by the surrounding soil through the mechanism of an arching action over the pipe.

HISTORICALLY, A FLEXIBLE PIPE HAS BEEN DEFINED AS A CONDUIT THAT WILL DEFLECT AT LEAST TWO PERCENT WITHOUT ANY SIGN OF STRUCTURAL DISTRESS, SUCH AS INJURIOUS CRACKING.

of flexible pipe's external-load-carrying capacity. Under soil load, the pipe tends to deflect. The vertical diameter is compressed and the horizontal diameter expands by approximately the same amount in both directions. When the hori-

zontal diameter expands, it engages the passive resistance of the soil support at the sides of the pipe. At the same time, the compression of the vertical diameter relieves the pipe of the major portion of the vertical soil load, which is then carried by the surrounding soil through the mechanism of an arching action over the pipe.

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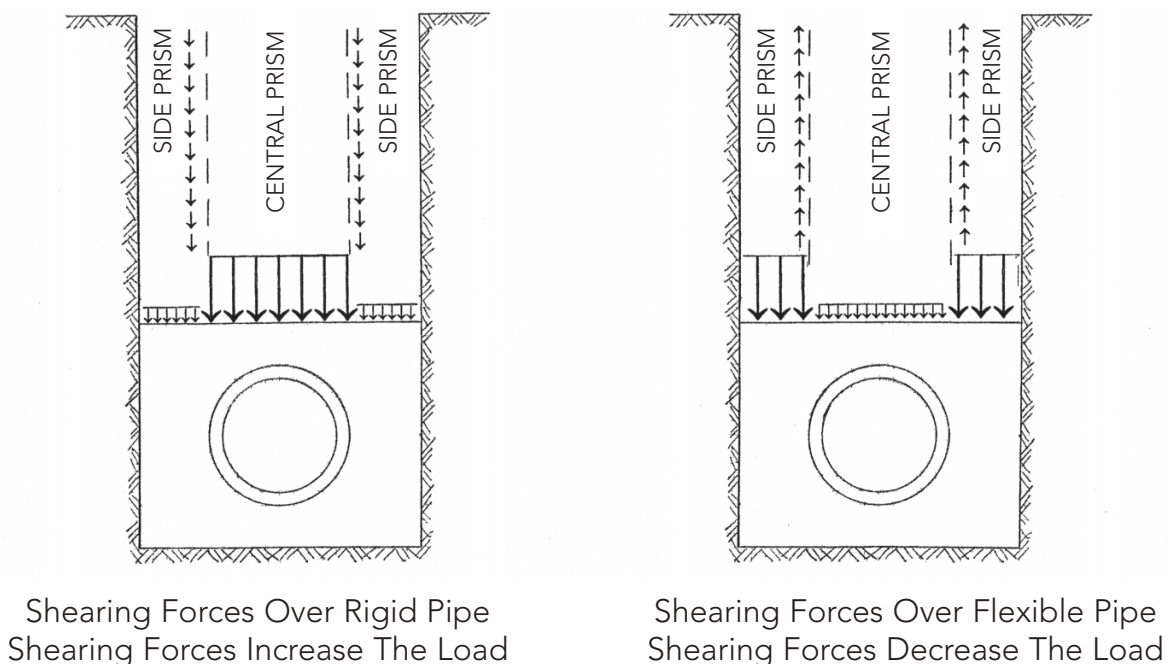


Figure A: Comparing Trench Loads for Flexible and Rigid Products

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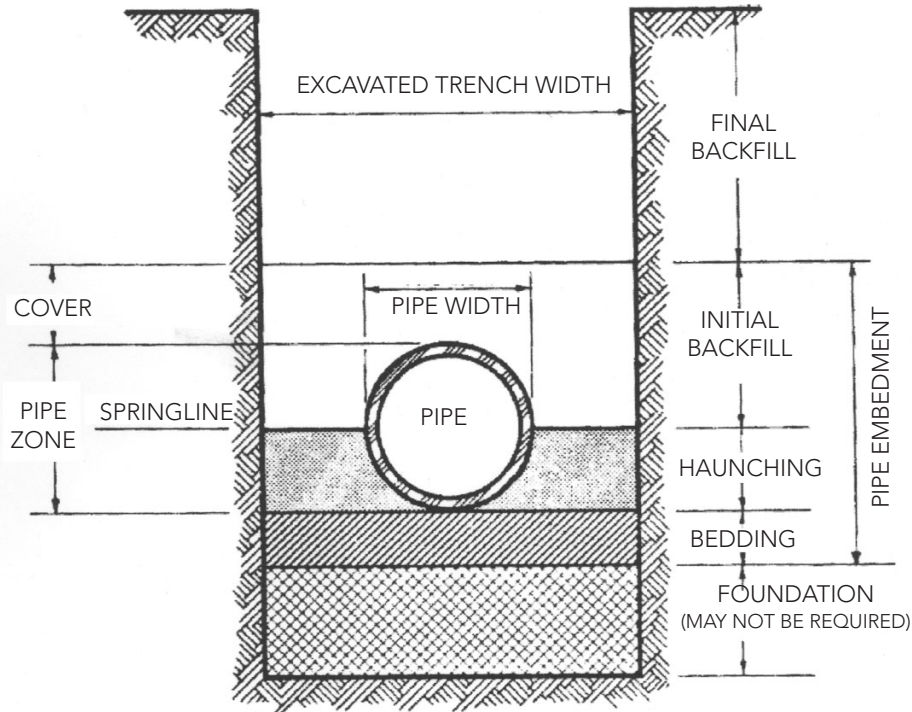


Figure B: Trench Embedment Terminology

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loads and live loads are treated as separate design parameters.

The first solution to the problem of soil-induced loads on buried pipe was published by Professor Anson Marston at Iowa State University in 1913. Since then, the Marston Theory of Loads on Underground Conduits has been used in determining the loads on buried pipe. Much of the research

on earth loading technology for buried conduits throughout the world is related, in

buried pipe is modified by the response of the pipe and the relative movement of the

ALMOST ANY REASONABLE SOIL STRUCTURE WILL WORK FOR PVC PRESSURE PIPE BURIAL.

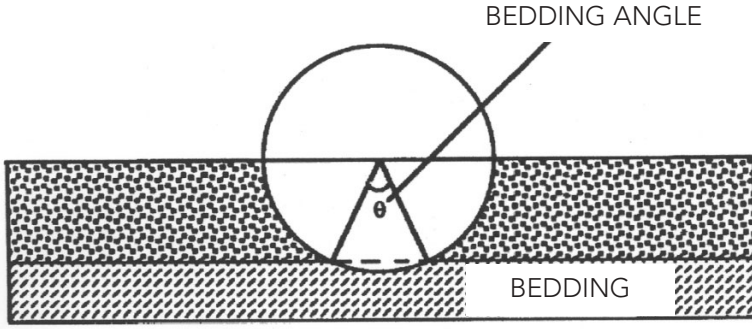
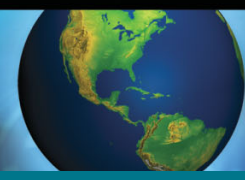
part, to Marston's load theory. The basic concept of the theory is that the load due to the weight of the column of soil above a

side columns of soil to the central column. When the side columns of soil between the pipe and the trench wall (pipe zone) are

**Table 1
Average Values Of Modulus Of Soil Reaction, E'
(For Initial Flexible Pipe Deflection)***

ASTM D2321 Embedment Material Classification		E' for Degree of Compaction of Haunching, in psi			
		Dumped	Slight < 85% Proctor	Moderate 85% - 95% Proctor	High > 95% Proctor
Manufactured Granular Angular	Class I	1,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Clean Sand & Gravel	Class II	200	1,000	2,000	3,000
Sand & Gravel with Fines	Class III	100	400	1,000	2,000
Silt & Clay	Class IV	50	200	400	1,000
Organic Materials	Class V	No data available; consult a competent soils engineer; otherwise use E' = 0			

* A more detailed table is available for download from Uni-Bell's website, www.uni-bell.org. The table is in Uni-Bell's technical report "Deflection: The Pipe/Soil Mechanism," UNI-TR-1.



VALUES OF BEDDING CONSTANT ,K

BEDDING ANGLE	K
0°	0.110
30°	0.108
45°	0.105
60°	0.102
90°	0.096
120°	0.090
180°	0.083

Figure C: Bedding Angle Defined

more compressible than the pipe, this causes the pipe to assume load generated across the width of the trench. This is typically the case for rigid products like concrete and clay. However, when pipe has the ability to deflect without cracking, this produces a situation that allows the central prism of soil (directly over the pipe) to settle more in relation to the adjacent soil columns (between the pipe and the trench wall). This settlement produces shearing forces which reduce the load on a flexible pipe to an amount less than the weight of the prism directly over it. The two scenarios are shown in Figure A on page 13. Regardless of pipe stiffness, as soil in the trench settles or moves downward compared to the trench sidewall, friction forces are generated which act to reduce the weight of the trench-wide soil column. Marston's Load Theory predicts and accounts for these frictional shearing forces.

Figure B on page 14 shows a typical trench cross-section denoting standard nomenclature used in the plastic pipe industry. The word "bedding" is generally accepted as the soil structure around the pipe and not necessarily the bedding upon which the pipe rests. This would include the haunching and initial backfill areas. The soil structure requirements for pressure pipe are less stringent than for gravity sewer pipe. This is primarily due to the fact that pressure pipe is usually buried at shallow depths. Also, pressure pipes tend to have thicker walls than

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Table 2
Calculated Deflections Of Buried PVC Pressure Pipe; Deflection (percent) For Prism, Highway H20, or Railway E80 Loads

Height of Cover Live Load	2'			4'			6'			8'			10'		
	Prism	H20	E80	Prism	H20	E80	Prism	H20	E80	Prism	H20	E80	Prism	H20	E80
E' Value	DR 14														
50	0.13	0.58	2.25	0.27	0.49	1.75	0.40	0.51	1.66	0.54	0.59	1.43	0.67	0.67	1.28
200	0.12	0.54	2.10	0.25	0.46	1.63	0.37	0.48	1.54	0.50	0.55	1.33	0.62	0.62	1.20
400	0.11	0.50	1.92	0.23	0.42	1.49	0.34	0.44	1.42	0.46	0.50	1.22	0.57	0.57	1.10
1000	0.09	0.40	1.54	0.18	0.34	1.19	0.27	0.35	1.13	0.37	0.40	0.97	0.46	0.46	0.88
2000	0.07	0.30	1.15	0.14	0.25	0.89	0.21	0.26	0.85	0.27	0.30	0.73	0.34	0.34	0.66
E' Value	DR 18														
50	0.29	1.26	4.89	0.58	1.07	3.79	0.87	1.11	3.60	1.16	1.28	3.10	1.45	1.45	2.79
200	0.25	1.09	4.22	0.50	0.92	3.27	0.75	0.96	3.10	1.00	1.11	2.67	1.25	1.25	2.40
400	0.21	0.92	3.57	0.42	0.78	2.76	0.64	0.81	2.62	0.85	0.94	2.26	1.06	1.06	2.03
1000	0.14	0.63	2.43	0.29	0.53	1.89	0.43	0.55	1.79	0.58	0.64	1.54	0.72	0.72	1.39
2000	0.09	0.41	1.59	0.19	0.35	1.23	0.28	0.36	1.17	0.38	0.42	1.01	0.47	0.47	0.91
E' Value	DR 21														
50	0.46	1.99	7.71	0.92	1.68	5.97	1.37	1.76	5.67	1.83	2.02	4.89	2.29	2.29	4.39
200	0.37	1.59	6.16	0.73	1.34	4.77	1.10	1.40	4.53	1.46	1.62	3.90	1.83	1.83	3.51
400	0.29	1.25	4.86	0.58	1.06	3.76	0.87	1.11	3.57	1.15	1.27	3.08	1.44	1.44	2.77
1000	0.18	0.77	2.97	0.35	0.65	2.30	0.53	0.68	2.19	0.71	0.78	1.88	0.88	0.88	1.69
2000	0.11	0.47	1.81	0.21	0.39	1.40	0.32	0.41	1.33	0.43	0.47	1.14	0.54	0.54	1.03
E' Value	DR 25														
50	0.75	3.23	12.56	1.49	2.74	9.73	2.24	2.86	9.23	2.98	3.29	7.96	3.73	3.73	7.15
200	0.53	2.29	8.91	1.06	1.94	6.90	1.59	2.03	6.55	2.12	2.34	5.65	2.65	2.65	5.07
400	0.38	1.65	6.42	0.76	1.40	4.97	1.14	1.46	4.72	1.53	1.68	4.07	1.91	1.91	3.66
1000	0.21	0.90	3.49	0.42	0.76	2.71	0.62	0.80	2.57	0.83	0.92	2.21	1.04	1.04	1.99
2000	0.12	0.51	1.99	0.24	0.43	1.54	0.35	0.45	1.46	0.47	0.52	1.26	0.59	0.59	1.13
E' Value	DR 26														
50	0.83	3.59	13.95	1.66	3.04	10.80	2.49	3.18	10.26	3.31	3.66	8.84	4.14	4.14	7.94
200	0.57	2.47	9.59	1.14	2.09	7.43	1.71	2.18	7.05	2.28	2.51	6.07	2.85	2.85	5.46
400	0.40	1.74	6.77	0.80	1.47	5.24	1.21	1.54	4.98	1.61	1.77	4.29	2.01	2.01	3.85
1000	0.21	0.93	3.59	0.43	0.78	2.78	0.64	0.82	2.64	0.85	0.94	2.28	1.07	1.07	2.05
2000	0.12	0.52	2.02	0.24	0.44	1.56	0.36	0.46	1.48	0.48	0.53	1.28	0.60	0.60	1.15

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a comparable gravity pipe in order to handle the pressure capacity typically specified. This often results in external load capabilities that far exceed the design requirement. As a consequence, almost any reasonable soil structure will work for PVC pressure pipe burial.

The "bedding factor" is also used in burial equations. Precise values are shown in Figure C on page 15. The bedding factor has little effect on results of burial calculations and is usually taken as 0.100.

What is the modulus of soil reaction? It is

symbolically represented as E' . The average values are shown in Table 1 on page 14. This variable is very important in flexible

becomes increasingly important as depth of cover increases. However, at relatively shallow depths in the 3 to 10 foot range E'

THE STRENGTH AND SUITABILITY OF THE PVC PIPE FOR BURIAL MADE IT EQUAL TO (OR BETTER THAN) OTHER TRADITIONAL PIPING MATERIALS...

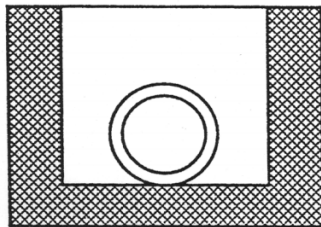
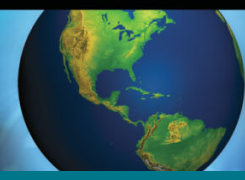
pipe burial calculations. E' in the haunch area is a measure of the ability of the soil to absorb live and dead loads transmitted through the pipe as it deflects over time. E'

values of 700 to 2,000 psi will cover almost any burial situation as long as there is full support in the haunches of the pipe.

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Table 2 (cont.)
Calculated Deflections Of Buried PVC Pressure Pipe; Deflection (percent) For Prism, Highway H20, or Railway E80 Loads

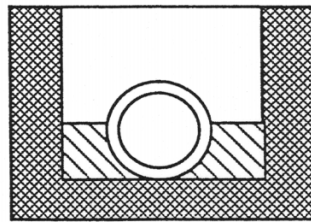
Height of Cover Live Load	2'			4'			6'			8'			10'		
	Prism	H20	E80	Prism	H20	E80	Prism	H20	E80	Prism	H20	E80	Prism	H20	E80
E' Value	DR 32.5														
50	1.44	6.24	24.22	2.88	5.28	18.77	4.32	5.52	17.81	5.76	6.35	15.35	7.20	7.20	13.79
200	0.80	3.49	13.53	1.61	2.95	10.48	2.41	3.08	9.95	3.22	3.55	8.57	4.02	4.02	7.70
400	0.51	2.19	8.52	1.01	1.86	6.60	1.52	1.94	6.26	2.02	2.23	5.40	2.53	2.53	4.85
1000	0.24	1.04	4.04	0.48	0.88	3.13	0.72	0.92	2.97	0.96	1.06	2.56	1.20	1.20	2.30
2000	0.13	0.55	2.15	0.26	0.47	1.66	0.38	0.49	1.58	0.51	0.56	1.36	0.64	0.64	1.22
E' Value	DR 41														
50	2.31	10.01	38.88	4.62	8.47	30.12	6.93	8.85	28.59	9.24	10.19	24.63	11.55	11.55	22.13
200	1.02	4.42	17.14	2.04	3.74	13.28	3.05	3.90	12.60	4.07	4.49	10.86	5.09	5.09	9.76
400	0.58	2.53	9.82	1.17	2.14	7.61	1.75	2.24	7.22	2.33	2.58	6.22	2.92	2.92	5.59
1000	0.26	1.11	4.31	0.51	0.94	3.34	0.77	0.98	3.17	1.02	1.13	2.73	1.28	1.28	2.45
2000	0.13	0.57	2.22	0.28	0.48	1.72	0.40	0.51	1.64	0.53	0.58	1.41	0.66	0.66	1.27
E' Value	DR 51														
50	3.22	13.94	54.13	6.43	11.79	41.93	9.65	12.33	39.80	12.86	14.19	34.30	16.08	16.08	30.82
200	1.16	5.04	19.57	2.33	4.27	15.16	3.49	4.46	14.39	4.65	5.13	12.40	5.81	5.81	11.14
400	0.63	2.72	10.57	1.26	2.30	8.19	1.88	2.41	7.78	2.51	2.77	6.70	3.14	3.14	6.02
1000	0.26	1.14	4.44	0.53	0.97	3.44	0.79	1.01	3.27	1.06	1.17	2.82	1.32	1.32	2.53
2000	0.13	0.58	2.26	0.27	0.49	1.75	0.40	0.51	1.66	0.54	0.59	1.43	0.67	0.67	1.29
Height of Cover Live Load	12'			14'			16'			18'			20'		
	Prism	H20	E80	Prism	H20	E80	Prism	H20	E80	Prism	H20	E80	Prism	H20	E80
E' Value	DR 14														
50	0.80	0.80	1.25	0.94	0.94	1.27	1.07	1.07	1.35	1.21	1.21	1.43	1.34	1.34	1.51
200	0.75	0.75	1.16	0.87	0.87	1.19	1.00	1.00	1.26	1.12	1.12	1.33	1.25	1.25	1.40
400	0.69	0.69	1.07	0.80	0.80	1.09	0.91	0.91	1.15	1.03	1.03	1.22	1.14	1.14	1.29
1000	0.55	0.55	0.85	0.64	0.64	0.87	0.73	0.73	0.92	0.82	0.82	0.97	0.91	0.91	1.03
2000	0.41	0.41	0.64	0.48	0.48	0.65	0.55	0.55	0.69	0.62	0.62	0.73	0.68	0.68	0.77
E' Value	DR 18														
50	1.74	1.74	2.71	2.04	2.04	2.76	2.33	2.33	2.93	2.62	2.62	3.10	2.91	2.91	3.27
200	1.50	1.50	2.34	1.75	1.75	2.38	2.01	2.01	2.53	2.26	2.26	2.67	2.51	2.51	2.82
400	1.27	1.27	1.98	1.48	1.48	2.01	1.69	1.69	2.14	1.91	1.91	2.26	2.12	2.12	2.38
1000	0.87	0.87	1.35	1.01	1.01	1.37	1.16	1.16	1.46	1.30	1.30	1.54	1.45	1.45	1.63
2000	0.57	0.57	0.88	0.66	0.66	0.90	0.76	0.76	0.95	0.85	0.85	1.01	0.95	0.95	1.06
E' Value	DR 21														
50	2.75	2.75	4.28	3.21	3.21	4.35	3.66	3.66	4.62	4.12	4.12	4.89	4.58	4.58	5.15
200	2.20	2.20	3.42	2.56	2.56	3.48	2.93	2.93	3.69	3.29	3.29	3.90	3.66	3.66	4.12
400	1.73	1.73	2.70	2.02	2.02	2.74	2.31	2.31	2.91	2.60	2.60	3.08	2.89	2.89	3.25
1000	1.06	1.06	1.65	1.24	1.24	1.68	1.41	1.41	1.78	1.59	1.59	1.88	1.77	1.77	1.99
2000	0.64	0.64	1.00	0.75	0.75	1.02	0.86	0.86	1.08	0.97	0.97	1.14	1.07	1.07	1.21
E' Value	DR 25														
50	4.48	4.48	6.97	5.22	5.22	7.09	5.97	5.97	7.52	6.71	6.71	7.96	7.46	7.46	8.39
200	3.18	3.18	4.94	3.70	3.70	5.03	4.23	4.23	5.34	4.76	4.76	5.65	5.29	5.29	5.95
400	2.29	2.29	3.56	2.67	2.67	3.62	3.05	3.05	3.85	3.43	3.43	4.07	3.81	3.81	4.29
1000	1.25	1.25	1.94	1.45	1.45	1.97	1.66	1.66	2.09	1.87	1.87	2.21	2.08	2.08	2.33
2000	0.71	0.71	1.10	0.83	0.83	1.12	0.94	0.94	1.19	1.06	1.06	1.26	1.18	1.18	1.33



Type 1

Flat-bottom trench.* Loose embedment.

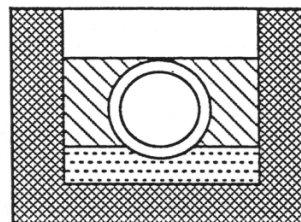
$E' = 50 \text{ psi (340 kPa), } K = 0.110$



Type 2

Flat-bottom trench.* Embedment lightly consolidated to centerline of pipe.

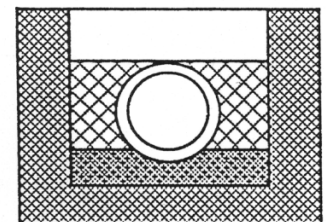
$E' = 200 \text{ psi (1,380 kPa), } K = 0.110$



Type 3

Pipe bedded on 4 in. (100 mm) minimum of loose soil.† Embedment lightly consolidated to top of pipe.

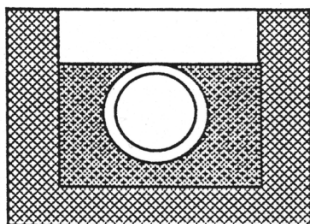
$E' = 400 \text{ psi (2,760 kPa), } K = 0.102$



Type 4

Pipe bedded on sand, gravel, or crushed stone to depth of 1/8 pipe diameter, 4 in. (100mm) minimum. Embedment compacted to top of pipe. (Approximately 80 percent Standard Proctor, AASHTO T-99 or ASTM D 698.)

$E' = 1,000 \text{ psi (6,900 kPa), } K = 0.096$



Type 5

Pipe embedded in compacted granular material to centerline of pipe. Compacted granular or select material‡ to top of pipe. (Approximately 90 percent Standard Proctor, AASHTO T-99 or ASTM D 698)

$E' = 2,000 \text{ psi (13,800 kPa), } K = 0.083$

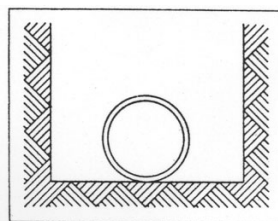
Figure D Notation

NOTE: Required embedment type will depend on the pipe's dimension ratio, internal operating pressure, and external load, and shall be specified by the purchaser. (see Sec. 5.3)

* "Flat-bottom is defined as undisturbed earth.

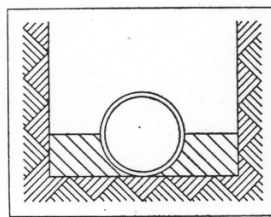
† "Loose soil" or "select material" is defined as native soil excavated from the trench, free of rocks, foreign materials, and frozen earth. A soft "loose soil" bedding will contour to the pipe bottom. Caution must be exercised to ensure proper placement of embedment material under the haunches of the pipe.

Figure D: Typical Trench Types in the PVC Installation Standard, AWWA C605



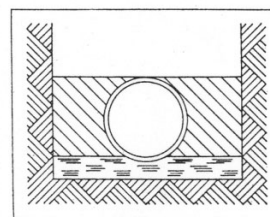
Type 1

Flat-bottom trench.‡ Loose backfill.



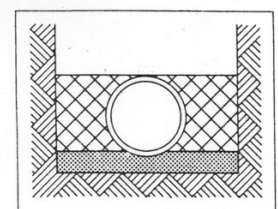
Type 2

Flat-bottom trench.‡ Backfill lightly consolidated to centerline of pipe.



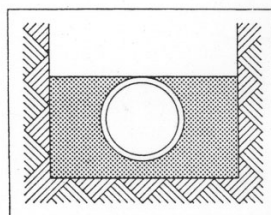
Type 3

Pipe bedded on 4 in. (100 mm) minimum of loose soil.‡ Backfill lightly consolidated to top of pipe.



Type 4

Pipe bedded on sand, gravel, or crushed stone to depth of 1/8 pipe diameter, 4 in. (100mm) minimum. Backfill compacted to top of pipe. (Approximately 80 percent Standard Proctor, AASHTO T-99.)



Type 5

Pipe embedded in compacted granular material to centerline of pipe. Compacted granular or select material‡ to top of pipe. (Approximately 90 percent Standard Proctor, AASHTO T-99.)

Figure E Notation

* For 14-in. (355-mm) and larger pipe, consideration should be given to the use of laying conditions other than type 1.

† "Flat-bottom is defined as undisturbed earth.

‡ "Loose soil" or "select material" is defined as native soil excavated from the trench, free of rocks, foreign materials, and frozen earth. A soft "loose soil" bedding will contour to the pipe bottom. Caution must be exercised to ensure proper placement of embedment material under the haunches of the pipe.

Figure E: Typical Trench Types in the Ductile Iron Installation Standard, AWWA C600