

surface so rapidly that the surface remains thoroughly wet, and evaporation proceeds at a constant rate, precisely as from a free water surface. The material tends to assume a temperature corresponding to the wet-bulb temperature of the surrounding air. But the actual temperature is often slightly higher, due to radiation and conduction from dry surfaces adjoining the material. The constant rate period continues until a time is reached when the moisture no longer comes to the surface as fast as it is evaporated. This point is called the *critical moisture content* in the drying process.

As the drying proceeds, a period of *uniform falling rate* is entered. During this period, the surface of the material is gradually drying out, and

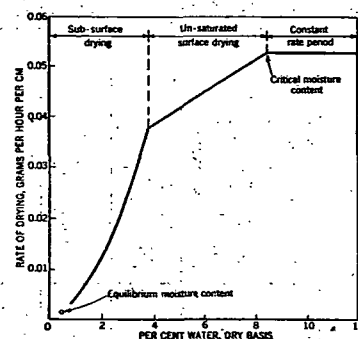


FIG. 5. RATE OF DRYING OF WHITING SLAB

the rate of drying falls as the remaining wet surface decreases in area. This period is also known as *unsaturated surface drying*.

As drying continues, the surface is completely dry and the water from the interior evaporates and comes through the surface as vapor. As the plane of water recedes, the diffusion of the vapor becomes more difficult and hence the period is known as *varying falling rate period*, or *sub-surface drying*.

Drying ceases when the *equilibrium moisture content* has been reached. The final moisture content of the product depends on the relative humidity of the air in contact with it. Equilibrium is established when the vapor pressure of the moisture in the air and the vapor pressure of the moisture in the material are equal. The equilibrium moisture content varies with the hygroscopic properties of the material, (see table of Regain of Hygroscopic Materials, Chapter 45).

The drying of a slab of whiting is shown in Fig. 5 and illustrates the principles referred to previously. The factors affecting the variations of drying rates during the periods mentioned are outlined in Table 2.

Omissions in the Cycle

Many solids, such as lumber, are so dry at the beginning of the drying operation that the constant rate period of free surface evaporation does not occur. Frequently the surface of the material is dry enough so that no surface drying can take place, in which case only the final stage of sub-surface drying is involved. In other instances, the critical moisture con-

tent of a wet solid is sufficiently low that sub-surface drying starts almost immediately after the conclusion of the constant rate period. Thus the intermediate state of unsaturated surface drying does not occur and the drying is of the sub-surface type during practically the whole of the falling rate period. With other kinds of material, particularly thin sheets, such as newsprint paper, sub-surface drying may occur at such a low moisture content that it is not encountered in commercial work, the falling rate period being confined in practice to unsaturated surface drying.

TABLE 2. FACTORS INFLUENCING DRYING

FACTOR	DRYING PERIOD	
	Constant Rate, Unsaturated Surface	Sub-Surface
Temperature	Increase in temperature increases drying rate	Increase in temperature increases drying rate, because with decreased viscosity, capillary flow is increased.
Humidity	Drying rate increases as humidity is decreased	No effect until equilibrium content is reached; drying then ceases
Air Velocity	Drying rate varies approximately as the 0.6 power of the velocity	No effect
Air Direction	Drying rate increases, the more nearly the air blows perpendicular to surface; for dead air film becomes thinner	No effect
Thickness of Material	Drying rate is not affected by the thickness	Drying rate varies inversely as the square of the thickness

GENERAL RULES FOR DRYING

Temperature

The highest temperature possible should be used because of faster drying and smaller requirements for ventilation. The amount of moisture that can be carried by a pound of air increases rapidly with rise in temperature as shown in the humidity chart of Fig. 6. Too high a temperature may cause spoilage of materials; many materials calcine or change their chemical properties if heated too hot; gypsum and glauber salts lose some of the chemically combined water, fall apart, and change their chemical properties. Too high or rapid rise in temperatures in drying lumber or ceramics may create a liquid vapor tension within the material so high that the cells explode, causing permanent injury to the fiber. If too high a temperature is used on some chemicals, they begin to react exothermally; a temperature rise and chemical action from within will burn the materials, e.g., bakelite products, gunpowder, etc. During the constant rate period of drying, the material heats only to the wet-bulb temperature of the surrounding air, consequently high temperatures will not injure the material in this stage.

Humidity

Moisture in the drying air may be very important. Many materials tend to case-harden, dry on the outside, forming a skin which retards the moisture flow from the inside to the surface, or stops it completely, and so