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HEAT CAPACITY (HC) VALUES FOR CONCRETE MASONRY WALLS

INTRODUCTION

Heat capacity is a material property used to assess a wall's thermal mass, and it is often used as a criteria in energy codes and standards. Thermal mass is defined as: the absorption and storage of significant amounts of heat in a building or in walls of a building (ref. 1). Wall thermal mass, such as that present in concrete masonry construction, tends to decrease both heating and cooling loads in a given building, thus saving energy. The amount of savings realized by incorporating thermal mass into a building's design is a function of several variables. These include local climate, wall heat capacity, fenestration (window) area, fenestration orientation, fenestration solar gain, building occupancy load and other internal gains such as lights and office equipment. The most manageable approach to account for energy savings due to thermal mass is to relate the savings to the wall heat capacity and local climate.

Heat capacity (*HC*) is defined as the amount of heat necessary to raise the temperature of a given mass one degree (refs. 2, 3), and is calculated as the product of a wall's mass per unit area by its specific heat.

A building with massive walls, such as concrete masonry, often uses less energy for heating and cooling than does one with lightweight frame walls, wood or steel studs for example. Because of this, the *International Energy Conservation Code* and ASHRAE Standard 90.1, *Energy Standard for Buildings Except Low-Rise Residential Buildings* (refs. 4, 3), prescribe lower R-value requirements for concrete masonry walls than those for frame walls and metal buildings, in many cases. (This lower required R-value corresponds to a higher required U-factor.) In order to qualify for this lower minimum R-value, ASHRAE Standard 90.1 requires the wall to achieve a minimum *HC* value. The *International Energy Conservation Code* defines "mass walls" in terms of wall weight, rather than heat capacity (see reference 5 for detailed information).

This TEK is intended for use by engineers and designers as a guide to determining the heat capacity (*HC*) of concrete masonry walls.

HEAT CAPACITY VALUES IN CODES AND STANDARDS

ASHRAE Standard 90.1 defines a mass wall as one with a heat capacity exceeding:

- 7 Btu/ft²·°F (45.2 kJ/m²·K), or
- 5 Btu/ft²·°F (32.2 kJ/m²·K) provided that the wall has a material unit weight not greater than 120 lb/ft³ (1,922 kg/m³). This criteria clarifies that most lightweight concrete masonry walls are defined as mass walls for the purposes of the Standard.

Walls meeting either of these criteria are considered mass walls, and are eligible to comply to the Standard using the lower mass wall requirements in the prescriptive compliance tables.

In addition to these prescriptive compliance tables, heat capacity is also used in the ENVSTD compliance software, that forms a part of ASHRAE Standard 90.1, when defining a mass wall assembly. See TEKs 06-12E, *Concrete Masonry in the 2012 Edition of the IECC*, and 06-04B, *Energy Code Compliance Using COMcheck* (refs. 5, 6) for further information on energy code compliance options.

Concrete masonry heat capacity values are also required for more rigorous energy analyses, such as those necessary to demonstrate compliance with the Total Building Performance option in the *International Energy Conservation Code*, demonstrate compliance with the Energy Cost Budget Method in ASHRAE Standard 90.1, or demonstrate energy savings to qualify for LEED® program points.

CALCULATING HEAT CAPACITY

Wall heat capacity is defined as: the sum of the products of the mass of each individual material in the wall per unit area times its individual specific heat (ref. 3). As indicated previously, *HC* is equal to the mass, or wall weight, multiplied by the specific heat. Therefore, for example, a single wythe concrete masonry wall weighing 34 lb/ft² (166 kg/m²) has a *HC* of 7.14 Btu/ft²·°F (1.26 kJ/m²·K), as follows:

$HC = \text{wall weight (lb/ft}^2) \times \text{specific heat (Btu/lb } \cdot \text{ }^\circ\text{F)}$

$HC = 34 \text{ lb/ft}^2 \times 0.21 \text{ Btu/lb} \cdot \text{ }^\circ\text{F}$

$HC = 7.14 \text{ Btu/ft}^2 \cdot \text{ }^\circ\text{F (46.1 kJ/m}^2\text{K)}$

This simple calculation is based on a rule-of-thumb that the specific heat of most concretes is very close to 0.21 Btu/lb · °F (880 J/kg·K). The actual value depends on the aggregate type used to manufacture the concrete masonry units. Concrete masonry units produced using sand-gravel aggregates tend to have specific heat values of approximately 0.22 Btu/lb · °F (922 J/kg·K), while most other units have a specific heat of 0.20 to 0.21 Btu/lb · °F (840 to 880 J/kg·K) (ref. 2).

Single Wythe Walls

Tables 1 through 5 contain calculated heat capacity values for 4-in. to 12-in. (102- to 305-mm) thick concrete masonry walls. The values are based on: minimum face shell and web thickness requirements of *Standard Specification for Loadbearing Concrete Masonry Units*, ASTM C-90 (ref. 7); 125 pcf (2,003 kg/m³) mortar; and 140 pcf (2,243 kg/m³) grout. For walls not included in these tables, the heat capacity can be calculated by multiplying the wall weight in lb/ft² (kg/m²) by the specific

heat of 0.21 Btu/lb · °F (880 J/kg·K). Note that concrete masonry wall weights are tabulated in CMU-TEC-002-23, *Weights and Section Properties of Concrete Masonry Assemblies* (ref. 8).

Multiwythe Walls and Finishes

For multiwythe walls or walls including a finish such as gypsum wallboard or plaster, the heat capacity of the second masonry wythe and/or finish is simply added to that of the first masonry wythe, as follows:

$HC_T = HC_{w1} + HC_{w2} + HC_f$

where:

$HC_T =$ total heat capacity of finished wall, Btu/ft² · °F (kJ/m²·K)

$HC_{w1} =$ heat capacity of the first concrete masonry wythe, including mortar and grout (see Tables 1 through 5), Btu/ft² · °F (kJ/m²·K)

$HC_{w2} =$ heat capacity of the second concrete masonry wythe, including mortar and grout (see Tables 1 through 5), Btu/ft² · °F (kJ/m²·K)

$HC_f =$ heat capacity of finish materials such as masonry veneer, plaster, or gypsum wallboard (see Table 1 for concrete masonry veneer, Table 6 for other finishes), Btu/ft² · °F (kJ/m²·K)

Table 1—Heat Capacities of 4-in. (102-mm) Concrete Masonry Walls								
Units	Vertical grout spacing, in.(mm)	Mortar bedding	Wall heat capacity, Btu/ft ² ·°F (kJ/m ² ·K) for concrete densities, lb/ft ³ (kg/m ³) of:					
			85 (1,362)	95 (1,522)	105 (1,682)	115 (1,842)	125 (2,003)	135 (2,163)
Hollow	No grout	Face shell	2.7 (18)	3.0 (20)	3.3 (21)	3.6 (23)	3.9 (25)	4.2 (27)
Hollow	No grout	Full	2.8 (18)	3.1 (20)	3.3 (22)	3.6 (23)	3.9 (25)	4.2 (27)
Solid	No grout	Full	5.6 (36)	6.2 (40)	6.7 (44)	7.3 (47)	7.9 (51)	8.5 (55)

Table 2—Heat Capacities of 6-in. (152-mm) Concrete Masonry Walls								
Units	Vertical grout spacing, in.(mm)	Mortar bedding	Wall heat capacity, Btu/ft ² ·°F (kJ/m ² ·K) for concrete densities, lb/ft ³ (kg/m ³) of:					
			85 (1,362)	95 (1,522)	105 (1,682)	115 (1,842)	125 (2,003)	135 (2,163)
Hollow	No grout	Face shell	4.0 (26)	4.5 (29)	4.9 (32)	5.4 (35)	5.8 (37)	6.2 (40)
Hollow	No grout	Full	4.1 (26)	4.5 (29)	5.0 (32)	5.4 (35)	5.9 (38)	6.3 (41)
Solid	No grout	Full	8.6 (56)	9.6 (62)	10.5 (68)	11.4 (73)	12.3 (79)	13.2 (85)
Hollow	8 (203)	Full	11.1 (72)	11.6 (75)	12.0 (77)	12.4 (80)	12.9 (83)	13.3 (86)
Hollow	16 (406)	Face shell	7.6 (49)	8.0 (52)	8.5 (55)	8.9 (57)	9.3 (60)	9.8 (63)
Hollow	24 (610)	Face shell	6.4 (41)	6.8 (44)	7.3 (47)	7.7 (50)	8.2 (53)	8.6 (55)
Hollow	32 (812)	Face shell	5.8 (38)	6.2 (40)	6.7 (43)	7.1 (46)	7.6 (49)	8.0 (52)
Hollow	40 (1,016)	Face shell	5.5 (35)	5.9 (38)	6.3 (41)	6.8 (44)	7.2 (47)	7.7 (49)
Hollow	48 (1,219)	Face shell	5.2 (34)	5.7 (37)	6.1 (39)	6.5 (42)	7.0 (45)	7.4 (48)
Hollow	56 (1,422)	Face shell	5.0 (33)	5.5 (35)	5.9 (38)	6.4 (41)	6.8 (44)	7.2 (47)
Hollow	64 (1,626)	Face shell	4.9 (32)	5.4 (35)	5.8 (37)	6.2 (40)	6.7 (43)	7.1 (46)
Hollow	72 (1,829)	Face shell	4.8 (31)	5.3 (34)	5.7 (37)	6.1 (40)	6.6 (42)	7.0 (45)
Hollow	96 (2,438)	Face shell	4.6 (30)	5.1 (33)	5.5 (36)	5.9 (38)	6.4 (41)	6.8 (44)
Hollow	120 (3,048)	Face shell	4.5 (29)	4.9 (32)	5.4 (35)	5.8 (38)	6.3 (40)	6.7 (43)

Table 3—Heat Capacities of 8-in. (203-mm) Concrete Masonry Walls

Units	Vertical grout spacing, in.(mm)	Mortar bedding	Wall heat capacity, Btu/ft ² ·°F (kJ/m ² ·K) for concrete densities, lb/ft ³ (kg/m ³) of:					
			85 (1,362)	95 (1,522)	105 (1,682)	115 (1,842)	125 (2,003)	135 (2,163)
Hollow	No grout	Face shell	5.2 (34)	5.8 (37)	6.3 (41)	6.9 (45)	7.5 (48)	8.0 (52)
Hollow	No grout	Full	5.3 (34)	5.9 (38)	6.4 (42)	7.0 (45)	7.6 (49)	8.1 (53)
Solid	No grout	Full	11.7 (76)	13.0 (84)	14.2 (92)	15.4 (100)	16.7 (108)	17.9 (116)
Hollow	8 (203)	Full	15.2 (98)	15.8 (102)	16.3 (105)	16.9 (109)	17.5 (113)	18.0 (116)
Hollow	16 (406)	Face shell	10.2 (66)	10.8 (70)	11.4 (73)	11.9 (77)	12.5 (81)	13.1 (84)
Hollow	24 (610)	Face shell	8.5 (55)	9.1 (59)	9.7 (62)	10.3 (66)	10.8 (70)	11.4 (73)
Hollow	32 (812)	Face shell	7.7 (50)	8.3 (53)	8.8 (57)	9.4 (61)	10.0 (64)	10.5 (68)
Hollow	40 (1,016)	Face shell	7.2 (47)	7.8 (50)	8.3 (54)	8.9 (58)	9.5 (61)	10.0 (65)
Hollow	48 (1,219)	Face shell	6.9 (44)	7.4 (48)	8.0 (52)	8.6 (55)	9.1 (59)	9.7 (63)
Hollow	56 (1,422)	Face shell	6.6 (43)	7.2 (46)	7.8 (50)	8.3 (54)	8.9 (57)	9.5 (61)
Hollow	64 (1,626)	Face shell	6.5 (42)	7.0 (45)	7.6 (49)	8.2 (53)	8.7 (56)	9.3 (60)
Hollow	72 (1,829)	Face shell	6.3 (41)	6.9 (44)	7.5 (48)	8.0 (52)	8.6 (55)	9.2 (59)
Hollow	96 (2,438)	Face shell	6.0 (39)	6.6 (43)	7.2 (46)	7.7 (50)	8.3 (54)	8.9 (57)
Hollow	120 (3,048)	Face shell	5.9 (38)	6.4 (42)	7.0 (45)	7.6 (49)	8.1 (53)	8.7 (56)

Table 4—Heat Capacities of 10-in. (254-mm) Concrete Masonry Walls

Units	Vertical grout spacing, in.(mm)	Mortar bedding	Wall heat capacity, Btu/ft ² ·°F (kJ/m ² ·K) for concrete densities, lb/ft ³ (kg/m ³) of:					
			85 (1,362)	95 (1,522)	105 (1,682)	115 (1,842)	125 (2,003)	135 (2,163)
Hollow	No grout	Face shell	6.0 (39)	6.6 (43)	7.3 (47)	7.9 (51)	8.6 (56)	9.3 (60)
Hollow	No grout	Full	6.1 (40)	6.8 (44)	7.4 (48)	8.1 (52)	8.8 (57)	9.4 (61)
Solid	No grout	Full	14.8 (95)	16.4 (106)	17.9 (116)	19.5 (126)	21.1 (136)	22.6 (146)
Hollow	8 (203)	Full	19.5 (126)	20.1 (130)	20.8 (134)	21.5 (139)	22.1 (143)	22.8 (147)
Hollow	16 (406)	Face shell	12.8 (82)	13.4 (87)	14.1 (91)	14.7 (95)	15.4 (99)	16.0 (104)
Hollow	24 (610)	Face shell	10.5 (68)	11.2 (72)	11.8 (76)	12.5 (80)	13.1 (85)	13.8 (89)
Hollow	32 (812)	Face shell	9.4 (60)	10.0 (65)	10.7 (69)	11.3 (73)	12.0 (77)	12.7 (82)
Hollow	40 (1,016)	Face shell	8.7 (56)	9.3 (60)	10.0 (65)	10.7 (69)	11.3 (73)	12.0 (77)
Hollow	48 (1,219)	Face shell	8.2 (53)	8.9 (57)	9.5 (62)	10.2 (66)	10.9 (70)	11.5 (74)
Hollow	56 (1,422)	Face shell	7.9 (51)	8.6 (55)	9.2 (60)	9.9 (64)	10.5 (68)	11.2 (72)
Hollow	64 (1,626)	Face shell	7.7 (49)	8.3 (54)	9.0 (58)	9.6 (62)	10.3 (66)	11.0 (71)
Hollow	72 (1,829)	Face shell	7.5 (48)	8.1 (53)	8.8 (57)	9.5 (61)	10.1 (65)	10.8 (69)
Hollow	96 (2,438)	Face shell	7.1 (46)	7.8 (50)	8.4 (54)	9.1 (59)	9.7 (63)	10.4 (67)
Hollow	120 (3,048)	Face shell	6.9 (44)	7.5 (49)	8.2 (53)	8.8 (57)	9.5 (61)	10.2 (66)

Table 5—Heat Capacities of 12-in. (305-mm) Concrete Masonry Walls

Units	Vertical grout spacing, in.(mm)	Mortar bedding	Wall heat capacity, Btu/ft ² ·°F (kJ/m ² ·K) for concrete densities, lb/ft ³ (kg/m ³) of:					
			85 (1,362)	95 (1,522)	105 (1,682)	115 (1,842)	125 (2,003)	135 (2,163)
Hollow	No grout	Face shell	6.6 (42)	7.3 (47)	8.0 (52)	8.8 (56)	9.5 (61)	10.2 (66)
Hollow	No grout	Full	6.8 (44)	7.5 (48)	8.2 (53)	9.0 (58)	9.7 (62)	10.4 (67)
Solid	No grout	Full	17.9 (115)	19.7 (127)	21.6 (140)	23.5 (152)	25.4 (164)	27.3 (176)
Hollow	8 (203)	Full	23.9 (154)	24.6 (159)	25.3 (164)	26.1 (168)	26.8 (173)	27.5 (178)
Hollow	16 (406)	Face shell	15.3 (98)	16.0 (103)	16.7 (108)	17.4 (113)	18.2 (117)	18.9 (122)
Hollow	24 (610)	Face shell	12.4 (80)	13.1 (84)	13.8 (89)	14.5 (94)	15.3 (99)	16.0 (103)
Hollow	32 (812)	Face shell	10.9 (70)	11.6 (75)	12.4 (80)	13.1 (85)	13.8 (89)	14.6 (94)
Hollow	40 (1,016)	Face shell	10.0 (65)	10.8 (70)	11.5 (74)	12.2 (79)	13.0 (84)	13.7 (88)
Hollow	48 (1,219)	Face shell	9.5 (61)	10.2 (66)	10.9 (70)	11.7 (75)	12.4 (80)	13.1 (85)
Hollow	56 (1,422)	Face shell	9.1 (58)	9.8 (63)	10.5 (68)	11.2 (73)	12.0 (77)	12.7 (82)
Hollow	64 (1,626)	Face shell	8.7 (56)	9.5 (61)	10.2 (66)	10.9 (71)	11.7 (75)	12.4 (80)
Hollow	72 (1,829)	Face shell	8.5 (55)	9.2 (60)	10.0 (64)	10.7 (69)	11.4 (74)	12.1 (78)
Hollow	96 (2,438)	Face shell	8.0 (52)	8.7 (56)	9.5 (61)	10.2 (66)	10.9 (71)	11.7 (75)
Hollow	120 (3,048)	Face shell	7.7 (50)	8.5 (55)	9.2 (59)	9.9 (64)	10.6 (69)	11.4 (73)

Table 6—Properties of Finish Materials (ref. 2)

Material	Specific heat, Btu/lb · °F (J/ kg·K)	Heat capacity, Btu/ft ² · °F (kJ/m ² ·K)
Clay brick, solid 3 5/8 in. (92 mm)	0.20 (840)	7.6 (49)
Gypsum wall- board	0.26 (1,090)	0.41 (2.6)
3/8 in. (10 mm)	0.26 (1,090)	0.54 (3.5)
1/2 in. (13 mm)	0.26 (1,090)	0.68 (4.4)
5/8 in. (16 mm)		
Plaster and stucco	0.20 (840)	1.0 (6.4)
3/8 in. (10 mm)	0.20 (840)	1.5 (9.7)
1/2 in. (13 mm)	0.20 (840)	2.0 (12.9)
5/8 in. (16 mm)		

REFERENCES

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ABOUT CMHA

The Concrete Masonry & Hardscapes Association (CMHA) represents a unification of the Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute (ICPI) and National Concrete Masonry Association (NCMA). CMHA is a trade association representing US and Canadian producers and suppliers in the concrete masonry and hardscape industry, as well as contractors of interlocking concrete pavement and segmental retaining walls. CMHA is the authority for segmental concrete products and systems, which are the best value and preferred choice for resilient pavement, structures, and living spaces. CMHA is dedicated to the advancement of these building systems through research, promotion, education, and the development of manufacturing guides, design codes and resources, testing standards, and construction practices.

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