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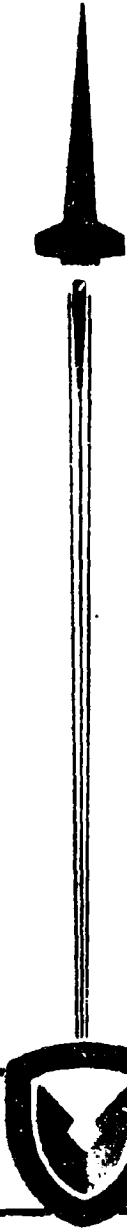
FINAL REPORT
EFFECT OF PLASTICIZERS
ON THE STRENGTH OF A PLASTIC MOTOR CASE

by
Donald A. Morgan

October 1971

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| DOCUMENT CONTROL DATA - R & D | | |
|---|---|---|
| <i>(Security classification of title, body of abstract and indexing annotation must be entered when the overall report is classified)</i> | | |
| 1. ORIGINATING ACTIVITY (Corporate author) Propulsions Directorate Directorate for Research, Development, Engineering and Missile Systems Laboratory U.S. Army Missile Command Redstone Arsenal, Alabama 35809 | | 2a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified |
| | | 2b. GROUP NA |
| 3. REPORT TITLE EFFECT OF PLASTICIZERS ON THE STRENGTH OF A PLASTIC MOTOR CASE | | |
| 4. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES (Type of report and Inclusive dates) Technical Report | | |
| 5. AUTHOR(S) (First name, middle initial, last name) Donald A. Morgan | | |
| 6. REPORT DATE 1 October 1971 | 7a. TOTAL NO. OF PAGES 22 | 7b. NO. OF REFS 11 |
| 8a. CONTRACT OR GRANT NO. b. PROJECT NO. (DA) 1M262303A214 c. AMC Management Structure Code No. 522C.11.214 d. | | 9a. ORIGINATOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) RK-TR-71-18 9b. OTHER REPORT NO(S) (Any other numbers that may be assigned this report) AD _____ |
| 10. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited. | | |
| 11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES None | 12. SPONSORING MILITARY ACTIVITY Same as No. 1 | |
| 13. ABSTRACT This report summarizes the effect of plasticizers on the strength of a glass-fiber-reinforced plastic motor case and, specifically, the effect on the burst strength of the motor case. Maximum average loss in burst strength occurred with dipropyl adipate and amounted to 79 psi out of an average burst of the blank of 2842 psi. Deterioration did not increase with longer intervals of storage. A direct correlation could be established between burst pressure and extension at break of a ring cut from an identical (same lot) motor case and treated with plasticizer. In addition, a direct correlation could be established between burst pressure and the reciprocal of the amount of sag of a coupon cut from an identical motor case. The effect on a motor case after two years storage in contact with a plasticizer is considered negligible. | | |

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1 NOV 66

REPLACES DD FORM 1473, 1 JAN 66, WHICH IS OBSOLETE FOR ARMY USE.

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| 14. KEY WORDS | LINK A | | LINK B | | LINK C | |
|---|--------|----|--------|----|--------|----|
| | ROLE | WT | ROLE | WT | ROLE | WT |
| Plasticizers Motor case Dipropyl adipate Burst pressure Shear-creep | | | | | | |

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Propulsion Directorate
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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the effect of plasticizers on the strength of a glass-fiber-reinforced plastic motor case and, specifically, the effect on the burst strength of the motor case.

Maximum average loss in burst strength occurred with dipropyl adipate and amounted to 79 psi out of an average burst of the blank of 2842 psi. Deterioration did not increase with longer intervals of storage.

A direct correlation could be established between burst pressure and extension at break of a ring cut from an identical (same lot) motor case and treated with plasticizer. In addition, a direct correlation could be established between burst pressure and the reciprocal of the amount of sag of a coupon cut from an identical motor case.

The effect on a motor case after two years storage in contact with a plasticizer is considered negligible.

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SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----------|--|
| \bar{M} | Molecular weight |
| ρ | Density, gm/cc |
| μ | Viscosity, gm/cm ³ -sec |
| σ | Surface tension, dyne/cm |
| ν | Kinematic viscosity cm ² /sec |
| δ | Solubility factor, cal ^{$\frac{1}{2}$} /cm ^{$\frac{3}{2}$} |
| DMP | Dimethyl phthalate |
| DEP | Diethyl Phthalate |
| DBP | Dibutyl phthalate |
| TEP | Triethyl phosphate |
| TBP | Tributyl phosphate |
| TA | Triacetin |
| TBC | Tributyl citrate |
| DBT | Dibutyl d-tartrate |
| EN | Ethyl nonanoate |
| DBS | Dibutyl sebacate |
| DBA | Di-isobutyl azelate |
| DBM | Dibutyl maleate |
| DPA | Dipropyl adipate |
| CO | Castor oil |
| TMETN | Trimethylolethane trinitrate |
| TEGDN | Trimethylene glycol dinitrate |
| NG | Nitroglycerine |

1. Introduction

Many rocket motor cases have already been made of plastic materials reinforced by wound glass fibers. Wider use of these cases awaits more certain knowledge of the degree of their deterioration during long storage under a variety of conditions.

Work is in progress by many investigators on the deterioration of glass-reinforced plastics by weather during extended exposure. Results are now being published [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].

Weather is not the only environment to which a motor case is subjected. The interior is subjected to a chemical environment consisting of various vapors, liquids, and gases derived from the propellant and from the adhesives, insulation, and other materials used in assembly of a rocket motor. The liner normally used between the propellant and the case gives a high degree of protection, but even this can be slowly penetrated by diffusive processes during long storage.

The storage life of a plastic motor case of a loaded rocket should be at least as long as the propellant it contains. The objective of the research is to determine if the chemical environment on the inside of a loaded rocket motor could contribute to the deterioration of a plastic case, and if so, to what degree, and to provide a method of rapid screening to determine if a given chemical could cause deterioration in the concentration present.

Plasticizers found in a propellant could cause deterioration of the case. These plasticizers are generally organic esters which range from nitroglycerine (NG) to castor oil (CO). Nitrous fumes or other gases may also have an effect.

Any definite conclusions as to the absolute degree of deterioration must await actual long-time storage tests under normal environment.

2. Research Plan and Materials

The experiment is divided into three phases. In Phase I, 17 plasticizers used in the formulation of propellants were tested to determine those most likely to degrade a motor case. In Phase II, those plasticizers found especially active were absorbed on Fuller's Earth and packed into rings cut from a motor case. In Phase III, discussed in this report, plasticizers selected from Phase II were mixed with builder's sand and loaded into the motor case.

At the outset it was postulated that an attack by these plasticizers would be either on the resin or on the glass-resin interface. For this reason the tests in Phases I and II were designed so that little if any

of the tensile strength of the glass fibers was reflected in the results. In Phase III, a burst test was used and the tensile strength of the glass fibers was, of necessity, important.

The test material used in all phases was derived from a single lot of plastic motor cases reinforced by wound fibers of S-glass. Details of raw materials, manufacture, and testing are found in the manufacturer's report [6] and in the previous reports on the subject [7, 8].

The plasticizers used in these experiments were from one lot of practical grade. Values of the physical properties of these plasticizers are found in Table I. Certain physical properties were determined in the laboratory and so may differ from those reported for pure compounds. Values of viscosity used in a subsequent correlation are those found in literature for pure compounds, because these values were found to give a better correlation than actual determined value. Kinematic viscosity was likewise found to give a better fit in the correlation than viscosity alone.

3. Test Equipment and Methods

Test equipment and methods used in Phase I [7], shear-creep of motor case segments immersed in plasticizers, and in Phase II [8], elongation and tensile strength of rings treated with selected plasticizers, have already been reported.

Tests in Phase III consisted of burst tests on plastic motor cases stored in contact with plasticizers selected from Phase II. Plasticizers selected were one of high activity, dipropyl adipate (DPA) of low activity, triethylene glycol dinitrate (TEGDN), and of intermediate activity, dibutyl phthalate (DBP).

These plastic motor cases were of the same lot [6] from which the coupons and rings were derived and had been stored at 76°F and 50 percent relative humidity. The cases were filled with a saturated mixture of builder's sand and plasticizer and stored in an igloo. Samples in triplicate were removed at 6-month intervals for burst. Blanks were stored concurrently and also burst in triplicate.

The plasticizers used easily permeated the cases. Consequently, the cases had to be placed in sealed polyethylene bags during storage. The porosity of the cases is notable. A boot proved necessary in all burst tests. The increases in diameter of the cases during burst were unusual. Increases of 12.5 percent on the circumference at pressures of 2000 psi were not uncommon. All cases burst along a longitudinal axis, as did the original qualification test bottles [6]. Pressurization rates of 1000 psi per minute were used as had been specified for the original tests.

The original scheme called for a statistical analysis to be made on the burst pressures of the three plasticizer series and the blank. A change in organization caused the first series of bursts, and part of the second, to be made by one team on one set of equipment and the remainder of the second series, plus the third and fourth, to be run by a second team on a second set of equipment. This introduced personal errors into the tests. Consequently, analyses were made first on differences between burst pressures of the bottles and the burst pressures of the blanks and secondly over the last three time periods.

a. Results

Results from Phase I are summarized in Table I which presents physical properties of plasticizers; Table II, areas under the time-sag curve at 76°F to 7 weeks; Table III, results of regression analysis on the areas; and Figure 1, a graphic portrayal of Table III and Equation (2). Table IV gives the areas under the time-sag curves at 135°F to 11 days.

The multiple regression calculated between the various areas in Table II at 76°F and the critical properties of surface tension and kinematic viscosity gave

$$A = 70.48 \frac{\sigma^{0.268}}{\nu^{0.116}} \quad (1)$$

as the best fit. A similar, rounded equation, also statistically valid, is

$$A = 87.15 \left(\frac{\sigma^2}{\nu} \right)^{\frac{1}{9}} - 6.09 \quad (2)$$

The plot of this equation is shown in Figure 1.

The addition of an exponential function of the solubility factor improved the fit. This equation is

$$A = 89.4 \left(\frac{\sigma^2}{\nu} \right)^{\frac{1}{9}} - 45.31 \exp \left[-3(\mathcal{S} - 10.8)^2 \right] - 4.70 \quad (3)$$

where 10.8 is the solubility factor of an epoxy resin. The grouping

$\frac{2\sigma}{v}$ was also investigated by a regression analysis. The resulting equation

$$A = 111.89 \left(\frac{2\sigma}{v} \right)^{\frac{1}{8}} - 33.59 \exp \left[-2(\delta - 10.8)^2 \right] + 4.74 \quad (4)$$

had a worse fit than Equation (3), but was still statistically valid.

The presence of a negative exponential term is surprising. It indicates that a modicum of solubility of plasticizer in plastic is advantageous. Possibly a soluble plasticizer will swell the plastic and so heal the micro cracks through which a massive penetration of plasticizer to the glass-plastic interface could take place.

Results from Phase II are summarized in Table V. Details have been previously reported [7]. Parentheses indicate that the ring broke in a resin-poor area. Values given are actual results. The average of the two acceptable tests was used in the analysis of variance.

Table VI gives the results of the analysis of variance on data from Table V. The occurrence of a minimum in the plot of extension at break versus time has already been reported [7]. It has been further noticed that the time of the minimum correlates roughly with extension at break and also with the value of the solubility factor. Again it appears that a slight solubility of plasticizer in plastic may be beneficial in delaying massive penetration of the plasticizer to the glass-resin interface.

If the reciprocals of the sag-creep areas from Table II are plotted against these extensions, Figure 2 results for all plasticizers except tributyl phosphate (TBP) are almost a straight line.

A factor corresponding to Young's Modulus was also determined from stress-strain relationships of the rings. An analysis of variance indicated that time and plasticizer were significant variables. A significant quadratic factor was present in time, i.e., the increase in modulus at 9 months was significant in comparison with moduli at 3 and 21 months.

Rating of the plasticizers by moduli was generally the same as that by extension, except that triethyl phosphate (TEP) was less active and TEGDN more active.

Table VIII gives a comparison of values found in Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III for plasticizers common to all three phases. DBP alone is out of order.

Figure 3 shows plots of burst pressures versus the reciprocal of observed areas under the sag-time curve given in Table IV and also burst pressure versus extensions given in Table VII. Points for DPA, TEGDN, and the blank (air) are seen to be plotted in almost a straight line. The point for DBP does not. DBP does not seem normal, as can be seen by its plotted position in Figure 1 and its behavior elsewhere [8, 9].

A plot of moduli from Phase 2 versus reciprocals of areas, not shown, gives a similar result. DBP is again not normal.

b. Conclusions

An approximate prediction can be made between lowering of the burst pressure of a rocket motor case by a plasticizer and area under the sag-time curve of a coupon cut from that case and immersed in the same plasticizer. By extension of relationships, the decrease in burst pressures can be related inversely to viscosity and directly to the surface tension of the plasticizer.

The lowering of the burst pressure of a motor case by a plasticizer is considered minimal even after two years storage, amounting to less than 100 psi out of 2800 in the worst case. It is considered that in an actual condition, a motor case with a greater part of its strength due to glass fibers, a propellant with about 15 percent plasticizer and with a liner present, the rate of deterioration will be much slower, and will not reach a higher degree of deterioration. The same absolute value of deterioration in psi will be found in a case of much higher strength. No significant deterioration due to presence of plasticizer is to be expected during normal storage life, i.e., the life of the propellant.

Table I. Physical Properties of Selected Plasticizers

| Plasticizer | \bar{M} | ρ_{25}^* | μ_{25} | σ_{25}^* | ν_{25} | δ |
|------------------|-----------|---------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-----------|
| H ₂ O | 18 | 0.997 | 0.89 | 71.9 | 0.893 | 23.5 [10] |
| DMP | 194 | 1.189 | 17.2 | 45.6 | 14.48 | 10.8 [11] |
| DBP | 278 | 1.042 | 11.3 | 36.2 | 17.5 | 9.4 [11] |
| TA | 218 | 1.155 | 17.3 | 39.3 | 14.94* | 10.3 [10] |
| TEP | 182 | 1.068 | 1.6* | 32.4 | 1.462* | 9.0 [10] |
| DEP | 222 | 1.115 | 6.8 | 40.5 | 10.8 | 9.8 [10] |
| TBC | 360 | 1.046 | 23.9 | 33.3 | 31.0 | 9.0 [11] |
| DBT | 262 | 1.087 | 65.6 | 33.6 | 62.3 | 9.5 [10] |
| TBP | 266 | 0.971 | 3.7 | 30.0 | 3.50 | 9.0 [10] |
| EN | 186 | 0.860 | 2.5 | 29.2 | 1.96 | 6.8 [11] |
| DBM | 228 | 0.988 | 4.0 | 32.9 | 4.60 | 8.4 [11] |
| DBS | 314 | 0.929 | 9.0 | 33.9 | 15.4 | 7.3 [10] |
| DPA | 230 | 0.979 | 4.2 | 33.2 | 3.97 | 8.1 [10] |
| DBA | 300 | 0.933 | 7.6 | 31.8 | 9.75 | 6.8 [10] |
| CO | 933 | 0.951 | 620* | 38.2 | 652* | 7.0 [10] |
| TMETN | 255 | 1.450 | 47.2* | 48.9 | 32.5* | 13.4 [10] |
| TEGDN | 240 | 1.317 | 5.96* | 47.2 | 4.52* | 10.1 [10] |
| NG** | 225 | 1.490 | 12.9 | 44.9 | 23.6 | 9.4 [10] |

*Measured

**Desensitized with TA

Table II. Activity Ratings of Plasticizers at 76°F

| Group | Plasticizer | Average Area | Confidence Level Between Groups (%) |
|-------|------------------|--------------|---|
| 1 | H ₂ O | 235.14 | 99.95 |
| 2 | DPA | 181.52 | |
| | DBP | 171.19 | |
| | TEP | 170.82 | |
| | EN | 169.40 | |
| 3 | TEGDN | 162.58 | 97.5 |
| | DBM | 158.66 | |
| | TBP | 153.29 | |
| | TMETN | 137.07 | |
| | DEP | 131.83 | |
| | DBA | 131.66 | |
| | NG-TA | 130.04 | |
| | TA | 129.61 | |
| | DBS | 128.43 | |
| | Air | 124.76 | |
| | TBC | 124.11 | |
| | 4 | DBT | |
| DMP | | 108.43 | |
| CO | | 97.48 | |

Table III. Correlation of Data in Table II

| No. | Plasticizer | $\frac{\sigma^2}{v}$ | A _{obs} * | A _{range} ** | A _{calc} *** |
|-----|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | H ₂ O | 5800 | 235 | ±35 | 222 |
| 2 | DMP | 119 | 108 | 104-113 | 142 |
| 3 | DBP | 84 | 171 | ±25 | 136 |
| 4 | TA | 103 | 130 | ±22 | 140 |
| 5 | TEP | 718 | 171 | ±43 | 175 |
| 6 | DEP | 151 | 132 | ±23 | 144 |
| 7 | TBC | 36 | 124 | 109-139 | 124 |
| 8 | DBT | 18 | 117 | 113-121 | 114 |
| 9 | TBP | 257 | 153 | ±33 | 155 |
| 10 | EN | 435 | 169 | 166-173 | 165 |
| 11 | DBM | 235 | 159 | 137-180 | 154 |
| 12 | DBS | 75 | 128 | 120-137 | 135 |
| 13 | DPA | 278 | 181 | ±48 | 157 |
| 14 | CO | 2.2 | 97 | 88-107 | 89 |
| 15 | TEGON | 493 | 163 | 117-208 | 168 |
| 16 | TMETH | 73 | 137 | 129-145 | 134 |
| 17 | NG-TA | 65 | 130 | 126-135 | 133 |
| 18 | DBA | 104 | 132 | 128-136 | 140 |

*A_{obs} is the average observed area.

**A_{range} gives the one sigma variation, or the observed pair of areas.

***A_{calc} is calculated from Equation (2).

Table IV. Activity Ratings of Plasticizers at 135°F

| Group | Plasticizer | Average Area | Confidence Level Between Groups (%) |
|-------|-------------|--------------|---|
| 1 | TEP | 315.50 | 90 |
| 2 | DPA | 283.85 | |
| 3 | DBM | 231.20 | 99 |
| | DBS | 216.70 | |
| | EN | 216.50 | |
| 4 | TA | 190.05 | 99 |
| | DMP | 188.00 | |
| | DBT | 183.00 | |
| 5 | DEP | 176.20 | 90 |
| | TBP | 167.25 | |
| | Air | 164.15 | |
| | DBP | 160.30 | |
| | TBC | 143.00 | |
| | CO | 123.80 | |

Table V. Effect of Plasticizers on Break Strength and Elongation at Break at 76°F

| Plasticizer | Time (mo) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 3 | | 6 | | 9 | | 12 | | 15 | | 21 | |
| | TS* | E** | TS | E | TS | E | TS | E | TS | E | TS | E |
| Blank | 990 | 515 | 940 | 539 | 1010 | 500 | 830 | 564 | (530) | (186) | 810 | 485 |
| | 830 | 525 | 920 | 466 | 910 | 529 | 1040 | 559 | 1030 | 564 | 920 | 554 |
| | (610) | (220) | 940 | 495 | 940 | 529 | 1090 | 559 | 920 | 603 | 770 | 407 |
| TBP | 860 | 431 | 880 | 466 | 980 | 544 | 1010 | 505 | 900 | 431 | 950 | 456 |
| | (670) | (392) | 670 | 328 | 950 | 564 | 980 | 510 | 910 | 529 | 750 | 490 |
| | 870 | 544 | 630 | 270 | 790 | 529 | 650 | 397 | 1020 | 500 | (710) | (358) |
| TEGDN | 960 | 534 | 870 | 515 | 880 | 593 | 880 | 505 | 970 | 515 | 650 | 250 |
| | 770 | 549 | 990 | 500 | 990 | 520 | 1040 | 554 | 1000 | 544 | 840 | 456 |
| | 870 | 515 | (570) | (206) | (480) | (147) | 1200*** | 520 | 1000 | 544 | 840 | 539 |
| EN | 820 | 490 | 1010 | 505 | 760 | 426 | 1030 | 475 | 710 | 304 | 840 | 461 |
| | 940 | 495 | 1000 | 544 | 1030 | 466 | 760 | 534 | 1055 | 525 | 800 | 569 |
| | 880 | 441 | 890 | 490 | 1020 | 529 | 960 | 456 | 860 | 603 | 840 | 417 |
| DBP | 1000 | 505 | 900 | 485 | 950 | 495 | 730 | 412 | 950 | 505 | 1010 | 451 |
| | 850 | 500 | 750 | 549 | 960 | 559 | 840 | 480 | 970 | 598 | 990 | 574 |
| | 690 | 387 | 730 | 456 | 850 | 446 | 660 | 309 | 910 | 554 | 940 | 554 |
| DPA | 790 | 368 | 910 | 446 | (600) | (221) | 1050 | 500 | 900 | 441 | 950 | 554 |
| | 890 | 402 | 790 | 436 | 720 | 412 | 880 | 564 | 950 | 520 | 1000 | 520 |
| | 870 | 520 | 870 | 436 | 880 | 461 | 610 | 348 | 910 | 495 | 730 | 402 |
| TEP | (540) | (176) | (430) | (216) | 930 | 485 | (630) | (275) | 990 | 480 | 940 | 490 |
| | 960 | 412 | 840 | 412 | 830 | 441 | 930 | 456 | 980 | 534 | 940 | 544 |
| | 920 | 539 | 750 | 412 | 980 | 515 | 920 | 451 | 710 | 456 | 1010 | 485 |

*Tensile strength is in pounds.

**Elongation is given in thousandths of an inch.

***Estimated. Actual TS beyond the range of the instrument.

Table VI. Comparison of Plasticizers

| Plasticizers | Extension (in.) | Confidence Level (%) | Minimum | δ | A_o | $\frac{1000}{A_o}$ |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|----------|--------|--------------------|
| Blank | 10.92 | 90 | At 21 months | - | 124.76 | 8.02 |
| TEGDN | 10.64 | | At 21 months | 10.1 | 162.58 | 6.15 |
| DBP | 10.27 | | At 12 months | 9.4 | 171.19 | 5.84 |
| EN | 10.24 | | ---- | 6.8 | 169.40 | 5.90 |
| TEP | 9.95 | | At 6 months | 9.0 | 170.82 | 5.85 |
| TBP | 9.86 | | At 6 months | 9.0 | 153.29 | 6.52 |
| DPA | 9.81 | | At 3 months | 8.1 | 181.52 | 5.51 |

Table VII. Burst Strength of Cases in psi

| Months | Blank | | | DPA | | | DBP | | | TEGDN | | |
|--------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|------|-------|------|------|
| | 0 | 2800 | 2900 | 3000 | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | 3000 | 3400 | 2700 | 3000 | 3000 | 3200 | 3000 | 3200 | 3000 | 3200 | 3500 | 3200 |
| 12 | 2850 | 2860 | 2810 | 3000 | 2850 | 2810 | 3000 | (2430) | 2730 | 2770 | 2800 | 2910 |
| 18 | 2946 | 3000 | 2616 | 2634 | 2769 | 2688 | 2820 | 3054 | 3054 | 2820 | 2703 | 2793 |
| 24 | 2680 | 2900 | 2920 | 2730 | 2940 | 2450 | 3065 | 3035 | 2770 | 2765 | 2865 | 2775 |

Table VIII. Correlation of Burst Pressures

| Plasticizer | Burst Pressure (psi) | Extension* (in.) | $\frac{1000}{\text{Sag Area}^{**}}$ |
|-------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| DBP | 2932 | 10.27 | 5.83 |
| Blank (air) | 2842 | 10.92 | 8.01 |
| TEGDN | 2800 | 10.64 | 6.15 |
| DPA | 2763 | 9.81 | 5.50 |

*Values of extension are from Table VII.

**Values of sag area are from Table II.

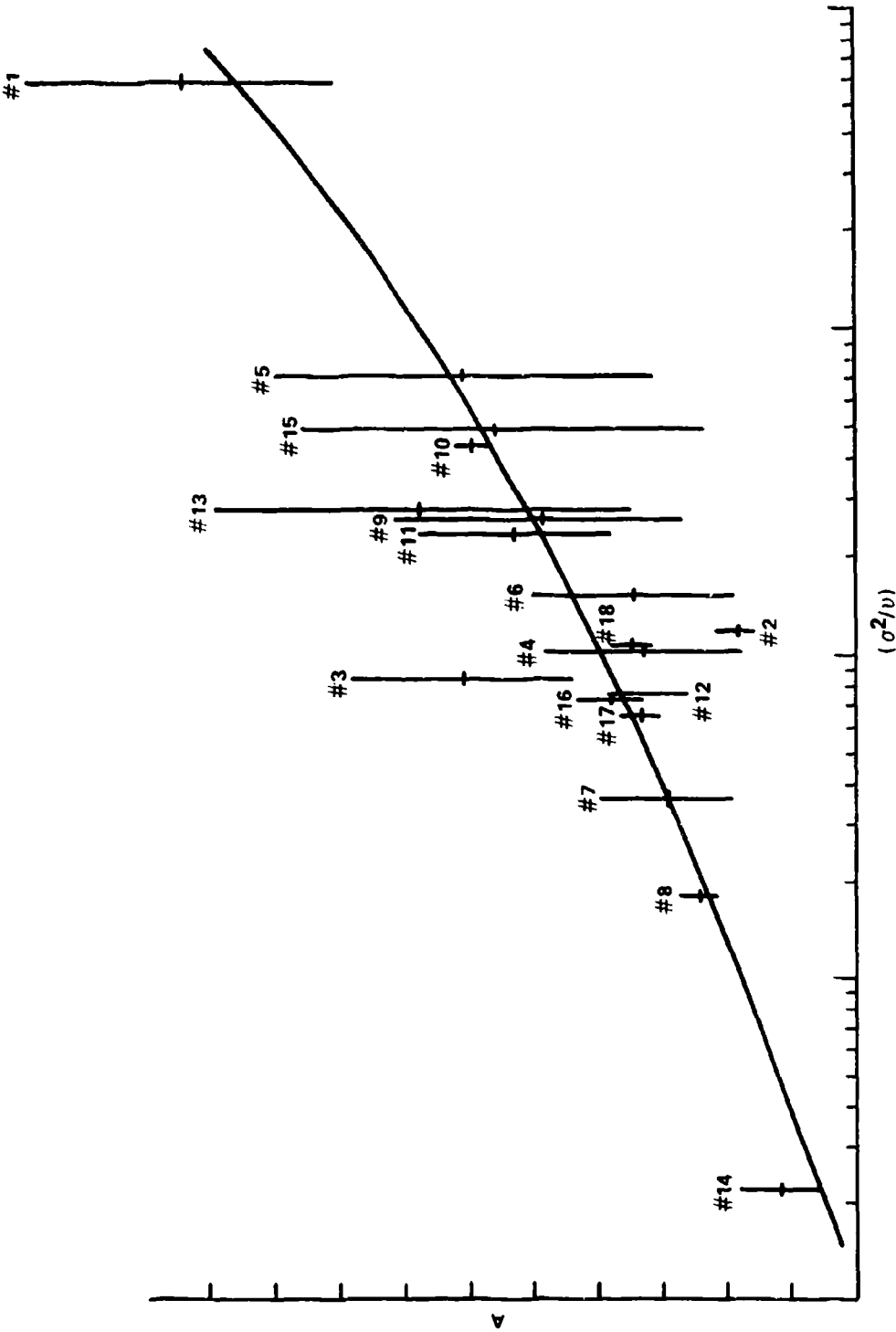


Figure 1.. Graphic Portrayal of Table III and Equation (2)

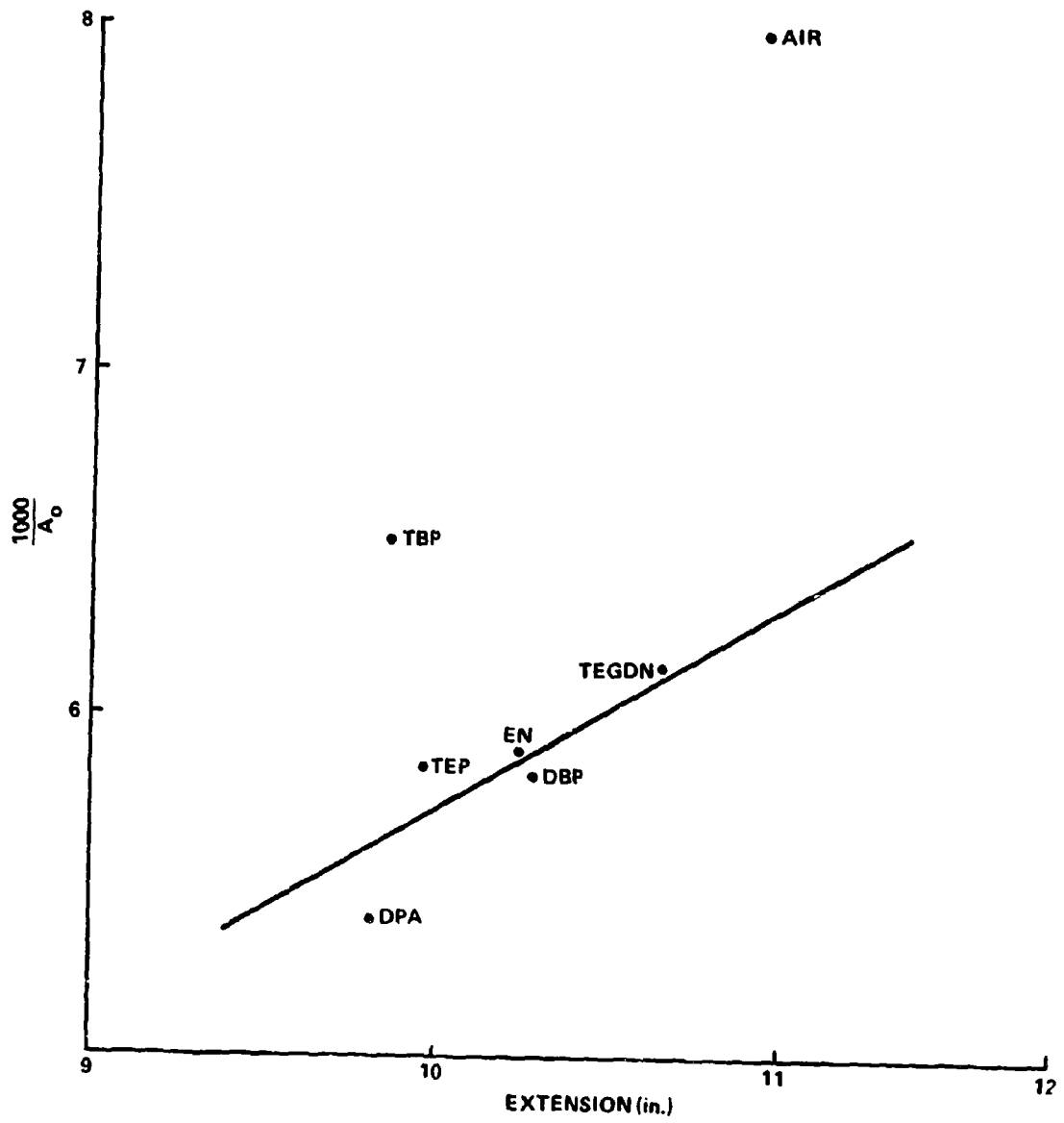


Figure 2. Sag-Creep Areas from Table II Plotted Against Extensions at Break

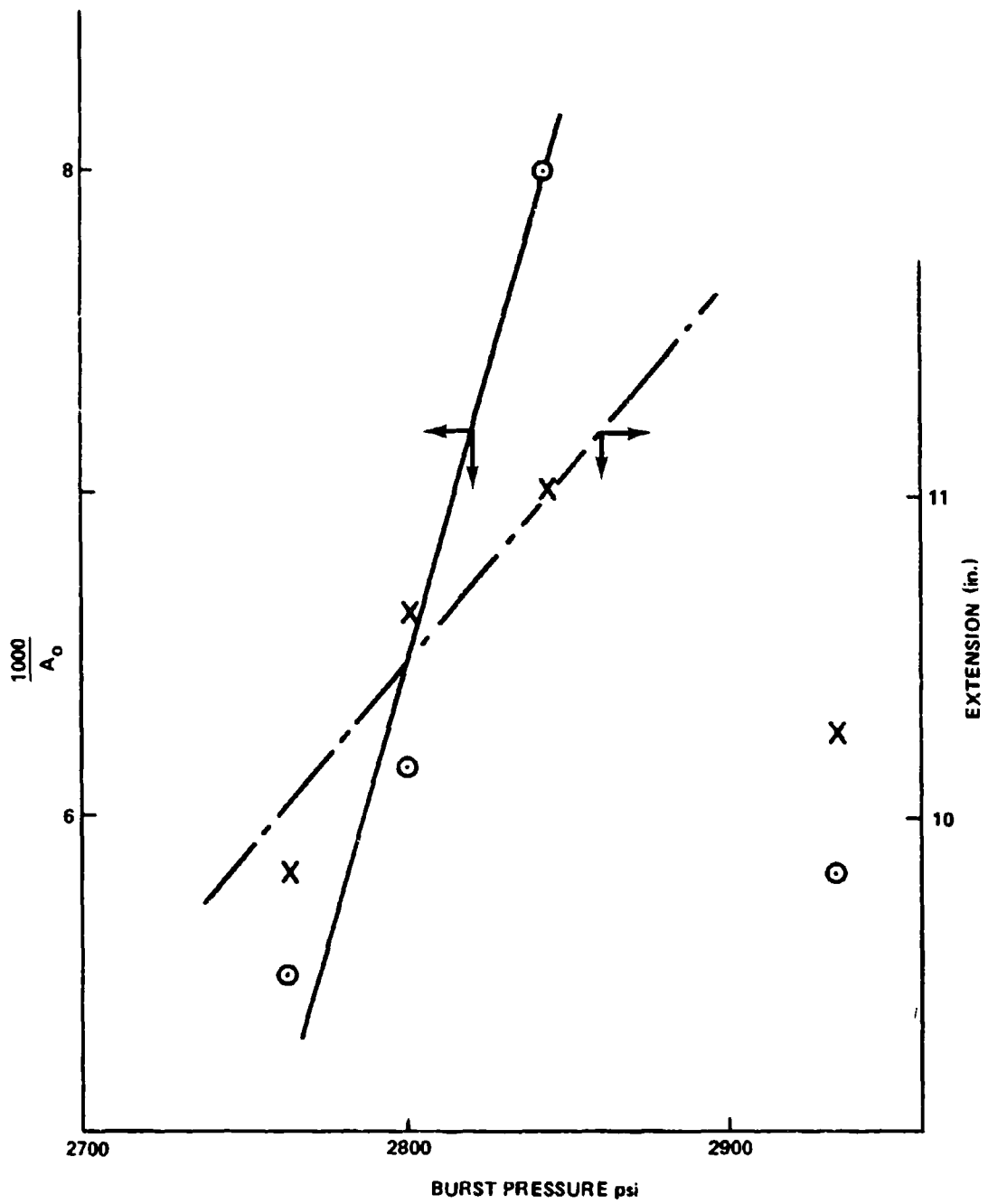


Figure 3. Burst Pressures Versus the Reciprocal of Observed Areas Under the Sag-Time Curves (Table II) and Burst Pressures Versus Extensions (Table III)

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