

Electrochemical Corrosion in Bars of AISI 304 Embedded in Concrete Immersed in Marine-Sulfated Environment

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Abstract — The electrochemical behavior of the corrosion resistance of AISI 304 embedded in concrete manufactured as indicated by the ACI 211.1 method was evaluated. The specimens were exposed for more than 150 days to highly aggressive marine-sulfated environment, solution with a concentration of 5% NaCl and 5% Na₂SO₄. The electrochemical technique of Resistance to Linear Polarization (Rp) was used for to determine the corrosion rate (I_{corr}) and monitoring of corrosion potential (E_{corr}). The E_{corr} and I_{corr} results indicate a high level of corrosion for AISI 1018 steel, on the contrary, the electrochemical behaviour of AISI 304 steel according to the values of E_{corr} and I_{corr} , indicate a corrosion resistance of up to 10 times higher when exposed to an environment with a high concentration of chlorides and sulfates.

Keywords — AISI 304, Corrosion, Concrete, Electrochemical Behavior, Marine-Sulfated Environment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, concrete is the most widely used material in the construction industry, due to its versatility for the manufacture of different structural elements of Civil Infrastructure such as bridges, roads, buildings, industrial warehouses, airports, tunnels, dams, canals, sewage treatment plants, houses, etc. [1]-[4].

However, if at first it was thought that reinforced concrete had unlimited durability, over time it was determined that one of the main causes of premature damage in civil works built with reinforced concrete was the corrosion of reinforcing steel, causing expenses for billions of dollars in the world [5]-[9], in 1986, it was estimated that more than 244,000 bridges in the USA had significant deterioration, the main cause being corrosion of the reinforcing bars of concrete structures [10]-[12].

Initially, reinforcing steel embedded in concrete is naturally protected from corrosion by the high alkalinity of the surrounding medium, pH=12.2 or higher. However, due to the behavior of concrete as a semi-permeable membrane, aggressive substances or ions enter, the most important being

chlorides present in marine environments. [13]-[22], and sulfates that may be present in soils contaminated with agrochemicals, wastewater, etc. [23]-[34].

Unlike corrective or secondary actions, such as the use of corrosion inhibitors, galvanized steel, austenitic stainless steels, epoxy coating of the rods, electrochemical removal of chlorides, the production of more durable concrete based on industrial or agro-industrial residues [35]-[41], also pozzolanic materials when used in the construction industry have a beneficial environmental impact because the manufacturing process of Portland Cement is responsible for emitting 6 and 8% of CO₂ in the world [42]-[45].

Therefore, the present research evaluated the corrosion resistance of bars of AISI 304 and AISI 1018 embedded in concrete immersed in a marine-sulfated environment.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A. Materials

1) Dosage and Proportioning of Concrete Mixtures

The ACI 211.1 method was used to determine the amount of materials for the preparation of the concrete mix. [46].

TABLE I: PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGGREGATES

Physical properties of materials	Coarse Aggregate	Fine Aggregate
Specific Mass, gr/cm ³	2.32	2.84
Bulk Volumetric Mass, Kg /m ³	1380	-
Absorption (%)	2.45	3.26
Module of Fineness	-	2.70
Maximum Size Nominal	¾ "	-

ASTM standards were used to determine the physical characteristics of the fine and coarse aggregates [47]-[50], see Table I.

A water/cement ratio = 0.65 was used for the design of the concrete mix. Table II shows the dosage for 1 m³ of concrete.

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TABLE II: DOSAGE OF CONCRETE MIXTURES IN KG FOR 1 M³

Materials	Concrete Mixture
Water	205
CPC 30R	315
Coarse Aggregate	869
Fine Aggregate	824

B. Method

1) Quality control test of concrete mixture

The ASTM and ONNCCE standards were used to carry out the control tests of fresh and hardened concrete [51]-[54], the results obtained are within the specifications for conventional concrete, see Table III.

TABLE III: PROPERTIES OF CONCRETE MIXTURE (FRESH AND HARDENED STATE)

TEST	Concrete Mixture
Slump, cm	8
Temperature, °C	18
Density, kg/m ³	2164
F'c, Kg/cm ²	226

2) Characteristics of reinforcing steel

In each specimen, two bars of AISI 304 and AISI 1018 were embedded, both to be used as working electrodes (WE) and auxiliary electrode (AE), and a third AISI 304 steel bar was embedded, but with a diameter of 1/8" as an auxiliary electrode. In the three bars was placed 5 cm strip of fluorocarbon tape on the upper part, to avoid differential aeration zones, the concentration of salts or crevice corrosion and an area susceptible to corrosion is delimited as indicated in the literature [55], see Fig. 1.

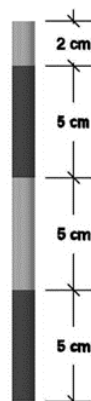


Fig. 1. Reinforcing steel -Characteristics-.

3) Nomenclature of the specimens

For the evaluation of corrosion, the nomenclature was assigned to the study specimens according to the type of steel and the exposure medium. Specimens exposed medium control (Water) and Marine-Sulfated environment (solution at 5% NaCl and 5% Na₂SO₄), see Table IV.

TABLE IV: NOMENCLATURE TEST SPECIMENS

SPECIMEN
304-C
1018-C
304-MS
1018-MS

- 304 = AISI 304.
- 1018 = AISI 1018.
- C = Control medium (water).
- MS= Marine-Sulfated environment (solution at 5% NaCl and 5% Na₂SO₄).

4) Experimental arrangement

The ASTM G59 standard was used to determine the corrosion rate [56], using a potentiostat/galvanostat with a three-electrode arrangement, according to what was reported in the literature [57]-[58]. The characteristics of the concrete specimens that were used to evaluate the corrosion rate are detailed in Fig. 2, two WE (bars AISI 304 and AISI 1018 steel) and one auxiliary electrode (AE) of AISI 304.

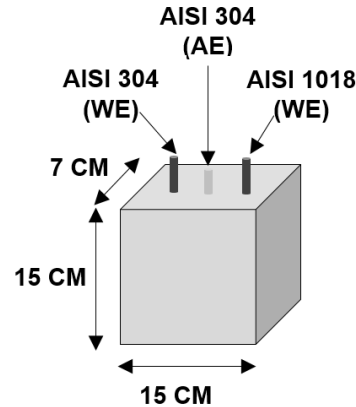


Fig. 2. Study specimens to determine the rate of corrosion.

The three-electrode arrangement is also used in other electrochemical techniques but is used to a lesser extent in the steel-concrete system and more used in other industrial areas [59]-[60].

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Corrosion Potential (E_{corr})

The interpretation of the E_{corr} results was carried out according to what is indicated in the ASTM C-876-15 standard [61] and in the literature [62], Table V shows the parameters for the analysis of the corrosion potentials of the present study.

TABLE V: CORROSION POTENTIAL IN REINFORCED CONCRETE (E_{corr}).

Corrosion potentials mV vs Cu/CuSO ₄	
<- 500	Severe corrosion
<-350	90% Corrosion Risk
-350 to -200	Uncertainty of Corrosion Risk
> -200	10% Corrosion Risk

Fig. 3 shows the behavior of corrosion potentials (E_{corr}) of the specimens 304-C and 1018-C. The specimen 304-C reports values of corrosion potentials in the first 28 days from -170 mV to -192 mV, to maintain a stable behavior throughout the evaluation period with more positive values at -200 mV, which indicates a risk of corrosion of 10%. In the case of the specimen 1018-C has E_{corr} values of -358 mV in the same period, which would indicate a risk of corrosion of 90% to pass to more positive values, presented on day 28 a more noble corrosion potential of -292 mV, behavior associated with the formation of the passive layer, so there is a behavior with a tendency to passivation with the passage of time, remaining in an E_{corr} range between -190 mV to -230 mV, behavior reported in literature because it is the non-aggressive control medium [63].

The results of the corrosion potentials of the specimens 304-MS and 1018-MS are presented in Fig. 4, when exposed to a sulfated marine environment (solution at 5% NaCl and 5% Na₂SO₄). The corrosion potential monitoring period was for more than 150 days, where the 304-MS specimen presented potentials of -174 mV to -162 mV from day 14 to 28, to maintain E_{corr} more positive during the time of the electrochemical tests, with E_{corr} values from -145 mV to -160 mV, indicates a 10% of corrosion risk. The specimen 1018-MS presents E_{corr} from -430 mV to -390 mV in the first 28 days, with an E_{corr} of -332 mV for day 112, reporting E_{corr} greater than -350 mV, which is associated with a 90% risk of corrosion at the end of the exposure time, initiating the activation of the reinforcing steel when exposed to a marine-sulfated environment, the results coincide with investigations in similar media in exposure media with a high concentration of chlorides and sulfates [64]-[65].

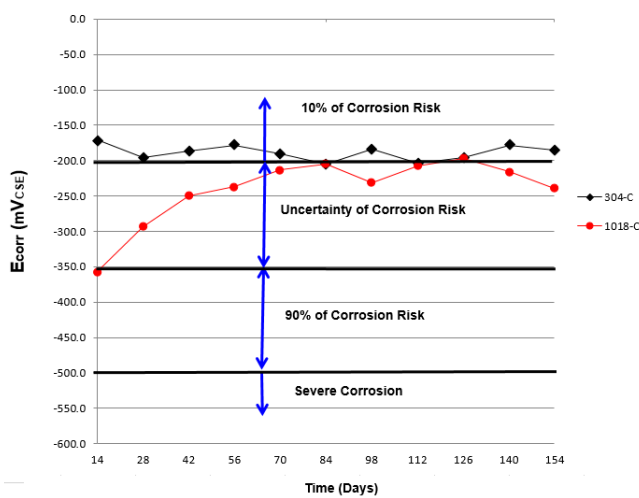


Fig. 3. E_{corr} of AISI 304 vs AISI 1018 concrete exposed to control environment.

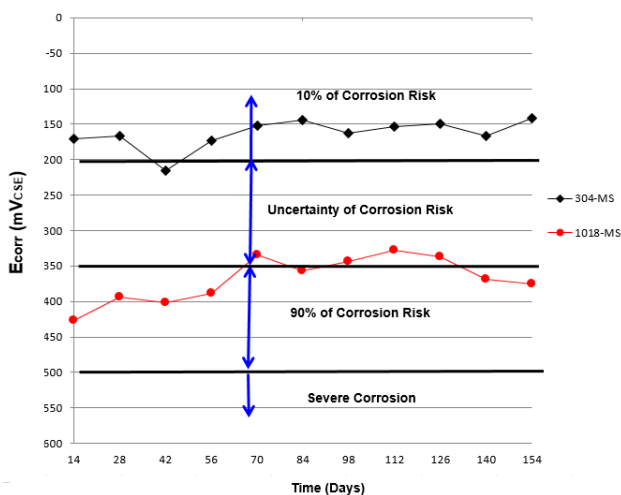


Fig. 4. E_{corr} of AISI 304 vs AISI 1018 concrete exposed to marine-sulfated environment.

B. Corrosion Current Density (I_{corr})

To determine the level of corrosion present in the study specimens, DURAR NETWORK Manual criteria were used, see Table VI [66].

Corrosion rate (I_{corr}) $\mu\text{A} / \text{cm}^2$	Level of Corrosion
<0.1	Despicable
0.1 - 0.5	Moderate
0.5 to 1	High
> 1	Very High

Fig. 3 presents the behavior of monitoring of intensity corrosion current I_{corr} of specimen 304-C and the specimen reinforced with 1018-C. It is found that specimen 304-C reports an I_{corr} of 0.038 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$ for day 14, decreasing to 0.029 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$ on day 28, normal behavior in the first four weeks of exposure to the control medium, to reach an I_{corr} of 0.011 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$ in the day 56, and remain stable until the last monitoring in an I_{corr} range of 0.009 to 0.01 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$, values 10 times less than 0.1 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$, which represents the absence of corrosion in the evaluated system, according to what is indicated in Table VI.

For specimen 1018-C, a similar behavior is observed, with relatively high values of I_{corr} beginning to reach values that indicate a negligible corrosion level over time, however, the influence of the type of steel is observed in the I_{corr} ranges obtained, given that in the curing stage the values reported by specimen 1018-C are 10 times higher than specimen 304-C, with an I_{corr} from 0.30 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$ to 0.20 in the first 28 days, ending with a value of 0.07 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$ until the end of the exposure period. This behavior that coincides with what has been reported by some research [67]- [68].

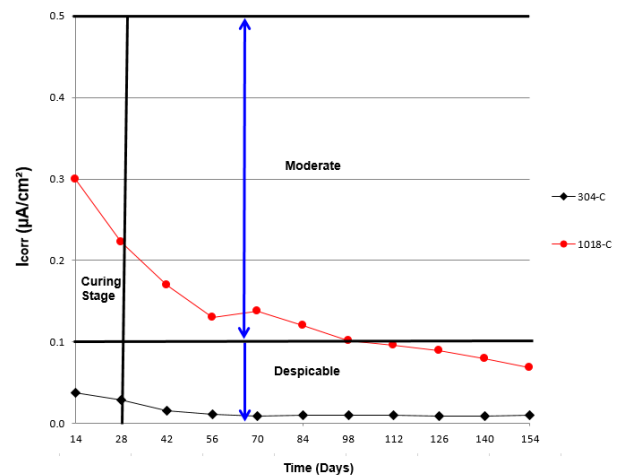


Fig. 5. I_{corr} of AISI 304 vs AISI 1018 concrete exposed to control environment.

Fig. 6 presents the results of 304-MS and 1018-MS specimens, when exposed to a sulfated marine environment (solution at 5% NaCl and 5% Na₂SO₄) for more than 150 days. The specimen 304-MS reports in the curing stage values of I_{corr} from 0.034 to 0.026 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$, to decrease to 0.014 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$ in the day 56, to present until the last day of the electrochemical test, I_{corr} values of 0.011 to 0.013 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$, with a variation of only 0.001 to 0.003 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$ compared to specimen 304-C exposed to the non-aggressive medium (water), it is found that the 304-MS specimen exposed to the highly aggressive marine-sulfated environment offers great resistance to corrosion, behaving as if the exposure medium were not aggressive, this has been reported in various investigations worldwide, however, the number of studies on concrete durability in media with such a high concentration of NaCl and Na₂SO₄, are significantly less [69]-[70].

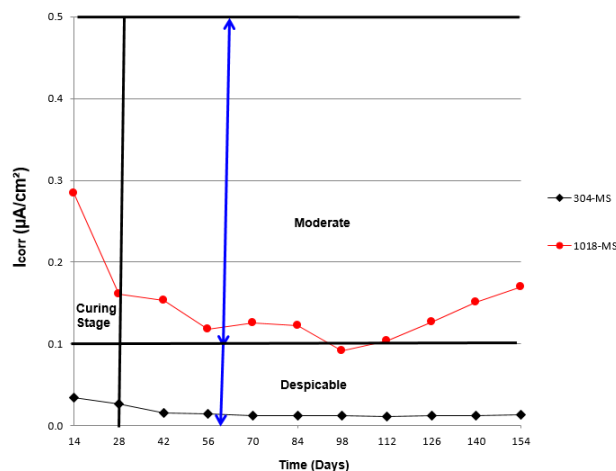


Fig. 6. I_{corr} of AISI 304 vs AISI 1018 concrete exposed to marine-sulfated environment.

On the contrary to the great anticorrosive efficiency to the aggressive medium reported by the specimen with AISI 304 Stainless Steel, 304-MS, the specimen 1018-MS presented a good behavior in the curing stage, with I_{corr} of 0.28 to 0.16 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$, with a tendency to lower values of I_{corr} reporting on day 98 I_{corr} of 0.09 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$, to later report constant increases in I_{corr} until reaching at the end of the corrosion tests, day 150, an I_{corr} of 0.17 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$, but with an upward trend, behavior that indicates a much lower resistance when the this specimen is exposed to a highly aggressive environment (solution at 5% NaCl and 5% Na_2SO_4). Due to the results obtained in the present investigation, the intelligent use of AISI 304 stainless steel is justified for the construction of durable concrete structures, which would allow significant and sustainable savings to increase up to two times the useful life.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The behavior in the control medium of both AISI 304 and AISI 1018 steels, is of a tendency to E_{corr} values that indicate 10% risk of corrosion and I_{corr} values that confirm the level of negligible corrosion, with I_{corr} values below of 0.1 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$, with AISI 304 steel presenting the lowest values in all the monitoring.

The specimens with AISI 304 steel presented a great resistance to corrosion of more than 10 times when exposed to the marine-sulfated environment of the present study, reporting similar values of I_{corr} of the specimens exposed to the control medium with only a difference of between 0.001 to 0.003 $\mu\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$.

The use of AISI 304 stainless steel is recommended as reinforcement in concrete structures that will be exposed to environments with high concentrations of chlorides and sulfates, using it intelligently in critical areas of each structure.

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