Joseph Lstiburek, Ph.D., P.Eng, ASHRAE Fellow

Building Science

Adventures In Building Science

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Physics

Physics….relax…..big words….but easy concepts….

Arrhenius Equation

For Every 10 Degree K Rise

Activation Energy Doubles

$$k = Ae^{-E_a/(RT)}$$

Damage Functions

Water

Heat

Ultra-violet Radiation

Laws of Thermodynamics

Zeroth Law – Equal Systems

First Law - Conservation of Energy

Second Law - Entropy

Third Law – Absolute Zero

2nd Law of Thermodynamics

In an isolated system, a process can occur only if it increases the total entropy of the system

Rudolf Clausius

Heat Flow Is From Warm To Cold

Moisture Flow Is From Warm To Cold

Moisture Flow Is From More To Less

Air Flow Is From A Higher Pressure to a Lower Pressure

Gravity Acts Down

Moisture Flow Is From Warm To Cold

Moisture Flow Is From More To Less

Moisture Flow Is From Warm To Cold

Moisture Flow Is From More To Less

Thermal Gradient – Thermal Diffusion

Concentration Gradient – Molecular Diffusion

Moisture Flow Is From Warm To Cold

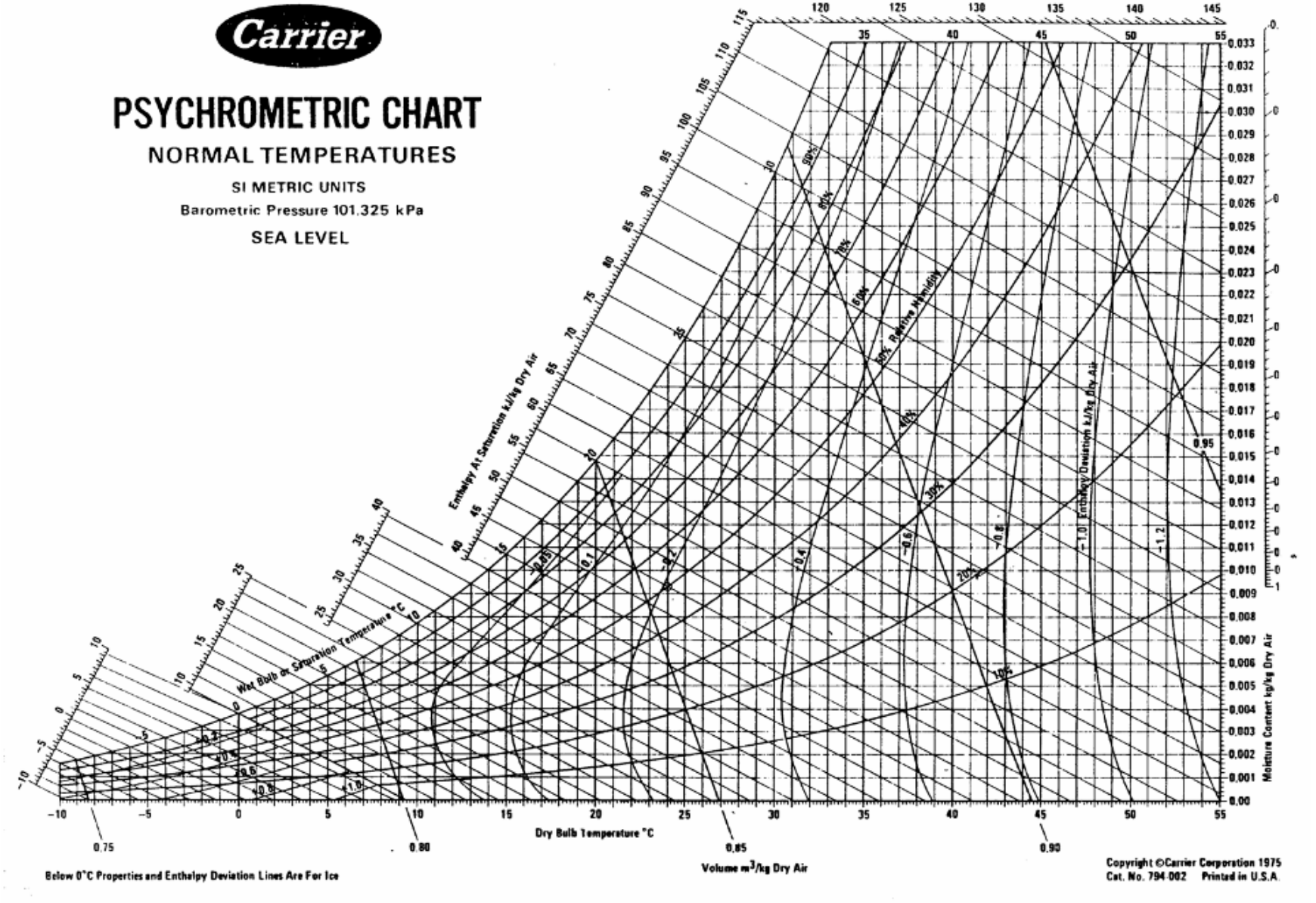
Moisture Flow Is From More To Less

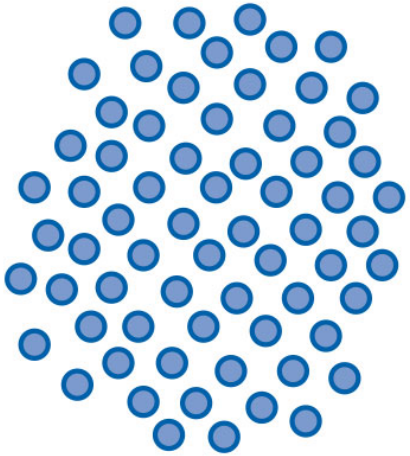
Thermal Gradient – Thermal Diffusion

Concentration Gradient – Molecular Diffusion

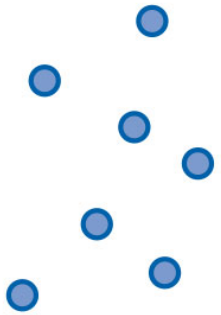
Vapor Diffusion

Thermodynamic Potential


Carrier
PSYCHROMETRIC CHART
NORMAL TEMPERATURES
SI METRIC UNITS
Barometric Pressure 101.325 kPa
SEA LEVEL
Dry Bulb Temperature °C
Wet Bulb or Saturation Temperature °C
Enthalpy At Saturation kJ/kg Dry Air
Moisture Content kg/kg Dry Air
50% Relative Humidity
Below 0°C Properties and Enthalpy Deviation Lines Are For Ice
Volume m³/kg Dry Air
Copyright ©Carrier Corporation 1975
Cat. No. 794-002 Printed in U.S.A.



DIFFUSION



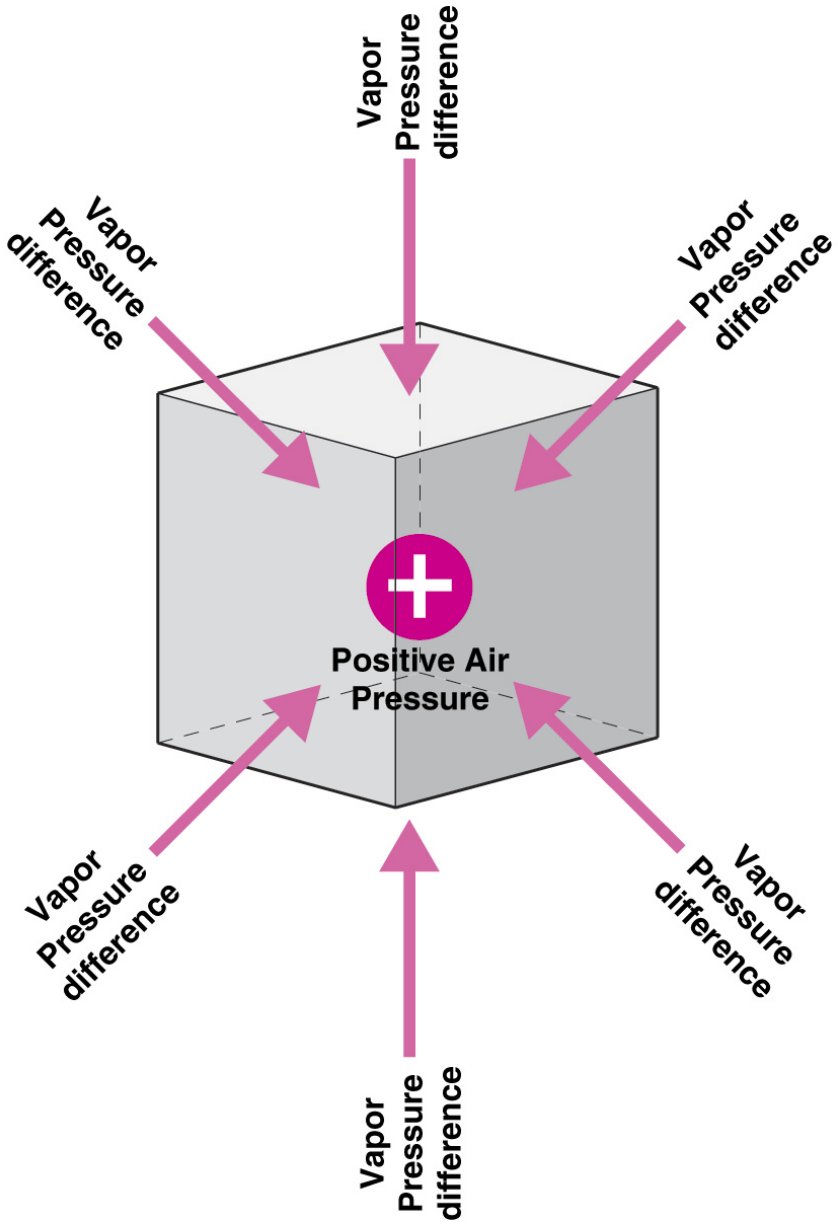
Higher Dewpoint Temperature
Higher Water Vapor Density
or Concentration
(Higher Vapor Pressure)
on Warm Side of Assembly

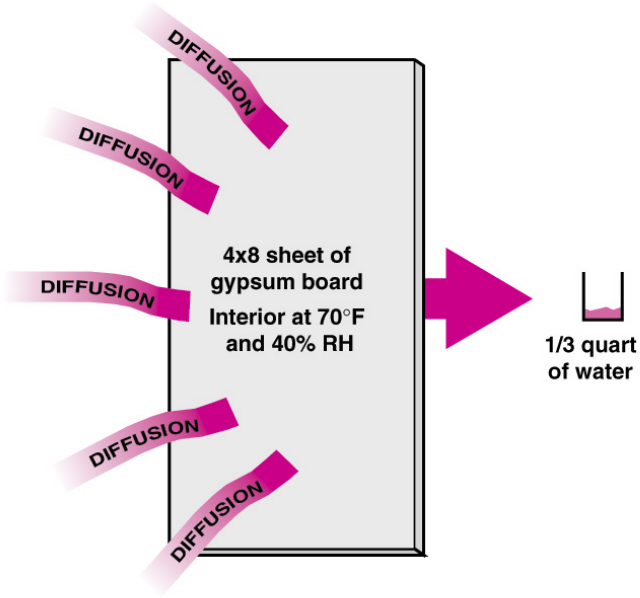
Low Dewpoint Temperature
Lower Water Vapor Density
or Concentration
(Lower Vapor Pressure)
on Cold Side of Assembly

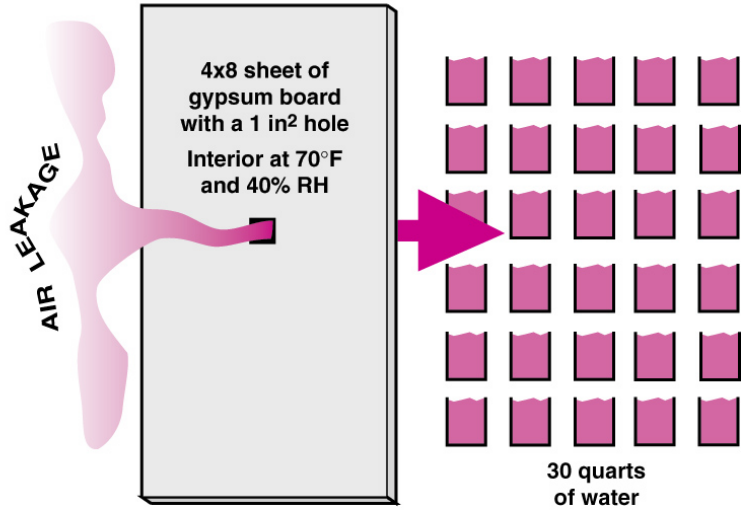
AIR TRANSPORT

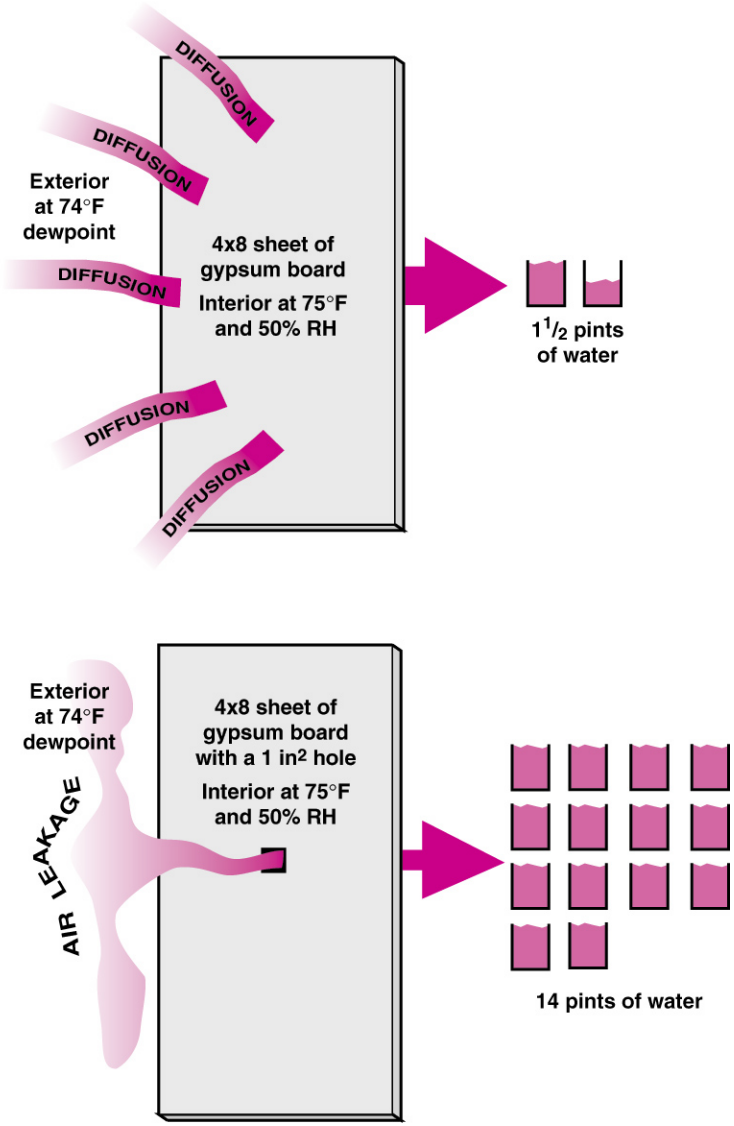
Higher Air Pressure

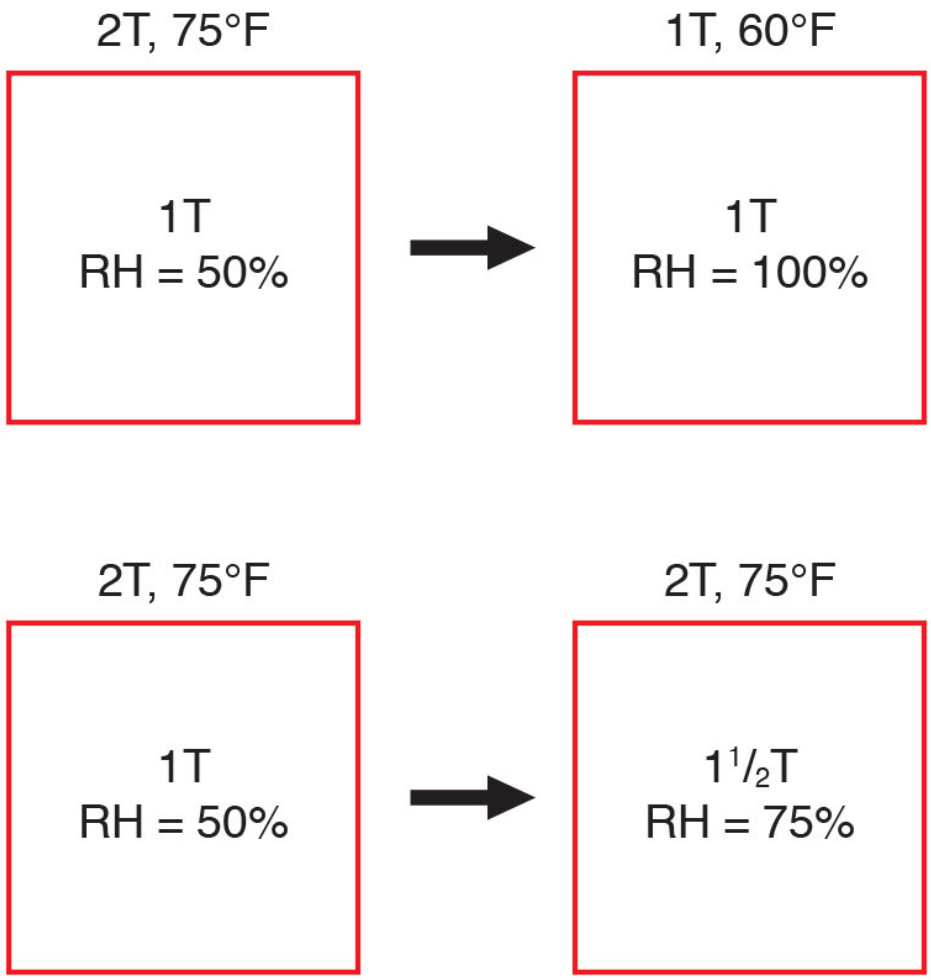
Lower Air Pressure

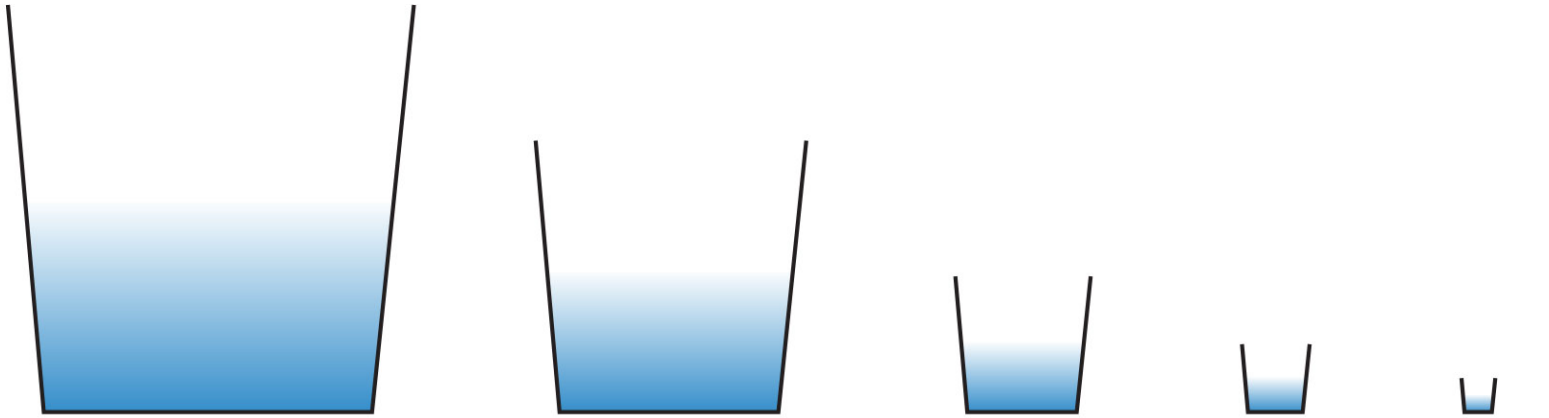

Vapor Pressure difference
Vapor Pressure difference
Vapor Pressure difference
Positive Air Pressure
Vapor Pressure difference
Vapor Pressure difference
Vapor Pressure difference

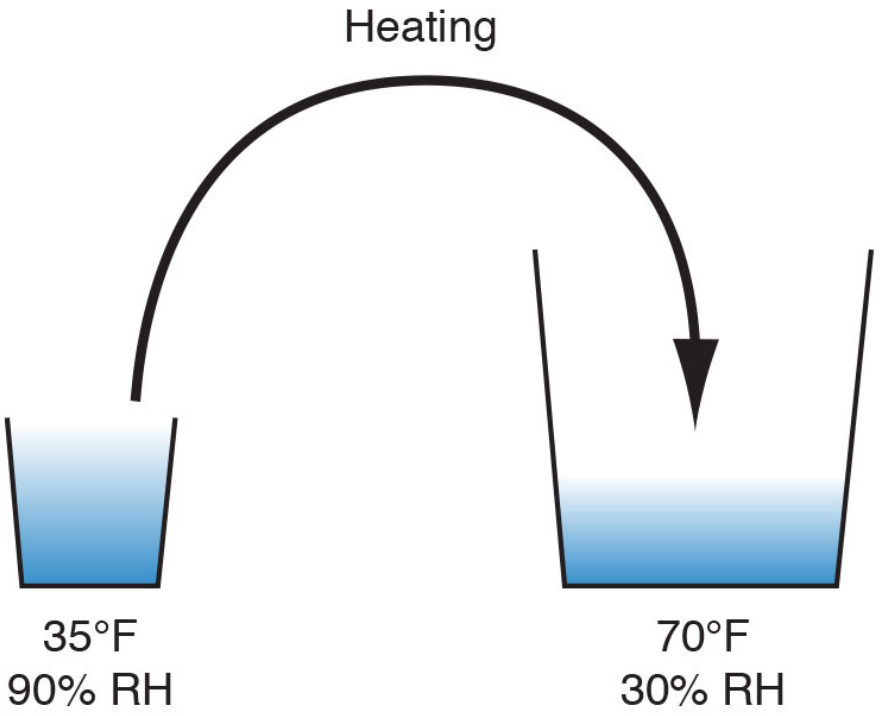

DIFFUSION
DIFFUSION
DIFFUSION
DIFFUSION
DIFFUSION
4x8 sheet of
gypsum board
Interior at 70°F
and 40% RH
1/3 quart
of water

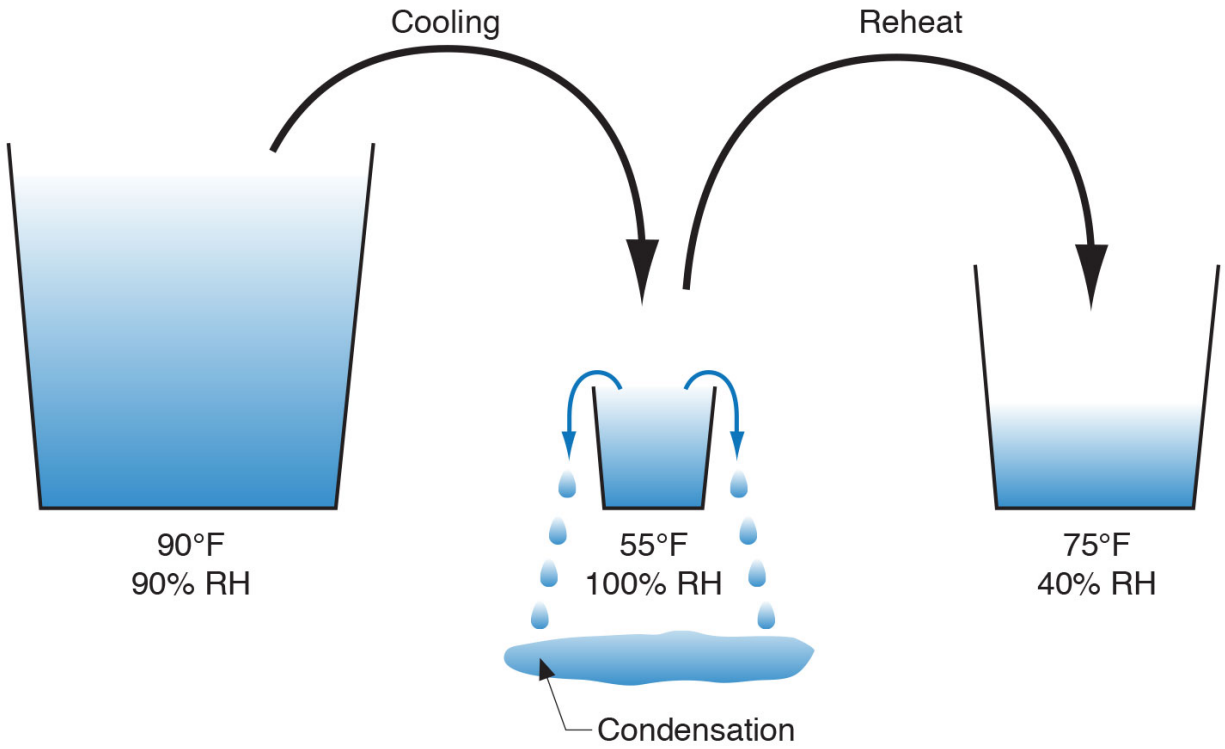

AIR LEAKAGE
4x8 sheet of
gypsum board
with a 1 in² hole
Interior at 70°F
and 40% RH
30 quarts
of water

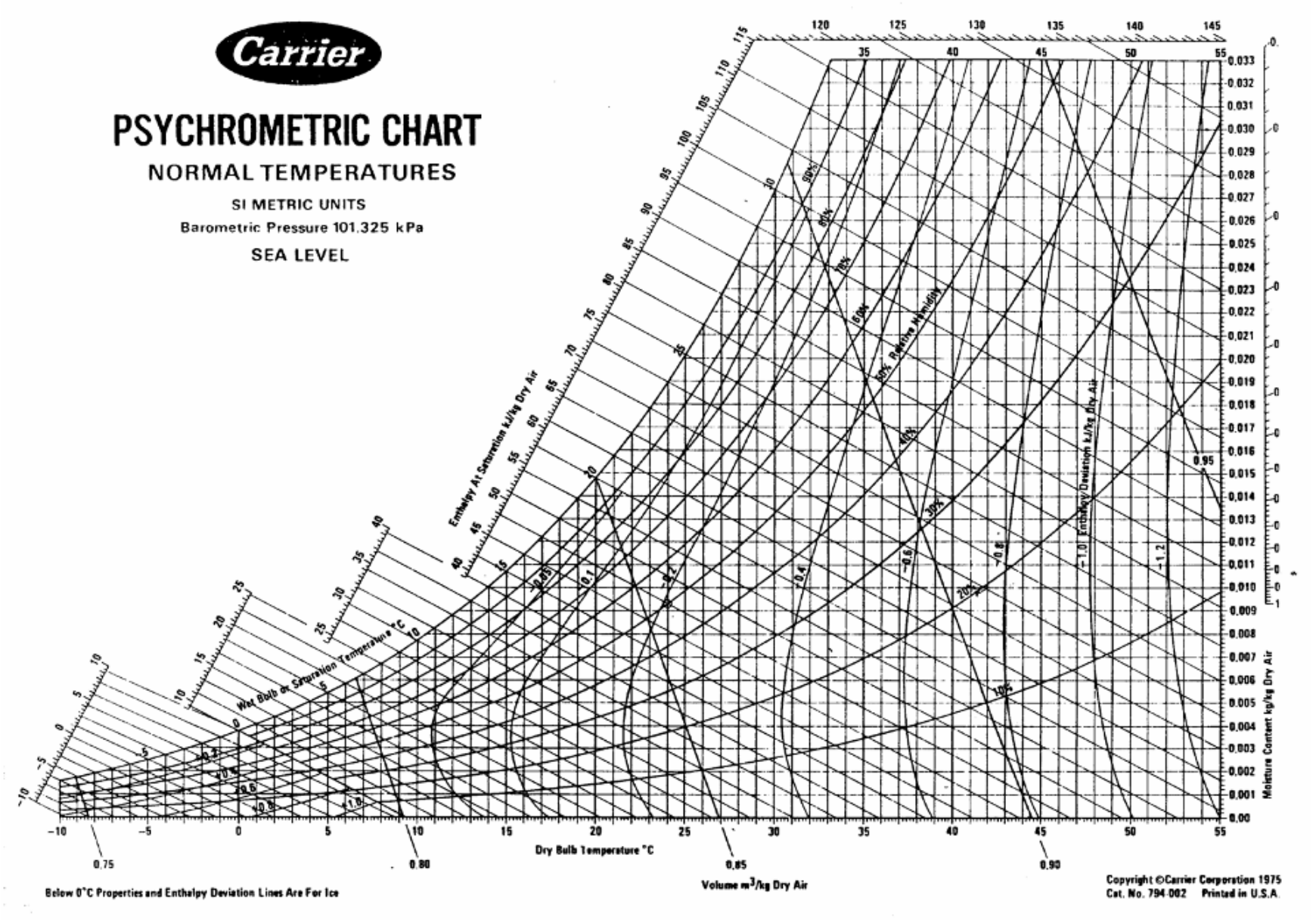

DIFFUSION
DIFFUSION
Exterior
at 74°F
dewpoint
DIFFUSION
4x8 sheet of
gypsum board
Interior at 75°F
and 50% RH
DIFFUSION
DIFFUSION
1 1/2 pints
of water
Exterior
at 74°F
dewpoint
AIR LEAKAGE
4x8 sheet of
gypsum board
with a 1 in2 hole
Interior at 75°F
and 50% RH
14 pints of water


2T, 75°F
1T
RH = 50%
1T, 60°F
1T
RH = 100%
2T, 75°F
1T
RH = 50%
2T, 75°F
1 1/2T
RH = 75%


90°F
50% RH
75°F
50% RH
60°F
50% RH
45°F
50% RH
30°F
50% RH


Heating
35°F
90% RH
70°F
30% RH


Cooling
Reheat
90°F
90% RH
55°F
100% RH
75°F
40% RH
Condensation


Carrier
PSYCHROMETRIC CHART
NORMAL TEMPERATURES
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Barometric Pressure 101.325 kPa
SEA LEVEL
Dry Bulb Temperature °C
Wet Bulb or Saturation Temperature °C
Enthalpy At Saturation kJ/kg Dry Air
Moisture Content kg/kg Dry Air
Below 0°C Properties and Enthalpy Deviation Lines Are For Ice
Volume m³/kg Dry Air
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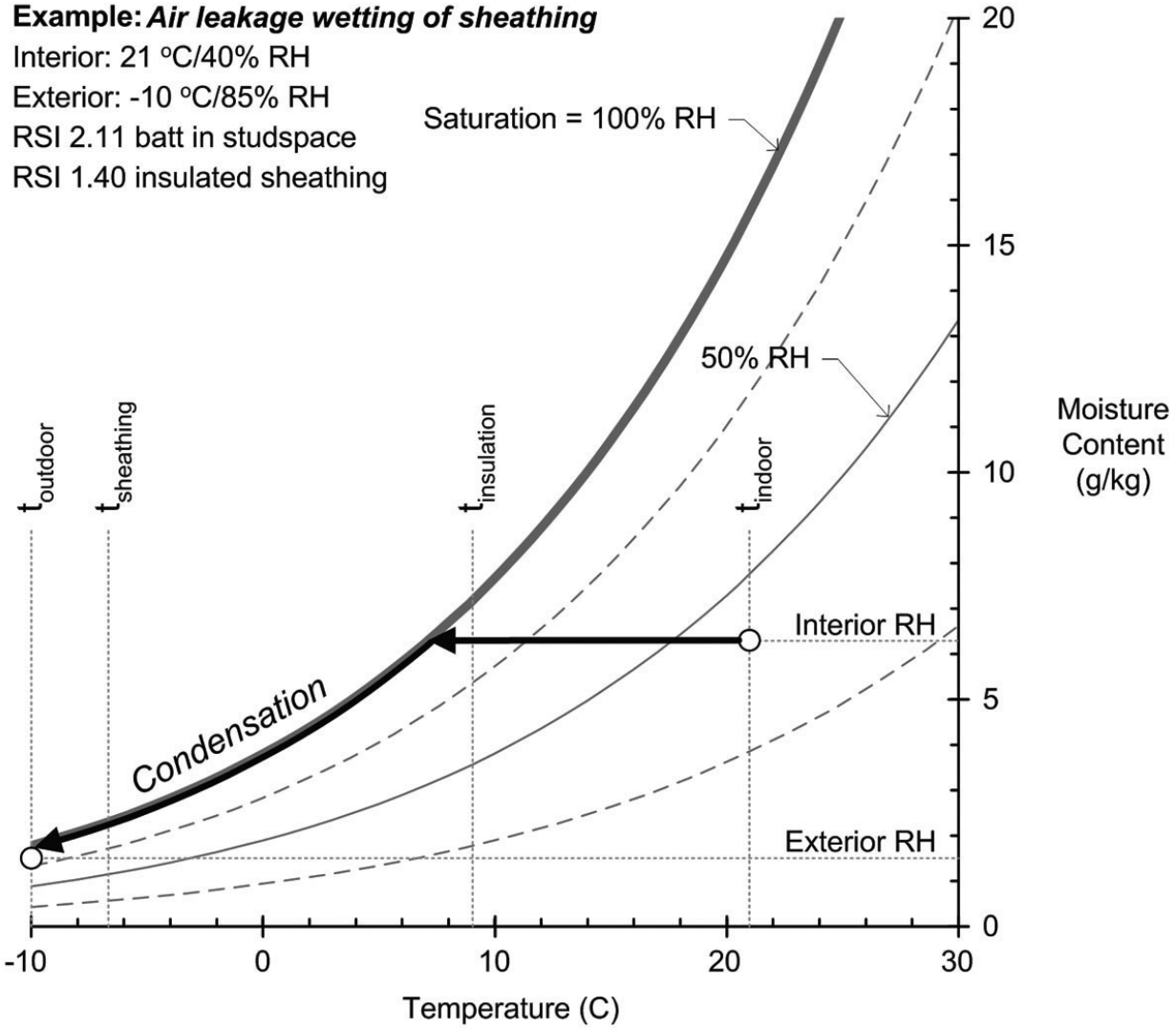
Cat. No. 794-002 Printed in U.S.A.

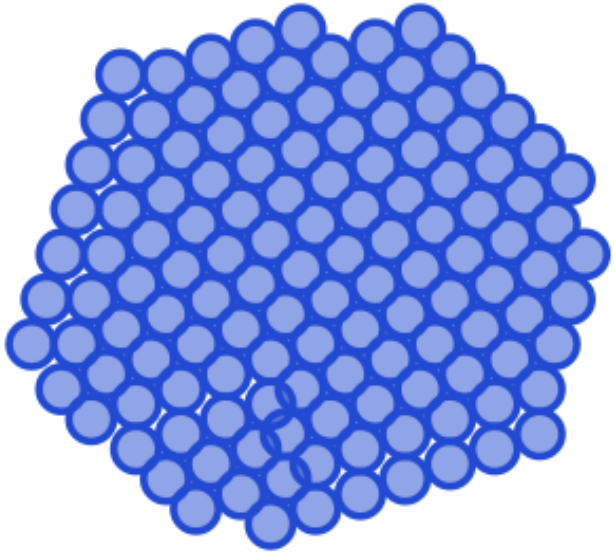


Cooling and condensation
From Straube & Burnett, 2005

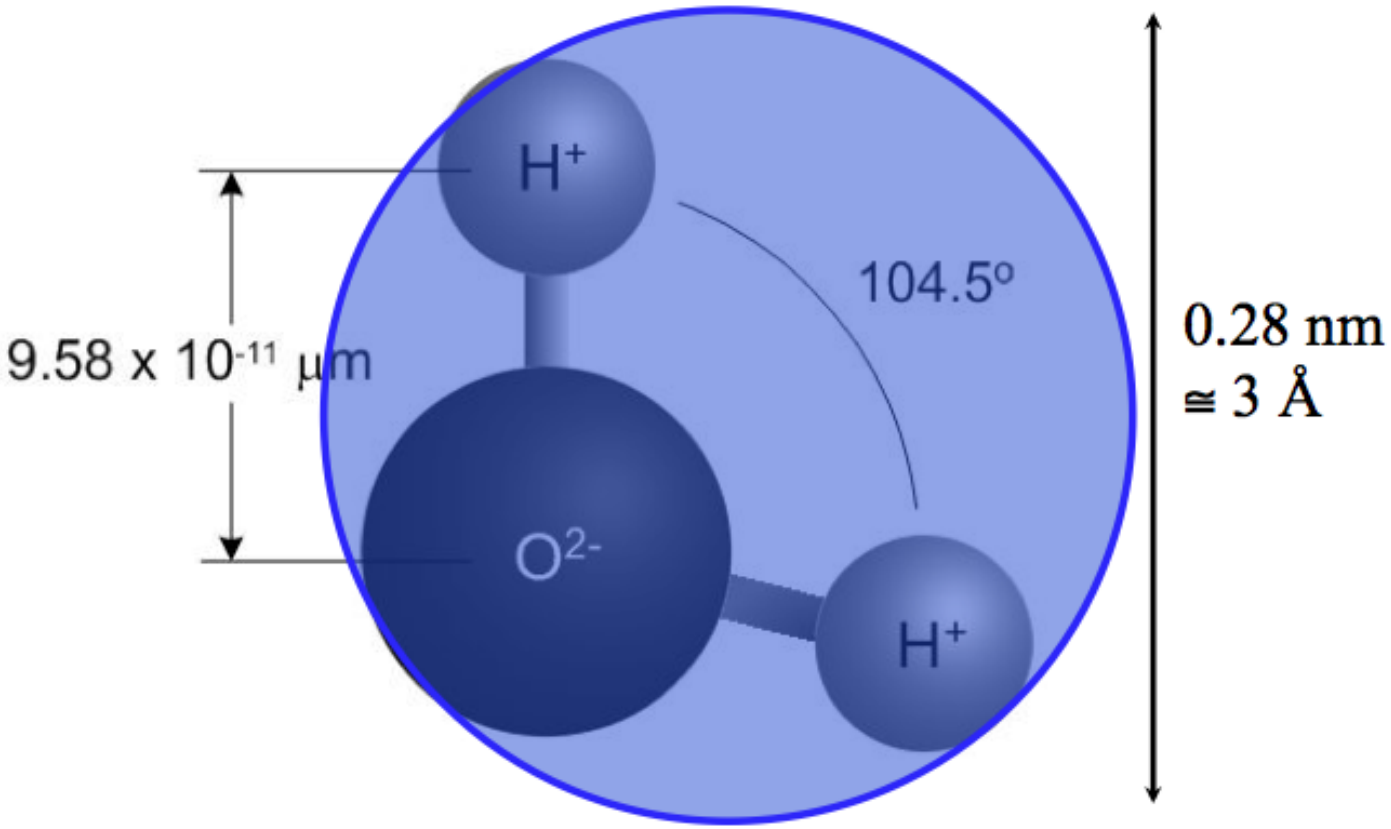
Water Molecules

Size Matters

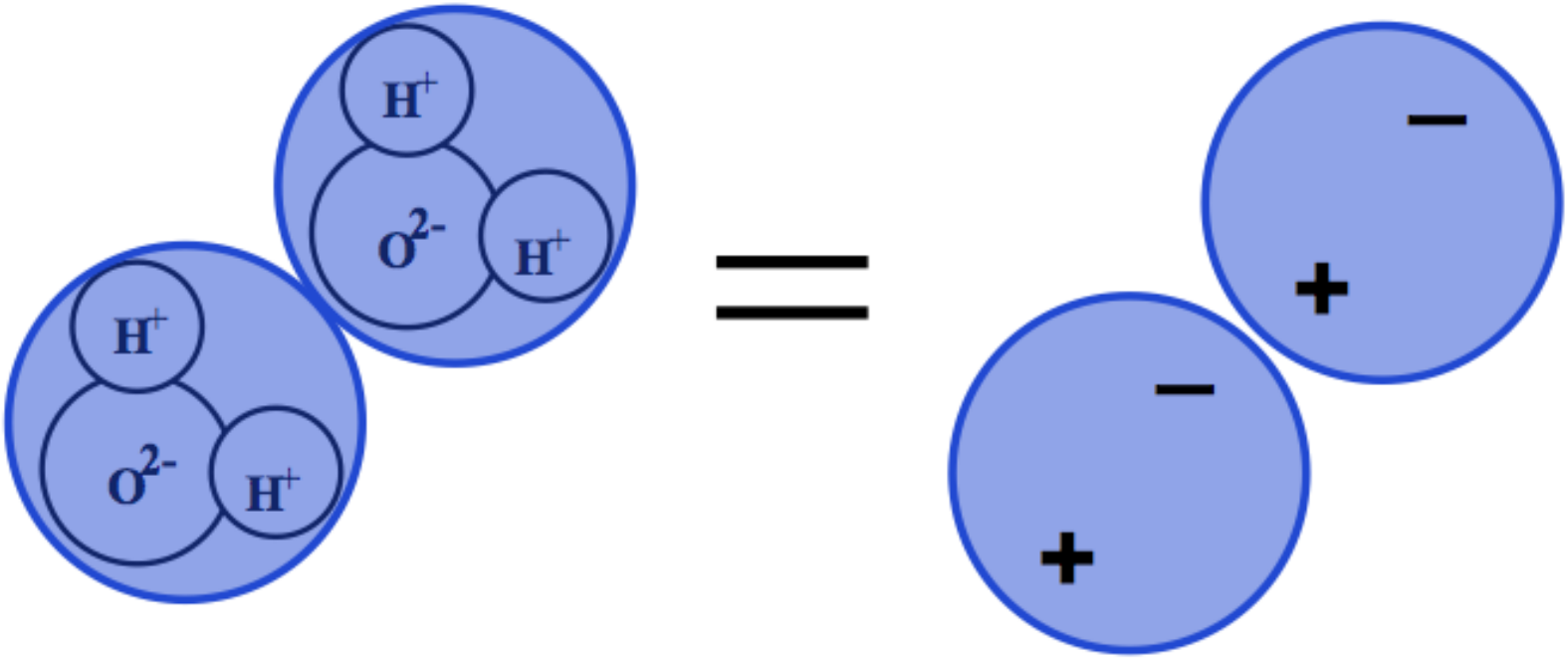
Vapor

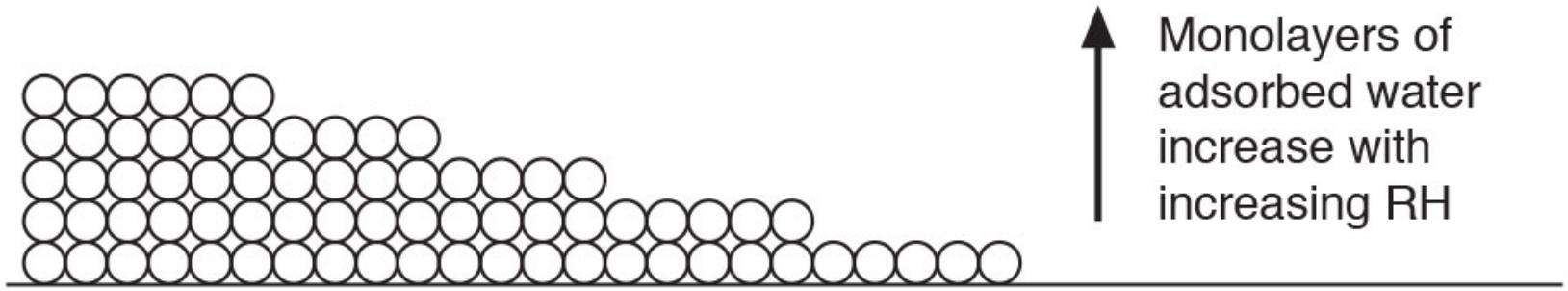


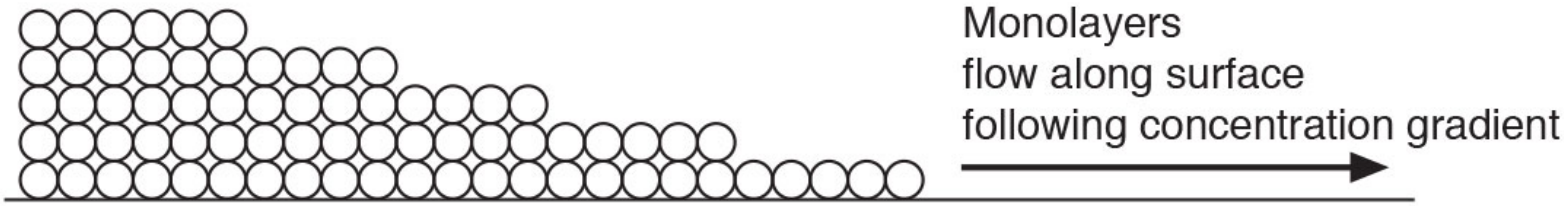
Liquid

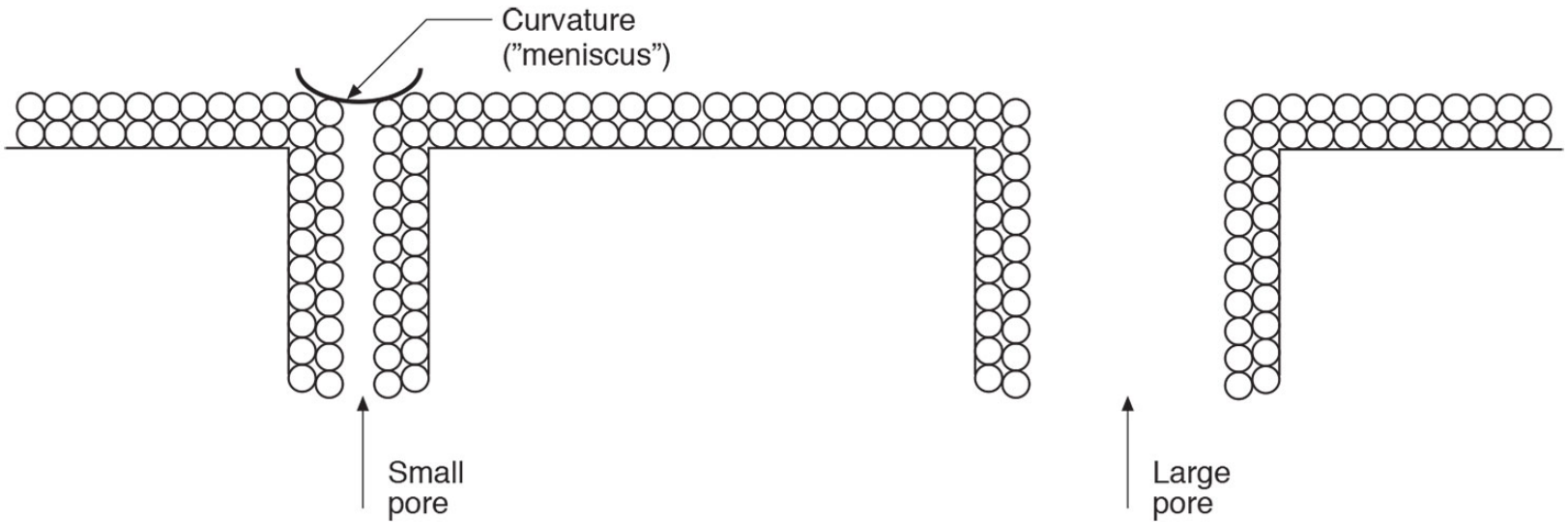

H+
104.5°
9.58 x 10-11 µm
O2-
H+
0.28 nm
≅ 3 Å

Polar Molecule

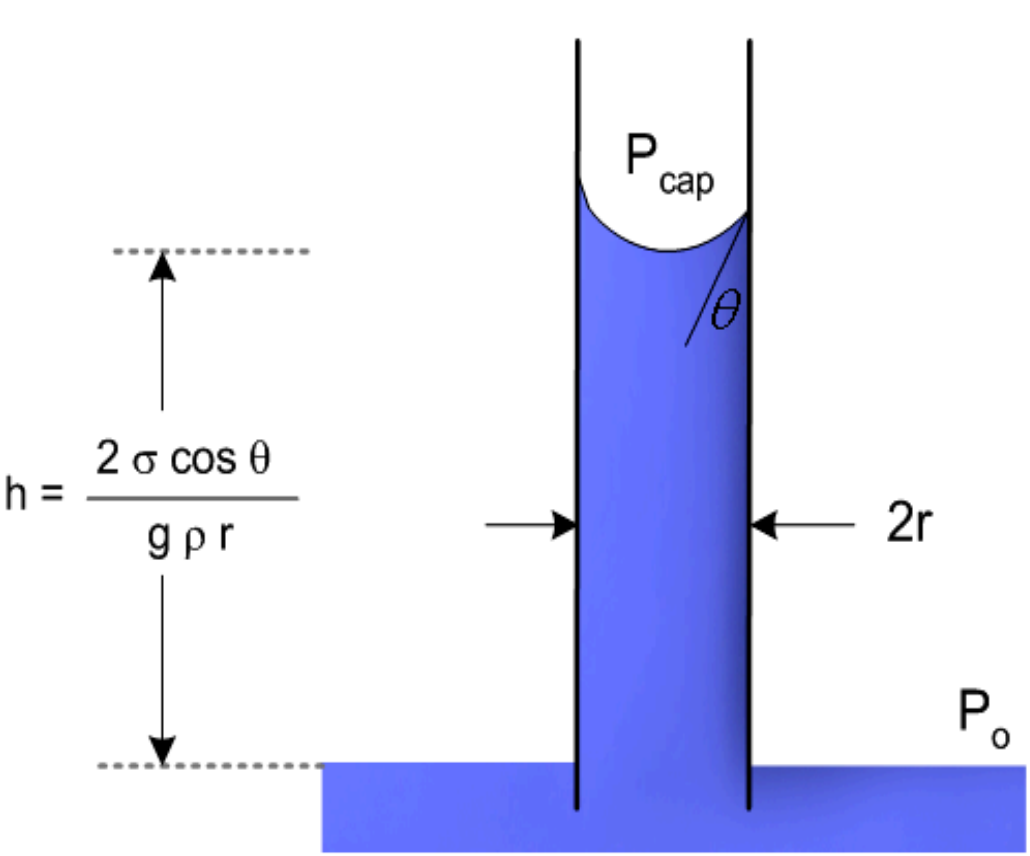

H+
O2-
H+
H+
O2-
H+
−
+
−
+

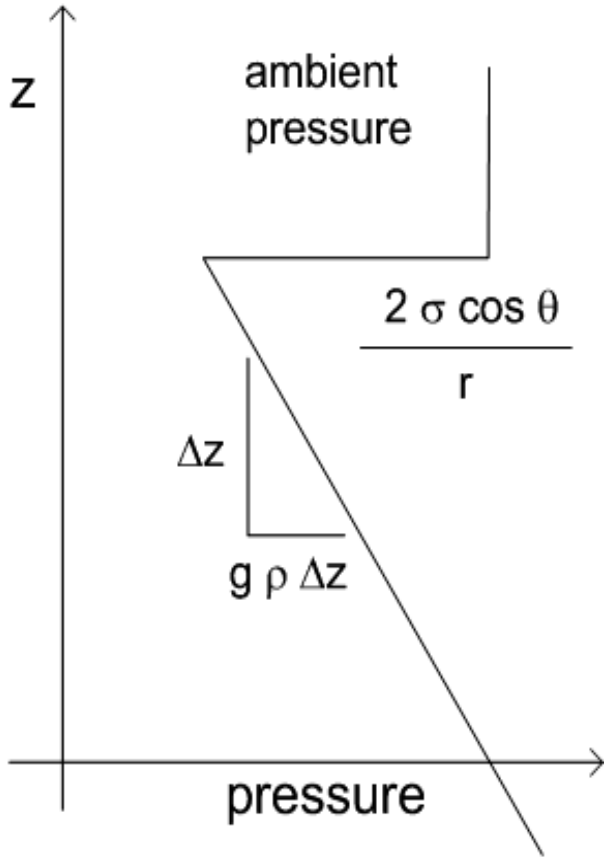

Monolayers of
adsorbed water
increase with
increasing RH


Monolayers
flow along surface
following concentration gradient

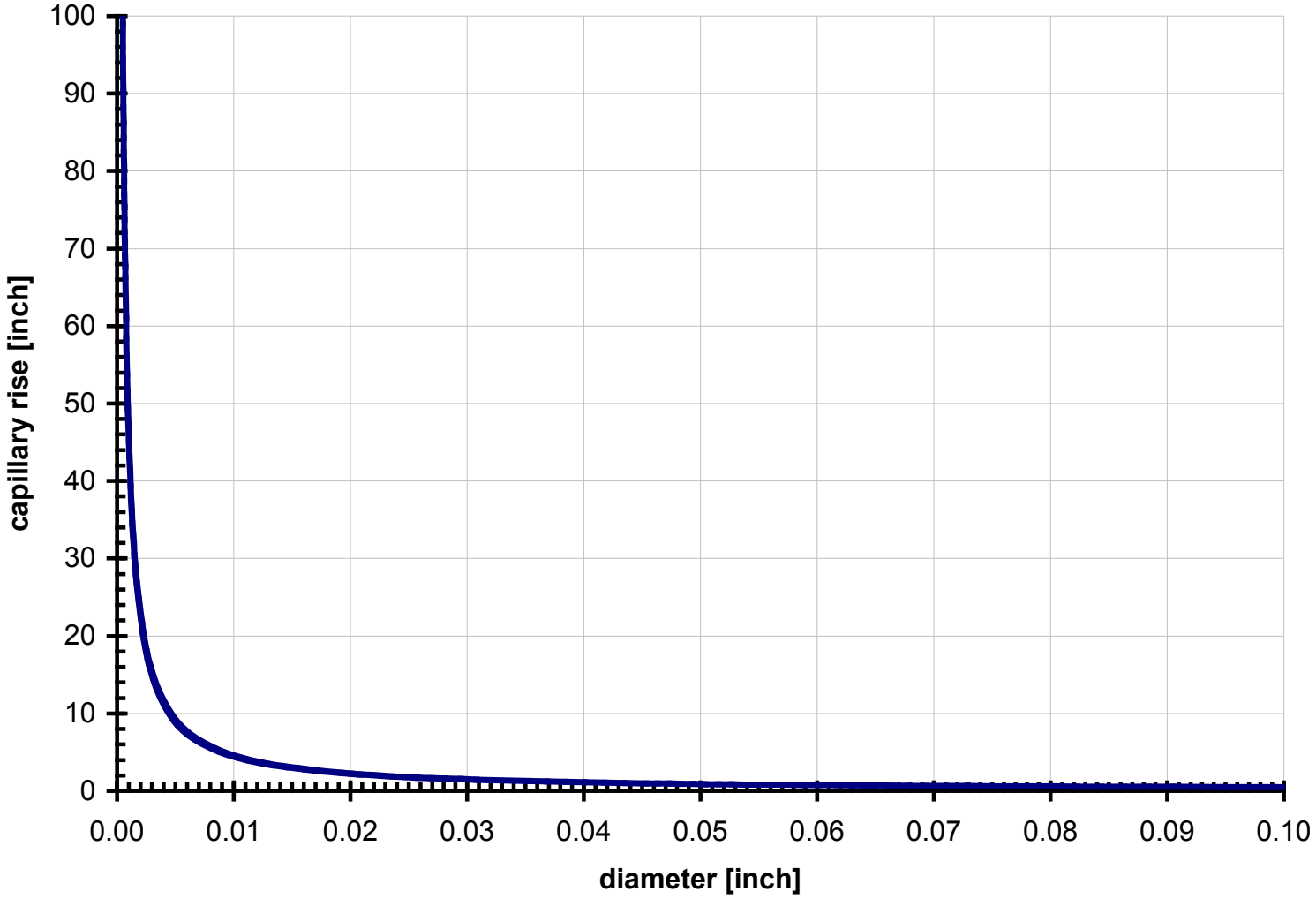

Curvature
("meniscus")
Small
pore
Large
pore

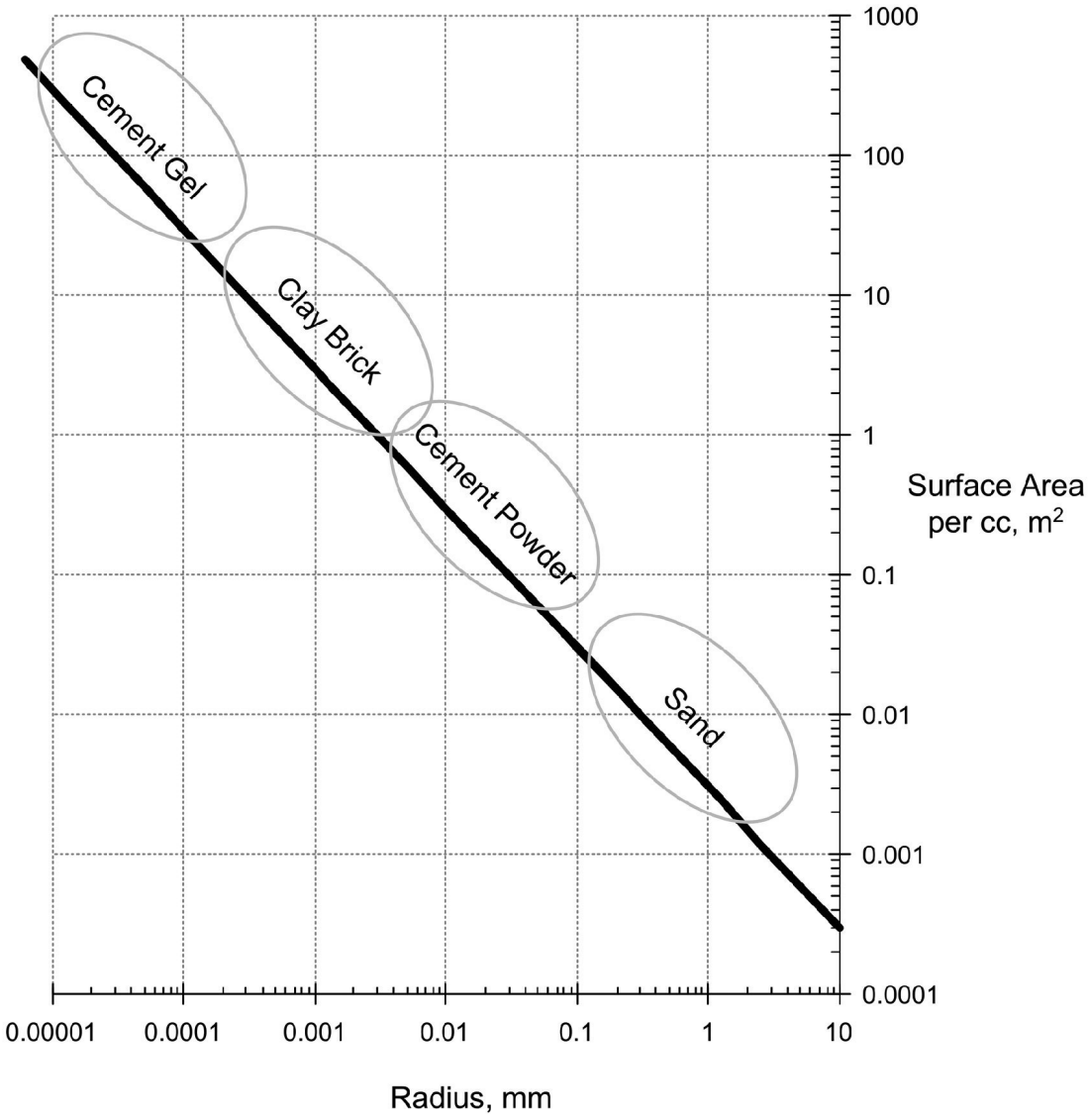
Calculating capillary rise





Capillary rise versus diameter





Surface area vs. particle size
From Straube & Burnett, 2005

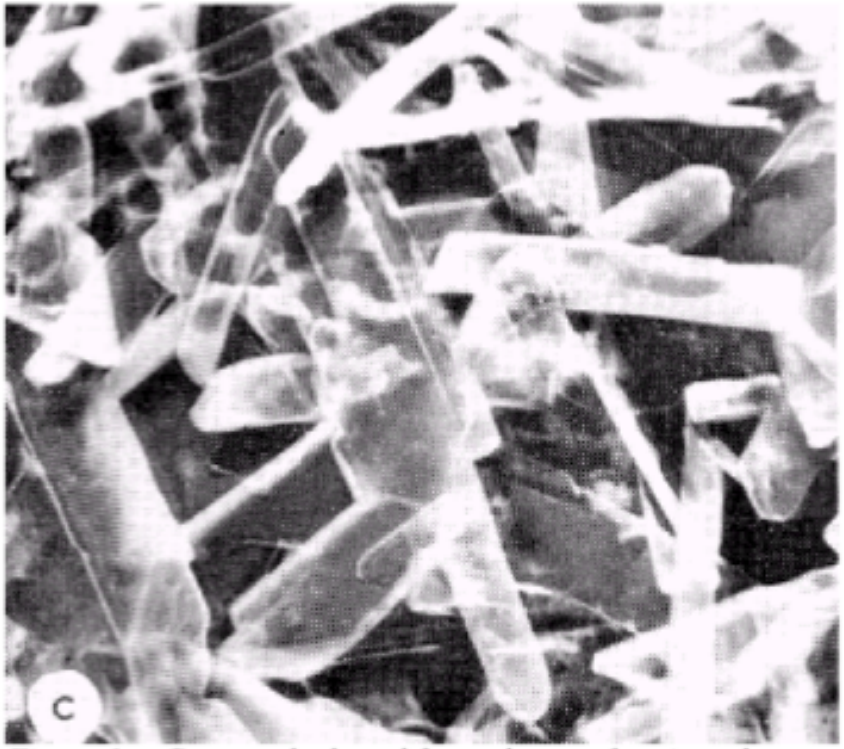


Figure 1c. Gypsum, hydrated from plaster of paris and water, porosity 30 per cent.

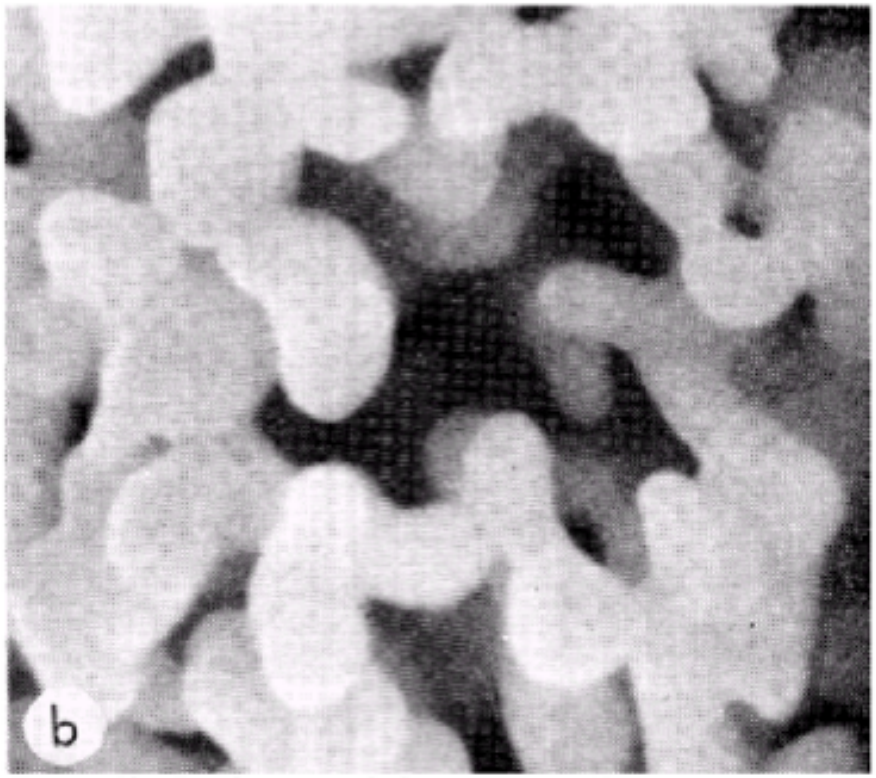
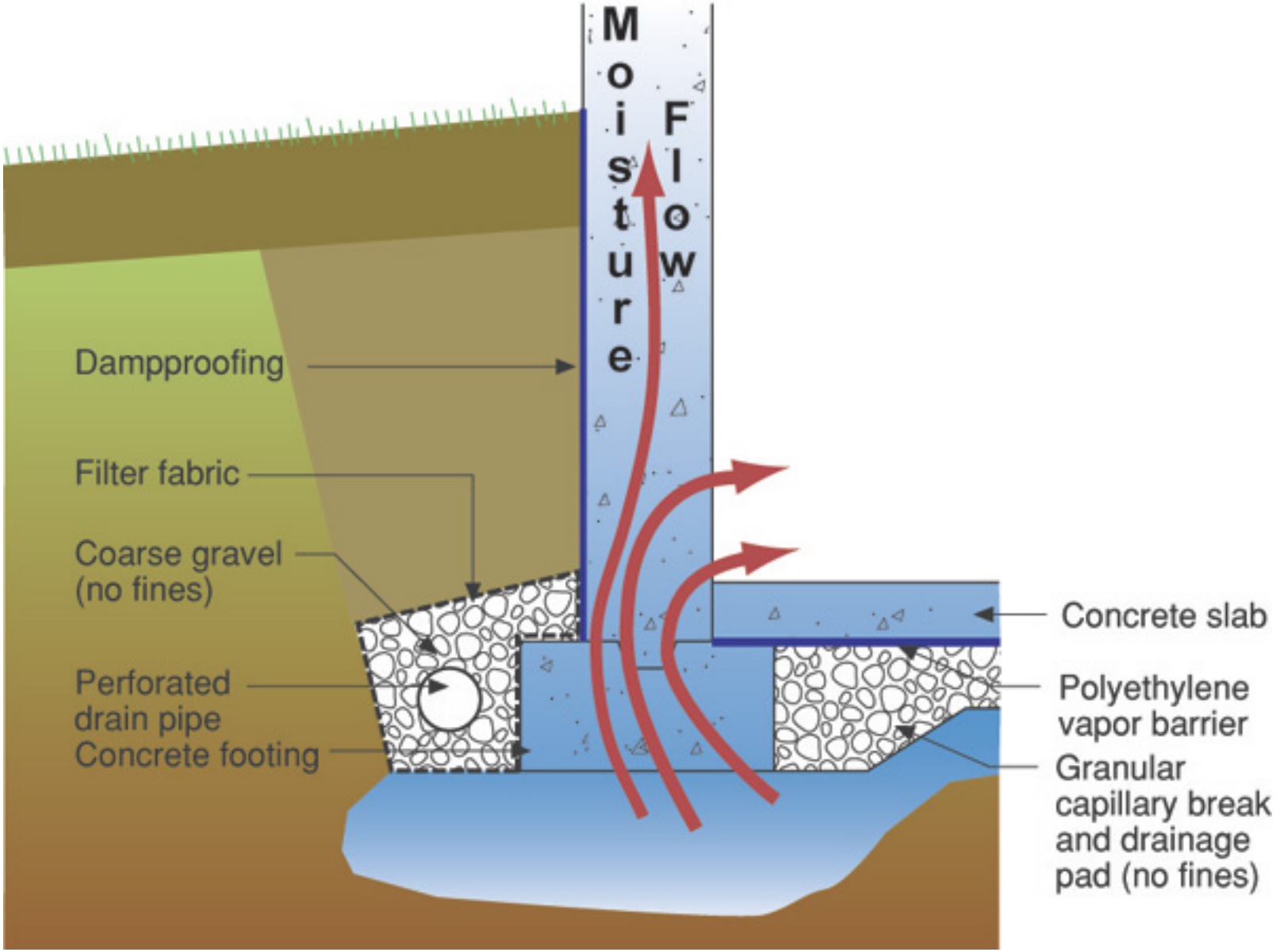
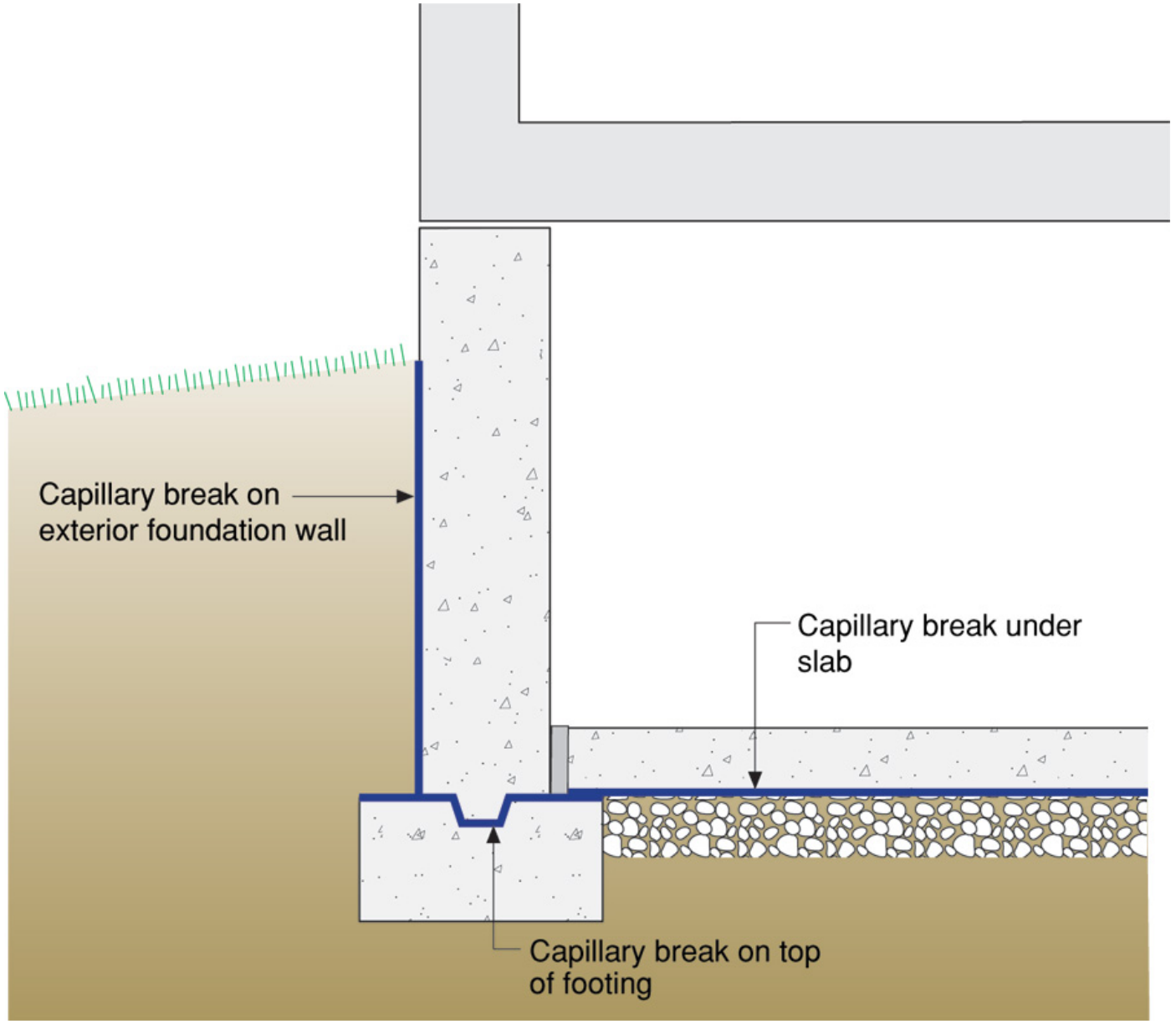
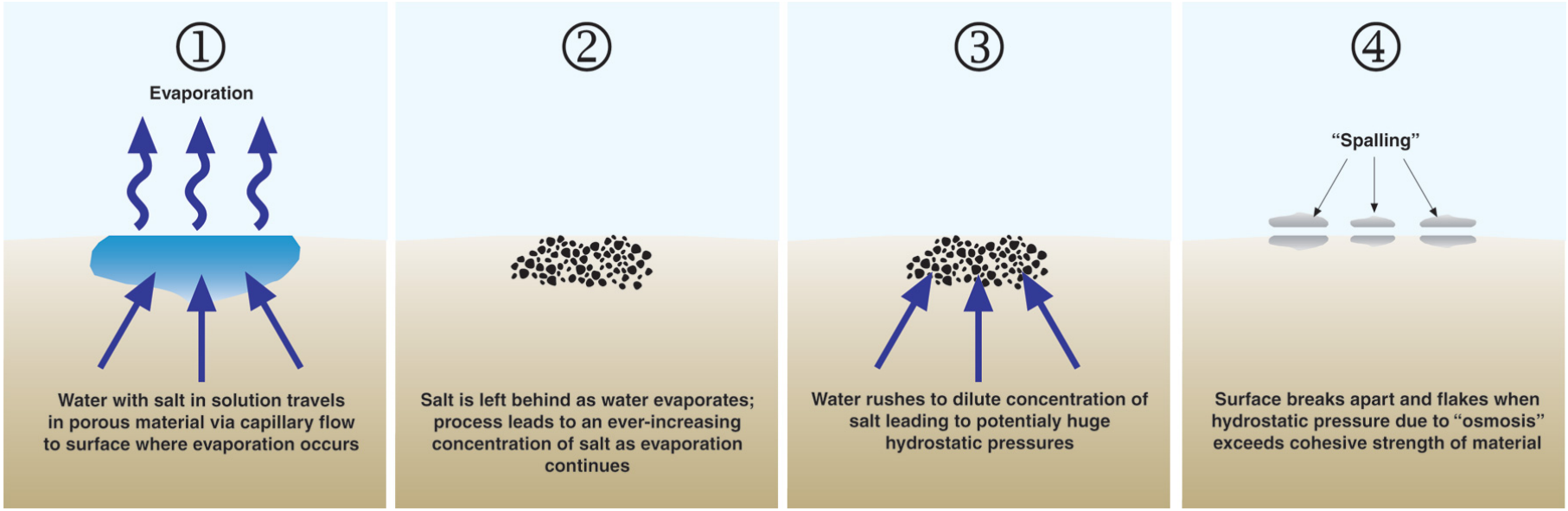


Figure 1b. Brick, sintered clay, porosity 40 per cent.


Moisture Flow
Dampproofing
Filter fabric
Coarse gravel
(no fines)
Perforated
drain pipe
Concrete footing
Concrete slab
Polyethylene
vapor barrier
Granular
capillary break
and drainage
pad (no fines)

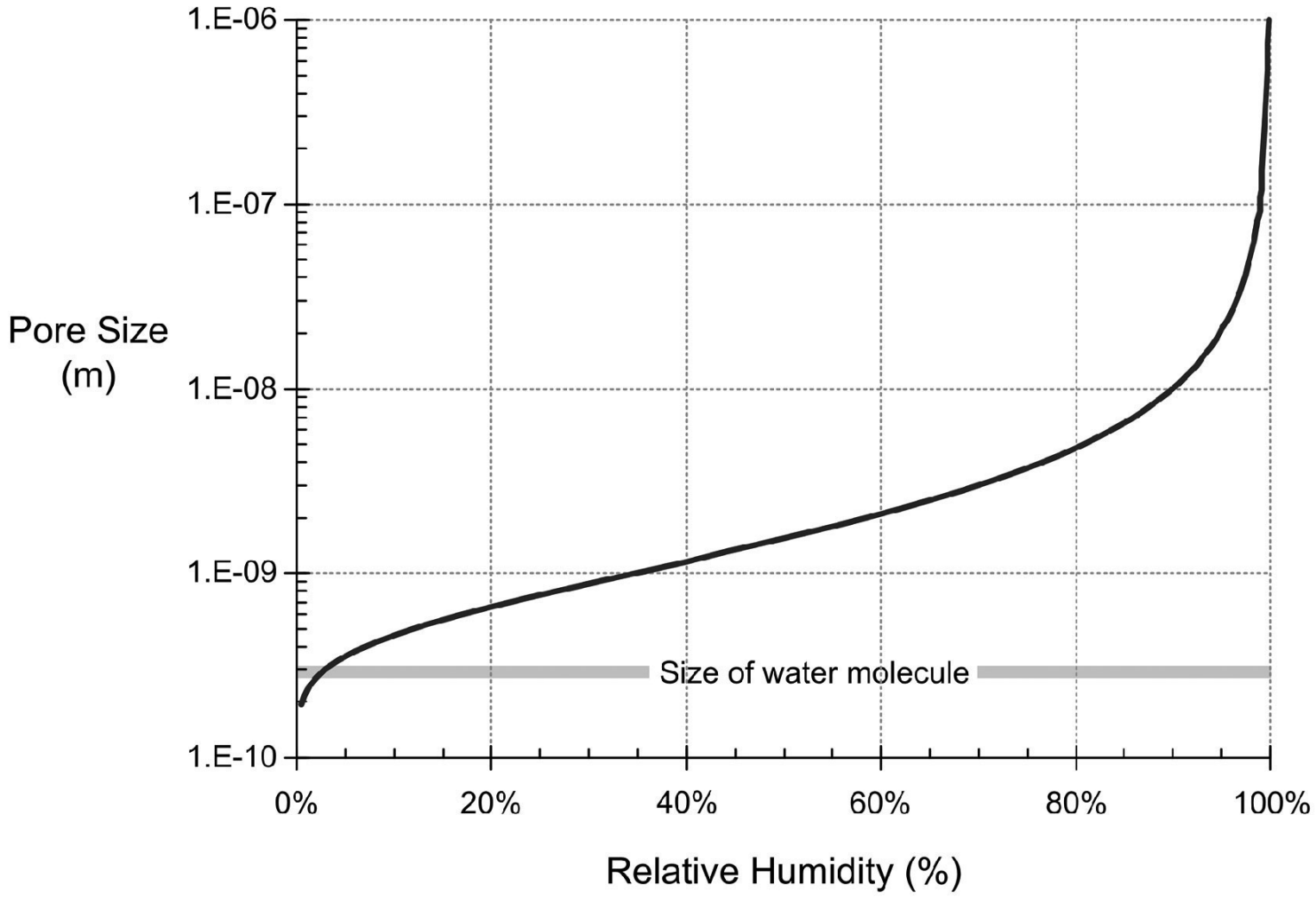

Capillary break on
exterior foundation wall
Capillary break under
slab
Capillary break on top
of footing


①
Evaporation
Water with salt in solution travels in porous material via capillary flow to surface where evaporation occurs
②
Salt is left behind as water evaporates; process leads to an ever-increasing concentration of salt as evaporation continues
③
Water rushes to dilute concentration of salt leading to potentialy huge hydrostatic pressures
④
"Spalling"
Surface breaks apart and flakes when hydrostatic pressure due to "osmosis" exceeds cohesive strength of material

Pressures

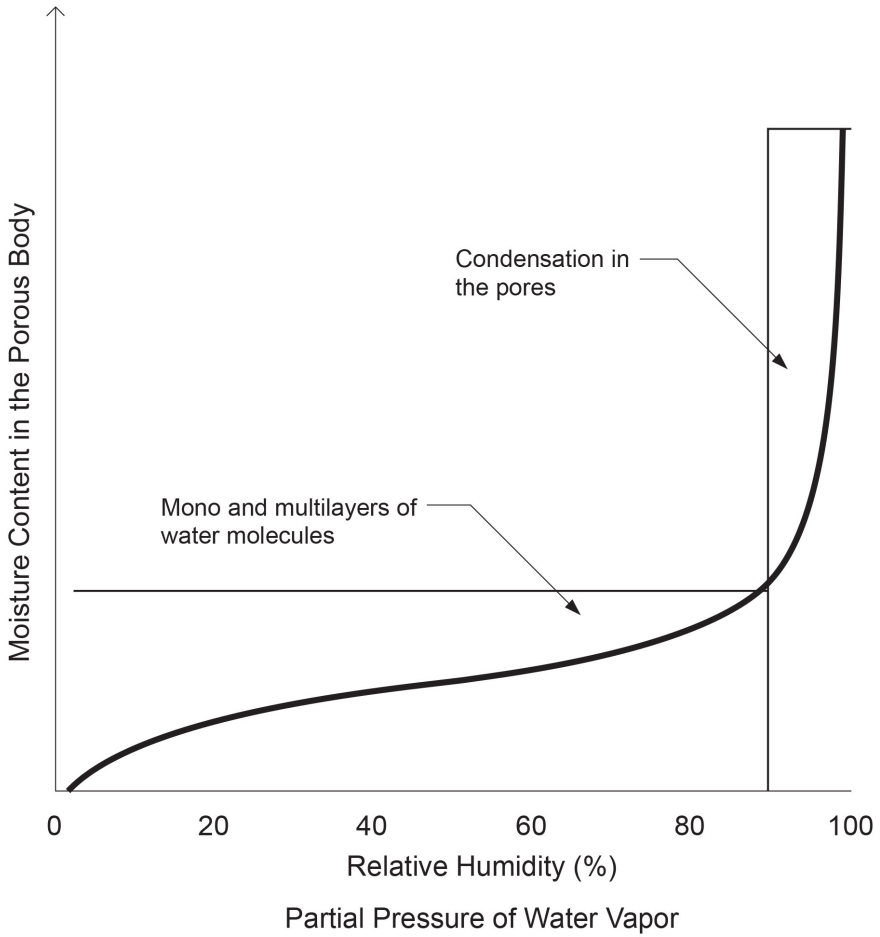
- Diffusion Vapor Pressure 3 to 5 psi
- Capillary Pressure 300 to 500 psi
- Osmosis Pressure 3,000 to 5,000 psi

Combined Flows



Ambient relative humidity at which capillary condensation is predicted to occur by the Kelvin equation

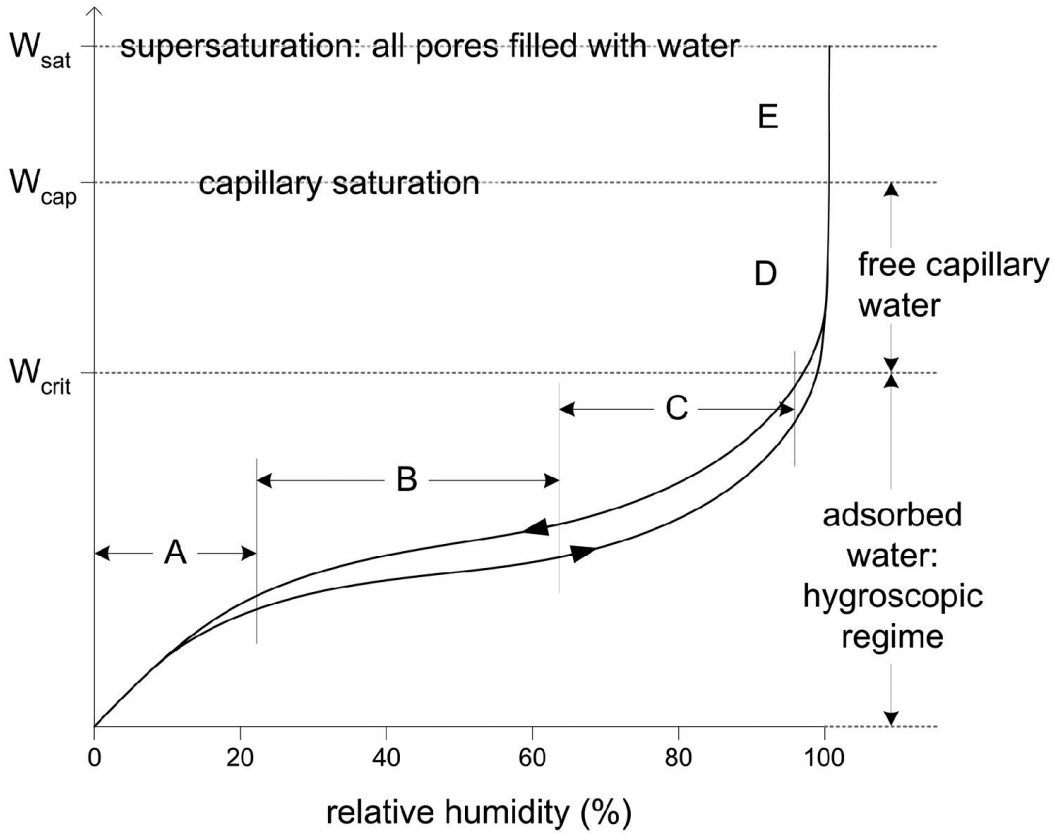
From Straube & Burnett, 2005



Change in the storage of moisture in a porous building material as the partial pressure of water vapor in the ambient air increases from zero to full saturation value at a given temperature.

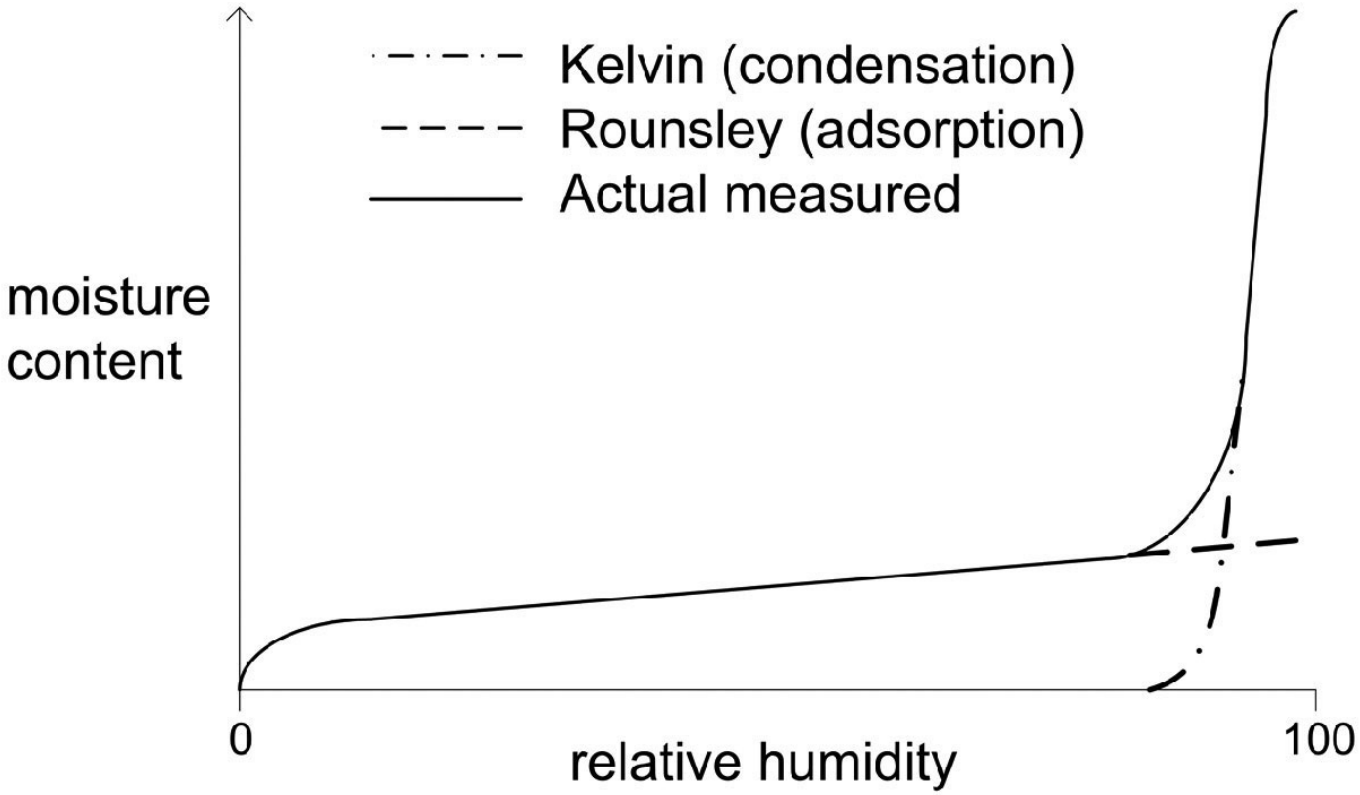
Sorption Curve

From M.K. Kumaran, ASTM MNL 18-2nd Edition, Moisture Control in Buildings, 2009

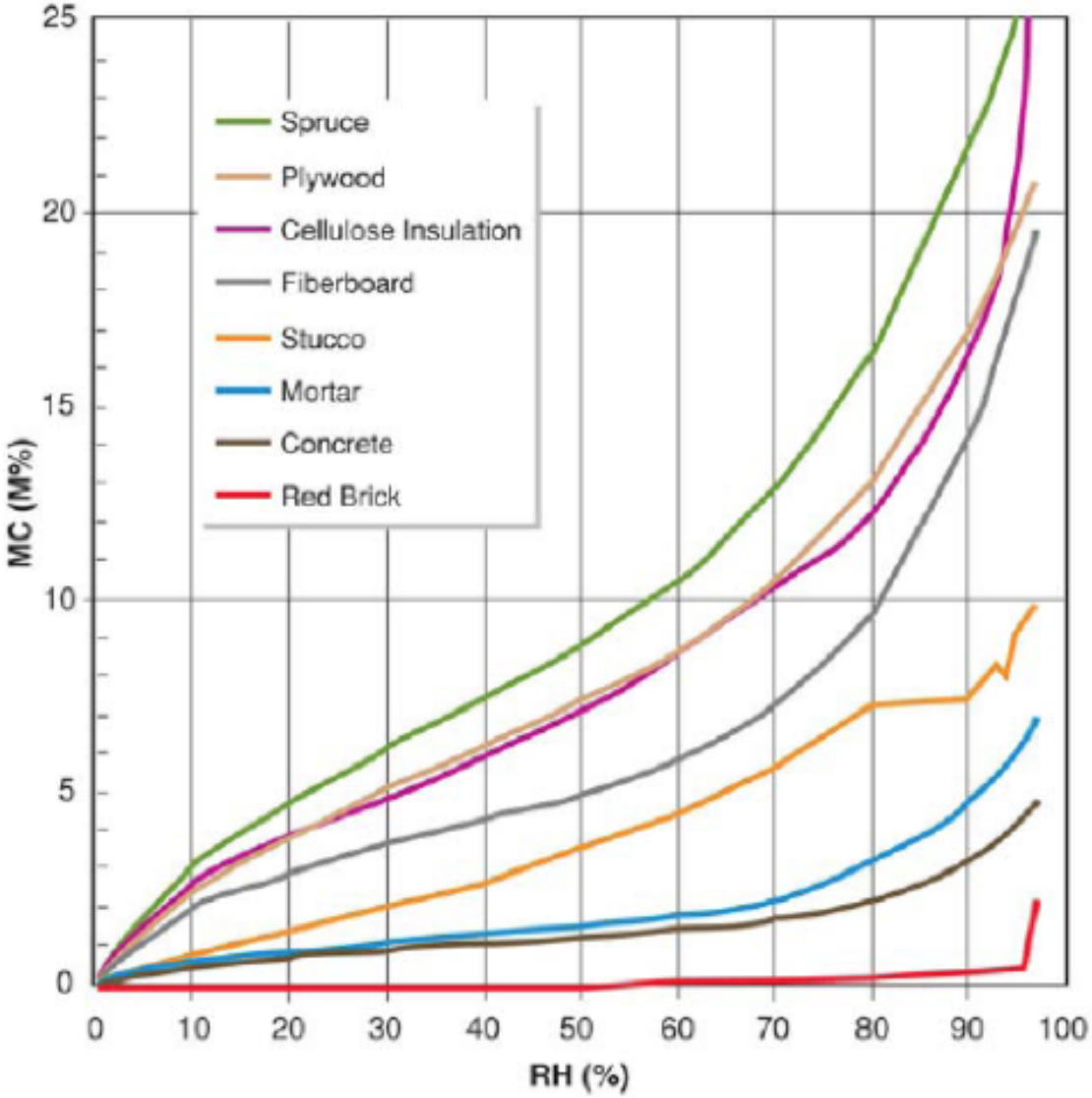


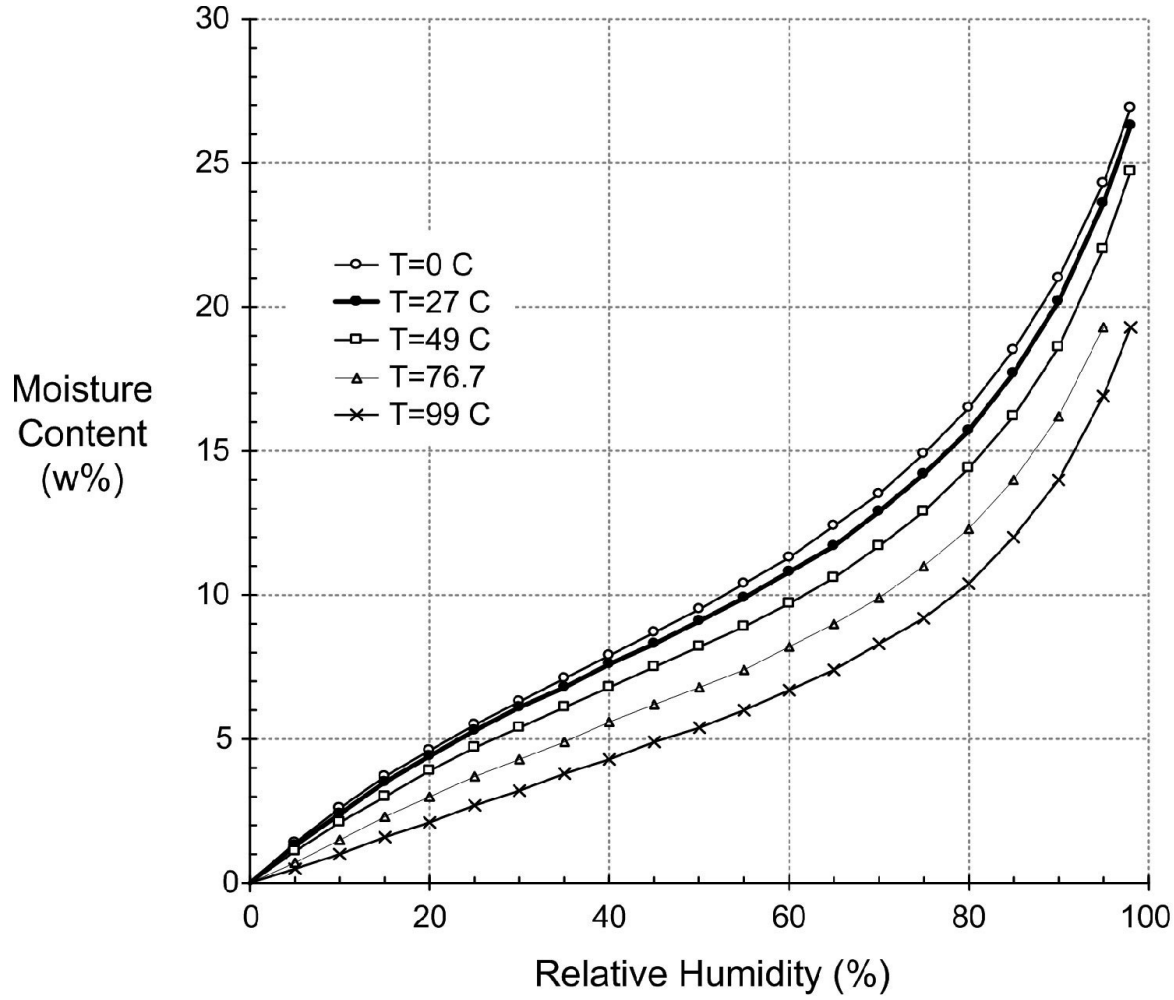
A: Single-layer of adsorbed molecules
B: Multiple layers of adsorbed molecules
C: Interconnected layers (internal capillary condensation
D: Free water in Pores, capillary suction
E: Supersaturated Regime

Regimes of moisture storage in a hygroscopic porous material
From Straube & Burnett, 2005

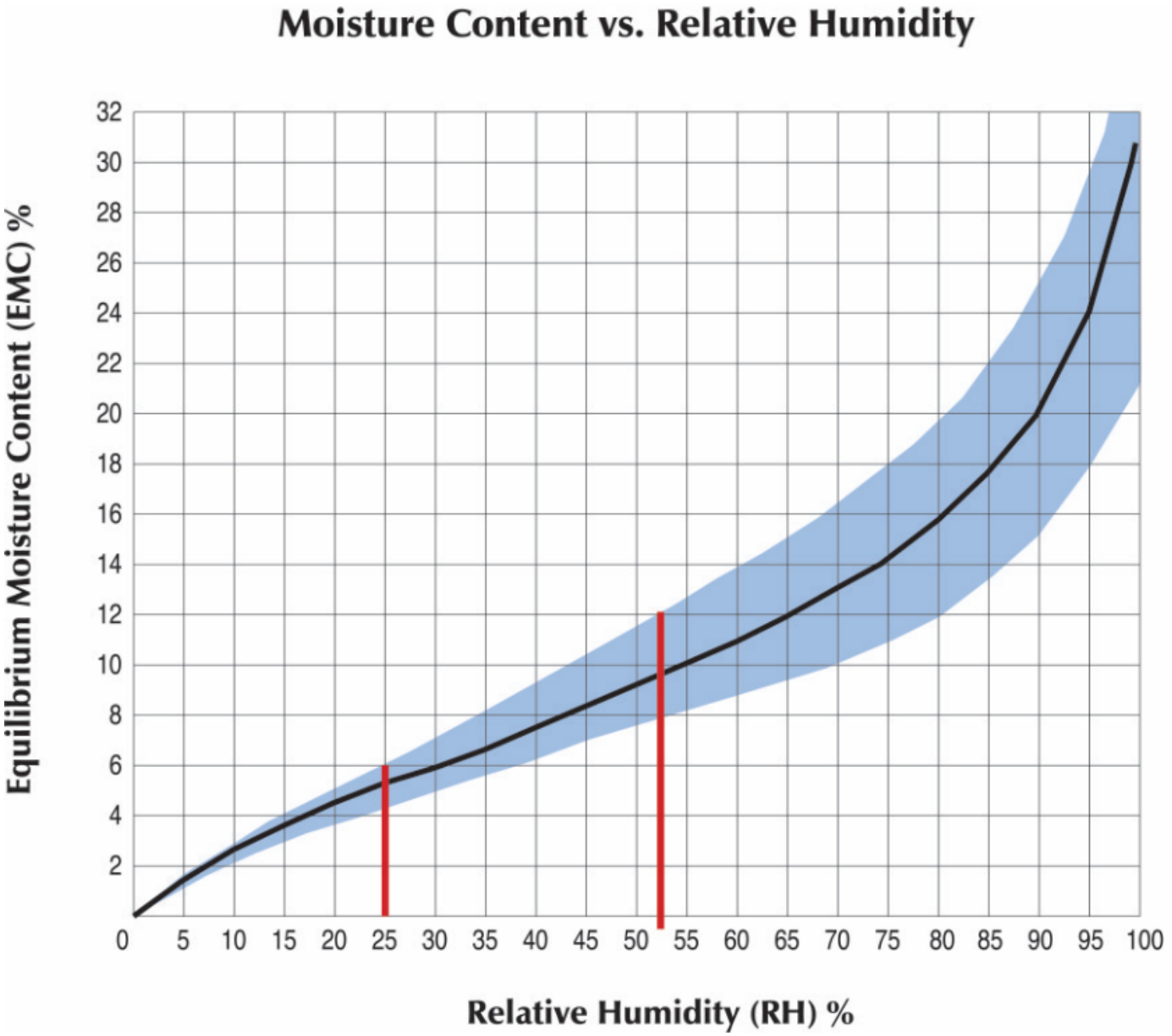


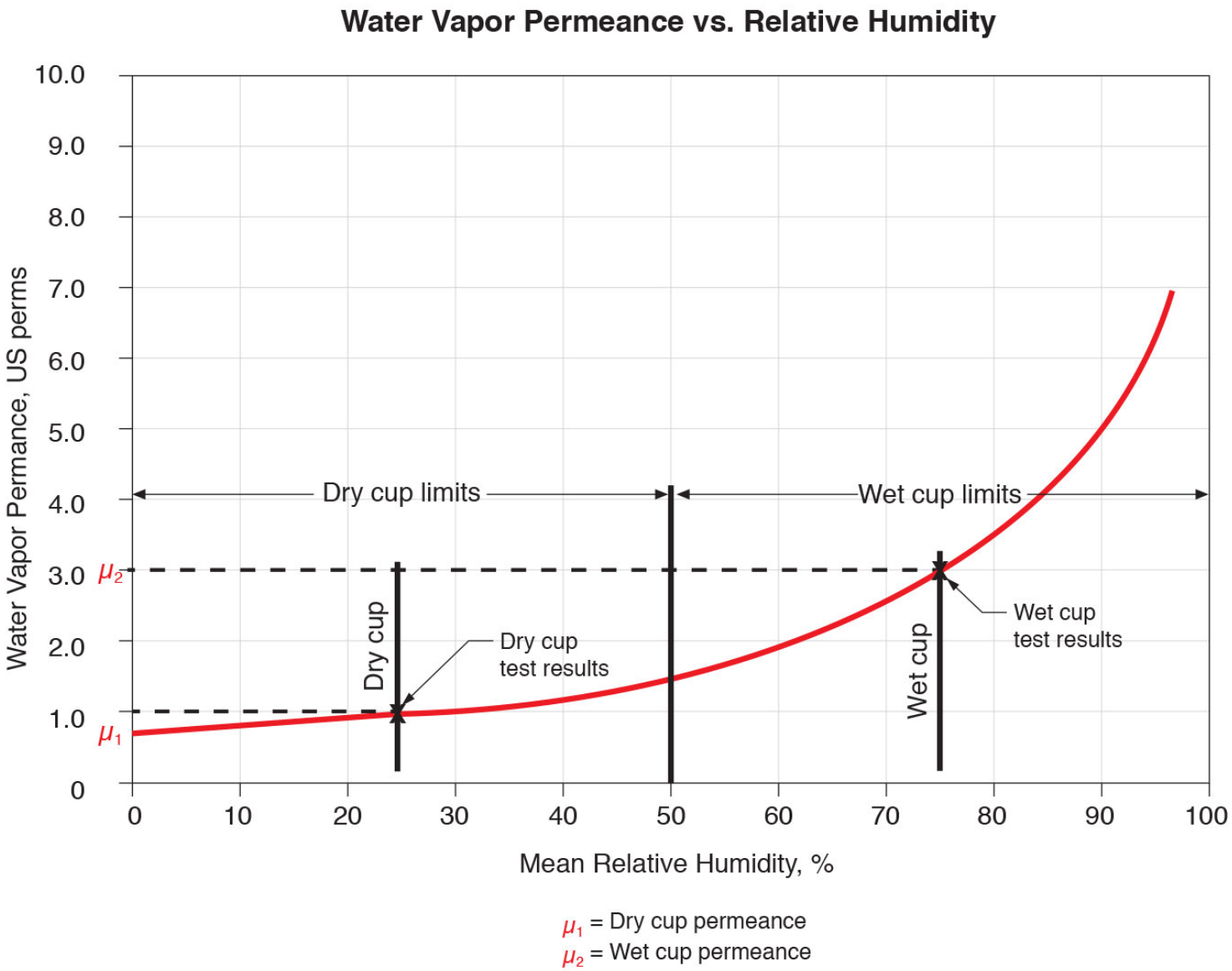
Typical predicted sorption isotherm according to Kelvin equation and modified BET theory
From Straube & Burnett, 2005


Spruce
Plywood
Cellulose Insulation
Fiberboard
Stucco
Mortar
Concrete
Red Brick
MC (M%)
RH (%)
0
5
10
15
20
25
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100

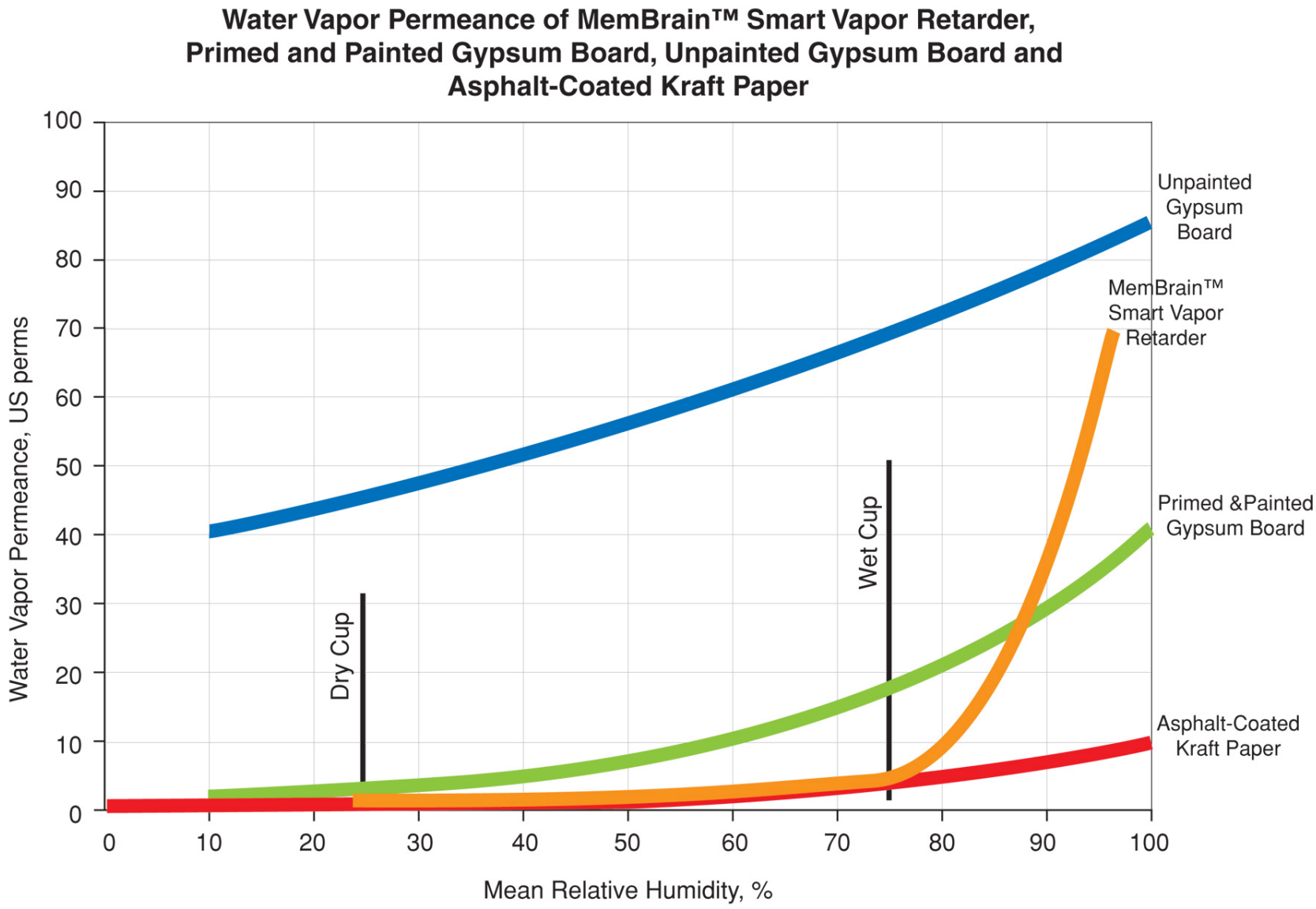


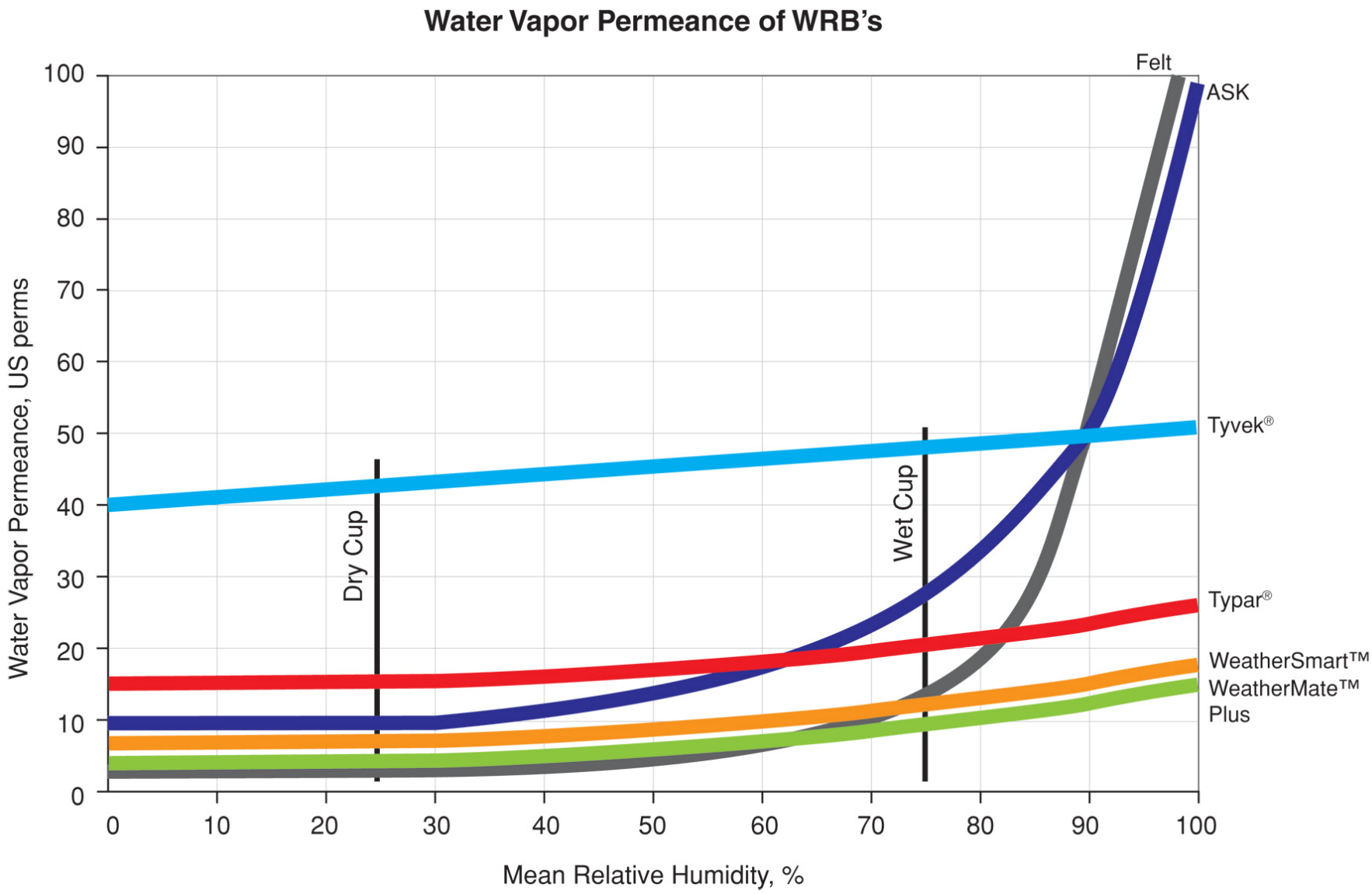
Average sorption isotherm for wood as a function of temperature
From Straube & Burnett, 2005

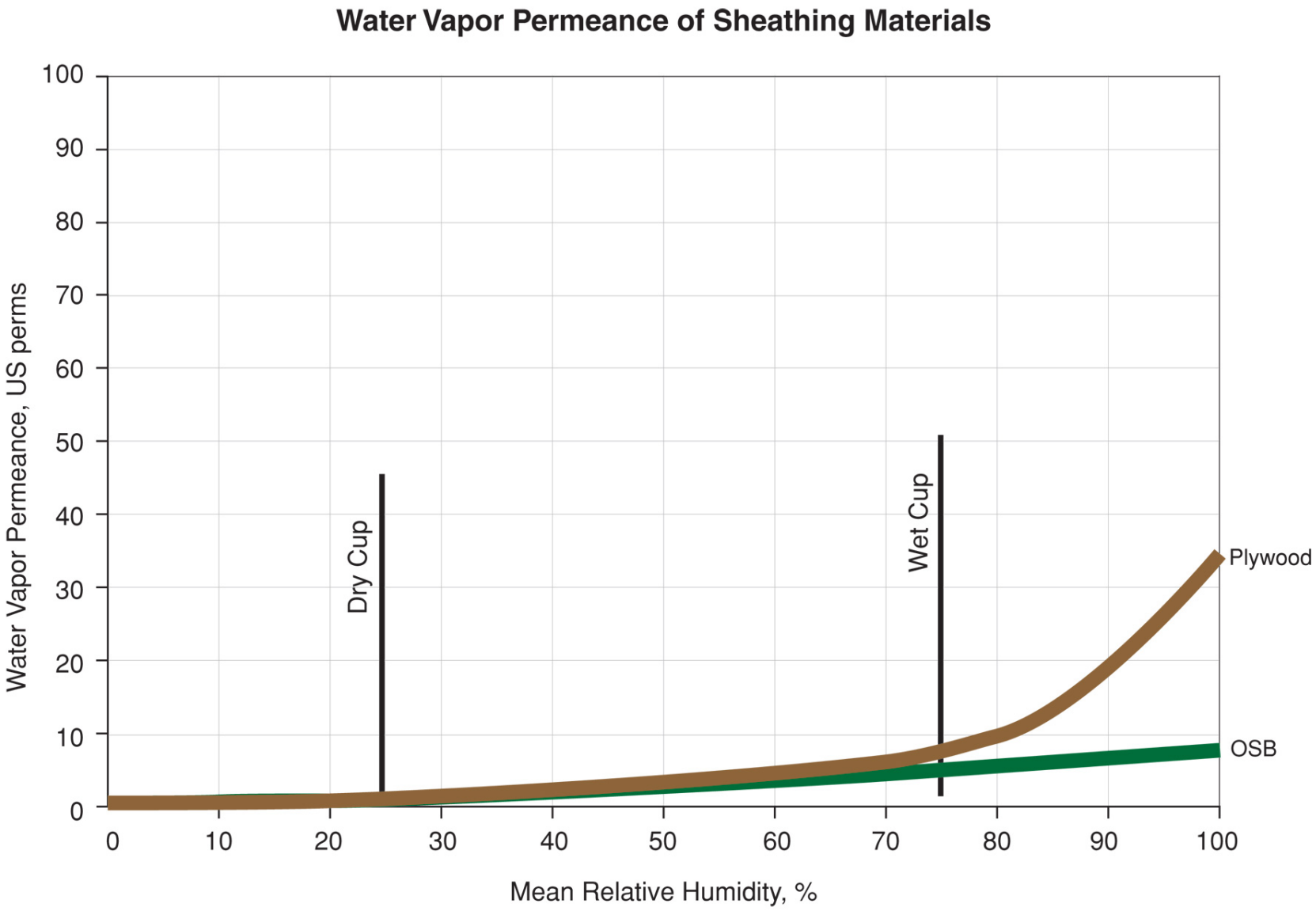

Moisture Content vs. Relative Humidity
Equilibrium Moisture Content (EMC) %
32
30
28
26
24
22
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
90
95
100
Relative Humidity (RH) %

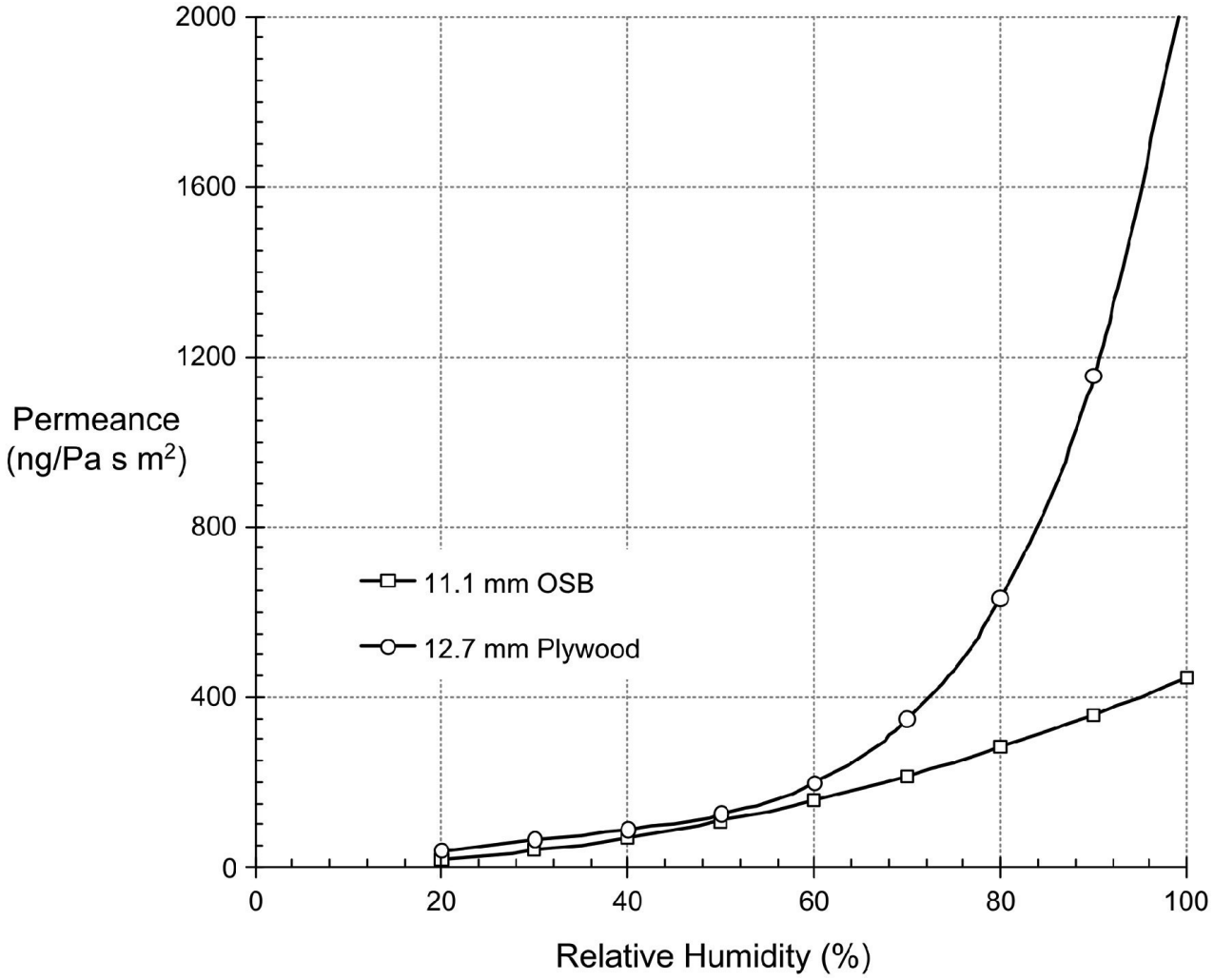

Water Vapor Permeance vs. Relative Humidity
Water Vapor Permance, US perms
10.0
9.0
8.0
7.0
6.0
5.0
4.0
3.0
2.0
1.0
0
μ_2
μ_1
Dry cup limits
Wet cup limits
Dry cup
Dry cup test results
Wet cup
Wet cup test results
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
Mean Relative Humidity, %
μ_1 = Dry cup permeance
μ_2 = Wet cup permeance


OWENS-CORNING
Fiberglas
Building
Insulation
FIBERGLAS
R-11
3½"
ASSURED THERMAL
PERFORMANCE
WARNING: The FACING on this insulation will BURN AND SHOULD NOT BE LEFT EXPOSED. Special care should be taken when working close to the facing.
C0206867702K

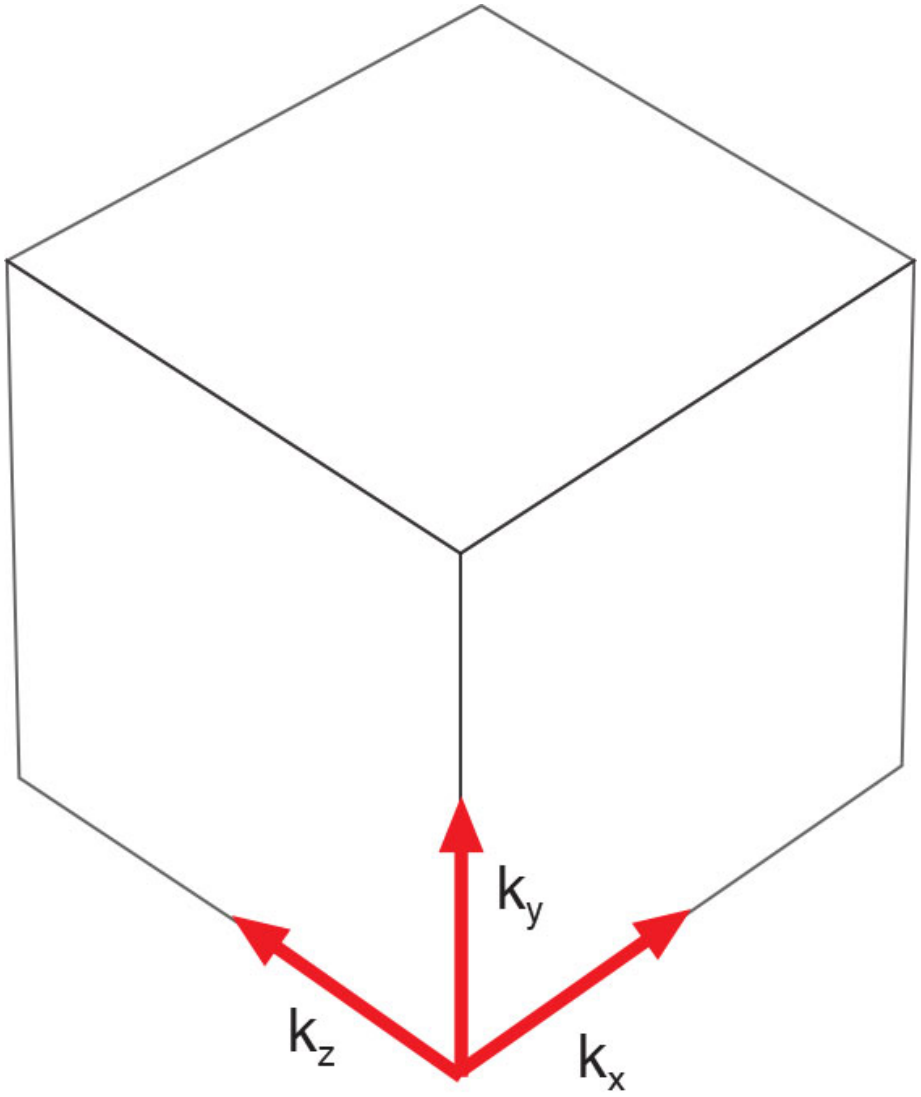

Water Vapor Permeance of MemBrain™ Smart Vapor Retarder, Primed and Painted Gypsum Board, Unpainted Gypsum Board and Asphalt-Coated Kraft Paper
Water Vapor Permeance, US perms
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
Mean Relative Humidity, %
Dry Cup
Wet Cup
Unpainted Gypsum Board
MemBrain™ Smart Vapor Retarder
Primed &Painted Gypsum Board
Asphalt-Coated Kraft Paper

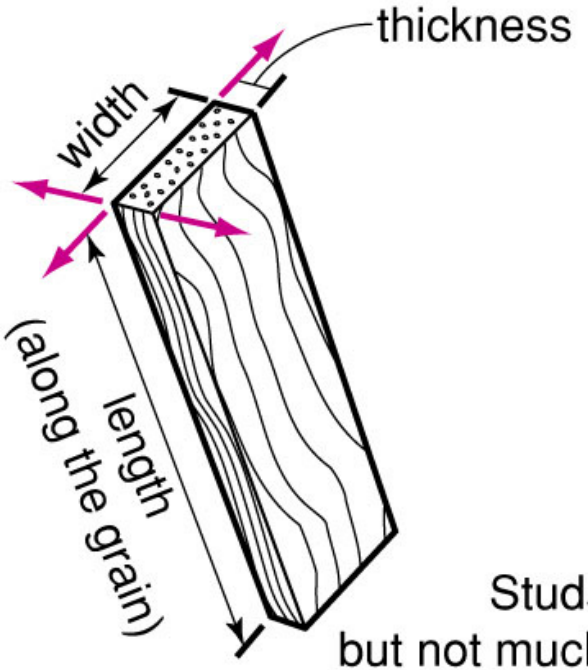

Water Vapor Permeance of WRB's
Water Vapor Permeance, US perms
Mean Relative Humidity, %
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
Dry Cup
Wet Cup
Felt
ASK
Tyvek®
Typar®
WeatherSmart™
WeatherMate™
Plus

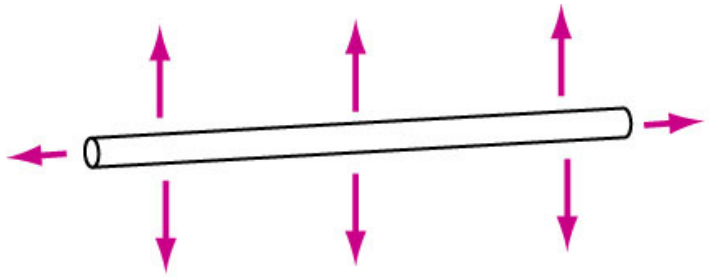

Water Vapor Permeance of Sheathing Materials
Water Vapor Permeance, US perms
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Dry Cup
Wet Cup
Plywood
OSB
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
Mean Relative Humidity, %



Vapor permeability test results for wood-based products as a function of RH [Kumaran *et al* 2002]
From Straube & Burnett, 2005


k_y
k_z
k_x



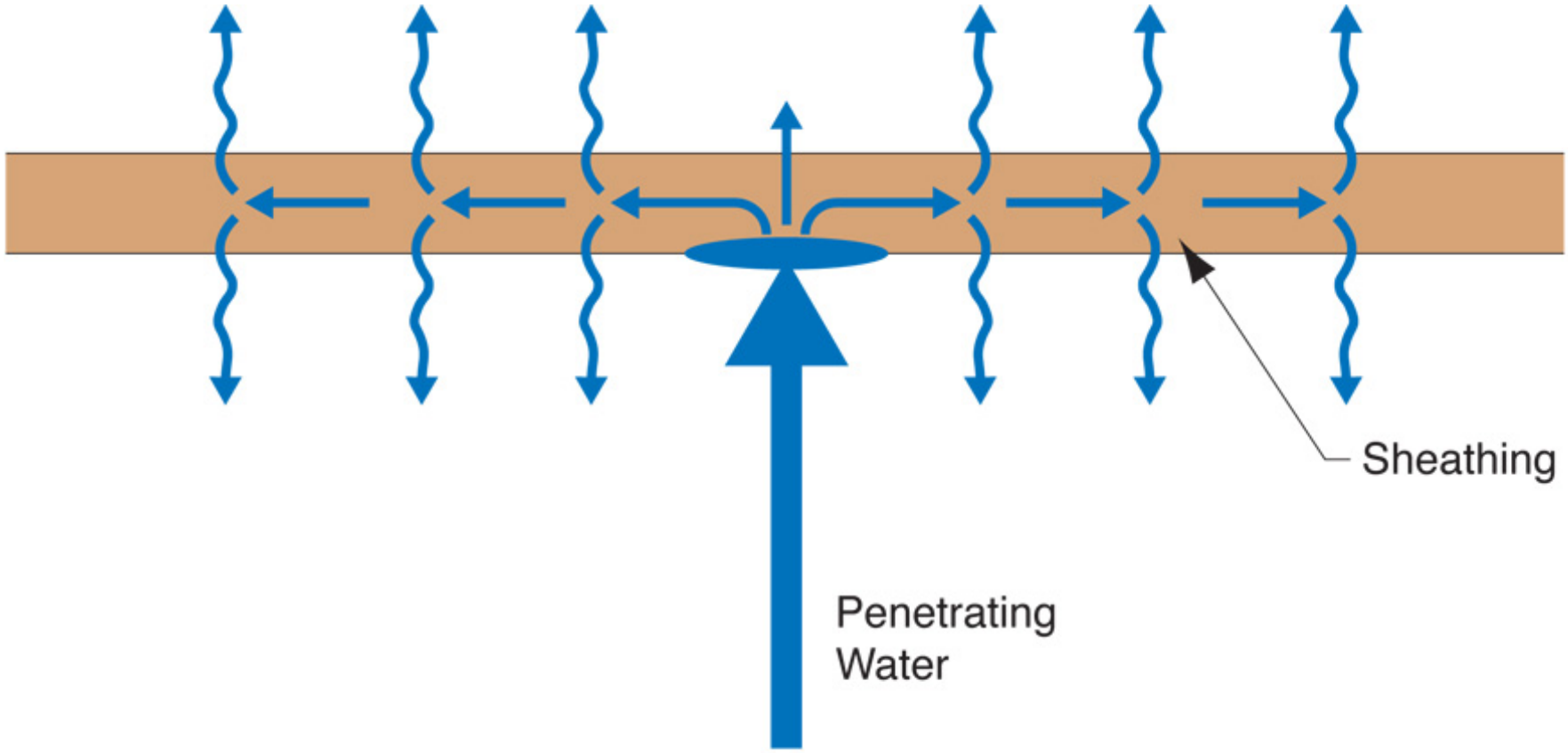


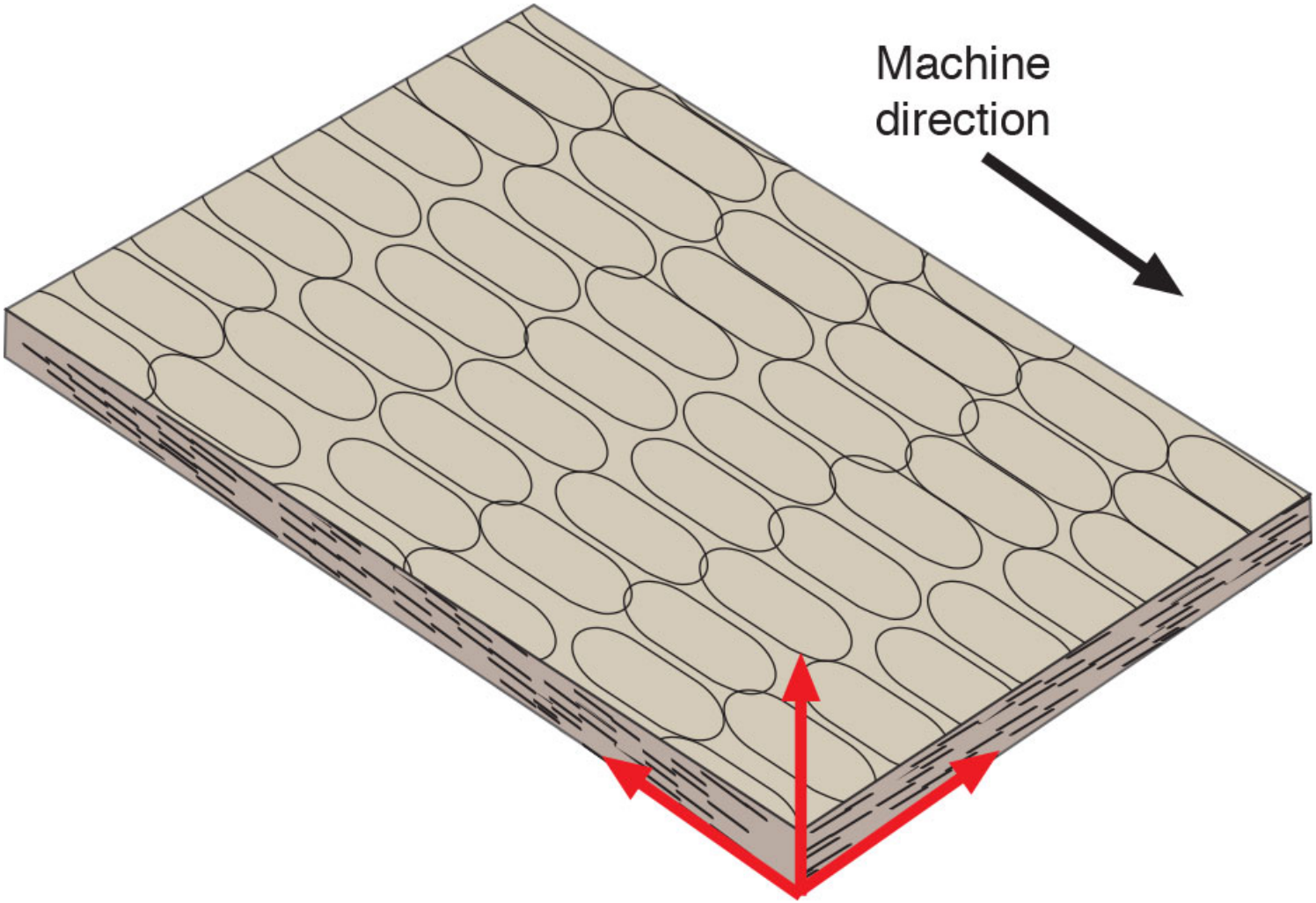
Wood Fiber

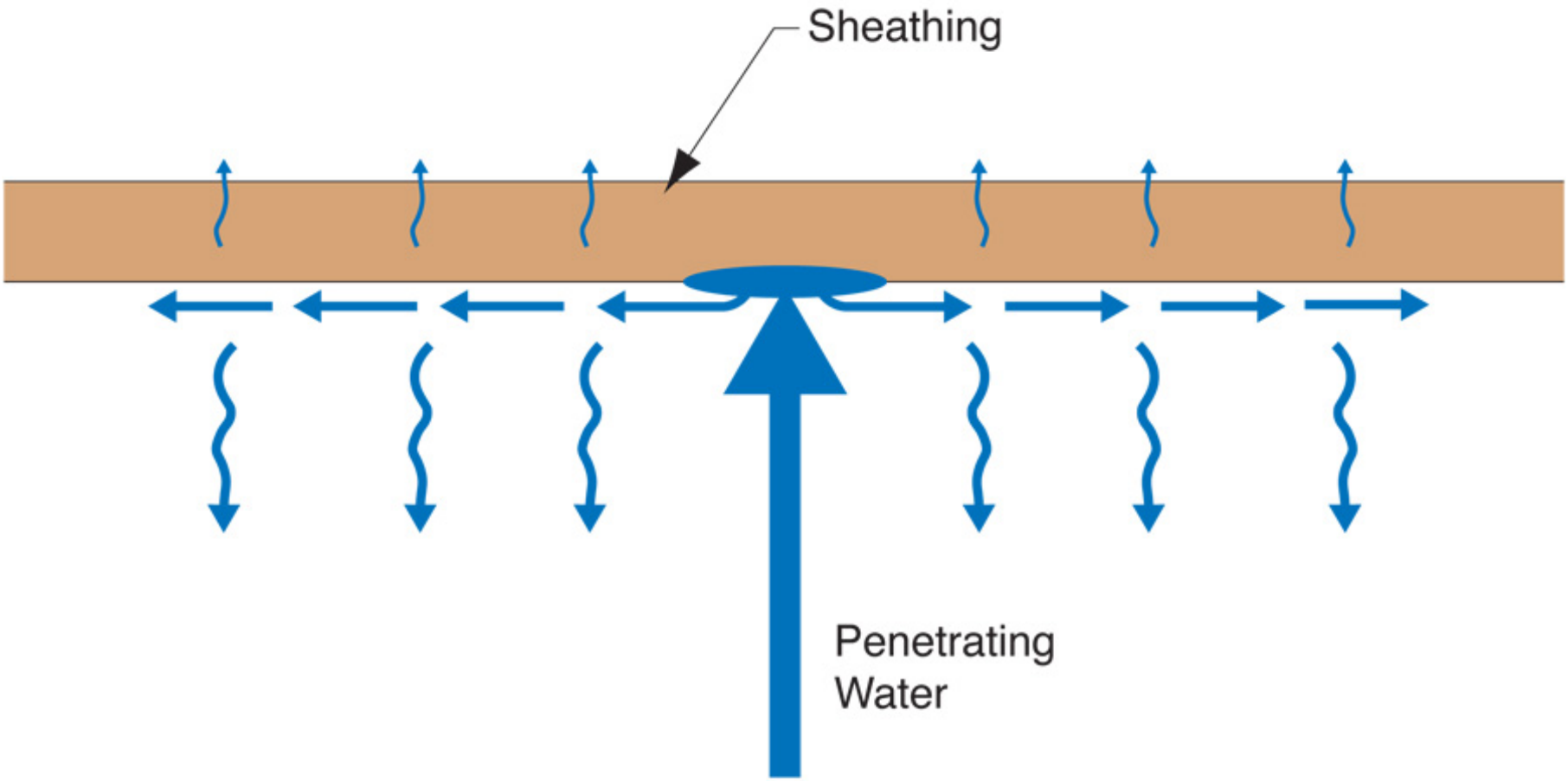
Fibers get much thicker than longer
when they pick up moisture

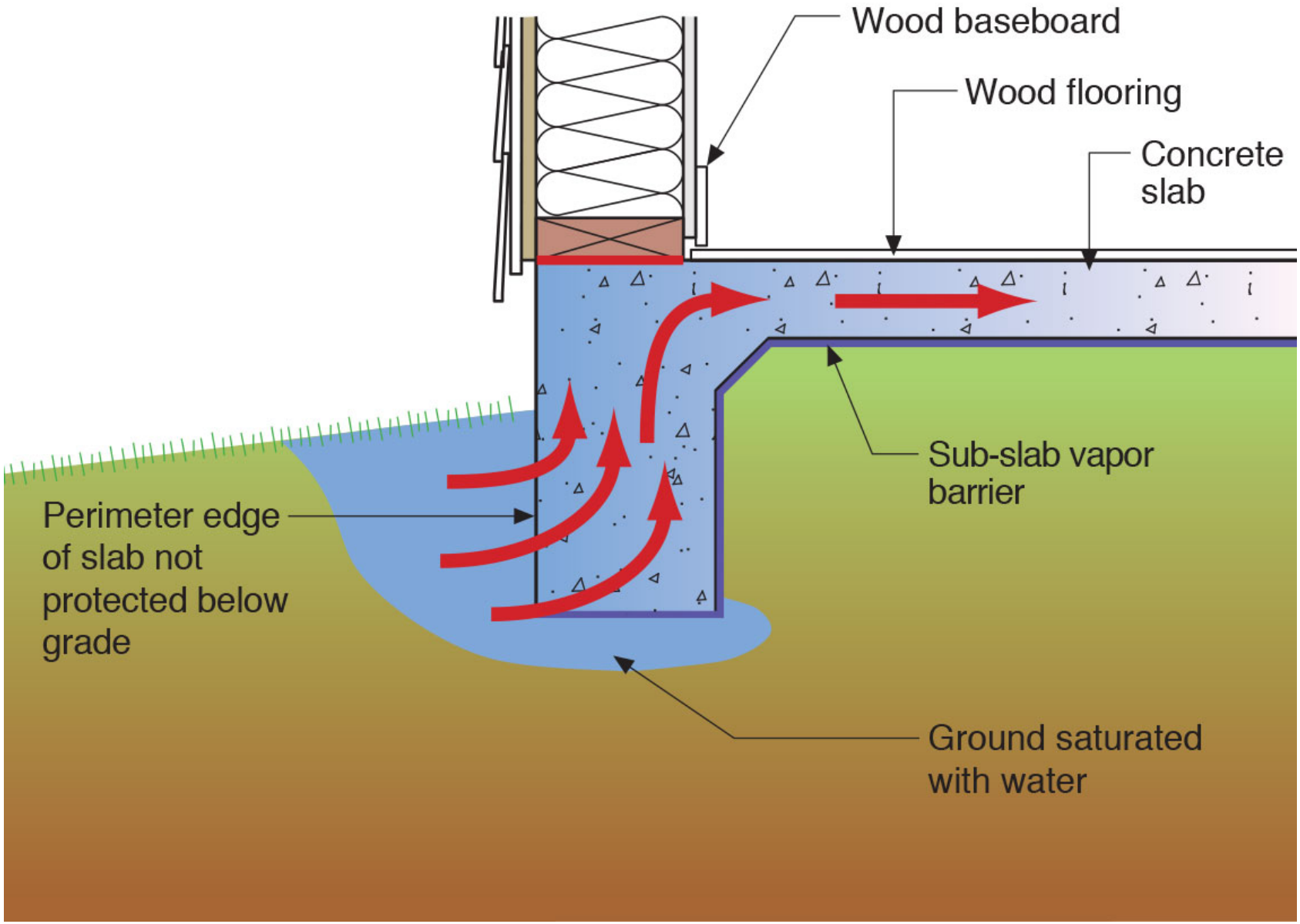
Studs get much wider and thicker,
but not much longer, when they pick up moisture

Interesting Complications


Sheathing
Penetrating
Water

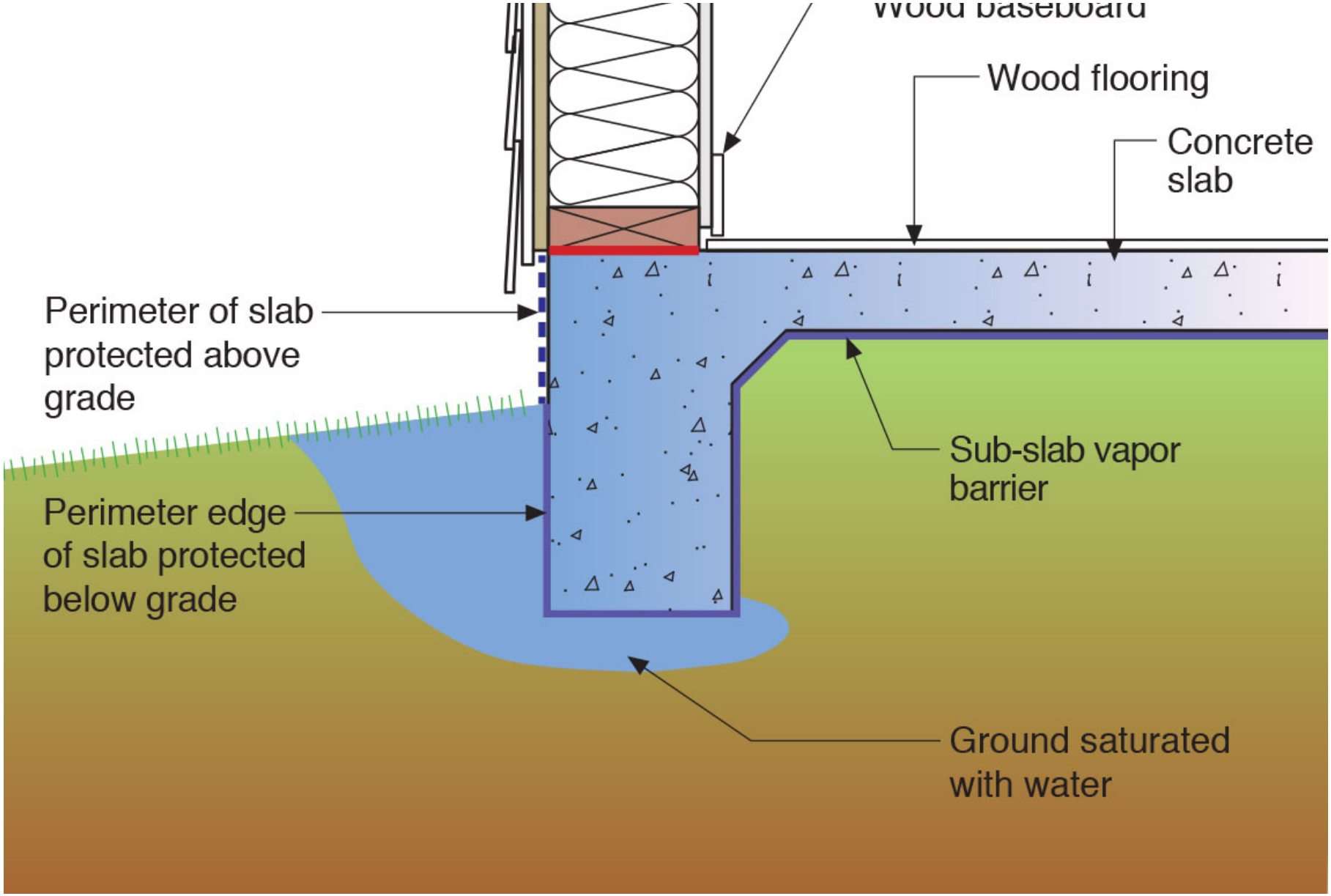

Machine
direction

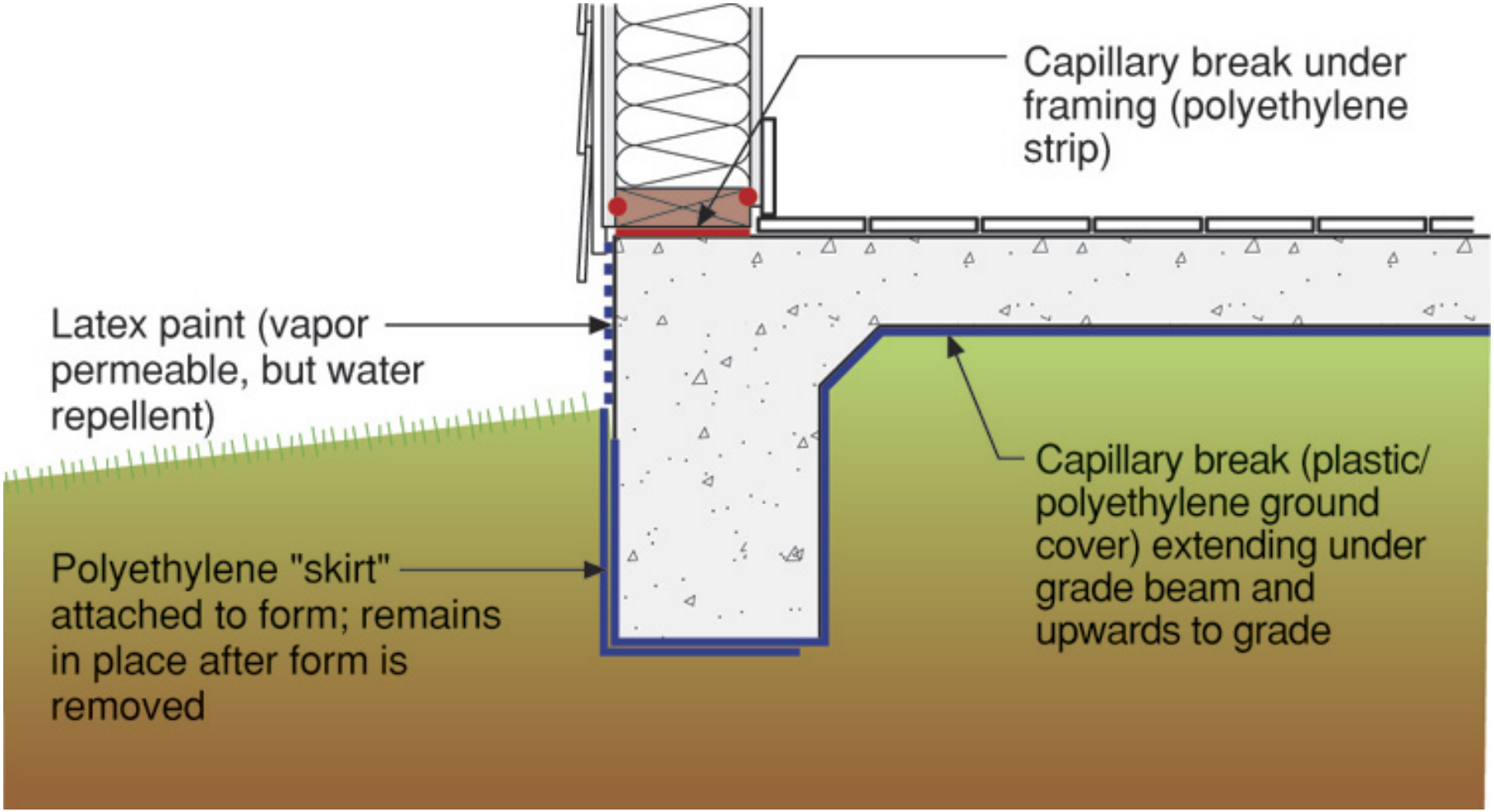

Sheathing
Penetrating
Water

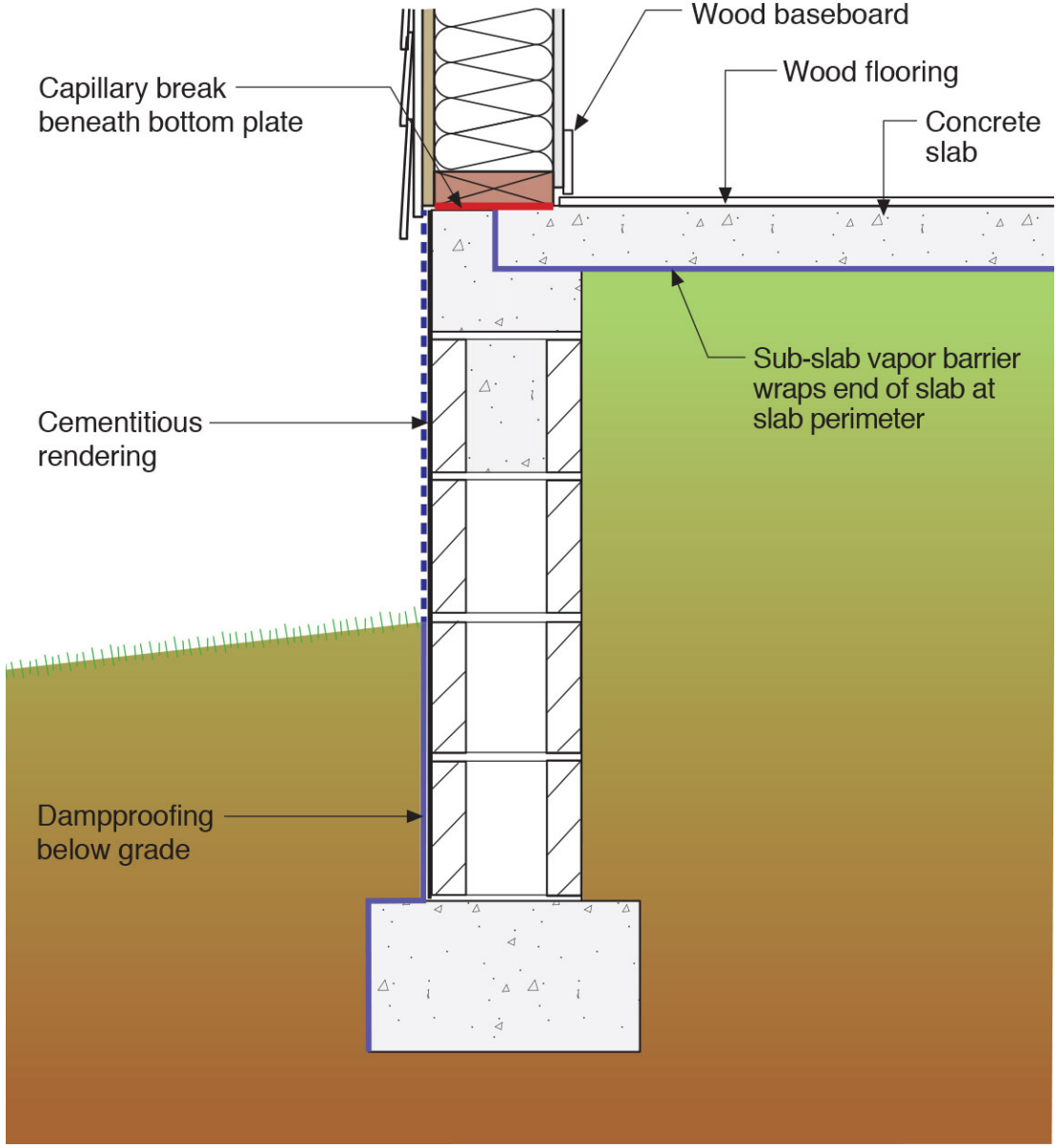

Wood baseboard
Wood flooring
Concrete slab
Sub-slab vapor barrier
Perimeter edge of slab not protected below grade
Ground saturated with water

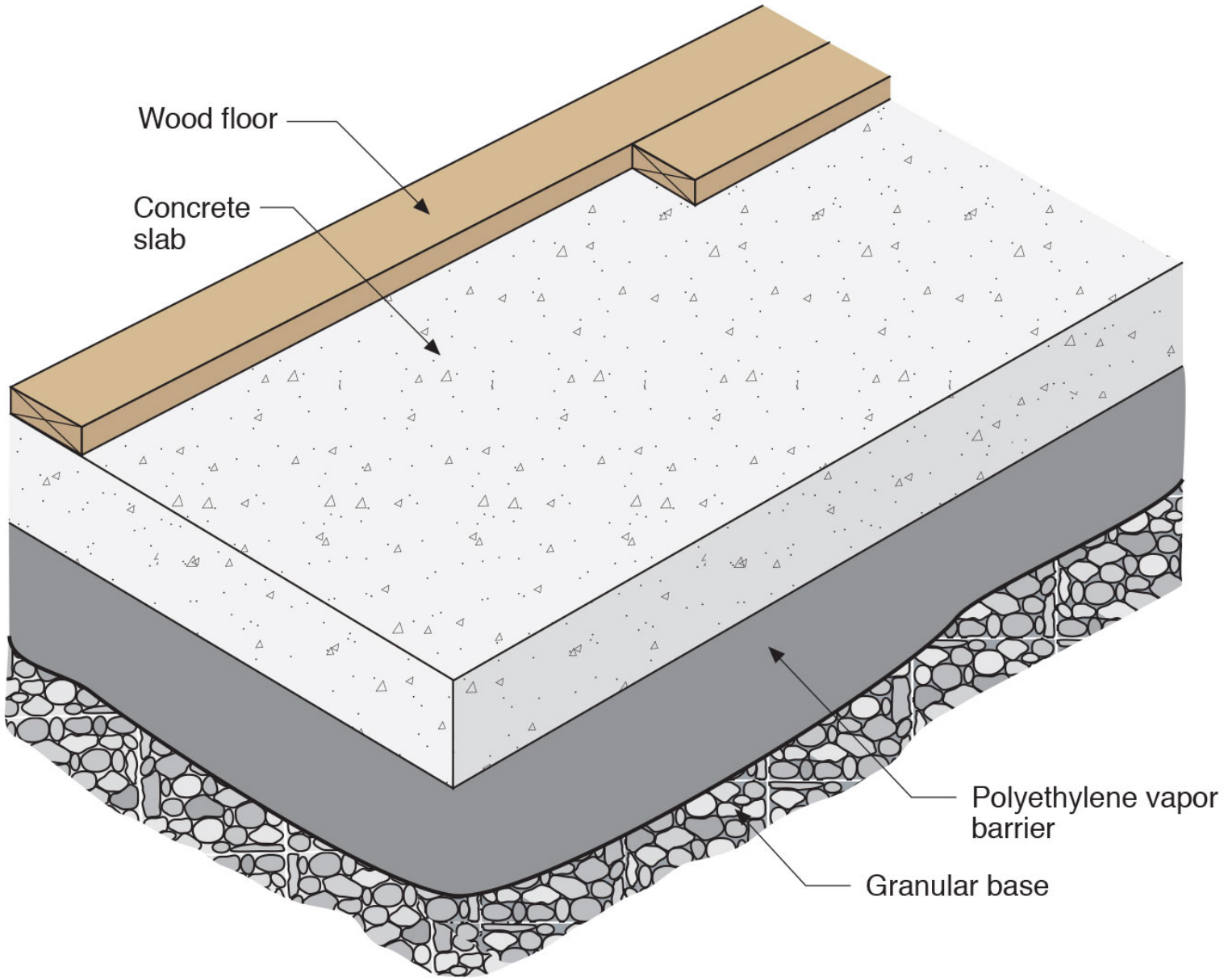

25
U-HAU
MOVE YOURSELF AND

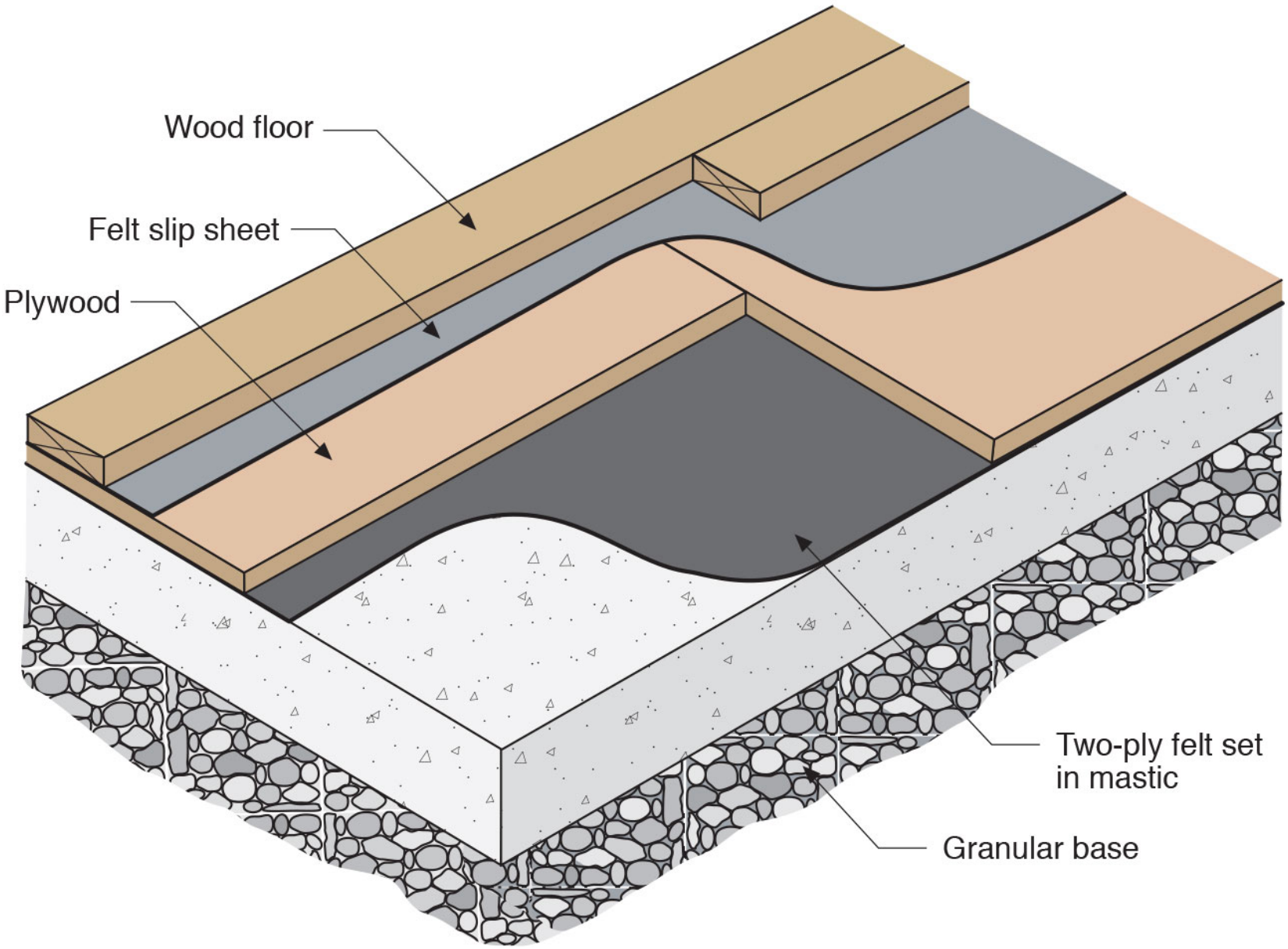

FORD


Wood baseboard
Wood flooring
Concrete slab
Perimeter of slab protected above grade
Perimeter edge of slab protected below grade
Sub-slab vapor barrier
Ground saturated with water

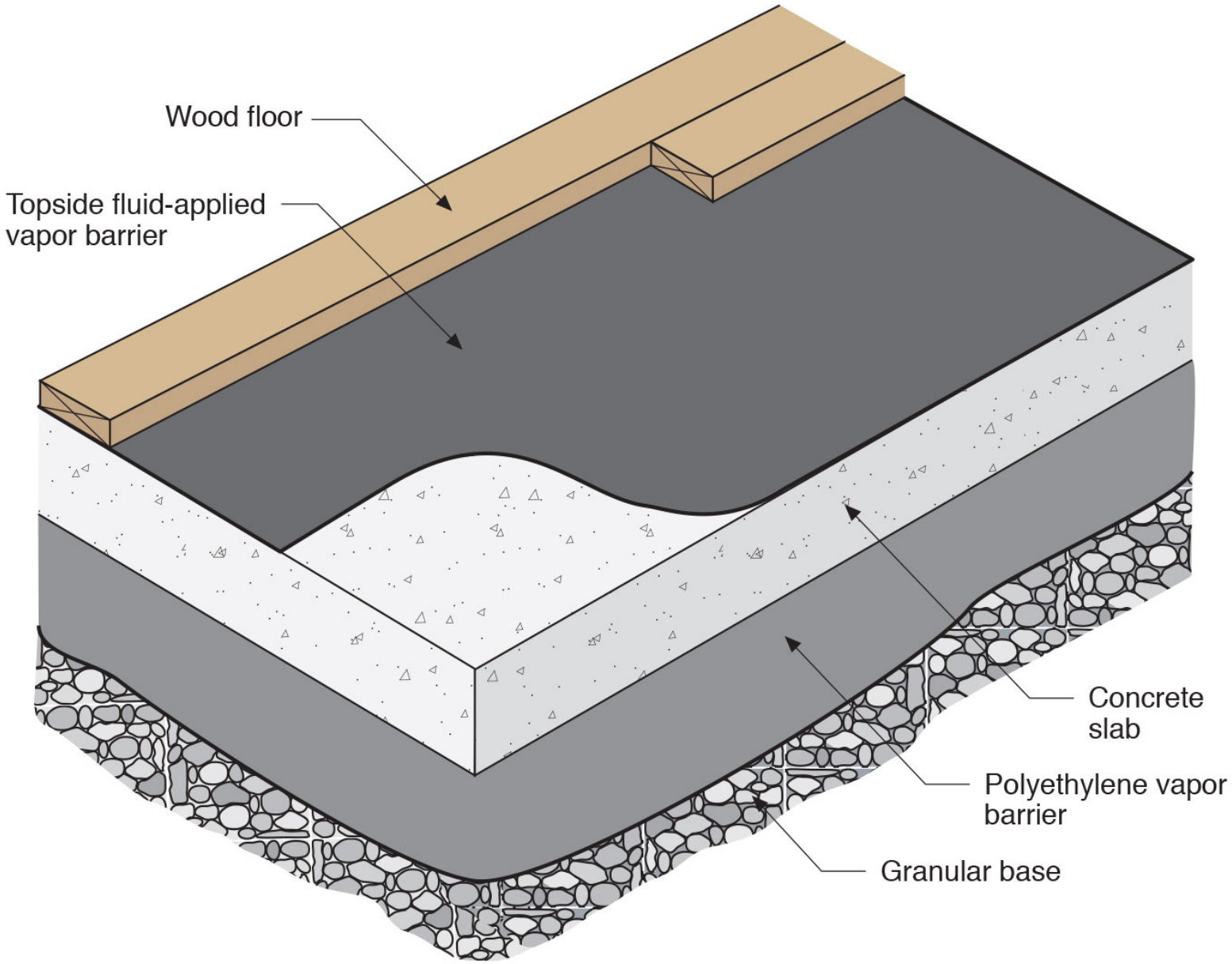

Capillary break under framing (polyethylene strip)
Latex paint (vapor permeable, but water repellent)
Polyethylene "skirt" attached to form; remains in place after form is removed
Capillary break (plastic/ polyethylene ground cover) extending under grade beam and upwards to grade


Wood baseboard
Wood flooring
Concrete slab
Capillary break beneath bottom plate
Sub-slab vapor barrier wraps end of slab at slab perimeter
Cementitious rendering
Dampproofing below grade

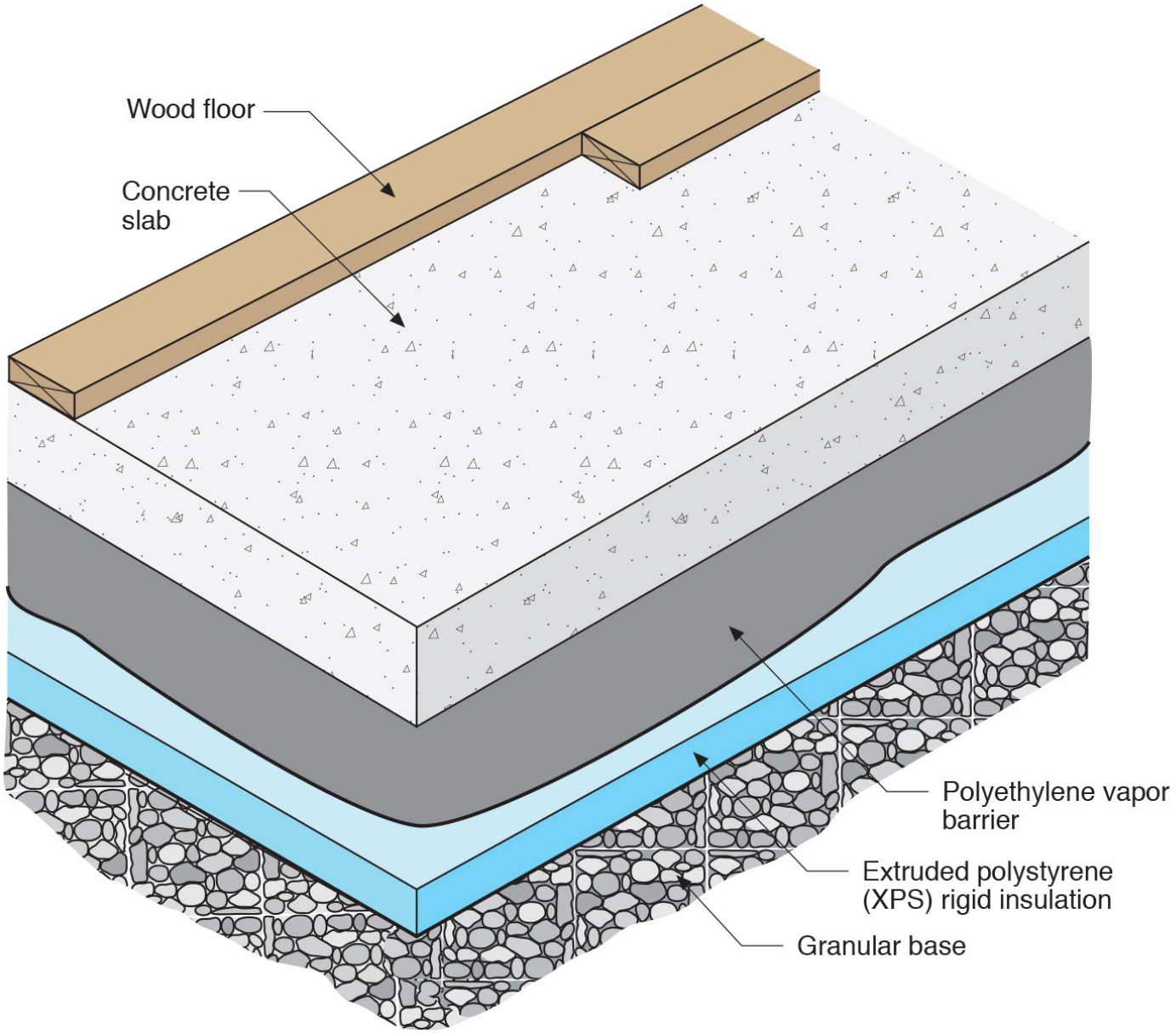

Wood floor
Concrete slab
Polyethylene vapor barrier
Granular base

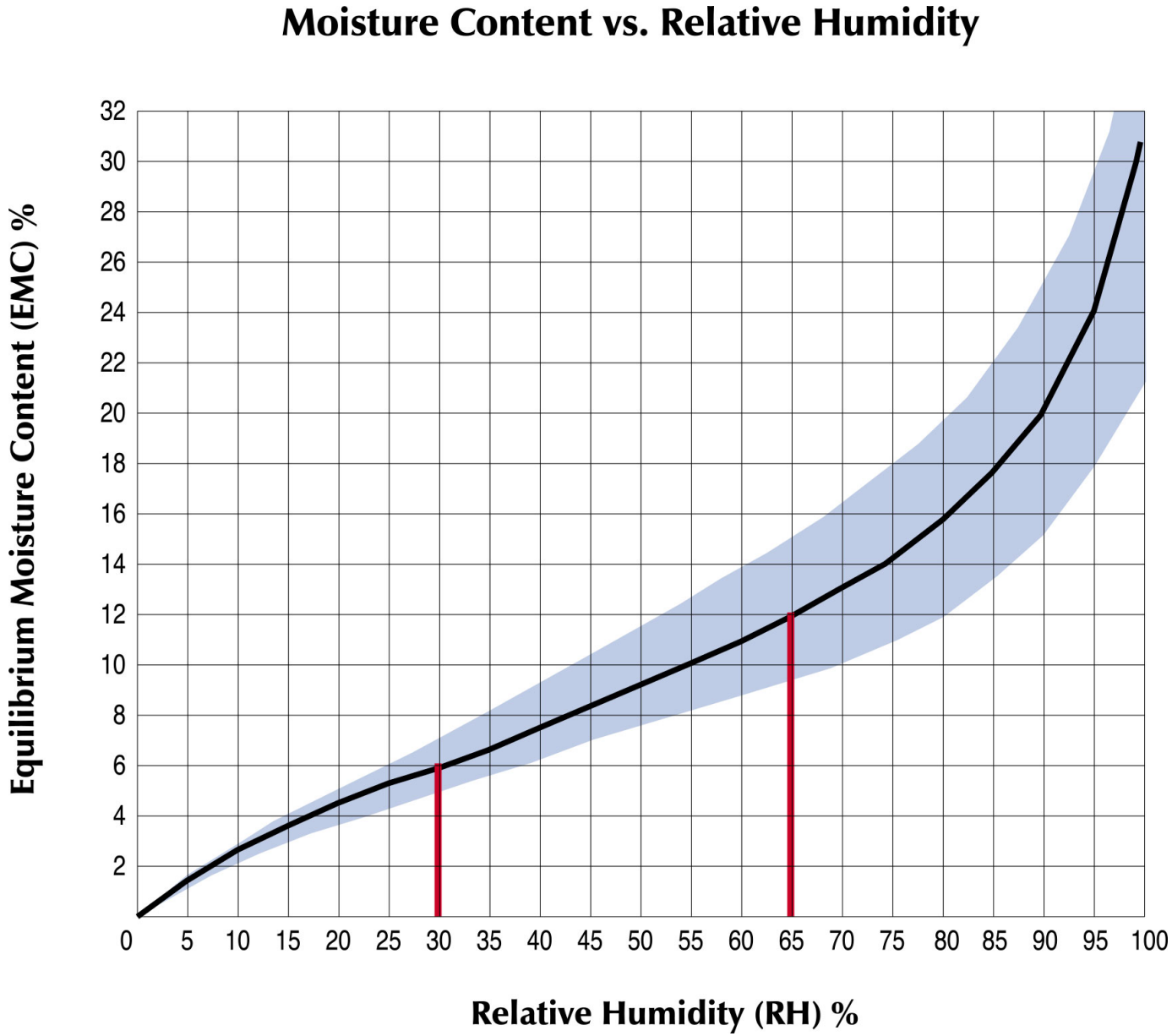

Wood floor
Felt slip sheet
Plywood
Two-ply felt set
in mastic
Granular base

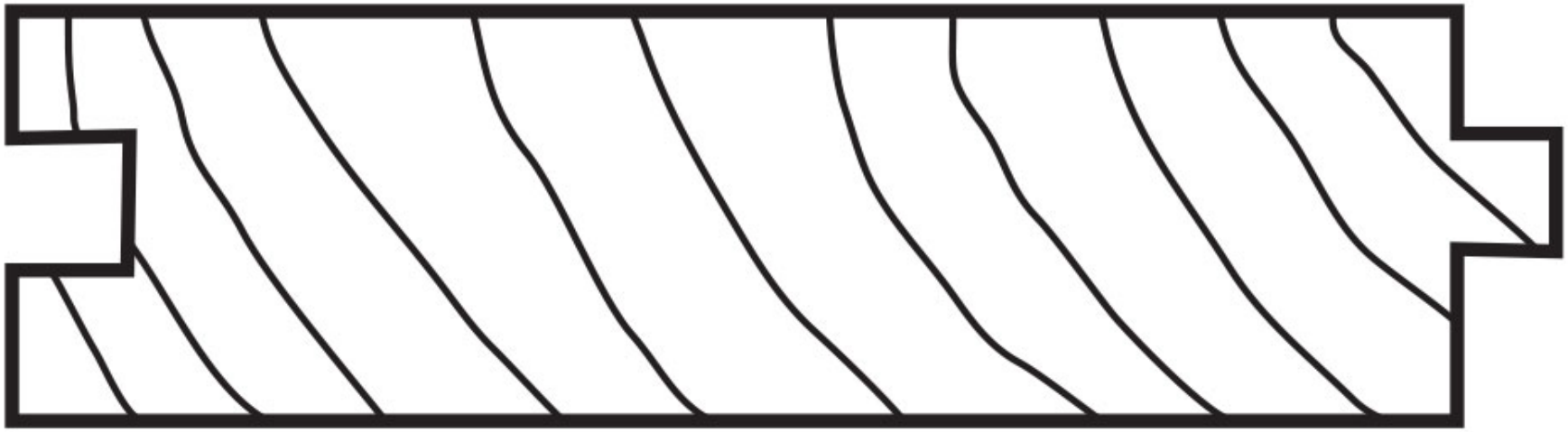

Shop-vac


Wood floor
Topside fluid-applied vapor barrier
Concrete slab
Polyethylene vapor barrier
Granular base


COLA

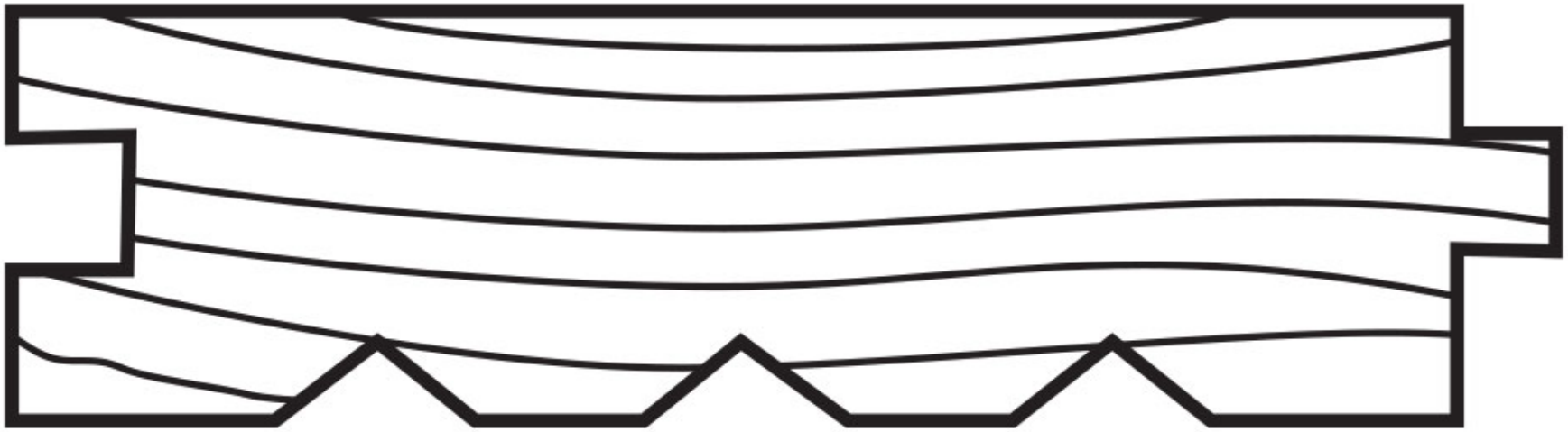

Wood floor
Concrete slab
Polyethylene vapor barrier
Extruded polystyrene (XPS) rigid insulation
Granular base


Moisture Content vs. Relative Humidity
Equilibrium Moisture Content (EMC) %
32
30
28
26
24
22
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
90
95
100
Relative Humidity (RH) %

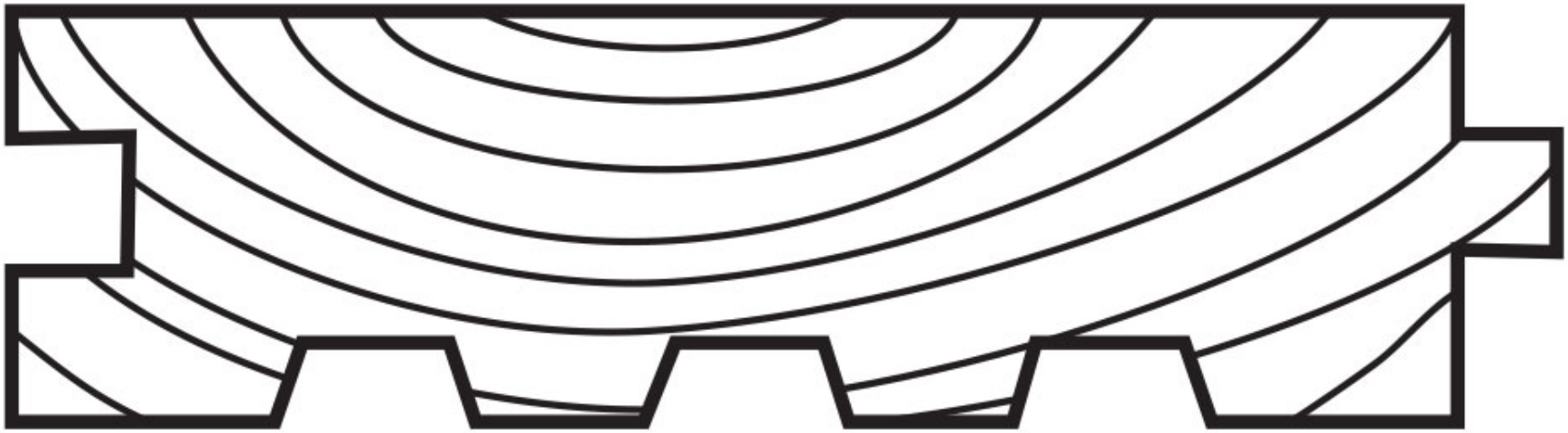


Plain

Hollow Back



Scratch Back



Hollow or Scratch Back