AIR FORMED ARCH CULVERT CONSTRUCTION CRAWFORD COUNTY

Final Report Iowa Highway Research Board Project HR-314

December 1995

Project Development Division

lowa Department of Transportation



TECHNICAL REPORT TITLE PAGE

REPORT NO.	2.	REPORT DATE
HR-314		December 1995
TITLE AND SUBTITLE	4.	TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED
Air Formed Arch Culvert Construction - Crawford County		Final Report, 9-88 to 12-95
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7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COOPERATING ORGANIZATIONS Capital Construction Company Crawford County Secondary Roads Department

8. ABSTRACT

Iowa's secondary road network contains nearly 15,000 bridges which are less than 12 m (40 ft) long. Many of these bridges were built several decades ago and need to be replaced. Box culvert construction has proven to be an adequate bridge replacement technique. An alternative to box culverts is the Air-O-Form method of arch culvert construction. The Air-O-Form method has several potential advantages over box culvert construction. The new technique uses inflated balloons as the interior form in the construction of an arch culvert. Concrete is then shotcreted onto the balloon form to complete the arch culvert.

The objective of research project HR-314 was to construct an air formed arch culvert to determine its applicability as an alternative county bridge replacement technique.

The project had the following results:

- The Air-O-Form method can be used to construct a structurally sound arch culvert.
- The method must become more economical if it is to complete with box culverts.

9. KEY WORDS

10. NO. OF PAGES

Air-O-Form Method Arch Culverts Bridge Replacement Culverts Inflated Balloon, Shotcrete

FINAL REPORT IOWA HIGHWAY RESEARCH BOARD PROJECT HR-314

AIR FORMED ARCH CULVERT CONSTRUCTION CRAWFORD COUNTY

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December 1995

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Page
Introduction	1
Objective	2
Project Description	2
Construction	3
Preculvert Work	5 5
Post Construction Observations	9
Field Review	10
Project Cost	10
Conclusions	1 0
Acknowledgements	11
Appendices	12
B. Materials Sources	12 14 16 19
E. Concrete/Shotcrete Testing	

DISCLAIMER

The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Iowa Department of Transportation and Crawford County. This report does not constitute any standard, specification or regulation.

INTRODUCTION

Iowa's secondary road network contains nearly 15,000 bridges which are less than 12 m (40 ft) long. Many of these bridges were constructed several decades ago and are now becoming either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

One method often used to replace such a bridge is to construct a single or multiple box culvert. This type of construction has proved to be an adequate replacement for bridges. However, box culvert construction can be expensive and time consuming. Construction is slowed because forms cannot be removed and reused until the poured concrete reaches an acceptable strength.

An alternative to box culverts is the Air-O-Form method of arch culvert construction. The Air-O-Form technique uses an air inflated balloon as the inside form for the construction of an arch shaped culvert. The balloon can be inflated quickly, saving time the contractor would otherwise spend forming the box culvert. The balloon used can also be made to fit a variety of shapes and sizes.

The arch shape offers several advantages over a box. First, the arch is structurally more efficient than the box. A culvert of greater strength can be constructed using less steel and concrete. Also, the arch can be hydraulically more efficient. A third advantage is the absence of a wall in the center of the structure such as found in multiple box culverts. This eliminates an obstruction and allows debris to flow through the structure.

The Air-O-Form method of arch culvert construction involves the following six steps.

- 1. Placement of a reinforced bottom slab or footing.
- 2. Placement of flexible metal straps in the desired shape of the arch and inflation of the balloon form. (The straps hold the balloon form in the desired shape.)
- 3. Placement of longitudinal and vertical steel reinforcement around the inflated form.
- 4. Adjustment of the air pressure inside the form to the required pressure.
- 5. Application of 150 mm (6 in) or more of shotcrete in one lift.
- 6. Deflation and removal of the balloon form once the shotcrete has gained the necessary , strength.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research project was to construct an air formed arch culvert to determine its applicability as an alternative county bridge replacement technique. Specific topics to be researched include:

- 1. The cost and time savings that may be realized using the air form technique.
- 2. The strength and durability properties of the shotcrete used in the structure.
- 3. The long term structural capacity of the arch.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The location selected (Figure 1) for installation of the air formed arch culvert was the eastern most of two bridges located on a granular surfaced road in Crawford County separating sections twelve and thirteen in Nishnabotna Township (12 & 13-82N-38W). The bridge it replaced could

no longer safely support the heavy farm equipment loads. Also, during heavy rains, the creek occasionally rose above the bridge deck making travel hazardous.

The arch culvert was designed to drain a 385 ha (950 acre) area in southeastern Crawford County. Hydraulic calculations showed a culvert end area of 10.2 m^2 (110 sq ft) was needed to carry the peak water flow from a 25-year flood. Based on this information, a semicircular arch having a 2.7 m (9 ft) radius and a culvert length of 16 m (52 ft) was needed to meet roadway width requirements.

CONSTRUCTION

Capital Construction Company, Inc. of Logan, Iowa was awarded the contract to construct the arch culvert. A copy of the contract is in Appendix A.

PreCulvert Work

Before the contractor began constructing the culvert, bridge removal and excavating work were required. The contractor began to remove the existing $7.3 \text{ m} \times 4.9 \text{ m} (24 \text{ ft} \times 16 \text{ ft})$ bridge and abutments on October 10, 1990 and all the excavation work was completed by October 16, 1990.

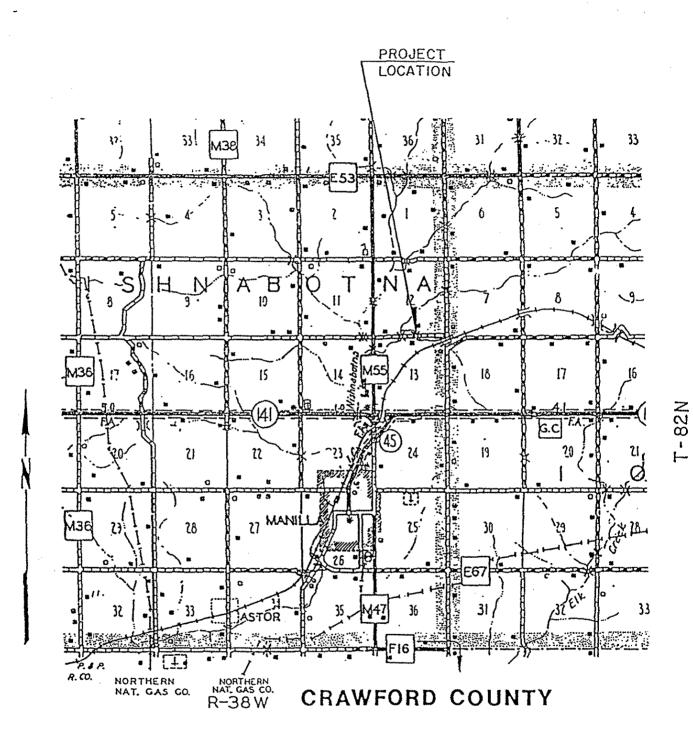


Figure 1 Project Location

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Culvert Floor and Curtain Walls

On October 22, 1990 the contractor began work constructing the arch culvert. Although the contractor had experience in other types of concrete work, this was the first experience of constructing a culvert by shotcrete, a pneumatically applied concrete mix. Forms for the inlet and outlet curtain walls were placed as well as the reinforcing steel for the pour made later in the day.

The following two days were spent placing the forms and reinforcing steel for the footing. With the steel in place on bar chairs and correctly spaced, the pour was made and later covered with wet burlap for proper curing.

Mix Design for Shotcrete

The original mix design gradation submitted was compared to American Concrete Institute (A.C.I.) 506.2-77 Rev 83 Part 2 Table 2.2.1 gradation No. 2 and was found to be low on material passing the No. 50 sieve and No. 100 sieve. This was pointed out to the shotcrete subcontractor. 45 kg (100 lbs) of fly ash was then added to improve the pumpability of the fine mix. According to the applicator, it is desirable to have 15-16% passing the No. 50 sieve and 4% passing the No. 100 sieve, or a minimum of 20% passing the No. 50 and No. 100 sieves combined. Materials sources are listed in Appendix B.

Due to the A.C.I. gradation demands and the availability of produced material that would provide the combined grading needed, mortar sand, concrete sand, and 13 mm (1/2 in) coarse

gravel were required in the mix. Hosteng Ready Mix Company, Denison, only had 2 bin capability for aggregate proportioning. The problem was solved by proportioning the mortar sand (60%) and concrete sand (40%) through the ready mix plant and blending them in a transit mixer. The pre-blended sand was then stockpiled for proportioning into the shotcrete mix along with the 13 mm (1/2 in) gravel using 70% blended sand and 30% 13 mm (1/2 in) gravel. The final gradations and mix design are given in Appendices C and D.

Samples of shotcrete were obtained at the transit mixer discharge chute prior to pumping and also from 760 mm x 760 mm (30 in x 30 in) shotcrete applied test panels that were 200 mm (8 in) thick. The samples were obtained from the shotcrete applied panels for the full depth of the application. All testing of the plastic concrete was then accomplished following Iowa Department of Transportation Instruction Memorandum (I.M.) testing procedures.

Comparisons were made between the air content of the shotcrete applied concrete and the air content of the shotcrete mix prior to pumping. The percent air loss due to application ranged from 1.2% to 1.5%. The same comparison was made for the slump change in the shotcrete. There was a range of 25 mm to 45 mm (1 in to 1 3/4 in) slump reduction in the applied shotcrete mix. Two test panels with reinforcing conforming to the design spacing were made up with shotcrete applied approximately 200 mm (8 in) thick. The first panel was evaluated for reinforcing embedment immediately after shotcrete was applied. This was accomplished by carefully removing the plastic concrete and visually inspecting for dense concrete around the reinforcing. The second test panel was allowed to set overnight. Two cores were then cut from

the panel. One core was through the reinforcing bars near their intersection and the second core was through a single reinforcing bar.

Visual examination showed very good embedment of the bars in both cores. Directly below the reinforcing bar intersection there appeared to be a reduction in coarse aggregate in the applied shotcrete. This was probably due to rebound loss of coarse aggregate striking the reinforcing during shotcrete application.

Arch Construction

Once the floor and curtain walls were completed, the contractor began work on the air formed arch.

The first step in this process was to bolt a perforated angle iron on each side of the floor at the location where the floor meets the arch. Metal straps were then cut to the desired length and attached to the angle irons through the perforations. The steel straps hold the inflated balloons in the desired arch shape. The contractor also widened and lengthened the excavated area to accommodate the 24 m (80 ft) long balloons.

After inflating both balloons, it was noticed that one had several holes, possibly caused by the reinforcing bars at the site, and the Air-O-Form subcontractor decided to use just one balloon for the arch shape. Consequently, the single balloon was expected to stretch 5% more than normal causing the sides of the balloon to roll away from the reinforcing cage. Plywood boards

placed along the sides provided a surface to shotcrete against, somewhat compensating for this problem.

After inflating the balloon to an air pressure of 5.7 kPa (0.83 psi), the contractor began placing reinforcing steel. Number 4 bars were used for longitudinal steel reinforcement and were placed at 190 mm (7.5 in) spacings. Number 5 bars were then used for transverse reinforcement and spaced 100 mm (4.0 in) apart. The reinforcement was set away from the balloons by strings of steel chairs placed around the arch. The entire operation, from positioning the deflated balloons to finishing placing the reinforcing steel, took two days. Once the steel was in place the arch was ready to be shotcreted.

On Thursday, November 1, 1990 the arch culvert was shotcreted. Two crews consisting of a nozzleman and blow pipe operator worked on opposite sides of the arch in order to keep the weight of the shotcrete evenly distributed around the balloon. Shotcrete was applied full depth approximately 2.1 m (7.0 ft) high along the length of the culvert. A two hour set-up time was allowed for this first section and then the top of the culvert was completed by shotcreting from a mobile platform. The entire process took approximately eight hours.

Crawford County and Iowa DOT personnel were present and performed testing throughout the shotcreting operation. Test results are listed in Appendix E.

After the arch was completed, the contractor applied a white pigment curing compound by Dayton Superior and covered the arch with insulated blankets. The balloon was kept inflated while the arch developed enough strength to support itself. A determination was made by

Crawford County to keep the balloon inflated until a shotcrete compressive strength of 11,720 kPa (1700 psi) was reached as determined from cylinders made at the beginning of the shotcreting operation. This requirement was met in one day, and on November 2, 1990 the balloon was deflated and removed.

Work on excavation for the east culvert headwalls began on November 5, 1990. It was slow going as a result of light rain, snow and muddy conditions at the site over a period of days. The contractor worked on moving the temporary 250 mm (10 in) P.V.C. culvert utilized in diverting the running creek water in order to excavate material for construction of the west culvert headwalls. With the forming and reinforcement in place, the headwalls were poured and covered with insulated blankets. The county then backfilled the culvert with a mix of dry dirt and gravel, compacting it with the aid of a bulldozer. The project was completed on November 21, 1990.

POST CONSTRUCTION OBSERVATIONS

After the balloon was removed, the interior of the arch could be observed. Two relatively large cracks had already appeared, one on each side of the arch approximately 2.1 m (7.0 ft) above the floor. These cracks ran nearly the length of the culvert. One reason may be that these cracks were the result of cold joints which formed while the first shotcrete sequence was allowed to set-up and harden. Another explanation could be that the shotcreting operation was done at more of an angle than should have been done, because the work platform could not extend properly from where it was located, and this inhibited the blow pipe operator from doing his job

well. These defects should not damage the structural integrity of the arch. Since any load applied would result in compression of the concrete, the horizontal cracks should close. These cracks were subsequently repaired with a non-shrinking grout.

FIELD REVIEW

Visual examinations were performed on the Air-O-Form arch culvert annually. The examinations found the culvert to be structurally sound. The cracks that were formed during construction show some staining from water seepage (see photo 7 and 8 in Appendix F). The culvert allows free flow of water and debris. Photo 9 in Appendix F shows the culvert in July of 1993. Note the lack of debris or blockage of flow in the culvert and streambed.

PROJECT COST

The contract price for the Air-O-Form semicircular arched culvert was \$51, 673. The culvert was 16 m (52 ft) long with a 2.7 m (9 ft) radius. The price included the footing and headwall. A copy of the contract and bid prices is in Appendix A, page 12.

CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this research was to demonstrate the applicability of the Air-O-Form method of arch culvert construction. In this respect, the project was successful. However, the claim of being faster and less costly than normal box culvert construction techniques were not met. The contractors bid was more than \$10,000 over the cost estimate for a similar sized box culvert. One possible reason for the higher cost may have been the research nature of the

project; this was only the second Air-O-Form arch culvert built in the state of Iowa and both culverts were built by different contractors. The Air-O-Form method may be more economically favorable for larger diameter and longer culverts. The strength and durability properties of the shotcrete used in the structure were acceptable. However, precautions should be taken so cold joints will not form during construction. The arch culvert has provided good service to date. The long-term structural capacity of the arch appears to be good, but only time will allow an accurate estimate of design life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project was sponsored by Crawford County and the Iowa Department of Transportation through the Iowa Highway Research Board. Partial funding for this project was from the Secondary Road Research Fund in the amount of \$16,500.

The authors wish to extend appreciation to the Crawford County Board of Supervisors and the Iowa DOT for their support in developing and conducting this project. The Crawford County and Iowa DOT Northwest Iowa Transportation Center inspection personnel, Capital Construction Company, and Concepts in Concrete also deserve recognition for the extra effort put forth on this project.

Appendix A Contract

	CONTRACT		,	
Kir of Work Single Arch Air-O-Form Culvert	Miles			
Project NoLC-28-13N73-24	County	Crawfor	d	······································
THIS AGREEMENT made and entered by and between	Crawford		County, low	a, by its Board of Supervisors
consisting of the following members: Virgil E. Anderson	n, Don Jensen,			John P. Lawler,
and Eileen Heiden				. , Contracting Authority, and
Capital Constr. Co., Inc. P.O. Box 168 SE 8th Avenue	_ ofLog	jan, Iowa	51546	. Contractor.

WITNESSETH: That the Contractor, for and in consideration of Fifty-one Thousand Seven Hundred Sixty-three & 00/100

Dollars (<u>51,763.00</u>) payable as set forth in the specifications constituting a part of this contract, hereby agrees to construct in accordance with the plans and specifications therefore, and in the locations designated in the notice to bidders, the various items of work as follows:

item No.	tiem.	Quentity	Unit Price	Amount
1.	Concrete, Structural Footing & Headwall	65.8 Cu.Yds	\$ 180.00	\$11,844.00
2.	Concrete, Structural, Arch	36.2 Cu.Yds	670.00	24,254.00
3.	Excavation, Class 10 Channel	300 Cu.Yds	3.00	900.00
4.	Excavation, Class 20	480 Cu.Yds	7.00	3,360.00
5.	Granular Material, Placement Only	71 Tons	3.00	213.00
6.	Mobilization	Lump Sum	2,000.00	2,000.00
7.	Piling,Steel Sheet	435 Sq.Ft.	10.00	4,350.00
8.	Steel,Reinforcing, Footing & Headwall	5,870 Lbs.	0.40	2,348.00
9.	Steel, Reinforcing, Arch	6,235 Lbs.	0.40	2,494.00
	TOTALS			\$51,763.00

Said specifications and plans are hereby made a part of and the basis of this agreement, and a true copy of said plans and specifications are now on file in the office of the County Auditor under date of September 11, 1990_____

That in consideration of the foregoing, the Contracting Authority hereby agrees to pay the Contractor, promptly and according to the requirements of the specifications the amounts set forth, subject to the conditions as set forth in the specifications.
That it is mutually understood and agreed by the parties hereto that the notice to bidders, the proposal, the specifications for Project No. LC-28-13N--73-24

in ______ Crawford _____ County, lows, the within contractor's bond, and the general and detailed plans are and constitute the basis of contract between the parties hereto.

Thel is in further understood and agreed by the parties of this contract that the above work shall be commenced and completed on or before:
Approximate Starting Date Specified Starting Date Specified Completion Date

07-26-91 30

That time is the essence of this contract and that said contract contains all of the terms and conditions agreed upon by the parties hereto.

It is further understood that the Contractor consents to the jurisdiction of the courts of lows to hear, determine and render judgement as to any controversy arising hereunder.

2nd October 10 day of Approved: IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION 9 \mathcal{U} Contracts Engi 1990 OCT 1 1 Dat

Crawford County, towa cting Authority α Chairman construction Co. Inc.

Number of Working Days

Appendix B Material Sources

AGGREGATES

Туре	Iowa DOT Prod. Spec.	Specific <u>Gravity</u>	Iowa DOT Source No.	Source Name
Mortar Sand	4112-2	2.64	A-81504	Hosteng Conc. & Gravel, Auburn, IA
Concrete Sand	4110-1	2.67	A-81528	Carnarvon Sand & Gravel, Wall Lake/ Pittman
1/2" Gravel	4115 *	2.70	A-81502	Hallett Materials, Lake View

*Gradation used in pre-cast pipe production

1 inch = 25.4 mm

Water Reducer

CEMENT

Material	AASHTO <u>Type</u>	Specific <u>Gravity</u>	Producer
Fly Ash	C	2.55	Port Neal 4, Sioux City, IA
Portland Cement	I	3.14	Monarch Cement Co.

ADMIXTURES

Material	Brand	Producer				
Air Entraining	Prokrete AES	Prokrete Ind. Lot No. 25359				

Prokrete N-3

Prokrete Ind. Lot No. 25359 Prokrete Ind. Lot No. 25360

Appendix C Aggregate and Sand Gradations

*BLENDED SAND GRADATIONS (60% mortar sand, 40% concrete sand)

	Percent Passing Sieve							
Sieve	Mortar	Concrete	Calculated Blend	Blended Sample				
<u>Size</u>	Sand	Sand	Gradation	Gradation				
3/8"	100	100	100	100				
4	100	100	100	100				
8	100	82	93	94				
16	96	60	82	83				
30	61	33	50	52				
50	20	9.4	16	16				
100	1.9	0.8	1.4	2.6				
200	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.7				

1 inch = 25.4 mm

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*Proportion by weight through ready mix plant. Mixed in a transit mixer and stockpiled as a blended sand.

COMBINED AGGREGATE GRADATION

Sample Identification	Pe	rcent Pa	ssing S	Sieve					
Sieve Size	<u>1/2"</u>	<u>3/8"</u>	_4	8	<u>16</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>200</u>
A.C.I. 506.2-77, Rev.83 Part 2, Table 2.2.1 #2	(min.) (max.)	90/ 100	70/ 85	50/ 70	35/ 55	20/ 35	8/ 20	2/ 10	
Contractor's gradation proposal	100	92	70	64	56	34	11	1.0	0.3
(1) Test mix sample proportioned sample	100	94	71	65	56	34	10	2.0	1.1
(2) Test mix, sample of shotcrete recovered aggregate	100	94	66	62	52	31	9.1	2.0	1.3
(3) Project acceptance proportioned sample	100	96	71	66	58	36	11	2.5	0.8
(4) Project assurance proportioned sample	100	95	71	66	58	36	12	2.1	0.7

1 inch = 25.4 mm

- 1. Individual sand and gravel proportioning plant samples taken October 31, 1990 were mathematically combined using 70% blended sand and 30% 13 mm (1/2 in) gravel.
- 2. Sample was secured from shotcrete applied to a test panel October 31, 1990. Cement and material passing the 200 mesh sieve was washed from the plastic shotcrete sample. The remaining aggregate was tested for gradation using standard I.M. procedures.
- 3. Proportioning plant mathematically combined sample test results. Sampled November 1, 1990 by Crawford County personnel.
- 4. Split sample verification of acceptance sample tests run by Iowa DOT Materials personnel. Mathematically combined results of blended sand and 13 mm (1/2 in) gravel.

Appendix D Mix Design

	Absolute	Specific	Dry I		
<u> </u>	Volume	Gravity	Wt.(lb/cy)) (kg/m)	Note
Blended Sand	0.44840	2.65 Avg.	2002	1190	(1)
1.3 cm (1/2 in) Gravel	0.18932	2.69	858	509	
Cement	0.14215	3.14	752	446	
Fly Ash Type C	0.02328	2.55	100	59	(2)
Water	0.13685	1.000	230	136	(3)
Air Content	0.06000				
Water Reducer		Nga Agram		3 oz/100 lb (89 ml/45 k	

(1) Blended sand: 60% mortar sand, Sp.Gr. 2.64 & 40% concrete sand, Sp.Gr. 2.67.
 (2) Fly ash added to improve pumping.
 (3) Water/cement plus fly ash ratio 0.27 lb/lb

Appendix E Concrete/Shotcrete Testing

COMPRESSIVE STRENGTH

Shotcrete Test Cylinder Strength Results 15 cm x 30 cm (6 in dia. x 12 in 0)

		Conc.					-
Sample	Plastic	(2)Slump	Date	Date	Age	Stre	ngth
<u>I.D,</u>	<u>(1)Air%</u>	Inch	Made	Tested	(day)	(PSI)	(MPa)
Transit Mix	c discharge prio	r to pumping (Io	wa DOT test)				
CB-1	5.9	2.0	11-1-90	11-29-90	28	6610	45.6
CB-2	3.7	2.0	11-1-90	11-29-90	28	600	4.1
CB-3			11-1-90	11-29-90	28	5720	3 9.4
						6100	42.1
11+6.				••••	• • • • •	0100	74.1
Shotcrete a	pplied to vertica	al panel (Iowa D	OT test)				
CB-4	4.4(3)	1.0(3)	11-1-90	11-29-90	28	6380	44.0
CB-5	(5)		11-1-90	11-29-90	28	6130	42.2
CB-6			11-1-90	11-29-90	28	6050	41.7
				* * * * * * * *		6190	42.7
Transit mix	discharge prior	to pumping (co	ntractor test rea	sults)			
3A			11-1-90	11-2-90	1	2510	17.3
3B			11-1-90	11-8-90	7	5230	36.1
3C			11-1-90	11-15-90	14	5660	39.0
3D			11-1-90	11-29-90	28	6300	43.4
(1) Loss of	of air content du	e to shotcrete ap	plication 1.5%				
		shotcrete applica					

(2) Loss of slump due to shotcrete application 25 mm (1.0 in)
(3) Sample removed from applied shotcrete and tested according to Iowa DOT Standard I.M.'s.

1 inch = 25.4 mm

FLEXURAL STRENGTH

Flexural Beam Strength Results

Material Sample Location	Sample I.D.	Plastic Air%	Conc. Slump Inch	Date Made	Date Tested	Age <u>(day)</u>		ength) (kPa)
Transit mixer discharge prior to pumping (Iowa DOT test)	BT-1 BT-2	5.9 5.9	2.0 2.0	11-1-90 11-1-90	11-3-90 11-8-90	2 7	560 780	3850 5390
*Shotcrete applied to vertical panel (Iowa DOT test)	BM-1 BM-2	4.4 4.4	1.0 1.0	11-1-90 11-1-90	11-3-90 11-8-90	2 7	560 720	3850 4960

*Material for flexural beams was obtained from shotcrete applied concrete. Beams were made and tested according to Iowa DOT I.M. test procedures.

1 inch = 25.4 mm

CORE COMPRESSIVE STRENGTH SHOTCRETE CORE TEST STRENGTH RESULT

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	I.D. or	Plastic	Conc. Slump	Hardened Conc.	Date	Date	Age	Strength	
Material Sample Location	Lab No.	<u>Air %</u>	Inch	Air %	Placed_	Tested	<u>(Day)</u>	<u>(PSI)</u>	(MPa)
Cores from vertical shot-	35-11-1	4.4	1.0	4.3	11-1-90	11-29-90	28	7350	50.7
crete panel (Iowa DOT	35-11-2				11-1-90	11-29-90	28	6640	45.8
test)	35-11-3				11-1-90	11-29-90	28	7180	49.5
	Avg	• • • • •			• • • • •	• • • • •		7057	48.7
Contractor secured core from concrete arch culvert	#1				11-1-90	11-29-90	28	4030*	27.8

*Steel reinforcing bar in core -- test result is invalid.

1 inch - 25.4 mm

Appendix F Photographs

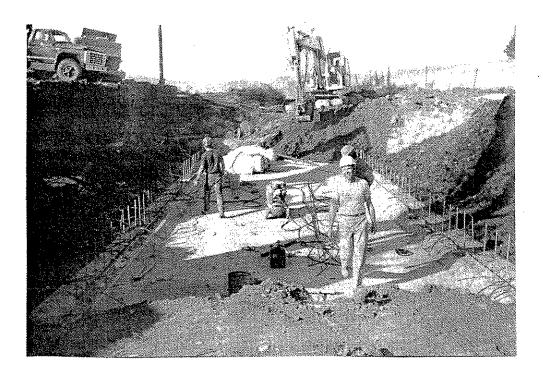


Photo 1: Metal band installation prior to balloon inflation



Photo 2: Reinforcing steel placement on inflated balloon

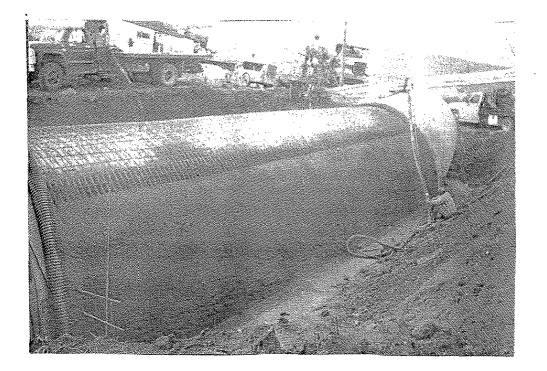


Photo 3: First stage of shotcreting operation

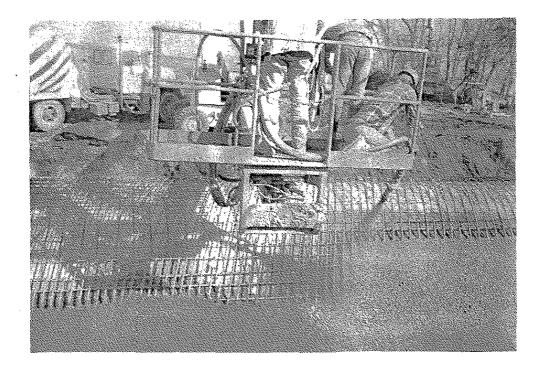


Photo 4: Completing shotcreting operation

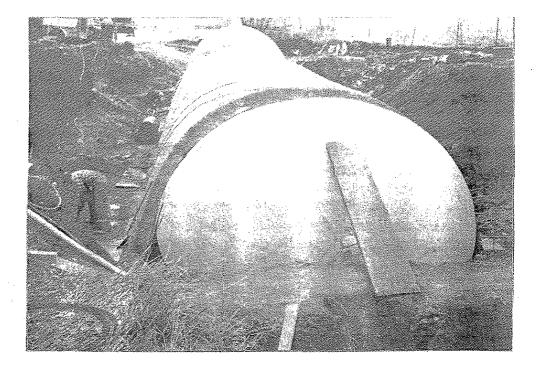


Photo 5: Concrete arch culvert in place

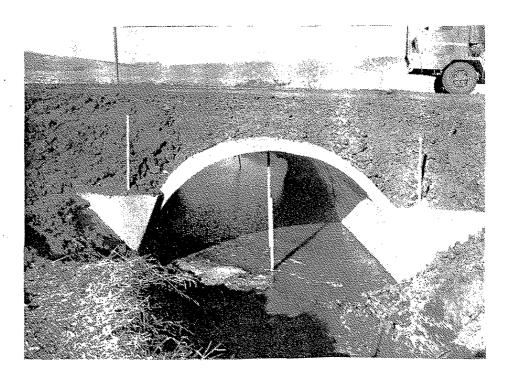


Photo 6: Finished arch culvert with backfill

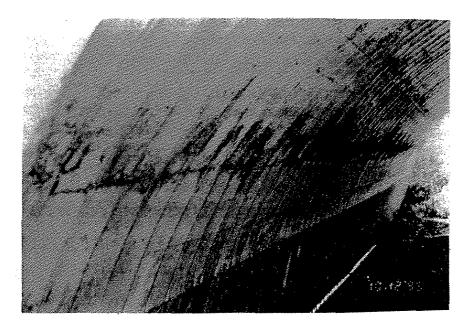
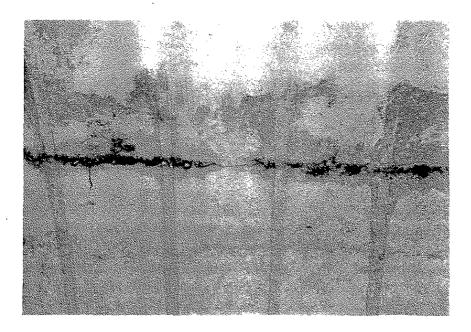


Photo 7: Cold Joint Crack on East Side of Culvert



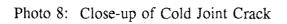




Photo 9: Arch Culvert, July 1993