



Designation: B738 – 13 (Reapproved 2018)

Standard Specification for Fine-Wire Bunch-Stranded and Rope-Lay Bunch-Stranded Copper Conductors for Use as Electrical Conductors¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation B738; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This specification covers bare bunch-stranded and rope-lay bunch-stranded conductors made from round copper wires finer than No. 40 AWG with diameters less than 0.0031 in. (.078 mm), either coated or uncoated with tin or silver, for use as electrical conductors. (Explanatory [Note 1](#)).

1.2 The values stated in inch-pound units are to be regarded as standard. The values given in parentheses are mathematical conversions to SI units that are provided for information only and are not considered standard.

1.2.1 *Exceptions*—The SI values for density and temperature are to be regarded as standard.

1.3 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

[B33](#) Specification for Tin-Coated Soft or Annealed Copper Wire for Electrical Purposes

[B49](#) Specification for Copper Rod for Electrical Purposes

[B172](#) Specification for Rope-Lay-Stranded Copper Conductors Having Bunch-Stranded Members, for Electrical Conductors

[B174](#) Specification for Bunch-Stranded Copper Conductors for Electrical Conductors

[B193](#) Test Method for Resistivity of Electrical Conductor Materials

[B258](#) Specification for Standard Nominal Diameters and

[Cross-Sectional Areas of AWG Sizes of Solid Round Wires Used as Electrical Conductors](#)

[B298](#) Specification for Silver-Coated Soft or Annealed Copper Wire

[B354](#) Terminology Relating to Uninsulated Metallic Electrical Conductors

3. Classification

3.1 For the purposes of this specification, the following classifications have been assigned (Explanatory [Note 2](#)):

3.1.1 *Type*:

3.1.1.1 *Type B*—Bunch-stranded conductors.

3.1.1.2 *Type R*—Rope-lay bunch-stranded conductors.

3.1.2 *Class*:

3.1.2.1 *Class R*—Stranded conductors using wire 42 AWG (0.0025).

3.1.2.2 *Class S*—Stranded conductors using wire 44 AWG (0.0020).

3.1.2.3 *Class T*—Stranded conductors using wire 46 AWG (0.00157).

3.1.2.4 *Class U*—Stranded conductors using wire 48 AWG (0.00124).

3.1.2.5 *Class V*—Stranded conductors using wire 50 AWG (0.00099).

3.2 Detailed information on Type B Conductors is found in [Table 1](#) and [Table 2](#). Detailed information on Type R Conductors is found in [Table 3](#) and [Table 2](#).

4. Ordering Information

4.1 Orders for materials under this specification shall include the following information:

4.1.1 Quantity of each size, class, and type,

4.1.2 *Conductor size*—circular-mil area, dc resistance ([7.1](#)) or AWG ([5.2.1](#)),

4.1.3 Class and type (Section [3](#)),

4.1.4 Whether coated or uncoated; if coated, designate type of coating ([6.1](#)); if silver coated, the minimum thickness of silver ([6.1.2](#)), and whether tarnish protection is desired ([11.3](#)),

4.1.5 Maximum length of lay ([5.2.4](#)), if required,

4.1.6 Temper ([6.2](#)),

4.1.7 Separators, if required ([5.2.2](#)),

4.1.8 Package size ([11.1](#)),

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

TABLE 1 Classification of Type B Bunch-Stranded Conductors

Class	Wire Diameter, in. ^A	Conductor Sizes, AWG
R	0.0025 (No. 42 AWG)	24,26,28,30,32,34
S	0.0020 (No. 44 AWG)	26,28,30,32,34,36
T	0.00157 (No. 46 AWG)	28,30,32,34,36,38
U	0.00124 (No. 48 AWG)	30,32,34,36,38,40
V	0.00099 (No. 50 AWG)	32,34,36,38,40

^A Sufficient quantities of wires of these diameters shall be used to form conductors having cross-sectional areas approximately equal to the AWG conductor sizes listed.

- 4.1.9 Special package marking, if required (Section 10), and
 4.1.10 Place of inspection (Section 9).

4.2 In addition, Supplementary Requirements shall apply only when specified by the purchaser in the inquiry, contract, or purchase order for direct procurement by agencies of the U.S. Government.

5. Materials and Manufacture

5.1 The material shall be copper of such quality and purity that the finished product shall have the properties and characteristics described in this specification. Material meeting the requirements of Specification B49 is such a material.

5.2 Construction:

5.2.1 *Cross-Sectional Area*—The cross-sectional area, number, and diameter of wires for a variety of strand constructions in general use are shown in Table 2.

5.2.2 *Separators*—If a separator is required to be furnished with the conductor, it shall be specified by the purchaser at the time of the order as to the requirements for the kind and thickness of material and its application details.

5.2.3 Joints:

5.2.3.1 Necessary joints in wires shall be made in accordance with accepted commercial practice.

5.2.3.2 Joints shall be so constructed and so disposed throughout the conductor that the diameter or configuration of the completed conductor is not substantially affected, and that the flexibility of the completed conductor is not adversely affected.

5.2.4 Lay:

5.2.4.1 Conductors of the same size and description furnished on one order shall have the same lay.

5.2.4.2 The direction of the lay of bunch-stranded conductors shall be at the option of the manufacturer unless otherwise specified by the purchaser.

5.2.4.3 Unless otherwise specified by the purchaser, the length of the lay of bare or coated bunch-stranded conductors shall conform to the requirements of Table 4.

5.2.4.4 The direction of the lay of the outer layer of rope-lay stranded conductors shall be lefthand, unless otherwise specified by the purchaser.

5.2.4.5 The length of the lay of the outer layer of rope-lay stranded conductors shall be not less than 8 or more than 16 times the outside diameter of the completed conductor. The length of the lay of the wires composing the bunch-stranded members shall be not more than 30 times the diameter of the member.

6. Physical Properties

6.1 *Wire Coating*—When coated, the coating of the wires of the stranded conductor, before stranding, shall conform to the requirements of 6.1.1 or 6.1.2.

6.1.1 Tin coating shall conform to the coating requirements of Specification B33.

6.1.2 Silver coating shall conform to the minimum thickness requirements of the purchase document. Minimum thickness shall be determined using the method for determining plating thickness described in Specification B298.

6.1.3 The finished diameter and mass of the coated wires used shall be substantially equal to those of the uncoated wires of the same class.

6.2 *Temper*—Unless otherwise specified, all coated conductors shall be furnished in the annealed temper. Uncoated conductors may be furnished either annealed or unannealed as ordered (see 4.1.6).

NOTE 1—The term unannealed as used in this specification means cold-worked conductor as produced on commercial wire-drawing machines.

6.3 *Tensile Strength and Elongation*—The stranded conductor, in its finished form, shall conform to the following:

Finished State	Tensile Strength, min.		Elongation, min.
	psi	MPa	10 in. %
Unannealed	40 000	275	...
Annealed	...	...	10

7. Electrical Properties

7.1 *DC Resistance*—The dc resistance in $\Omega/1000$ ft of the bunch-stranded conductor shall not exceed the appropriate values specified in Table 5. The dc resistance in $\Omega/1000$ ft of the rope-lay bunch-stranded conductor shall not exceed the appropriate values specified in Table 6 (Explanatory Note 3 and Note 4).

8. Test Methods

8.1 *Coating*—Tests to determine conformance of the coating to the requirements of Specification B33 or Specification B298 shall be performed on the individual wires before stranding (see 6.1.1 to 6.1.3).

8.2 Tensile Strength and Elongation:

8.2.1 Tests to determine conformance to the tensile strength and elongation requirements of 6.3 shall be made on the finished stranded conductor.

8.2.2 Determine tensile strength, T_s , expressed in pounds per square inch as follows:

$$T_s = \frac{L}{A}$$

where:

L = maximum load on the stranded conductor during the tension test (see Explanatory Note 6), lbs, and

A = original cross-sectional area of the stranded conductor, in.² (see 8.2.3).

8.2.3 The original cross-sectional area of the stranded conductor shall be considered to be the cross-sectional area of the individual wire calculated from the nominal wire diameter (see

TABLE 2 Construction Requirements of Bunch-Stranded and Rope-Lay Bunch-Stranded Conductors^A

Nominal Area, cmil	Size, AWG	CLASS R		CLASS S		CLASS T		CLASS U		CLASS V	
		Minimum Number of Wires 0.0025 in. in Diameter (No. 42 AWG)		Minimum Number of Wires 0.0020 in. in Diameter (No. 44 AWG)		Minimum Number of Wires 0.00157 in. in Diameter (No. 46 AWG)		Minimum Number of Wires 0.00124 in. in Diameter (No. 48 AWG)		Minimum Number of Wires 0.00099 in. in Diameter (No. 50 AWG)	
		Type ^B B	Type ^C R	Type B	Type R	Type B	Type R	Type B	Type R	Type B	Type R
2580	16	...	...	...	665	...	...	...	...	...	...
1620	18	...	...	...	413	...	...	...	...	...	...
1020	20	...	168	...	259	...	...	...	...	...	...
640	22	...	105	...	168	...	...	...	...	...	...
404	24	65	...	...	105	...	168	...	...	...	...
253	26	41	...	65	...	...	105	...	168	...	...
159	28	26	...	40	...	65	...	...	105	...	168
100	30	16	...	25	...	40	...	65	...	...	105
64	32	10	...	16	...	25	...	40	...	65	...
40	34	7	...	10	...	16	...	25	...	40	...
25	36	...	...	7	...	10	...	16	...	25	...
16	38	...	...	...	...	7	...	10	...	16	...
10	40	...	...	...	...	...	...	7	...	10	...

^A This table shows a variety of strand constructions useful and generally adequate to meet the needs encountered. It is not intended that the constructions listed in this table be exclusive of other constructions that may appear durable in certain applications employing the same number of wires. The constructions shown in this table provide for a finished, noncovered, stranded conductor approximately of the area indicated. When specified by the purchaser, usually to provide additional area to compensate for draw-down during subsequent processing, the number or size of wires composing the uncovered conductor may be increased as required.

^B Type B Bunch-Stranded Conductors.

^C Type R Rope-Lay Bunch-Stranded Conductors.

TABLE 3 Classification of Type R Rope-Lay Bunch-Stranded Conductors^A

Class	Wire Diameter, in. ^B	Conductor Sizes, AWG
R	0.0025 (No. 42 AWG)	20,22
S	0.0020 (No. 44 AWG)	16,18,20,22,24
T	0.00157 (No. 46 AWG)	24,26
U	0.00124 (No. 48 AWG)	26,28
V	0.00099 (No. 50 AWG)	28,30

^A Rope-lay bunch-stranded conductors 7 by bunch-stranded members.

^B Sufficient quantities of wires of these diameters shall be used to form conductors having cross-sectional areas approximately equal to the AWG conductor sizes listed.

supplied package. Use a white card (as a background) to ascertain if any base metal is exposed through a break in the coating. Detection of any base metal constitutes rejection.

8.6 Examination for Workmanship of Finished Uninsulated Stranded Conductor—A visual inspection with 10× magnification and a white background shall be performed on a conductor sample taken from the top of the supplied spool. The sample shall be a minimum of 12 in. (30 cm) in length. The outer surface of all stranded constructions shall be examined.

Detection of excessive exposed base metal due to the stranding process, such as indications along one side of the sample due to excessive localized abrasion during stranding, constitutes rejection. Continuous lines or patterns of exposed base metals constitute rejection. Small, random point failures shall not be cause for rejection.

9. Inspection

9.1 Unless otherwise specified in the contract or purchase order, the manufacturer shall be responsible for the performance of all inspection and test requirements specified.

9.2 All inspection and tests shall be made at the place of manufacture unless otherwise especially agreed upon between the manufacturer and the purchaser at the time of purchase.

9.3 The manufacturer shall afford the inspector representing the purchaser all reasonable manufacturer’s facilities to satisfy him that the material is being furnished in accordance with this specification.

10. Product Marking

10.1 The net mass, length (or lengths, and number of lengths, if more than one length is included in the package), size designation, type of conductor, purchase order number, and any other marks required by the purchase order shall be marked on a tag attached to the reel and, optionally, to the end of the conductor inside of the package. The same information,

Table 5 and Table 6) multiplied by the number of wires in the stranded conductor (Explanatory Note 6).

8.2.4 Determine the elongation of the specimen as the permanent increase in length, expressed in percent of the original length, due to the breaking of the specimen in tension, by measurements made between the jaws of testing machine. The zero length shall be the distance between the jaws at the start of the tension test, and shall be as near 10 in. (250 mm) as practicable. The final length shall be the distance between the jaws at the time of rupture. The fracture shall be between the jaws of the testing machine and not closer than 1 in. (25 mm) to either jaw.

8.3 Electrical—Tests to determine conformance to the electrical resistance requirements of 7.1 shall be made on the finished stranded conductor in accordance with Test Method B193 (Explanatory Note 3).

8.4 Other Requirements—For the purpose of calculating mass, cross-sectional area, and so forth, the density of the coated copper shall be taken as 8.89 g/cm³ (0.32117 lb/in.³) at 20°C (Explanatory Note 5).

8.5 Examination for Workmanship of Finished Uninsulated Stranded Conductor—A visual inspection with the unaided eye shall be performed on the outer layer of the conductor on the