



Designation: F2444 – 04

Standard Practice for Damage Prevention of Bearings, and Bearing Components Through Proper Handling Techniques¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers requirements for the handling of all bearings and bearing components.

1.2 This is a general practice. The individual bearing handling requirements shall be as specified herein or as specified in the contract or purchase order. In the event of any conflict between requirements of this practice and the individual bearing requirements of an OEM drawing, procurement specification, or other specification, the latter shall govern. Many companies, organizations, and bearing users have excellent facilities, equipment, and knowledgeable personnel for handling bearings. The thrust of this practice is for users that do not have this knowledge of bearings.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ABMA Standard:*²

[ABMA 1 Terminology](#)

2.2 *ISO Standards:*³

[ISO 14644-1 Cleanrooms and Associated Controlled Environments—Part 1: Classification of Air Cleanliness \(DOD Adopted\)](#)

[ISO 14644-2 Cleanrooms and Associated Controlled Environments—Part 2: Specifications for Testing and Monitoring to Prove Continued Compliance with ISO 14644-1](#)

[ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems—Requirements](#)

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee F34 on Rolling Element Bearings and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee F34.03 on Preservation, Cleaning and Packaging.

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² Available from American Bearing Manufacturers Association (ABMA), 2025 M Street, NW Suite 800 Washington, DC 20036.

³ Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036.

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of terms used in this practice, refer to ABMA 1.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 This practice covers bearings and bearing components of all material compositions and grades. It may be used to develop a process for adequately handling bearings.

4.2 Unless the proper conditions of an adequate facility, equipment, and trained personnel are available, it may be better not to inspect the bearings in-house. The danger of contaminating and damaging the bearings may be much greater than the possibility of receiving bearings that will not function.

4.3 Bearings are easily damaged at the customers' receiving and test areas. In most cases, bearings should be accepted based on the bearing manufacturer's certification. Certificates of quality (conformance) supplied by the bearing manufacturer may be furnished in lieu of actual performance of such testing by the receiving activity of the bearings. The certificate shall include the name of the purchaser, contract number/PO number, name of the manufacturer or supplier, item identification, name of the material, lot number, lot size, sample size, date of testing, test method, individual test results, and the specification requirements.

4.4 This practice does not cover clean room requirements of miniature and instrument precision bearings. These bearings require clean room environments in accordance with ISO 14644-1 and ISO 14644-2.

5. Reasons for Not Handling Bearings

5.1 When bearings are received, the following questions must be asked:

5.1.1 What amount of inspection checks will be performed on the bearings? Do we need to do any checks?

5.1.2 What will it cost to establish and maintain equipment and facilities to inspect and test bearings?

5.1.3 What is the established history of the bearing? If there has never been a rejection, is inspection warranted?

5.1.4 What type of test is required and how detailed is it?

5.1.4.1 Rough spin,

5.1.4.2 Destructive,

- 5.1.4.3 Nondestructive (NDT),
- 5.1.4.4 Disassembly,
- 5.1.4.5 Test requires recleaning, relubrication, and repackaging of the bearings,
- 5.1.4.6 Test requires a clean room environment,
- 5.1.4.7 Dimensional, or
- 5.1.4.8 Performance.
- 5.1.5 What type of documentation is required?
- 5.1.6 Are trained personnel available?
- 5.1.7 Are adequate equipment and facilities available?
- 5.1.8 Do we have knowledge of the bearing manufacturer's quality system?

6. Equipment and Facilities

6.1 The list below provides some conditions that must be considered by the bearing user. The bearing user must determine if they have the necessary in-house capability to perform inspections and tests of bearings.

6.2 It is recommended that the bearing areas have a controlled environment.

6.3 The construction of the bearing handling areas should be made of materials that do not lend themselves to accumulating dust. It is recommended that plastic materials or other non-shedding materials be used for walls and ceilings. The floors should be of a material that will not require waxing, has very few seams if any, and a non-abrasive surface.

6.4 Bearing handling areas should be away from doors and windows to prevent dust from entering the area when the doors or windows are opened.

6.5 The room must be well-lit.

6.6 Containers with covers are recommended for use during inspection and tests of bearings. Racks, trays, and handling containers should be made of glass, solvent resistant plastic, or non-magnetic materials.

6.7 Tweezers and tongs should have blunt points and rounded edges, and be made of non-magnetic stainless steel. Other suitable materials may be used.

6.8 Compressed air, if any is used in the room for gauging, cleaning, or drying bearings, should be filtered and dehydrated.

6.9 Inspection equipment required would depend on what and how much inspection is to be performed. It could consist of microscopes for visual inspection, air gages for checking bores and outside diameters, electronic or mechanical gages for checking width, and special gages for checking radial play, torque, axial play, and preload. Not all of these gages are used on all bearings. Many of these tests can only be performed at the manufacturer's facility. Many dimensions can only be checked as component parts. These are made before the bearings are assembled.

7. Training of Bearing Personnel

7.1 All personnel handling bearings shall be trained and must demonstrate the ability to perform visual inspections of bearings. This training shall be documented on the employee training record.

7.2 The training may be divided into two parts. Classroom training may be Part I and performance training may be Part II.

7.3 Personnel must complete all of the training requirements.

7.4 The bearing supplier is responsible for performance of all of the testing and inspection requirements. The receiving activity may use assigned certified personnel and equipment or any other suitable facility with trained personnel in the performance of the acceptance tests or inspections.

8. General Handling Rules (Recommended Precautions)

8.1 Never touch bearings with the bare hands. Acid moisture deposited by fingers will corrode bearings, and particles of skin on the surface of the bearings are very hard to remove. Use tweezers, tongs, powder free rubber gloves, and finger cots.

8.2 A bearing should never be placed directly on a contaminated surface.

8.3 The use of headgear or hairnets is recommended to protect the bearings from hair contamination.

8.4 Personnel handling bearings should change their personal clothing when it becomes soiled or contaminated by solid or liquid materials.

8.5 Personnel should wear shoes or boots that are free of dirt or other contamination. Shoe brushes may be provided in these areas so that footwear can be cleaned.

8.6 Personal items such as jackets, sweaters, papers, food, or drinks should not be in areas of close proximity to the bearings.

8.7 Lint-free rags and cloths should be used when cleaning bearings

8.8 No smoking is allowed in any inspection, test, or assembly area where bearings are handled.

8.9 No paper should be allowed to touch bearings because of possible contamination from paper lint. Some paper is also acidic and could cause corrosion. The use of non-shedding paper is desirable for making notes and recording data. Plastic document protectors may be used to enclose paper documentation such as routing tickets, labels, etc.

8.10 No erasers or rubber bands should be permitted around bearings. These items are a source of particulate contamination.

8.11 Personnel should use ballpoint pens.

8.12 Personnel handling bearings should wash and dry hands frequently, especially after eating or smoking.

8.13 Do not carry tweezers or other working equipment in pockets. Pockets are a large source of contamination. Garments without pockets are desirable.

8.14 Clean all gages and working equipment before using.

8.15 Use only clean containers for holding bearings. Be careful not to use a container that may have held bearings with a different lubricant.

8.16 The use of abrasive paper around bearings is not recommended.

8.17 Table tops and workbenches should be cleaned with lint free cloths or sponges and appropriate cleaner.

8.18 Dust-proof cabinets may be used for storing bearings. No paper products should be allowed in the dust cabinets. Inkpads and stamps should not be placed in dust cabinets.

8.19 Fans should not be permitted in areas where bearings are handled.

8.20 Appropriate hand lotions containing moisturizers may be used in any of the bearing handling areas.

8.21 Areas should be kept neat and orderly. There should be covered trash containers available for disposal of waste products.

8.22 Bearings and components released by machines must be controlled to prevent damage.

8.23 If components or bearings drop on the floor, they must be inspected.

8.24 When emptying components into another container, prevent sharp hitting.

8.25 Components and bearings must be handled with care during measurements.

8.26 When removing components from tumblers, do not pour or drop components.

8.27 Place components gently into containers between machining operations.

8.28 Components segregated for regrind are to be handled just as acceptable items.

8.29 Do not shake, drop, or move containers abruptly.

8.30 Place components and bearings in baskets by layering with dividers.

8.31 During operations that may generate agitation, use caution to avoid part movement.

8.32 During placement and removal of containers from carts and wagons, handle gently.

8.33 Items subject to corrosion during fabrication or storage require special processing.

8.34 Preserve and package items in controlled areas as required.

8.35 Ensure that all bearings and components are properly identified at all times.

9. Preparation for Inspection

9.1 Bearings are easily damaged at the customer's receiving inspection or test area. The damage is usually caused by the lack of training on how to properly handle bearings.

9.2 Bearings should be brought into a suitable inspection area in the smallest unit container that has the complete marking and identification information.

9.3 Shipping and intermediate containers, if applicable, should be removed before the bearings are brought to the inspection area.

9.4 Do not open more vials or packages than are required to obtain the inspection sample.

9.5 Care should be taken so that plastic particles are not a source of contamination when vials must be cut open with razor blades, knives, or other sharp-edged instruments.

9.6 All bearing packages should be thoroughly cleaned on the outside to remove contamination. Cut plastic bags containing bearings with a razor blade or scissors.

9.7 When bearings are serialized, care must be taken to prevent any mix up. The same care needs to be taken on bearings that are coded or classified in any manner.

9.8 When separable bearings are being inspected, care should be taken not to interchange the inner and outer races, as they are usually matched. If the races become mixed, the bearings must be scrapped.

9.9 One of the first operations in preparing for inspection of bearings should be demagnetization. Magnetized bearings are highly susceptible to contamination. The manufacturer will demagnetize the bearings before shipping, but they will pick up magnetism en route. There are several types of demagnetizers available, but precautions should be taken in their proper use to insure the operator does not actually magnetize the bearings. The demagnification should be verified with a gaussmeter. A maximum of 5 gauss is recommended.

10. Sampling

10.1 Sampling for visual and dimensional testing of bearings and bearing components shall be done in accordance with the purchase order or contract. The unit of product for sampling purposes shall be one bearing as applicable. Acceptance number shall be zero for all sample series unless otherwise specified.

10.2 Remember that "each" handling operation detracts from the quality of the bearing. The benefits to be obtained from sampling are: less damage to the bearings caused by handling, reduction of inspection errors caused by fatigue and a reduced inspection time. Personnel performing the inspection and testing shall meet the specific training requirements of the organization.

11. Receiving Inspection

11.1 Handling of all bearing components and bearing assemblies requires care, patience, knowledge, and common sense.

11.2 Use clean, burr-free tools that are designed for the job. The tools should not be painted or metal-plated. Use non-magnetic tools for miniature and instrument bearings.

11.3 Bearings should not be removed from the original packaging until they are ready for inspection, test, or use.

11.4 Protect unwrapped bearings by keeping them covered and dry at all times.

11.5 Miniature bearings, miniature precision bearings, and instrument bearings must be handled in a clean room environment.

11.6 Containers used for components and assemblies should be designed to avoid dents, nicks, and part-to-part impact. Size, type, and weight are important considerations when selecting containers for storage and movement of parts.

11.7 Assembled bearings shall be handled individually at receiving. Packaged bearings shall be removed from the packaging and placed in tote bins for inspection. Bearings shall be moved to other areas in the tote bins or may be individually placed in bags, vials, or racks. Bulk handling may be suitable for bearings 30 mm or less in diameter. All larger bearings shall be individually handled.

11.8 Inspect bearings using the unaided eye. Higher magnification is normally allowed to evaluate defects.

11.9 Plated, coated, and dry-film lubricated parts such as rings, retainers, and cages may require special handling. The manufacturer does not have these manufacturing processes in-house very often. Typically, the process supplier shall return the parts in the same containers that they received them in. Consideration must be given to the vibration the parts will receive from transport and handling. After inspection, the parts shall be returned to the appropriate packing to prevent unwanted part-to-part contact.

12. Dimensional Inspection and Performance Tests

12.1 Personnel performing the dimensional inspection and performance testing shall meet the training requirements of the organization.

12.2 The facility and environment conditions must be determined prior to performing measurements and other tests.

12.3 Segregate acceptable bearings from non-acceptable bearings and mark or tag accordingly.

12.4 All bearings and bearing components that are rejected must have disposition such as: return to vendor, rework, repair, scrap, or other.

12.5 Certain bearings have extremely thin radial ring sections that can be easily be deformed by testing gage loads. A maximum gage pressure must be established for all mechanical gage measurements. The user is strongly advised to obtain specific correlation with each bearing supplier when using a gage load.

12.6 Bearings should never be hammered or forced on test arbors or test fixtures. This can produce brinelling, race cracking, and damage to retainers.

12.7 All bearings being tested should be lubricated to prevent damage.

12.8 Extreme caution should be used any time a bearing has a load placed on it on a test fixture. Any loading of a bearing that is cocked on the fixture will tend to produce brinelling in the races.

12.9 Caution should be used any time a bearing is placed on or removed from the test fixture to prevent scratches in any critical areas.

12.10 If the proper conditions of facility, equipment and trained personnel are not available, it may be better to not inspect the bearings. The danger of contamination and damaging the bearings may be greater than the possibility of receiving defective bearings.

13. Disassembly

13.1 Properly trained personnel should be used for disassembly of bearings.

13.2 Use proper disassembly puller tools for removal of bearings from shafts and housings. Never use hammers, and avoid sharp blows to the bearings.

13.3 Make sure that bearing rings are removed evenly from shafts and housings to prevent cocking and distortion. This can damage the bearings or the assembly.

13.4 When removing bearings, clean the surrounding surfaces first. Isolate the used bearings and inspect them carefully before being reused or reprocessed. Make sure that bearings are free of heavy dirt and foreign contamination before placing them into containers.

13.5 Bearing containers will be provided in the disassembly area to keep bearings identified and segregated, and also to keep them from falling or hitting each other, causing additional damage.

13.6 Matched sets of bearings should be identified by tagging to keep bearings as a matched set.

13.7 Rolling elements such as balls, rollers, needles, and so forth shall be placed in plastic vials, plastic bags, cardboard boxes, or a similar container that will not cause damage because of part-to-part contact. The large rolling elements are extremely sensitive to bulk transfers and storage and must be suitably segregated from each other to prevent damage. Plastic mesh should be used if the components are layered.

14. Assembly

14.1 Properly trained personnel should be used for assembly of bearings.

14.2 Use proper assembly presses and heat in techniques to assemble bearings. Never use hammers, and avoid sharp blows to the bearings.

14.3 Make sure that bearing rings are started evenly on shafts or in housings to prevent cocking and distortion. This can damage the inspection equipment, bearings, and equipment.

14.4 Apply force only to the ring being press fitted. Never strike the outer ring to force the inner ring onto the shaft. Unusual force may cause brinelling that results in high torque, noisy operation, and shortened bearing life.

14.5 Assemble only clean parts that are free of burrs and raised metal.

14.6 When installing bearings, clean the surrounding surfaces first. Inspect the bearings carefully for damage before installing.

14.7 Bonded molded rubber seals shall be inspected before installation to insure that there is no binding and distortion of the rubber.

14.8 Bearings moved to the assembly area shall be placed in the original packaging or in plastic vials, plastic bags, or a similar container that will not cause damage.

15. Cleaning

15.1 Bearings must be cleaned by a controlled process. Bearings shall be demagnetized before cleaning to remove small steel particles that may adhere to the bearing surface.

15.2 Never use chlorinated solvents such as carbon tetrachloride or chloroform as cleaners.

15.3 Do not spin the assembled bearings during cleaning to avoid bearing damage. Also, caution should be taken in using ultrasonic cleaning to avoid bearing damage.

15.4 After cleaning, corrosion prevention shall be required for all corrosive-type materials because the protective oil has been removed.

15.5 The following rules are recommended:

15.5.1 Do not wash more bearings or bearing components than can be processed within 30 min.

15.5.2 Do not handle product with bare hands. Use tweezers, powder free latex gloves, or finger cots.

15.5.3 Dip the bearings and bearing components in protective lubricant at completion of inspection or test.

15.5.4 All parts reprocessed through wash must be relubricated or preserved within 30 min of wash.

15.5.5 Never leave parts dry for more than 30 min.

15.6 Stamped metal parts such as retainers, shields, seals, and wires that are susceptible to shape, flatness, roundness, or straightness problems should be cleaned by a process that will not cause damage to the components.

16. Lubrication

16.1 Lubrication of bearings is very critical. It would be preferred to purchase the bearings already lubricated to specification by the manufacturers who have the proper equipment and trained personnel.

16.2 Lubricants should be filtered. This must be done with caution to prevent removal of some of the important additives in the lubrication such as oil lubricants.

16.3 Use bearing quality lubricants. Keep the bearings clean during lubricating operations and covered between operations and after fully lubricated.

17. Packaging and Package Marking

17.1 The bearings shall be cleaned, dried, preserved and packaged in accordance with a controlled process. The level of preservation and packaging shall protect the bearings until the next process or operation.

17.2 The number of bearings or bearing components per unit container shall be in accordance with the customer requirement.

17.3 In addition to any special identification marking required by the customer, each unit pack, intermediate, and exterior container should be marked in accordance with the best commercial practice.

18. Bearing Storage

18.1 Bearings which are to be stored after inspection, waiting to be issued to production, must be stored in a suitable area.

18.2 It is recommended to issue the bearings with the oldest date first. This minimizes the possibility of corrosion and the aging of the lubricant while in storage.

18.3 Bearings that have long-term storage without being cleaned or relubricated should have a lubrication shelf life established to determine when the bearings will need to be cleaned and relubricated. In some cases, it may be advisable to return the bearings to the manufacturer for cleaning and relubrication.

18.4 Plated, coated and dry-film lubricated parts such as rings, retainers, and cages may require special storage. The size and weight of the parts is important to determine the appropriate container that will be used. The parts may be individually wrapped, placed in plastic mesh or sleeves, placed in plastic tubes, placed in plastic totes with compartments, packed in sealed poly bags, or layered with dividers and filler material to prevent damage.

19. Keywords

19.1 ball bearing; bearing rolling elements; plain bearing; roller bearing

APPENDIX

(Nonmandatory Information)

X1. HANDLING CHECKLIST

X1.1 This appendix is intended for guidance only. Checklists of this nature cannot be prepared that will cover all operations in all facilities in a comprehensive manner. Elements should be added or deleted from the checklist to reflect the actual control requirements in a given facility.

X1.2 The checklist is structured such that “YES” is the preferred answer; however, “YES” may not be appropriate in all areas. Judgment must be exercised to establish the specific requirements.

X1.3 To assist the user in quickly finding the specific topic of interest, the following subject index is provided:

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