



Designation: E1961 – 06

Standard Practice for Mechanized Ultrasonic Testing of Girth Welds Using Zonal Discrimination with Focused Search Units¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E1961; 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 practice covers the requirements for mechanized ultrasonic examination of girth welds. Evaluation is based upon the results of mechanized ultrasonic examination. Acceptance criteria are based upon flaw limits defined by an Engineering Critical Assessment (ECA) or other accept/reject criteria defined by the Contracting Agency.

1.2 This practice shall be applicable to the development of an examination procedure agreed upon between the users of this practice.

1.3 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. The inch-pound units given in brackets are for information only.

1.4 *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 The following documents form a part of this practice to the extent specified herein:

- 2.2 *ASTM Standards*:²
- E164 Practice for Contact Ultrasonic Testing of Weldments
 - E317 Practice for Evaluating Performance Characteristics of Ultrasonic Pulse-Echo Testing Instruments and Systems without the Use of Electronic Measurement Instruments
 - E1316 Terminology for Nondestructive Examinations
- 2.3 *ASNT Standard*:³

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E07 on Nondestructive Testing and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E07.06 on Ultrasonic Method.

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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.

³ Available from The American Society for Nondestructive Testing (ASNT), P.O. Box 28518, 1711 Arlingate Ln., Columbus, OH 43228-0518.

ASNT Practice SNT-TC-1A Personnel Qualification and Certification in Nondestructive Testing

ANSI/ASNT-CP-189 Standard for Qualification and Certification of Nondestructive Testing Personnel

2.4 *Military Standard*:

MIL-Std-410 Nondestructive Testing Personnel Qualification and Certification⁴

2.5 *API Standard*:

API STD-1104 Welding of Pipeline and Related Facilities⁵

2.6 *CSA Standard*:

CSA Z-662 Oil and Gas Pipelines Systems⁶

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*:

3.1.1 Definitions relating to ultrasonic examination, that appear in Terminology E1316 shall apply to the terms used in this practice.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard*:

3.2.1 *acceptance criteria*—definition of acceptable/rejectable flaws as defined by an Engineering Critical Assessment (ECA), such as defined in CSA-Z662 or API 1104, or workmanship criteria as defined by the contracting agency.

3.2.2 *contract document*—any document specified in the contract between the contracting agency and contractor, including the purchase order, specification, drawings or other written material.

3.2.3 *contracting agency*—a government agency, prime contractor or subcontractor procuring ultrasonic examination services.

3.2.4 *contractor*—the nondestructive examination contractor engaged by the contracting agency in work covered by this practice.

3.2.5 *mapping type presentations*—an ultrasonic image presentation whereby the digitized A-scan signal is represented as

⁴ Available from Standardization Documents Order Desk, Bldg. 4 Section D, 700 Robbins Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19111-5094, Attn: NPODS

⁵ Available from American Petroleum Institute, 1220 L Street, Northwest, Washington, DC 20005.

⁶ Available from Canadian Standards Association, 178 Rexdale Boulevard, Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada M9W 1R3.

colors or grayscale for amplitude variation along one axis representing time of flight and the other axis is the sampling position, or the distance along the weld.

3.2.6 *operator(s)*—the term “operator(s)” as used in this practice shall mean the operator(s) of ultrasonic equipment who is (are) certified according to the requirements in 6.6 and at a level deemed acceptable to the contracting agency.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 This practice is intended primarily for the mechanized ultrasonic examination of pipe girth welds used in the construction of gas and oil pipelines. This practice, with appropriate modifications due to changes in weld profile, may also be used to examine repaired welds. Manual techniques such as described in Practice E164 may also be used to examine production or repaired welds. This practice, with appropriate modifications, may also be used to examine other forms of butt welds including long seams.

4.2 Techniques used are to be based on zonal discrimination whereby the weld is divided into approximately equal vertical examination sections (zones) each being assessed by a pair of ultrasonic search units. See Fig. 1 for typical zones.

4.3 Thicknesses of material examined are normally 7 to 25 mm [0.28 to 1.00 in.] and pipe diameters 15 cm [6.0 in.] and greater but this standard may apply to other thicknesses and diameters if the techniques can be proven to provide the required zonal discrimination.

4.4 Examination zones are typically 2 to 3 mm [0.08 to 0.12 in.] in height. For most applications this will require the use of contact focused search units to avoid interfering signals originating from off-axis geometric reflectors and to avoid excessive overlap with adjacent zones.

5. Examination Methods

5.1 *Visual Examination*—All welds shall be visually examined after completion and assessed in accordance with the requirements of surface conditions for ultrasonic examination.

5.1.1 All bevels shall be examined immediately after machining to ensure compliance with the applicable welding procedure. This examination should be combined with scribing the reference line as described in 9.3.

5.1.2 Any items of non-compliance shall be referred to the contracting agency representative for corrective action.

5.2 *Ultrasonic Examination*—All girth welds identified for mechanized ultrasonic examination shall be examined for 100 % of their circumference and assessed in accordance with the contracting agency’s acceptance criteria. Examination should be conducted in accordance with procedures approved by the contracting agency.

6. Ultrasonic Equipment

6.1 *Ultrasonic System*—The system shall provide an adequate number of examination channels to ensure the complete volumetric examination of the weld through thickness in one circumferential scan. The instrument shall provide a linear “A” scan presentation for each channel selected. The examination channels will allow the volume of the weld scanned to be assessed in accordance with the examination zones as typically defined in Fig. 1. Instrument linearity shall be determined according to the procedures detailed in Practice E317, within six months of the intended end use date. The contractor shall retain a copy of the calibration certificate. Instrument linearity shall be such that the accuracy of any indicated amplitude is within 5 % of the actual full scale amplitude. This shall apply to both linear and logarithmic amplifiers. Each examination channel shall be selective for: pulse-echo or through-transmission mode, gate position and length for a minimum of

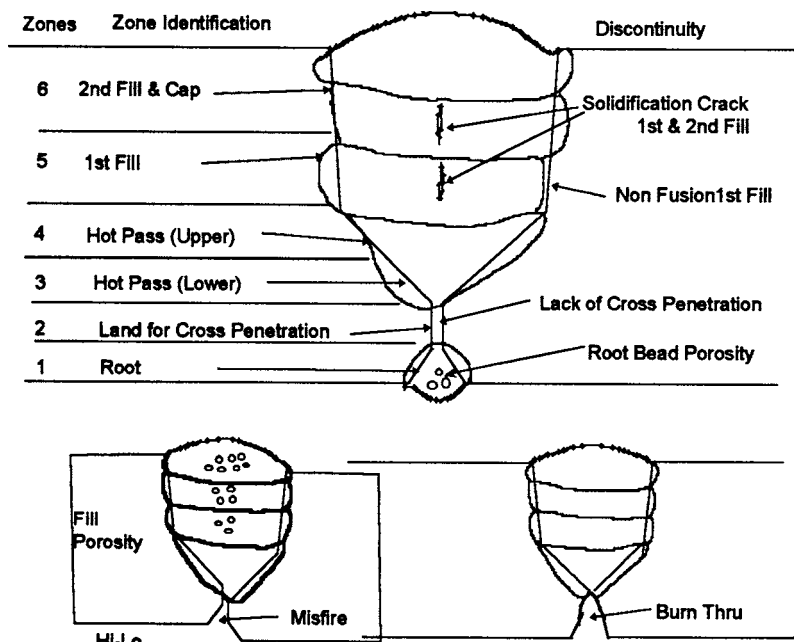


FIG. 1 Schematic Representation of Weld Zones and Discontinuities

two gates, and gain. Recording thresholds shall be selectable to display signals between 0 and 100 % of full screen height for simple amplitude and transit time recording and shall be from 0 to 100 % for B-scan or “mapping” type recording of data. Two recordable signal outputs per gate shall be available, being either analog or digital and representative of signal height and time of flight. These will be suitable for recording on a multi-channel recorder or computer data acquisition software display.

6.2 *Recording System:*

6.2.1 A distance measuring circuit or device suitable for connection to the recorder or acquisition system shall provide a means of electronically determining circumferential weld distance to an accuracy of typically ± 1 cm [0.4 in.] or better, as required by the contracting agency, over the circumference of the weld (an optical encoder is typically used for such distance measurement). Programmed scan lengths shall be sufficient to ensure all probes will travel the maximum circumferential distance required for a pipe having a diameter with the maximum tolerance allowed by the contracting agency’s specification. For equipment with encoders traveling on a track or welding guide-band a correction factor will be incorporated to ensure the circumferential distance recorded on the chart corresponds to the search unit position on the pipe outer surface. The recording or marking system shall clearly indicate the location of discontinuities relative to the marked starting position of the scan, with a ± 1 cm [0.4 in.] accuracy. There shall be recordings from each search unit for weld discontinuities and confirmation of the acoustic coupling arranged on the chart or display in a manner acceptable to the contracting agency.

6.2.2 B-scan or other form of “mapping” displays will be used for volumetric flaw detection and characterizations and Time of Flight Diffraction (TOFD) techniques may be added to improve characterization and sizing. TOFD techniques may augment pulse-echo techniques but shall not replace pulse-echo techniques.

6.2.3 Where TOFD techniques are employed the recording system shall be capable of a 256-level grayscale display and be capable of recording full R-F wave forms for the TOFD search unit pairs.

6.3 *Coupling*—The coupling shall be obtained by using a medium suitable for the purpose. An environmentally safe wetting agent may be required to enhance acoustic coupling. No residue should remain on the pipe surface after the liquid has evaporated. For examination where ambient temperatures are below 0°C [32°F] a methyl alcohol washer fluid or a similar medium may be used. This liquid medium may be recovered and filtered for re-use. For examination where pipe cool-down may be required after welding, water spray or other agents may be used with contracting agency approval.

6.4 *Search Units:*

6.4.1 Each search unit shall be marked with a method to identify the manufacturer’s name, search unit type, exit point,

incident beam angle or refracted beam angle for a specific wedge/steel velocity ratio, frequency, and crystal size.⁷

6.4.2 The search unit array design shall be specific to the project where the examination is to be performed.

6.4.3 All search units shall be contoured to match the curvature of the pipe surface.

6.5 *Reference Standards*—Reference standards shall be used to establish sensitivity and qualify the examination system for field examination and to monitor the system’s performance on an ongoing basis. Reference standards shall be manufactured from a section of unflawed project-specific line pipe supplied by the contracting agency. The contracting agency will provide the contractor with details of project-specific weld geometries and the reference reflectors required in specific areas. The contractor shall then provide a reference standard design that must be submitted to the contracting agency for approval before manufacturing. No design changes to the reference standard shall be made without prior approval of the contracting agency. **Annex A3** provides an example of a typical reference standard.

6.6 *Personnel Qualification*—If specified in the contractual agreement, personnel performing examinations to this practice shall be qualified in accordance with a nationally recognized NDT personnel qualification practice or standard such as **ANSI/ASNT-CP-189**, **SNT-TC-1A**, **MIL-STD-410**, or a similar document and certified by the employer or certifying agency as applicable. The practice or standard used and its applicable version shall be identified in the contractual agreement between the using parties.

6.7 *Ultrasonic Examination Procedure*—The contractor shall provide a procedure that will provide examination criteria for the ultrasonic examination of the weld in a single pass. It must allow for characteristic Hi/Lo fit-ups (edge misalignment), weld shrinkage and be pipe-size specific. Procedures submitted will allow zonal flaw characterization that permits use of the contracting agency’s engineering critical assessment acceptance criteria. It shall include but not be limited to describing the following requirements:

6.7.1 The mechanized variable speed scanner mountable on mechanical welding bands or other tracking mechanism,

6.7.2 The encoder capable of accurately indicating any flaw location about the girth weld,

6.7.3 Independently loaded ultrasonic search units mounted in an array that provides independent examination of the weld from both sides,

6.7.4 Provisions for adjusting and maintaining the alignment of these search units,

6.7.5 Provisions for recording the continuity of the coupling,

6.7.6 Provisions for ensuring the mechanical reliability of the equipment,

⁷ For phased array and EMAT probes, not all of the listed items may be applicable.

6.7.7 A technique summary stating beam angles, wave types, search unit frequencies, beam sizes and profiles with sketches for each geometry to be examined,

6.7.8 Record analog or digital signals from the multi-channels to a common distance of rotation,

6.7.9 Provide permanent copy of the scans in an easily interpretable format to meet archival and audit needs,

6.7.10 Provide construction and accuracy details of the reference standard,

6.7.11 Provide the standardization procedures to be used in the field, and

6.7.12 Standardization checks shall be established and verified on a time or weld cycle defined by the contracting agency. System performance between standardization checks shall be continually monitored for degradation.

7. Ultrasonic Examination Set-Up

7.1 *Search Unit Positioning and Primary Reference Sensitivity*—The system shall be optimized for field examination using the reference standard. Each search unit shall be positioned at its operating distance from the simulated weld centerline on the reference standard and adjusted to provide a peak signal from its target reference reflector in the search unit's examination zone. The peak signal response shall be adjusted to 80 % full-screen height (FSH) for each channel. The gain level determined for each search unit shall be the primary reference.

7.2 Gate Settings:

7.2.1 *Fusion-Zone Search Units*—Using the reference standard, each detection gate shall be set to cover a sound path distance that starts at least 3 mm [0.12 in.] before the weld preparation and ends at least 1 mm [0.04 in.] past the weld centerline. The gate start position with respect to the weld preparation and gate length for each channel shall be recorded in the procedure.

7.2.2 *Porosity Detection Search Units (Fill Region)*—Porosity provides a weak and characteristically different reflected signal compared to perpendicular reflection from non-fusion discontinuities. Dedicated channels using B-scan or mapping type presentations are recommended for detecting and characterizing porosity and other volumetric flaws. One of the fusion-zone search units can be used for porosity detection or (an) extra search unit(s) may be added to the array. Using the reference standard, each mapping gate should be set to cover a sound path distance which starts at least 1 mm [0.04 in.] before the weld preparation and long enough to encompass the weld bevel on the opposite side of the weld centerline. For test piece thickness greater than about 12 mm [0.5 in.], beam characteristics may require the use of more than one search unit for porosity detection in the fill regions. Scanning sensitivity should be typically 8 to 14 dB over that required to achieve an 80 % FSH signal from a flat-bottom hole (FBH) typically 1.5 to 2.0 mm [0.060 to 0.080 in.] diameter, but should not be so great as to cause interfering electrical or geometric noise that could be misinterpreted.

7.2.3 *Porosity Detection Search Units (Root Region)*—Using the reference standard each detection gate shall be set to cover a sound path distance which starts at least 1 mm [0.04 in.] before the weld preparation and long enough to ensure

coverage of the weld root area. Fusion-zone search units in the lowest examination zone(s) can be used for porosity detection in the root region or (an) extra search unit(s) may be added to the array. Scanning sensitivity requirements for porosity detection in the root region shall be adequate to ensure detection of porosity in this region. Scanning sensitivity should be typically 4 to 14dB over that required to achieve an 80 % FSH signal from a FBH typically 1.5 to 2.0 mm [0.060 to 0.080 in.] diameter but should not be so great as to cause interfering electrical or geometric noise that could be misinterpreted.

7.3 *Evaluation Threshold*—The evaluation threshold for each detection channel shall be typically 20 % of full screen height or greater for fusion zones. All signals above this amplitude will be evaluated in accordance with the contracting agency's acceptance criteria. Porosity detection channels may use a threshold for evaluation or patterns in mapping type channels and transit time may be used to characterize porosity.

7.4 *Recording Set-Up*—Channel output signals shall be arranged on the recording display in a manner that allows the weld to be presented symmetrically on either side of the weld centerline. In addition, delays shall be applied to the signals from each search unit to compensate for the various circumferential positions relative to the circumferential zero point. Details of the delays applied and the chart arrangement shall be recorded in the procedure.

7.5 *Circumferential Scanning Velocity*—For asynchronous system, the circumferential scanning velocity V_c shall be determined by:

$$V_c \leq W_c \times \frac{PRF}{3} \quad (1)$$

where: W_c is the narrowest -6dB beam width at the appropriate operating distance(s) of the all search units and PRF is the effective pulse repetition frequency per search unit.

For synchronous systems, the sample interval shall be 1 mm regardless of travel speed.

8. Dynamic Standardization

8.1 Detection Channels:

8.1.1 With the system optimized the reference standard shall be scanned at the same speed at which the examination will be performed. The analog or digital recording shall indicate signals, 80 % FSH, from each reference reflector recorded in their correct position assigned on the display. The circumferential positional accuracy of the recorded reflectors relative to each other should be within typically ± 2 mm [0.080 in.], and with respect to the zero start they should be within typically ± 1 cm [0.4 in.].

8.1.2 Acceptability of a system to produce a standardization chart or record will be based on its ability to discriminate examination zones typical of those described in Fig. 1. This will be demonstrated by signals from adjacent zones being at least 6 dB and not more than 14 dB lower than from the zone for which a search unit channel is standardized for. Failure to ensure the 6 to 14 dB separation between zones may be unacceptable and could require repositioning of the search unit or a complete search unit replacement. Actual dB separation requirements may be stipulated by the contracting agency.

8.2 *Coupling Monitor Channels*—A method shall be employed to determine that constant coupling is achieved during examinations. An examination of the test piece with its surface wiped dry (lack of couplant) shall produce a record showing an absence of the couplant recording signal.

9. Field Examination

9.1 *Weld Identification*—Each weld shall be identified by a unique number, a “0” mark and arrow, designating start point and direction of travel. The mark shall not interfere with scanning.

9.2 *Surface Condition*—A10 cm [4.0 in.] wide scanning area on each side of the weld shall be clear of weld spatter and other conditions which may interfere with the movement of the search units, the coupling liquid, or the transmission of acoustic energy into the material. Any surface condition such as geometry, coating, etc., impeding the ultrasonic examination shall be noted for corrective action prior to scanning.

9.3 *Reference Line*—Prior to welding the Contractor should scribe a reference line on the pipe surface at a distance of 40 mm [1.60 in.] \pm 0.5 mm [0.020 in.] from the centerline of the weld preparation, on the examination band side. The reference line shall be used to ensure that the search unit array is adjusted to the same distance from the centerline as to duplicate the reference standard. The tolerance to ideal positioning should not exceed \pm 0.5 mm [0.020 in.].

9.4 System Performance:

9.4.1 *Sensitivity Verification*—The reference standard shall be used to verify scanning sensitivity at the start of each shift and thereafter at intervals not exceeding 2 h or ten welds, whichever comes first, and at the conclusion of each shift or at intervals defined by the contracting agency. Hardcopy records for each reference standard scan should be included sequentially with the weld examination data. During production weld examination, at the contracting agency’s discretion, the system may be operated at a higher gain to ensure detection of flaws and to compensate for differences in coupling efficiencies between the reference standard and the production pipe. Whereas for initial standardization, the channels should indicate 80 % FSH, a satisfactory standardization during production may indicate values from 70 to 99 % FSH. Standardization outside of this range should require restandardization of the system (see 9.6.1).

9.4.2 *Circumferential Position Accuracy Verification*—The positional accuracy of the chart distance markers shall be verified prior to commencement of the project and verified monthly. The scanner shall travel from the zero position with the scanning frame and the pipe zero position coincident. At the $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ positions, the index marks on the scanning frame and pipe shall be aligned. The chart shall then be compared to circumferential distance measured with a tape measure placed on the outer surface of the pipe; chart accuracy should typically be \pm 1 cm [0.4 in.], or better, over the circumference.

9.4.3 *Temperature Differentials and Control*—Where temperature differences between reference standard’s surface, search unit wedge material and examination surface cause shifts in refracted angle which result in the system not being able to provide the required zonal discrimination, a means of

regulating the temperature of the reference standard or search unit wedge material, or both, shall be employed.

9.4.4 *Weld Zone Identification*—The system shall be capable of identifying all discontinuities identified in Fig. 1 or those defined in Section 6 of API 1104 and clearly identifying the specific zone in which they are located.

9.5 *Scanning Sensitivity*—Scanning shall be at least at primary reference sensitivity for fusion-zone channels and at the added gain setting for porosity detection channels as described in 7.2.2 and 7.2.3.

9.6 Re-Examination:

9.6.1 *Sensitivity*—If standardization during production weld examination indicates one or more channels with values outside the range defined by the contracting agency, the data from the welds scanned since the last acceptable standardization shall be evaluated to determine if the examination was acceptable or if the weld must be re-examined. The contracting agency shall provide a written procedure for the evaluation of suspect welds and define requirements for re-examination.

9.6.2 *Coupling Monitoring*—An area with lack of coupling as indicated by the absence of a coupling monitor signal over a circumferential distance exceeding the minimum allowable flaw length, should be re-examined.

10. Report

10.1 *Weld Examination Chart*—The examination data produced as a permanent record shall consist of a complete strip-chart type hardcopy showing the reference point, the direction of scanning, date and time of examination, and the name of the operator. The examination zone identified in each channel shall also be recorded. Alternate archival record formats may be approved by the contracting agency. For B-scan data, depending on noise level, colors for mapping can be selected down to 3 to 5 % FSH to aid in characterizing flaws. Colors used shall provide a rapid means of identifying areas of concern. Colors on monitor displays and colors or gray scales used on printouts should be selected to provide useful information to the operator. However, in addition the hardcopy should contain sufficient resolution and contrast so that the rationale for flaw evaluations can be easily seen by the contracting agency’s representative.

10.2 *Time of Report*—For examination during production welding ultrasonic examination of the weld should be carried out as soon as possible after the weld has been completed. The entire examination of a weld, including ultrasonic examination, evaluation and production of the weld examination record should not take longer than the weld production cycle. Evaluation of a weld and the associated weld examination data should be completed prior to commencement of the subsequent weld.

11. Standards of Acceptability

11.1 Standards of acceptability are to be established by the contracting agency. These may be based on workmanship or Engineering Critical Assessment (ECA) calculations. Examples of ECA determined acceptance criteria are shown in Tables 1 and 2 (see Note 1).

NOTE 1—Values in Table 1 and Table 2 are provided in only metric

TABLE 1 Mechanized Girth Weld Acceptance Criteria^{A,B,C}

NOTE 1—Based on Appendix K of CSA-Z662.

NOTE 2—This table is an example only. It is used here to illustrate how zonal discrimination can be applied to acceptance criteria. Acceptable lengths are based on calculations derived from destructive testing for a specific material.

Feature	Depth Assumed for Analysis	Acceptable Length for Wall Thickness <12.5mm	Acceptable Length for Wall Thickness >15mm
External Undercut /Low Cap	0.5 mm — 1.0 mm	250	335
External Undercut /Low Cap	1.1 mm — 2.5 mm	100	195
Surface Porosity/Pinholes	2.5 mm	25	25
External Weld Reinforcement	>2.5 mm (height)	None Allowed	
Lack of Fusion in one Fill Pass	2.5 mm	100	195
Lack of Fusion or porosity in Multiple Fill Passes	up to 5.8 mm	25	25
Lack of Fusion in Hot Pass: Both Zones	3.8 mm	65	120
Lack of Fusion in Hot Pass: One Zone	1.9 mm	100	200
Lack of Fusion or porosity in Root Pass	2 mm	100	200
Lack of Fusion in Both Root and Hot pass/Burn Through	5.8 mm	25	25
Lack of Cross Penetration	1 mm	250	335
Spherical Porosity	1 mm	250	335
Piping Porosity	Unacceptable if piping porosity continues through 3 or more passes.		

^A External undercut, low cap, cap porosity and excessive external weld reinforcement may be assessed by visual examination.

^B Flaw interaction should be considered in defining the effective flaw length. See API 1104 Appendix A for examples of flaw interaction.

^C All welding procedures assessed in accordance with this criteria should be qualified according to the appropriate governing standard, for example CSA Z662, Appendix K or API 1104.

(Table 1) or inch pound (Table 2), as they are actual industry examples. Each is derived from different calculations and only the units of calculation are used in the table.

12. Keywords

12.1 contact focused search units; girth welds; mechanized ultrasonics