INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

ISO 16866

First edition
2020-10

Metallic and other inorganic coatings — Simultaneous thickness and electrode potential determination of individual layers in multilayer nickel deposits (STEP test)

Revêtements métalliques et autres revêtements inorganiques — Détermination simultanée de l'épaisseur et du potentiel d'électrode de couches individuelles dans des dépôts de nickel multicouches (essai STEP)

Reference number
ISO 16866:2020(E)

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Published in Switzerland

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Foreword

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This document was prepared by the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) (as EN 16866:2017) and was adopted, without modification, by Technical Committee ISO/TC 107, *Metallic and other inorganic coatings*.

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Introduction

The abbreviated term “STEP” represents “Simultaneous Thickness and Electrode Potential determination”.

The STEP test can be used to measure, in one single operating step, the parameters (thickness of the individual nickel layers and the potential differences among them) relevant for the course of corrosion in a multilayer nickel system. Provided suitable instruments are applied, it can also be used to document them.

The test is a modification of the well-known coulometric method for the measurement of the coating thickness. This method takes advantage of the fact that, following the anodic dissolution of a nickel coating, a potential jump takes place of which the magnitude can be measured against a reference electrode.

Although, nowadays, the STEP test has been incorporated into a number of company standards, particularly in the automobile industry, there are currently no uniform and generally acknowledged potential difference values available. At present, values between 80 mV and 150 mV are assumed for double nickel layers, with the semi-bright nickel layer always being nobler than the bright one.

Likewise, no obligatory numerical values are available, currently, regarding the potential difference between bright nickel layers and existing special nickel layers (e.g. in the case of micro-porous chromium plating). According to the current practical experience, the potential difference is larger than approximately 20 mV, with the bright nickel layer always having to be less noble than the special nickel layer.