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## Non-destructive testing — Infrared thermographic testing — General principles

*Essais non destructifs — Essais thermographiques infrarouge —  
Principes généraux*

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# Contents

Page

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>1 Scope</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Normative references</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3 Terms and definitions</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>4 Infrared thermographic testing personnel</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>5 Infrared thermographic testing equipment</b>	<b>1</b>
5.1 Infrared camera	1
5.2 Equipment used for active thermography	2
<b>6 Test environment</b>	<b>2</b>
6.1 Installation environment for the test equipment	2
6.2 Avoidance of disturbance	2
<b>7 Test method</b>	<b>2</b>
7.1 Emissivity of test object	2
7.2 Passive thermography and active thermography	3
7.3 Imaging method	3
7.3.1 General	3
7.3.2 Non-uniformity and infrared intensity value correction	3
7.3.3 Field of view and spatial resolution	3
7.3.4 Angle	3
7.3.5 Temperature range and temperature resolution	4
7.3.6 Display of thermal images	4
7.3.7 Frame time and exposure time	4
7.3.8 Testing by using the infrared-reflecting mirror	4
7.3.9 Adjustment of focus	4
7.3.10 Confirmation of settings	4
7.4 Signal processing and image processing	4
<b>8 Implementation and reporting of tests</b>	<b>5</b>
8.1 Items described in the NDT procedures	5
8.2 Items described in the NDT instructions	5
8.3 Record of test conditions	5
8.4 Report	6
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>7</b>

## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html).

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 135, *Non-destructive testing*, Subcommittee SC 8, *Thermographic testing*.

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## Introduction

The industrial applications of infrared thermographic testing in non-destructive testing (NDT) are growing, along with a remarkable improvement in thermographic technologies. The effectiveness of any application of infrared thermographic testing depends upon proper and correct usage of the method. The purpose of this document is to provide general principles for infrared thermographic testing in order to promote the correct and effective application of a variety of industrial NDT, such as in power plants, buildings and structures, electronic instruments and industrial materials.

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# Non-destructive testing — Infrared thermographic testing — General principles

## 1 Scope

This document provides general principles for infrared thermographic testing in the field of industrial non-destructive testing (NDT).

## 2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 9712, *Non-destructive testing — Qualification and certification of NDT personnel*

ISO 10878, *Non-destructive testing — Infrared thermography — Vocabulary*

## 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document the terms and definitions given in ISO 10878 apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>
- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <http://www.iso.org/obp>

## 4 Infrared thermographic testing personnel

Personnel who are responsible for conducting infrared thermographic testing (TT) shall meet the following criteria.

- a) TT personnel shall have an adequate knowledge of the basics of infrared measurement and heat-transfer engineering as required by ISO 9712.
- b) The TT personnel's visual acuity and colour vision shall meet the requirements of ISO 9712.

## 5 Infrared thermographic testing equipment

### 5.1 Infrared camera

Each infrared camera has different properties and functions, such as the type of infrared detecting device, the spatial resolution (instantaneous field of view, effective pixels), temperature range, temperature resolution, temperature accuracy, frame time, exposure time, detection wavelength range, cooling method, scanning method, and the visible image display and recording function. It is necessary to ensure that an infrared camera with appropriate properties and functions with appropriate temperature calibration to meet the purpose of the testing is used.

If necessary, various devices that can be attached to the infrared camera such as wavelength filters, attenuation filters, replacement lenses, monitors, computers and software for data collection and processing, and infrared-reflecting mirrors may be used.

## 5.2 Equipment used for active thermography

Select the appropriate heating or cooling system, taking into account the properties and functions of the infrared camera, the test environment, and the status of the test object (dimensions, shape, emissivity, material, temperature before thermal loading, and so on.)

NOTE For the heating system, a heating lamp, a flash lamp, an electric radiation heater, an induction coil, a contact-type heater, a hot-air device, a reflection board, a power-distribution device, or a vibrational apparatus can be used. For the cooling system, a sprinkler, an atomizer, or an air blower can be used.

## 6 Test environment

### 6.1 Installation environment for the test equipment

Conduct the test in an environment where the temperature, humidity, and atmosphere are appropriate for the test equipment, including the infrared camera.

### 6.2 Avoidance of disturbance

In order to avoid reflections from objects other than the test object or background (temperature of the ambient environment), increasing the object's emissivity may be necessary. This can be achieved with paint or any other type of adequate surface preparation and/or treatment as described in 7.1. Moreover, during the installation of the infrared camera, several positions may be tested in order to determine which one minimizes the effect of reflections.

If the temperature of the test object is low, note that the proportion of the reflected apparent temperature to the total infrared radiation energy arriving at the infrared camera can be high.

Take care of absorption, scattering, and reflection of infrared radiation energy by any substances that are present between the infrared camera and the test object (for example, water vapour, carbon dioxide, or window materials).

## 7 Test method

### 7.1 Emissivity of test object

For temperature measurements, the emissivity of the test object shall be taken into account. Set the emissivity value within the radiometric software or within the camera as correctly as possible in order to match the apparent temperature with the true temperature [3] [4].

NOTE 1 If the emissivity of the surface of the test object is not uniform, the infrared radiation energy will not be uniform, even if the temperature of the surface of the test object is uniform. If the emissivity is low, the effects of reflections and/or transmission become proportionately larger.

NOTE 2 The emissivity of test object may vary with the material, the temperature, the roughness of the surface, the thickness of any oxidized membrane on the surface, the presence of impurities on the surface, the angle, and wavelength range of the infrared camera.

NOTE 3 If the emissivity of the test object is low or not uniform, a coating of matte black material can be applied thinly and uniformly until the surface of the base material is covered. Alternatively, a thin membrane of a material with a high emissivity can be attached to the surface to ensure that the emissivity is as uniform as possible during the test.

NOTE 4 Other methods can also be used, such as roughening the surface of plastics (for example, with sandpaper) or oxidizing the surface of metals and so on.

In the radiometric software, the ambient temperature shall also be considered.



## 7.2 Passive thermography and active thermography

Passive thermography is a thermographic technique for inspecting objects or installations by measuring their emitted thermal radiation, without using any additional energy source for thermal stimulation. It is not necessary to induce an additional temperature change within the objects or installations for the purpose of the test.

**EXAMPLE** Passive thermography can be used, for instance, for inspecting electrical installations and mechanical components, in process. It can also be used, for instance, when natural thermal loading by solar radiation exists, such as for buildings and structures<sup>[1]</sup> <sup>[2]</sup> <sup>[9]</sup>, or when the presence of an anomaly or a defect results in the generation or absorption of heat, such as a defect in transmission or distribution equipment.

Detecting anomalies by passive thermography has some physical limitations, which are often overcome by active thermography.

Active thermography is a thermographic examination of materials and objects which requires additional thermal stimulation.

**NOTE** The thermal stimulation can be optical, sonic (ultrasonic), inductive, microwave, or using any other form of energy.

In active thermography, if a test is meant to detect conductive anomalies, then a uniform thermal loading is preferred. The intensity of the thermal load shall be properly adjusted in relation to

- the performance of the infrared camera,
- the thermal properties of the test object, such as the thermal diffusivity, and
- the position, shape, dimensions, and depth of an anomaly or defect.

Care shall be taken not to damage the object under test, as a result of excessive thermal loading.

## 7.3 Imaging method

### 7.3.1 General

Steps shall be taken to ensure that the apparatus to be used for the test is operating correctly, i.e. in accordance with the technical specifications, and its settings are appropriate to the object under test.

### 7.3.2 Non-uniformity and infrared intensity value correction

Before imaging is performed, it is necessary to enable the non-uniformity correction function of the infrared camera to correct for variations in the sensitivity of individual infrared detection elements. If any equipment, such as a wavelength filter, replacement lens, or infrared-reflecting mirror, is attached to the optical system, it is necessary to apply an appropriate correction to the infrared intensity value.

### 7.3.3 Field of view and spatial resolution

One of the limitations in the detection of anomalies is the spatial resolution on the object. The distance between the camera and the object shall be adapted so that the spatial resolution is at least equal to the size of the anomalies. Changing the lens, for one offering a better resolution, might be necessary.

### 7.3.4 Angle

An angle of 45° or less between a line normal to the surface to be tested and the optical axis of the infrared camera is preferred. If this is not possible, an angle of 60° maximum is acceptable.

**NOTE** If the angle exceeds 60°, or for tests on the rear face of the object, a method involving an infrared-reflecting mirror can be used as described in [7.3.8](#).