Designation: E 690 – 98

Standard Practice for In Situ Electromagnetic (Eddy-Current) Examination of Nonmagnetic Heat Exchanger Tubes[1]

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E 690; 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 describes procedures to be followed during eddy-current examination (using an internal, probe-type, coil assembly) of nonmagnetic tubing that has been installed in a heat exchanger. The procedure recognizes both the unique problems of implementing an eddy-current examination of installed tubing, and the indigenous forms of tube-wall deterioration which may occur during this type of service. The document primarily addresses scheduled maintenance inspection of heat exchangers, but can also be used by manufacturers of heat exchangers, either to examine the condition of the tubes after installation, or to establish baseline data for evaluating subsequent performance of the product after exposure to various environmental conditions. The ultimate purpose is the detection and evaluation of particular types of tube integrity degradation which could result in in-service tube failures.

1.2 This practice does not establish acceptance criteria; they must be specified by the using parties.

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 *ASTM Standards:*

E 543 Practice for Evaluating Agencies that Perform Nondestructive Testing[2]

E 1316 Terminology for Nondestructive Examinations[2]

2.2 *Other Documents:*

SNT-TC-1A Recommended Practice for Personnel Qualification and Certification in Nondestructive Testing[3]

ANSI/ASNT-CP-189 ASNT Standard for Qualification and Certification of Nondestructive Testing Personnel[3]

MIL-STD-410E Nondestructive Testing Personnel Qualification and Certification[4]

NAS-410 NAS Certification and Qualification of Nondestructive Personnel (Quality Assurance Committee)[5]

3. Terminology

3.1 Standard terminology relating to electromagnetic examination may be found in Terminology E 1316, Section C, Electromagnetic Testing.

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 The examination is performed by passing an eddy-current probe through each tube. These probes are energized with alternating currents at one or more frequencies. The electrical impedance of the probe is modified by the proximity of the tube, the tube dimensions, electrical conductivity, magnetic permeability, and metallurgical or mechanical discontinuities in the tube. During passage through the tube, changes in electromagnetic response caused by these variables in the tube produce electrical signals which are processed so as to produce an appropriate combination of visual displays, alarms, or temporary or permanent records, or combination thereof, for subsequent analysis.

NOTE 1—The agency performing the testing or examination shall meet the requirements of Practice E 543.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Eddy-current testing is a nondestructive method of locating discontinuities in tubing made of materials that conduct electricity. Signals can be produced by discontinuities located either on the inner or outer surfaces of the tube, or by discontinuities totally contained within the tube wall. When using an internal probe, the density of eddy currents in the tube wall decreases very rapidly as the distance from the internal surface increases; thus the amplitude of the response to outer surface discontinuities decreases correspondingly.

5.2 Some indications obtained by this method may not be relevant to product quality. For example, an irrelevant signal may be caused by metallurgical or mechanical variations that

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[1] This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E-7 on Nondestructive Testing and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E07.07 on Electromagnetic Methods.

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[2] *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 03.03.

[3] Available from Smerican Society for Nondestructive Testing, 1711 Arlingate Plaza, P.O. Box 28518, Columbus, OH 43228–0518.

[4] Available from Standardization Documents Order Desk, Bldg. 4, Section D, 700 Robbins Ave. Philadelphia, PA 19111–5904, Attn: NPODS.

[5] Available from Aerospace Industries Association of America, Inc., 1250 Eye Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20005.

are generated during manufacture but that are not detrimental to the end use of the product. Irrelevant indications can mask unacceptable discontinuities occurring in the same area. Relevant indications are those that result from nonacceptable discontinuities. Any indication above the reject level, which is believed to be irrelevant, shall be regarded as unacceptable until it is proven to be irrelevant. For tubing installed in heat exchangers, predictable sources of irrelevant indications are lands (short unfinned sections in finned tubing), dents, scratches, tool chatter marks, or variations in cold work. Rolling tubes into the supports may also cause irrelevant indications, as may the tube supports themselves. Eddy-current testing systems are generally not able to separate the indication generated by the end of the tube from indications of discontinuities adjacent to the ends of the tube (end effect). Therefore, this examination may not be valid at the boundaries of the tube sheets.

6. Basis of Application

6.1 The following criteria may be specified in the purchase specification, contractual agreement, or elsewhere, and may require agreement between the purchaser and the supplier.

6.1.1 Type of eddy-current system, and probe (coil assembly) configuration,

6.1.2 Location of heat exchanger, if applicable,

6.1.3 Size, material, and configuration of tubes to be examined,

6.1.4 Extent of examination, that is, length, tube sheet areas, straight length only, minimum radius of bends, etc.,

6.1.5 Time of examination, that is, the date and location of the intended examination, and the expected environmental conditions,

6.1.6 The source and type of material to be used for fabricating the calibration standard,

6.1.7 The type(s), method of manufacture, location, dimensions, and number of artificial discontinuities to be placed on the calibration standard,

6.1.8 Allowable tolerances for artificial discontinuities, and methods for verifying compliance,

6.1.9 Methods for determining the extent of end effect,

6.1.10 Maximum time interval between equipment calibration checks,

6.1.11 Criteria to be used in interpreting and classifying observed indications,

6.1.12 Disposition of examination records and calibration standard,

6.1.13 Contents of examination report, and

6.1.14 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-410E, NAS-410, ASNT-ACCP, or a similar document and certified by the certifying agency, as applicable. The practice or standard used and its applicable revision shall be identified in the contractual agreement between the using parties.

NOTE 2—MIL-STD-410 is canceled and has been replaced with NAS-410, however, it may be used with agreement between contracting parties.

6.1.15 If specified in the contractual agreement, NDT agencies shall be qualified and evaluated in accordance with Practice E 543. The applicable edition of Practice E 543 shall be specified in the contractual agreement.

7. Apparatus

7.1 *Electronic Apparatus*:

7.1.1 The electronic apparatus shall be capable of energizing the probe coils with alternating currents of suitable frequencies, and shall be capable of sensing changes in the electromagnetic response of the probes. It is important to note that a differential coil probe system tends to maximize the response from abrupt changes along the tube length, while a single coil probe system usually responds to all changes.

7.1.2 Since many gradual changes are irrelevant, a differential coil system may permit higher gain than an absolute coil system, which enhances the response to small, short defects. Electrical signals produced in this manner may be processed so as to actuate an audio or visual readout, or both. When necessary, these signals may also be further processed to produce a permanent record. The apparatus should have some means of providing relative quantitative information based upon the amplitude or phase of the electrical signal, or both. This may take many forms, including calibrated sensitivity or attenuation controls, multiple alarm thresholds, or analog or digital readouts, or combination thereof.

7.2 *Readout Devices*, which require operator monitoring, such as an oscilloscope or oscillograph presentation, may be used when necessary to augment the alarm circuits. This may be necessary, for example, to find small holes, indications of which tend to be nearly in phase with the response from lands in skip-fin tubing. Since the lands cause very large signals to occur, phase discrimination may not prevent irrelevant alarms from tube support, if the alarm is set to reject the hole. By observing an oscilloscope or oscillograph, however, the ability to detect this type of defect may be improved, especially in areas between the tube supports.

7.3 *Test Coils*—Test coils shall be capable of inducing current in the tube and sensing changes in the electrical characteristics of the tube. The test coil diameter shall be selected to yield the largest practical fill-factor. The configuration of the test coils may permit sensing both small, localized conditions, which change rapidly along the tube length, such as pitting or stress corrosion cracks, and those which may change slowly along the tube length or from tube to tube, such as steam cutting, mechanical erosion, or metallurgical changes. The choice of coil diameter should be based upon requirements judged to be necessary for the particular test situation.

7.4 *Single-Coil or Differential-Coil Probe Systems*:

7.4.1 *Single-Coil Probe Systems*—In a single-coil probe system, the signal obtained from the interaction between the test coil, and the portion of the test specimen within its influence is often balanced against an off-line reference coil in a similar specimen, often with the aid of electrical compensation. In some systems, electrical balancing of the test coil is accomplished entirely by the use of an electrical balance reference.

7.4.2 *Differential-Coil Probe Systems*—In a differential-coil probe system, the reference coil is identical to (again, often