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Standard Practice for Cleaning, Descaling, and Passivation of Stainless Steel Parts, Equipment, and Systems¹

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This standard has been approved for use by agencies of the U.S. Department of Defense.

1. Scope*

1.1 This practice covers recommendations and precautions for cleaning, descaling, and passivating of new stainless steel parts, assemblies, equipment, and installed systems. These recommendations are presented as procedures for guidance when it is recognized that for a particular service it is desired to remove surface contaminants that may impair the normal corrosion resistance, or result in the later contamination of the particular stainless steel grade, or cause product contamination. The selection of procedures from this practice to be applied to the parts may be specified upon agreement between the supplier and the purchaser. For certain exceptional applications, additional requirements which are not covered by this practice may be specified upon agreement between the supplier and the purchaser. Although they apply primarily to materials in the composition ranges of the austenitic, ferritic, martensitic, and martensitic duplex stainless steels, the practices described may also be useful for cleaning other metals if due consideration is given to corrosion and possible metallurgical effects.

1.1.1 The term passivation is commonly applied to several distinctly different operations or processes relating to stainless steels. In order to avoid ambiguity in the setting of requirements, it may be necessary for the purchaser to define precisely the intended meaning of passivation. Some of the various meanings associated with the term passivation that are in common usage include the following:

1.1.1.1 Passivation is the process by which a stainless steel will spontaneously form a chemically inert resistant surface when exposed to air or other oxygen-containing environments. It was at one time considered that an oxidizing treatment was necessary to establish this passive metal oxide film, but it is now accepted that this film will form spontaneously in an oxygen-containing environment providing that the surface has been thoroughly cleaned or descaled.

1.1.1.2 Passivation is removal of exogenous iron or iron compounds from the surface of a stainless steel by means of a chemical dissolution, most typically by a treatment with an acid solution that will remove the surface contamination but will not significantly affect the stainless steel itself. This process is described in a general way in [6.2.11](#) and defined precisely in [6.4](#) with further reference to the requirements of [Annex A2](#) and Part II of the table on acid cleaning of steel. Unless otherwise specified, it is this definition of passivation that is taken as the meaning of a specified requirement for passivation. (See also [Specification A967/A967M](#).)

1.1.1.3 Passivation is the chemical treatment of a stainless steel with a mild oxidant, such as a nitric acid solution, for the purpose of enhancing the spontaneous formation of the protective passive metal oxide film. Such chemical treatment is generally not necessary for the formation of the passive metal oxide film.

1.1.1.4 Passivation does not indicate the separate process of descaling as described in [Section 5](#), although descaling may be necessary before passivation can be effective. Depending on the application, chemical descaling (acid pickling) as described in [5.2.1](#) may provide sufficient passivation as defined in [1.1.1.2](#).

1.2 This practice does not cover decontamination or cleaning of equipment or systems that have been in service, nor does it cover descaling and cleaning of materials at the mill. On the other hand, some of the practices may be applicable for these purposes. While the practice provides recommendations and information concerning the use of acids and other cleaning and descaling agents, it cannot encompass detailed cleaning procedures for specific types of equipment or installations. It therefore in no way precludes the necessity for careful planning and judgment in the selection and implementation of such procedures.

1.3 These practices may be applied when free iron, oxide scale, rust, grease, oil, carbonaceous or other residual chemical films, soil, particles, metal chips, dirt, or other nonvolatile deposits might adversely affect the metallurgical or sanitary condition or

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [A01](#) on Steel, Stainless Steel and Related Alloys and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [A01.14](#) on Methods of Corrosion Testing.

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*A Summary of Changes section appears at the end of this standard

stability of a surface, the mechanical operation of a part, component, or system, or contaminate a process fluid. The degree of cleanness required on a surface depends on the application. In some cases, no more than degreasing or removal of gross contamination is necessary. Others, such as food-handling, pharmaceutical, aerospace, and certain nuclear applications, may require extremely high levels of cleanness, including removal of all detectable residual chemical films and contaminants that are invisible to ordinary inspection methods.

NOTE 1—The term “iron,” when hereinafter referred to as a surface contaminant, shall denote free iron.

1.4 Attainment of surfaces that are free of iron, metallic deposits, and other contamination depends on a combination of proper design, fabrication methods, cleaning and descaling, and protection to prevent recontamination of cleaned surfaces. Meaningful tests to establish the degree of cleanness of a surface are few, and those are often difficult to administer and to evaluate objectively. Visual inspection is suitable for the detection of gross contamination, scale, rust, and particulates, but may not reveal the presence of thin films of oil or residual chemical films. In addition, visual inspection of internal surfaces is often impossible because of the configuration of the item. Methods are described for the detection of free iron and transparent chemical and oily deposits.

1.5 This practice provides definitions and describes practices for cleaning, descaling, and passivation of stainless steel parts. Tests with acceptance criteria to demonstrate that the passivation procedures have been successful are listed in 7.2.5 and 7.3.4, and can also be found in Specification [A967A967/A967M](#).

1.6 The values stated in either SI units or inch-pound units are to be regarded separately as standard. The values stated in each system may not be exact equivalents; therefore, each system shall be used independently of the other. Combining values from the two systems may result in non-conformance with the standard.

1.7 *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.* (For more specific safety precautions see 7.2.5.3, 7.3.4, Section 8, A1.7, and A2.11.)

1.8 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

[A967A967/A967M](#) Specification for Chemical Passivation Treatments for Stainless Steel Parts
[F21](#) Test Method for Hydrophobic Surface Films by the Atomizer Test
[F22](#) Test Method for Hydrophobic Surface Films by the Water-Break Test

2.2 Federal Standard-ISO Standards:³

~~Fed. Std. No. 209e~~ [ISO 14644-1](#) ~~for Clean Room and Work Station Requiring Controlled Environments~~ [Cleanrooms and associated controlled environments -- Part 1: Classification of air cleanliness by particle concentration](#)
[ISO 14644-2](#) [Cleanrooms and associated controlled environments -- Part 2: Monitoring to provide evidence of cleanroom performance related to air cleanliness by particle concentration](#)

3. Design

3.1 Consideration should be given in the design of parts, equipment, and systems that will require cleaning to minimize the presence of crevices, pockets, blind holes, undrainable cavities, and other areas in which dirt, cleaning solutions, or sludge might lodge or become trapped, and to provide for effective circulation and removal of cleaning solutions. In equipment and systems that will be cleaned in place or that cannot be immersed in the cleaning solution, it is advisable to slope lines for drainage; to provide vents at high points and drains at low points of the item or system; to arrange for removal or isolation of parts that might be damaged by the cleaning solution or fumes from the cleaning solutions; to provide means for attaching temporary fill and circulation lines; and to provide for inspection of cleaned surfaces.

3.2 In a complex piping system it may be difficult to determine how effective a cleaning operation has been. One method of designing inspectability into the system is to provide a short flanged length of pipe (that is, a spool piece) at a location where the cleaning is likely to be least effective; the spool piece can then be removed for inspection upon completion of cleaning.

4. Precleaning

4.1 Precleaning is the removal of grease, oil, paint, soil, grit, and other gross contamination preparatory to a fabrication process or final cleaning. Precleaning is not as critical and is generally not as thorough as subsequent cleaning operations. Materials should be usually precleaned before hot-forming, annealing, or other high-temperature operation, before any descaling operation, and

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 Standardization Documents Order Desk, Bldg 4 Section D, 700 Robbins Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19111-5094, Attn: NPODS; International Organization for Standardization, ISO Central Secretariat, Chemin de Blandonnet 8, CP 401, 1214 Vernier, Geneva, Switzerland.

before any finish-cleaning operation where the parts will be immersed or where the cleaning solutions will be reused. Items that are subject to several redraws or a series of hot-forming operations, with intermediate anneals, must ~~shall~~ be cleaned after each forming operation, prior to annealing. Precleaning may be accomplished by vapor degreasing; immersion in, spraying, or swabbing with alkaline or emulsion ~~cleaners, steam cleaners; steam;~~ or high-pressure water-jet (see 6.2).

5. Descaling

5.1 *General*—Descaling is the removal of heavy, tightly adherent oxide films resulting from hot-forming, heat-treatment, welding, and other high-temperature operations. Because mill products are usually supplied in the descaled condition, descaling (except removal of localized scale resulting from welding) is generally not necessary during fabrication of equipment or erection of systems (see 6.3). When necessary, scale may be removed by one of the chemical methods listed below, by mechanical methods (for example, abrasive blasting, sanding, grinding, power brushing), or by a combination of these.

5.2 *Chemical Descaling (Pickling)*—Chemical descaling agents include aqueous solutions of ~~sulfuric, nitric, sulfuric acid, or nitric~~ and hydrofluoric ~~acid acids,~~ as described in Annex A1, Table A1.1, molten alkali or salt baths, and various proprietary formulations. The safety precautions of 8.6 shall be observed in the use of these methods. Particular care shall be exercised when pickling closed systems and items with crevices or internal voids to prevent retention of pickling solutions and residues.

5.2.1 *Acid Pickling*—Nitric-hydrofluoric acid solution is most widely used by fabricators of stainless steel equipment and removes both metallic contamination, and welding and heat-treating scales. Its use should be carefully controlled and is not recommended for descaling sensitized austenitic stainless steels or hardened martensitic stainless steels or where it can come into contact with carbon steel parts, assemblies, equipment, and systems. See also A1.3. Solutions of nitric acid alone are usually not effective for removing heavy oxide scale.

5.2.2 Surfaces to be descaled shall be precleaned to remove oils and greases prior to acid treatment (see A1.5), and are usually precleaned prior to other chemical treatments.

5.2.3 ~~Surfaces to be descaled are usually precleaned prior to chemical treatment.~~ When size and shape of product permit, total immersion in the pickling solution is preferred. Where immersion is impractical, descaling may be accomplished by (1) wetting the surfaces by swabbing or ~~spraying; spraying,~~ or (2) by partially filling the item with pickling solution and rotating or rocking to slosh the solution so that all surfaces receive the required chemical treatment. The surface should be kept in contact with agitated solution for about 15 to 30 min or until inspection shows that complete scale removal has been accomplished. Without agitation, additional exposure time may be required. If rocking or rotation are impracticable, pickling solution may be circulated through the item or system until inspection shows that descaling has been accomplished.

5.2.4 Over-pickling must be avoided. Uniform removal of scale with acid pickling depends on the acid used, acid concentration, solution temperature, and contact time (see Annex A1). Continuous exposure to pickling solutions for more than 30 min is not recommended. The item should be drained and rinsed after 30 min and examined to check the effectiveness of the treatment. Additional treatment may be required. Most pickling solutions will loosen weld and heat-treating scale but may not remove them completely. Intermittent scrubbing with a stainless steel brush or fiber-bristle brush, in conjunction with pickling or the initial rinse, may facilitate the removal of scale particles and products of chemical reaction (that is, pickling *smut*).

5.2.5 After chemical descaling, surfaces shall be thoroughly rinsed with clean water to remove all traces of residual chemicals and thoroughly dried after the final water rinse. A neutralization treatment may be necessary under some conditions (such as the presence of crevices). If used, neutralization is usually also followed by rinsing with clean water to remove all traces of the neutralizing agent and thorough drying. To minimize staining, surfaces shall not be permitted to dry between successive steps of the acid descaling and rinsing procedure (see A1.5).

5.2.6 ~~After chemical descaling, surfaces must be thoroughly rinsed to remove residual chemicals; a neutralization step is sometimes necessary before final rinsing. To minimize staining, surfaces must not be permitted to dry between successive steps of the acid descaling and rinsing procedure, and thorough drying should follow the final water rinse.~~ Chemical descaling methods, factors in their selection, and precautions in their use are described in the *Metals Handbook*.⁴ When chemical descaling is necessary, it should be done while the part is in its simplest possible geometry, before subsequent fabrication or installation steps create internal crevices or undrainable spaces that may trap descaling agents, sludge, particles, or contaminated rinse water that might either result in eventual corrosion or adversely affect operation of the item after it is placed in service.

5.3 *Mechanical Descaling*—Mechanical descaling methods include abrasive blasting, power brushing, sanding, grinding, and chipping. Procedural requirements and precautions for some of these methods are given in the *Metals Handbook*.⁴ Mechanical descaling methods have the advantage that they do not produce such physical or chemical conditions as intergranular attack, pitting, hydrogen embrittlement, cracks, or smut deposits. For some materials, in particular the austenitic stainless steels when in the sensitized condition and the martensitic stainless steels when in the hardened condition, mechanical descaling may be the only suitable method. Grinding is usually the most effective means of removing localized scale such as that which results from welding. Disadvantages of mechanical descaling are cost, as compared to chemical descaling, and the fact that surface defects (for example, laps, pits, slivers) may be obscured, making them difficult to detect.

⁴ "Surface Cleaning, Finishing, and Coating," *Metals Handbook*, Am. Soc. Metals, 9th ed., Vol 5, 1982.



5.3.1 Surfaces to be descaled may have to be precleaned. Particular care must be taken to avoid damage by mechanical methods when descaling thin sections, polished surfaces, and close-tolerance parts. After mechanical descaling, surfaces should be cleaned by scrubbing with hot water and fiber brushes, followed by rinsing with clean, hot water.

5.3.2 Grinding wheels and sanding materials should not contain iron, iron oxide, zinc, or other ~~undesirable~~ ~~undesirable~~ materials that may cause contamination of the metal surface. Grinding wheels, sanding materials, and wire brushes previously used on other metals should not be used on stainless steel. Wire brushes should be of a stainless steel which is equal in corrosion resistance to the material being worked on.

5.3.3 Clean, previously unused abrasives, such as glass beads or iron-free silica or alumina sand, are recommended for abrasive blasting. Steel shot or grit is generally not recommended because of the possibility of embedding iron particles. The use of stainless steel shot or grit reduces the danger of rusting and iron contamination, but cannot completely eliminate the possibility of embedding residues of iron-oxide scale.

5.3.4 If a totally iron and scale free surface is required, most abrasive blasting may be followed by a brief acid dip (see [Annex A2](#)) or passivation treatment (see [6.4](#)).

6. Cleaning

6.1 *General*—Cleaning includes all operations necessary for the removal of surface contaminants from metals to ensure (1) maximum corrosion resistance of the ~~metal;~~ ~~metal~~, (2) prevention of product ~~contamination;~~ ~~contamination~~, and (3) achievement of desired appearance. Cleanness is a perishable condition. Careful planning is necessary to achieve and maintain clean surfaces, especially where a high degree of cleanness is required. Selection of cleaning processes is influenced mainly by the type of contaminant to be removed, the required degree of cleanness, and cost. If careful control of fabrication processes, sequencing of cleaning and fabrication operations, and measures to prevent recontamination of cleaned surfaces are exercised, very little special cleaning of the finished item or system may be necessary to attain the desired level of cleanness. If there is a question concerning the effectiveness of cleaning agents or procedures, or the possible adverse effects of some cleaning agents or procedures on the materials to be cleaned, ~~trial runs;~~ ~~runs~~ using test specimens and sensitive inspection techniques may be desirable. Descriptions, processes, and precautions to be observed in cleaning are given in the *Metals Handbook*.⁴ Proprietary cleaners may contain harmful ingredients, such as chlorides or sulfur compounds, which could adversely affect the performance of a part, equipment, or system under service conditions. It is recommended that the manufacturer of the cleaner be consulted if there is reason for concern.

NOTE 2—Instances are known where stainless steel vessels have stress cracked before start-up due to steaming out or boiling out with a chloride-containing detergent.

6.2 *Cleaning Methods*—Degreasing and general cleaning may be accomplished by immersion in, swabbing with, or spraying with alkaline, emulsion, solvent, ~~detergent,~~ ~~chelate,~~ or ~~detergent/acid~~ cleaners or a combination of these; by vapor degreasing; by ultrasonics using various cleaners; by ~~various mechanical methods;~~ by steam, with or without a cleaner; or by high-pressure water-jetting. The cleaning method available at any given time during the fabrication or installation of a component or system is a function of the geometric complexity of the item, the type of contamination present, the degree of cleanliness required, and cost. Methods commonly used for removing deposited contaminants (as opposed to scale) are described briefly below and in greater detail (including factors to be considered in their selection and use) in the *Metals Handbook*⁴ and the *SSPC Steel Structures Painting Handbook*.⁵ The safety precautions of [8.6](#) ~~must~~ ~~shall~~ be observed in the use of these methods. Particular care ~~must~~ ~~shall~~ be exercised when cleaning closed systems and items with crevices or internal voids to prevent retention of cleaning solutions and residues.

6.2.1 *Alkaline Cleaning* is used for the removal of oily, semisolid, and solid contaminants from metals. To a great extent the solutions used depend on their detergent qualities for cleaning action and effectiveness. Agitation and temperature of the solution are important.

6.2.2 *Emulsion Cleaning* is a process for removing oily deposits and other common contaminants from metals by the use of common organic solvents dispersed in an aqueous solution with the aid of a soap or other emulsifying agent (an emulsifying agent is one which increases the stability of a dispersion of one liquid in another). It is effective for removing a wide variety of contaminants including pigmented and unpigmented drawing compounds and lubricants, cutting fluids, and residues resulting from liquid penetrant inspection. Emulsion cleaning is used when rapid, superficial cleaning is required and when a light residual film of oil is not objectionable.

6.2.3 *Solvent Cleaning* is a process for removing contaminants from metal surfaces by immersion or by spraying or swabbing with common organic solvents such as the aliphatic petroleums, chlorinated hydrocarbons, or blends of these two classes of solvents. Cleaning is usually performed at or slightly above room temperature. Except for parts with extremely heavy contamination or with hard-to-reach areas, or both, good agitation will usually eliminate the need for prolonged soaking. Virtually all metal can be cleaned with the commonly used solvents unless the solvent has become contaminated with acid, alkali, oil, or other foreign material. Chlorinated solvents are not recommended for degreasing of closed systems or items with crevices or internal voids.

⁵ *Good Painting Practices*, Steel Structures Painting Council, Vol 1, 1982, Chapters 2.0–2.9, 3.1–3.2.

6.2.4 *Vapor Degreasing* is a generic term applied to a cleaning process that employs hot vapors of a volatile chlorinated solvent to remove contaminants, and is particularly effective against oils, waxes, and greases. The cleanness and chemical stability of the degreasing solvent are critical factors in the efficiency of the vapor and possible chemical attack of the metal. Water in the degreasing tank or on the item being cleaned may react with the solvent to form hydrochloric acid, which may be usually harmful to the metal. No water should be present in the degreasing tank or on the item being cleaned. Acids, oxidizing agents, and cyanides must be prevented from contaminating the solvent. Materials such as silicones cause foaming at the liquid-vapor interface and may result in recontamination of the workpiece as it is removed from the degreaser. Vapor degreasing with chlorinated solvents is not recommended for closed systems or items with internal voids or crevices.

6.2.5 *Ultrasonic Cleaning* is often used in conjunction with certain solvent and detergent cleaners to loosen and remove contaminants from deep recesses and other difficult to reach areas, particularly in small work-pieces. Cavitation in the liquid produced by the high frequency sound causes micro agitation of the solvent/cleaner in even tiny recesses of the workpiece, making the method especially desirable for cleaning parts or assemblies having an intricate configuration. For extremely high levels of surface cleanness, high-purity solvents (1 ppm total nonvolatile residue) are required.

6.2.6 *Synthetic Detergents* are extensively used as surface-active agents because they are freer rinsing than soaps, aid in soils dispersion, and prevent recontamination. They are effective for softening hard water and in lowering the surface and interfacial tensions of the solutions. Synthetic detergents, in particular, should be checked for the presence of harmful ingredients as noted in 6.1.

6.2.7 *Chelate Cleaning*—Chelates are chemicals that form soluble, complex molecules with certain metal ions, inactivating the ions in solution so they cannot normally react with another element or ions to produce precipitates or scale. They enhance the solubility of scales and certain other contaminants, do not precipitate different scales when the cleaning solution becomes spent, and can be used on some scales and contaminants that even mineral acids will not attack. When properly used (chelating agents must be continuously circulated and must be maintained within carefully controlled temperature limits), intergranular attack, pitting, and other harmful effects are minimal. Chelating agents are particularly useful for cleaning installed equipment and systems.

6.2.8 *Mechanical Cleaning* (also see 5.3)—Abrasive blasting, vapor blasting using a fine abrasive suspended in water, grinding, or wire brushing are often desirable for removing surface contaminants and rust. Cleanliness of abrasives and cleaning equipment is extremely important to prevent recontamination of the surfaces being cleaned. Although surfaces may appear visually clean following such procedures, residual films which could prevent the formation of an optimum passive condition may still be present. Subsequent treatment such as additional iron-free abrasive cleaning methods, acid cleaning, passivation, or combinations of these is, therefore, required for stainless steel parts, equipment, and systems to be used where corrosion resistance is a prime factor to satisfy performance and service requirements, or where product contamination must be avoided.

6.2.9 *Steam Cleaning* is used mostly for cleaning bulky objects that are too large for soak tanks or spray-washing equipment. It may be used with cleaning agents such as emulsions, solvents, alkalis, and detergents. Steam lances are frequently used for cleaning piping assemblies. Steam pressures from 345 to 515 kPa [50 to 75 psi] are usually adequate (see 6.1).

6.2.10 *Water-Jetting* at water pressures of up to 70 MPa [10 000 psi] is effective for removing grease, oils, chemical deposits (except adsorbed chemicals), dirt, loose and moderately adherent scale, and other contaminants that are not actually bonded to the metal. The method is particularly applicable for cleaning piping assemblies which can withstand the high pressures involved; self-propelled nozzles or “moles” are generally used for this purpose.

6.2.11 *Acid Cleaning* is a process in which a solution of a mineral or organic acid in water, sometimes in combination with a wetting agent or detergent or both, is employed to remove iron and other metallic contamination, light oxide films, shop soil, and similar contaminants. Suggested solutions, contact times, and solution temperatures for various alloys are given in Annex A2. Acid cleaning is not generally effective for removal of oils, greases, and waxes. Surfaces should shall be precleaned to remove oils and greases before acid cleaning. (See A2.10.) Common techniques for acid cleaning are immersion, swabbing, and spraying. Maximum surface quality is best achieved by using a minimum cleaning time at a given acid concentration and temperature. After acid cleaning the surfaces must be thoroughly rinsed with clean water to remove all traces of the acid and thoroughly dried after the final water rinse. To minimize staining, surfaces must shall not be permitted to dry between successive steps of the acid cleaning and rinsing procedure. A neutralizing treatment may be required under some conditions; if used, neutralization must be followed by repeated water rinsing to remove all trace of the neutralizing agent followed by thorough drying after the final water rinse. Acid cleaning is not recommended where mechanical cleaning or other chemical methods will suffice on the basis of intended use and, as may be necessary, on inspection tests (see 7.2 and 7.3). Requirements for superfluous cleaning and inspection testing can result in excessive costs. Acid cleaning, if not carefully controlled, may damage the surface and may result in further contamination of the surface.

6.2.12 *Rinsing*—After cleaning with an aqueous chemical cleaning solution, surfaces shall be thoroughly rinsed with clean water to remove all traces of residual chemicals and thoroughly dried after the final water rinse. A neutralization treatment may be necessary under some conditions (such as the presence of crevices). If used, neutralization is usually also followed by rinsing with clean water to remove all traces of the neutralizing agent and thorough drying. (See A2.10.)

6.3 *Cleaning of Welds and Weld-Joint Areas*—The joint area and surrounding metal for several inches back from the joint preparation, on both faces of the weld, should be cleaned immediately before starting to weld. Cleaning may be accomplished by

brushing with a clean stainless steel brush or scrubbing with a clean, lint-free cloth moistened with solvent, or both. When the joint has cooled after welding, remove all accessible weld spatter, welding flux, scale, arc strikes, etc., by grinding. According to the application, some scale or heat temper may be permissible on the nonprocess side of a weld, but should be removed from the process side if possible. If chemical cleaning of the process side of the weld is deemed necessary, the precautions of this standard must be observed. Austenitic stainless steels in the sensitized condition should generally not be descaled with nitric-hydrofluoric acid solutions. Welds may also be cleaned as described in [Table A2.1](#), Part III, Treatment *P* and *Q* (also see [5-2.35.2.4](#) and [5-2.45.2.5](#)).

6.4 Final Cleaning or Passivation, or Both—If proper care has been taken in earlier fabrication and cleaning, final cleaning may consist of little more than scrubbing with hot water or hot water and detergent (such as trisodium phosphate, TSP), using fiber brushes. Detergent washing must be followed by a hot-water rinse to remove residual chemicals. Spot cleaning to remove localized contamination may be accomplished by wiping with a clean, solvent-moistened cloth. If the purchaser specifies passivation, the final cleaning shall be in accordance with the requirements of [Table A2.1](#), Part II, or one of the treatments listed in Specification [A967A967/A967M](#). Unless specified by the purchaser, the chemical treatment applied to the parts shall be selected by the supplier from among the listed passivation treatments. When the stainless steel parts are to be used for applications where corrosion resistance is a prime factor to achieve satisfactory performance and service requirements, or where product contamination must be avoided, passivation followed by thorough rinsing several times with hot water and drying thoroughly after the final water rinse is recommended, whenever practical.

6.5 Precision Cleaning—Certain nuclear, space, and other especially critical applications may require that only very high-purity alcohols, acetone, ketones, or other *precision cleaning agents* be used for final cleaning or recleaning of critical surfaces after fabrication advances to the point that internal crevices, undrainable spaces, blind holes, or surfaces that are not accessible for thorough scrubbing, rinsing, and inspection are formed. Such items are often assembled under clean-room conditions (see [8.5.5](#)) and require approval, by the purchaser, of carefully prepared cleaning procedures before the start of fabrication.

6.6 Cleaning of Installed Systems—There are two approaches to cleaning installed systems. In the first, which is probably adequate for most applications, cleaning solutions are circulated through the completed system after erection, taking care to remove or protect items that could be damaged during the cleaning operation. In the second approach, which may be required for gaseous or liquid oxygen, liquid metal, or other reactive-process solutions, piping and components are installed in a manner to avoid or minimize contamination of process-solution surfaces during erection so that little additional cleaning is necessary after erection; post-erection flushing, if necessary, is done with the process fluid. If process surfaces are coated with an appreciable amount of iron oxide, a chelating treatment or high-pressure water-jetting treatment should be considered in place of acid treatment (see [6.2.7](#) and [6.2.10](#)).

6.6.1 Post-Erection Cleaning—Circulate hot water to which a detergent has been added, for at least 4 to 8 h. A water temperature of at least 60 to 70°C [140 to 160°F] is recommended (see [6.1](#)). Rinse by circulating clean hot water until the effluent is clear. If excessive particulate matter is present, the cleaning cycle may be preceded with a high-pressure steam blow, repeating as necessary until a polished-aluminum target on the outlet of the system is no longer dulled and scratched by particulates loosened by the high-velocity steam. Valves and similar items must be protected from damage during a steam blow.

6.6.2 If metallic iron is detected by one of the methods suggested in [Section 7](#), it can be removed by circulating one of the acid passivation solutions suggested in [6.4](#) until laboratory determination for iron, made on samples of the solution taken hourly, indicates no further increase in iron content, after which circulation may be stopped and the system drained. After this treatment, circulate clean hot water (that is, without detergent) through the system for 4 h to remove all traces of acid and corrosion product resulting from the acid treatment, or until the pH of the rinse water returns to neutral.

6.6.3 In critical systems where post-erection cleaning is not desirable (for example, liquid oxygen or nuclear reactor primary coolant systems), on-site erection may be conducted under clean-room conditions. Erection instructions may require that wrapping and seals of incoming materials and equipment be kept intact until the item is inside the clean area, and that careful surveillance be exercised to prevent foreign materials (for example, cleaning swabs or tools) from being dropped or left in the system. Where contamination does occur, the cleaning procedure usually is developed through consultation between the erector and the purchaser (or his site representative). Frequently, post-erection flushing is accomplished by circulating the process fluid through the system until contamination is reduced to tolerable levels.

6.6.4 When cleaning critical installed systems, do not permit the process surfaces to dry between successive cleaning and rinsing steps, or between the final rinse and filling with the layup solution.

7. Inspection After Cleaning

7.1 General—Inspection techniques should represent careful, considered review of end use requirements of parts, equipment, and systems. There is no substitute for good, uniform, cleaning practices which yield a metallurgically sound and smooth surface, followed by adequate protection to preserve that condition. Establishment of the most reliable tests and test standards for cleanness are helpful in attaining the desired performance of parts, equipment, and systems. Testing should be sufficiently extensive to ensure the cleanness of all surfaces exposed to process fluids when in service. The following represent some tests that have been successfully applied to stainless steels. The purchaser shall have the option of specifying in his purchase documents that any of