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Temperature Classes of Electrical Insulators

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1. Introduction

In early times, the temperature classes of electric insulators were simply divided into natural organics, inorganics, and combinations thereof. In the late 1930s, the types of synthetic resins became diverse and their production volumes increased, with their application range being gradually expanded to insulation. In the late 1940s, when silicone resin became a popular insulator material, the H-class insulator was added to the temperature classes, and it became increasingly necessary to find applications for heat resistant materials in electric instruments.

Under such circumstances, IEC¹⁾ issued a recommendation on the temperature classes of electric insulators, followed by IEC Publication 85²⁾ (1957), which established the classification system currently in use. In Japan,

JEC 147³⁾ (1957), which was prepared by the Japanese Electrotechnical Committee, and JIS C 4003 (established in 1962, revised in 1977, and confirmed in 1982), which was prepared by the Japanese Industrial Standards Committee, contain material-classifying tables as a reference.

In parallel, the evaluation method for insulator classification was established, and some testing techniques for the high temperature life of new material for temperature classification were investigated intensively in the United States. The results were issued in many IEC Publications⁴⁾. Such investigation has been continued to find a short time testing method of high temperature life.

This paper reviews the temperature classes of electric insulators.

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2. Insulation classes for electric equipment

In 1977, the Electric Instrument Rules Committee of the Japanese Industrial Standards Committee discussed the classes of electrical insulation and drew up JIS C 4003: Classes of electrical insulation, to clarify the classes of motor insulation and their maximum allowable temperatures (Table 1)

Table 1. Maximum allowable temperatures of various types of insulation

Insulation classes	Maximum permissible temperature (°C)
Y	90
A	105
E	120
B	130
F	155
H	180
C	Over 180

The following are brief explanations of those insulation techniques.

i) **Class-Y insulation:** Withstands a temperature of up to 90°C; typically made of cotton, silk, or paper

ii) **Class-A insulation:** Withstands a temperature of up to 105°C; reinforced Class-Y materials with impregnated varnish or insulation oil

iii) **Class-E insulation:** Withstands a temperature of up to 120°C

iv) **Class-B insulation:** Withstands a temperature of up to 130°C. This has a form that inorganic material is hardened with adhesives. This is the first insulator using this structure.

v) **Class-F insulation:** Withstands a temperature of up to 155°C; for example, made of Class-B materials that are upgraded with adhesives, silicone, and alkyd-resin varnish of higher thermal endurance

vi) **Class H insulation:** Withstands a

temperature of up to 180°C; for example, made of inorganic material glued with silicone resin or adhesives of equivalent performance

vii) **Class-C insulation:** Withstands a temperature of up to 180°C or higher; made of 100% inorganic material

As explained above, electrical insulation is classified with its maximum allowable temperature. By adopting an insulation technique of higher thermal endurance, electric instruments can be downsized.

3. Temperature classes of materials used for various insulators

Once the temperature classes of insulation have been established, those of the individual materials of each insulator become important. JIS C 4003 provides a table of material temperature classes as a reference, in addition to the text. This reference table adopted the Standards of the Japanese Electrotechnical Committee of the Institute of Electrical Engineers of Japan, JEC 147 (1960), prepared by the Thermal-Endurance Classifying Committee of the Institute of Electrical Engineers of Japan in accordance with IEC Publication 85 (1957) and in consideration of then domestic situations and completed. Table 2 is that insulator classification table.

It should be noted that in this table every material is not always classified into a specific temperature class; rather, the table provides information for reference purposes only. The performance (durability) of a material can be easily changed through the combination of materials, treatment of varnish, and method of use. Thus, the Standards clearly suggest that when a manufacturer uses a material for insulation, the manufacturer must decide on its own whether the selected material is suitable for the relevant insulation, and that the manufacturer must conduct a well designed long life test for each purposes.

Table 2. Temperature classes of insulator materials

1	2	3	4	5
Insulation type	Main or sub	Insulation material	Adhesive, impregnant, or coating material used together with the insulator specified in Column 3	Target insulator
Y	Main	Cotton, silk, or other natural plant or animal fibers O Regenerated cellulose O Cellulose acetate O Polyamide fiber O Paper and paper goods O Press board O	None	None

		Hard fiber O Wood O Aniline resin Urea resin			
	Sub	Acrylic resin Polyethylene Polystyrene Vinyl chloride (soft or hard) Vulcanized natural rubber	None	None	
A	Main	Impregnated or liquid-dielectric immersed cotton, silk, or other natural plant or animal fibers O Regenerated cellulose O Cellulose acetate O Polyamide fiber O Paper and paper goods O	None	Oil-modified natural resin O Ceramics, copal Other natural resin O Cellulose derivatives Paint O Higher-temperature-resistant materials O Insulation oil and synthetic insulation oil O	
		Press board O Hard fiber O Wood O	None		
		Varnish cloth (cotton, silk, or other natural plant or animal fibers; regenerated cellulose, cellulose acetate, or polyamide fiber base) O Varnish paper O	Oil-modified natural or synthetic resin varnish O		
		Laminated wood plates	Phenol resin		
		Cellulose acetate film O Cellulose acetate butyrate film O Bridged polyester resin Enamel wire oil varnish O Enamel wire polyamide resin Enamel wire polyvinyl formal ⁽¹⁾	None		
	Sub	Polychloroplylene, nitrile rubber	None		As above
E	Sub	Enamel wire polyurethane resin Enamel wire epoxy resin	None	Oil-modified asphalt and oil-modified synthetic resin varnish Bridged polyester resin Material with thermal endurance higher than that of epoxy resin	
		Cellulose-filled mold products O Cotton lamination O Paper lamination O	Melamine resin Phenol resin O Phenol furfural resin		
		Bridged polyester resin Cellulose triacetate film Polyethylene terephthalate film O Polyethylene terephthalate fiber O	None		
		Varnish-treated polyethylene terephthalate cloth	Oil-modified alkyd varnish		
B	Main	Glass fiber ※ O Asbestos ※O	None	Oil-modified asphalt and oil-modified synthetic resin varnish O Bridged polyester resin O Epoxy resin O Polyurethane resin O (If they will be exposed to strong mechanical stress, these are not good choices. In such a case, use unmodified phenol resin.) Material of higher thermal endurance O	
		Varnish glass cloth O Varnish asbestos O	Oil-modified synthetic resin varnish		
		Mica products (with or without support material) O	Shellac, asphalt or bituminous compound O Oil-modified synthetic resin O Alkyd resin O Bridged polyester resin O Epoxy resin		
		Glass lamination O Asbestos lamination O Mineral-packed mold products O	Melamine resin O Phenol resin O		
	Sub	Enamel wire silicone resin ⁽²⁾ Enamel wire polyethylene terephthalate ⁽²⁾	None		As above
		Mineral-packed mold products Polyfluorinated ethylene resin ⁽³⁾	Bridged polyester resin None		

F	Sub	Glass fiber ※ O Asbestos ※ O	None	Resin listed below featuring excellent thermal endurance { Alkyd resin Epoxy resin Bridged polyester resin Polyurethane resin Silicone alkyd resin O Silicone phenol resin O Material of higher thermal endurance O
		Varnish glass cloth O Varnish asbestos O Mica products (with or without support material) O	Resin listed below featuring excellent thermal endurance { Alkyd resin Epoxy resin Bridged polyester resin Polyurethane resin Silicone alkyd resin O	
H	Main	Glass fiber ※ O Asbestos ※ O	None	Silicone resin O
		Varnish glass cloth O Varnish asbestos O	Silicone resin	
		Rubber glass cloth O	Silicone rubber O	
		Mica products (with or without support materials) Glass lamination O Asbestos lamination O	Silicone resin O	
		Silicone rubber	None	
C	Main	Mica O Ceramic O Glass O Quartz O Inorganic materials with properties similar to the above O (Note: The maximum permissible temperature is limited by the material's physical, chemical, and electric properties at each operating temperature)	None	Inorganic adhesives such as glass or cement O
	Sub	Varnish glass cloth O Varnish asbestos mica products O	Silicone resin of excellent thermal endurance (Maximum permissible temperature 225°C) O	
			Polytetrafluoroethylene resin (Maximum permissible temperature 250°C)	None

Remark: Materials marked with ※ are regarded as belonging to the current insulator class if treated with a material listed in Column 5. Materials marked with O are proven by the Thermal-Endurance Classifying Committee of the Institute of Electrical Engineers of Japan to be sufficiently useful as a material of the class.

Notes: (1) Enamel wire polyvinyl formal... This is classified into Class E (sub) in the I.E.C. Table. However, we found that it should be classified into Class A unless it shows excellent heat resistance.

(2) Enamel wire silicone resin, enamel wire polyethylene terephthalate... In the test using yarned test pieces or the Marlette test or motor test using these materials as a magnet wire, they are known to have heat resistance approximately 30-40°C higher than that of enamel wire polyvinyl formal. Thus, they are classified into Class B.

(3) Polytrifluorinated ethylene resin... Its mechanical properties change depending on the fabrication conditions. Good fabrication techniques provide heat resistance as high as 130°C for an extended period. (Source: JIS C 4003)

In Table 2, "Main" means that the material is widely recognized as being useful in the class, and "Sub" means that the material's performance has not been confirmed, although it is often used on a trial basis.

4. Testing method of high temperature life for various materials

The heat resistance classification of insulators relies on either of the following:

- (a) Field records recognized over the long term
- (b) Experimental life test for new materials (not

always verified theoretically)

When using method (b), we conduct an accelerated aging test under the same conditions as employed for known reference material whose performance has already been proven, and decide the temperature class of the new material according to the test results compared with those of the known material. This is the technique that is employed by IEC⁵⁾ and used widely by many institutes.

To analyze the thermal aging of organic materials (both natural and synthetic), T.W. Dakin et al. have proposed a theory⁶⁾

considering the chemical reactions of oxidizing decomposition, polymerization, bridging, and evaporation of plasticizer.

According to their theory, the rate of chemical reactions can be expressed by the following equation:

$$\frac{dc}{dt} = -kc^n \dots\dots(1)$$

where c: concentration of the reacting material; t: time; n: rank of reaction; and k: reaction rate constant

Assuming that concentration C in (1) can be replaced by physical property P, we generally obtain the following equation:

$$f(P) = -kt + f(P_0) \dots\dots(2)$$

where f(P) is a function of P and P₀ is P at t=0

Assuming n=1,

$$\log P = -kt + \log P_0 \dots\dots(3)$$

Substituting Arrhenius' reaction rate constant k in eq. (3),

$$k = A \cdot e^{-E/RT}$$

where A: frequency constant; E: activation energy; R: gas constant; and T: absolute temperature

Solving (3) to obtain t in log form:

$$\log t = \log \left(\frac{1}{A} \cdot \log \frac{P_0}{P} \right) + \frac{E}{RT} \dots\dots(4)$$

Assuming that t_e is the aging time (life time) required for physical property P to reach P_e (for example, 50% of the initial value),

$$\log t_e = \log \left(\frac{1}{A} \cdot \log \frac{P_0}{P} \right) + \frac{E}{RT} \dots\dots(5)$$

In eq. (5), $\log \left(\frac{1}{A} \cdot \log \frac{P_0}{P} \right)$ is a constant and, if

expressed by A', eq. (5) reduces to (6).

$$\log t_e = A' + \frac{E}{RT} \dots\dots(6)$$

According to the theory of T. W. Dakin et al., because A', E, and R are constant, log t_e (logarithm of life time, t_e) is proportional to $\frac{1}{T}$ (absolute temperature of aging temperature).

Specifically, the maximum temperature is estimated from the temperature increase of the instrument based on its design. Next, we choose three to four temperatures that are higher than the maximum temperature as aging temperatures, calculate the aging time at each temperature at which the physical property changes into P_e, plot the relations of

$(\log t_e - \frac{1}{T})$, connect these points, check the linearity, and extrapolate this life line to lower temperatures by 20 thousand hours in order to determine the corresponding aging temperature and decide on the temperature class.

For example, in Fig. 1, suppose that a high-temperature life test has been conducted at temperatures T₁-T₄, and that the aging times for 50% degradation of the physical property are found from the degradation curve to be t₁-t₄.

By plotting $(\log t - \frac{1}{T})$ with the reciprocal of the absolute temperature of the aging temperature on the lateral axis and with the reciprocal of the aging time (time of degradation) on the vertical axis, a nearly linear line can be obtained by connecting those plots (Fig. 2).

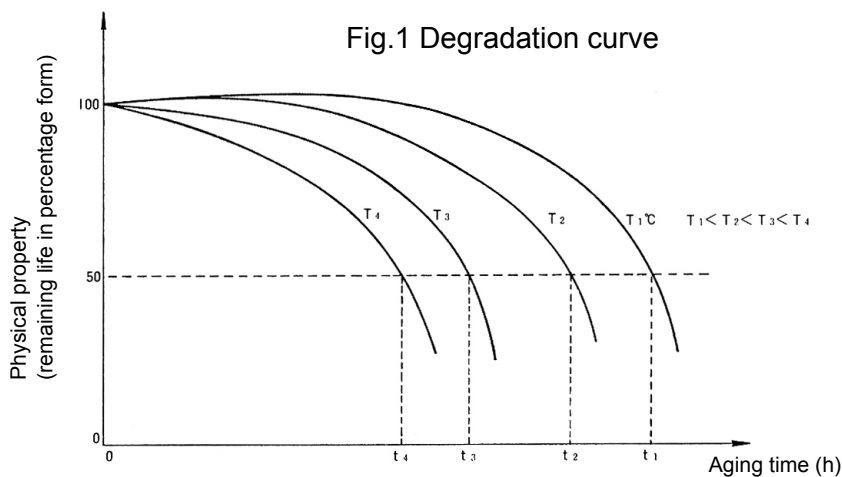
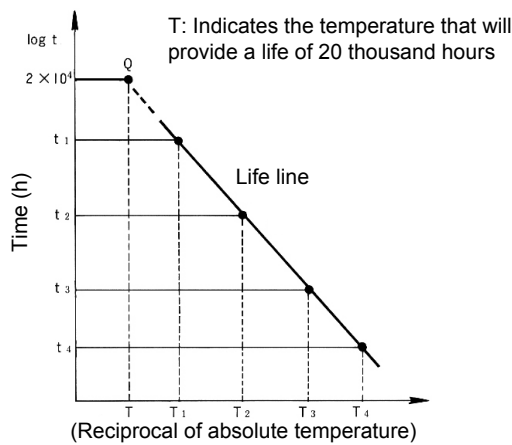


Figure 2. Heat-resistant life line



By extending this life line to lower temperatures and reading the cross-point, Q, with $t=20,000$ hours and temperature T (max. operating temperature) on the lateral axis, all information on the temperature class of the material can be obtained. The following is the specific testing method.

i) Test sample

Many insulators are composites using adhesives and varnish.

They are used as test samples following a simple varnish treatment. For example, the helical-coil method is a life testing method for impregnated varnish. By winding a bare Cu wire densely to form a cylinder, impregnating and coating the varnish and drying/sintering it to make a test sample, its bending breakage stress after heating can be determined and the thermal degradation rate can be checked simply. Another example is the method in which varnish is impregnated in a glass cloth and dried to make a varnish glass cloth for use as a test sample, and the breakdown voltage is then determined following thermal degradation. Another is the twisted-pair method, in which a test sample made of two twisted enamel wires is used. Meanwhile, the heat resistance of laminated material can be examined easily by using a test sample of an appropriate size to conduct a bending test or tensile strength test.

ii) Cycle conditions in the aging test

Some tests require rather complex degradation cycles, such as continuous heating, heating → cooling, heating → cooling → moisture absorption, and heating → cooling → moisture absorption → vibration, to attain the goal of testing. As for the aging temperatures,

the minimum aging temperature, which is approximately 20°C higher than the projected operating (max.) temperature, and three to four points, each of which is 20°C, 40°C, 60°C, and 80°C higher than the minimum aging temperature, respectively, must be selected. In addition, they must be selected so that the minimum degradation temperature provides a life as long as at least 100 hours.

iii) Selecting a physical property

As the index of the aging test, a physical property should be selected that is suited to the expected use, such as strength (tensile, bending), elongation, breakdown voltage, and weight loss, which makes the test easy and empirically reduces measurement error.

iv) Deciding the life end point

It is necessary to decide in advance, for each use of the material, the percentage of the life end point of the physical property in relation to the initial value. Because it depends on the physical property selected as the life index, there is no set rule. However, it is often decided to be 50% of the initial value. The percentage should be decided in consideration of the operating conditions, life, and safety of the electric instrument.

v) Life of an electric instrument

Although the life of an electric instrument depends on the adopted material and operating conditions, 20 thousand hours can be used as a guide for estimating the maximum temperature.

The high-temperature life test therefore continues for at least 5,000 hours at the minimum test temperature. This means that the test requires almost seven months of continuous heating to obtain the first point on the life line. Thus, nearly a year is required to determine the life line.

Since JEC147 (1960), Institute of Electrical Engineers of Japan has continued its research and surveys on material and test methods, and has issued the results in a technical report⁷⁾.

5. Temperature classification used in other standards

5-1. Japanese National Railways Standard (JRS)

As shown in the table below, temperature increase is used as a standard to decide the temperature classification of vehicle motors used in JR trains and locomotives.

Table 3. Vehicle motor standards⁸⁾

Component \ Insulation class		Unit: deg.		
		Class B	Class F	Class H
Stator coil	Resistance method	130	155	180
Armature coil	Resistance method	120	140	160
Commutator	Electric-type-thermometer method	105		
Standard ambient temperature		Standard 25°C; Maximum 40°C		

JRS decides the insulation class based on the temperature rise of the coil, unlike JEC and JIS. In the case of the maximum temperature of the Class-H stator coil, the standard ambient temperature reaches 205°C and the maximum ambient temperature reaches as high as 220°C. Thus, the insulator may be seriously damaged.

5-2. Relative temperature index used in UL standards

UL-764B⁹⁾ (1975) specifies a method for determining the long-term heat resistance of polymeric materials, and expresses the recommended temperature index of material using the relative temperature index (RTI). This index indicates the ability of material to maintain a specific property when exposed to high temperatures, thereby serving as a measure of a material's high-temperature durability. RTI can be obtained through the following:

- i) Field experience
- ii) A long term degradation program

The procedure specified in ii) is the same as those of the aforementioned IEC and JIS, in which linearity is checked with plotting ($\log t - \frac{1}{T}$). However, the time is set to 60 thousand hours when a reference material is available; otherwise, 100 thousand hours for extrapolation is required to determine the corresponding RTI.

Table 4 is an excerpt from RTI described in UL-764B. For details, refer to the review paper¹⁰⁾.

Table 4. Example of the relative temperature index^{a)}

Material name	Relative temperature index (°C)
Polyamide (6, 11, 12, 66, 610, 612 nylon) ^{b)}	65
Polycarbonate ^{b)}	75
Polyethylene terephthalate	
Mold products	65
Film ≤ 0.25 mm	105
Polypropylene	65
Teflon TFE	180
Teflon FEP	150
Silicone	
Mold products ^{c) d)}	150
Rubber (RTV)	105
Epoxy	
Mold products ^{c) d)}	130
Casting or potting	90
Diallylphthalate	
Mold products ^{c) d)}	130
Unsaturated polyester	
Mold products ^{c) d)}	130
<u>Mica composite</u>	
Epoxy or polyester bonding	130
Phenol resin bonding	150
Silicone bonding	200

- a) Part of UL-746B (1975); for reference
- b) Using an inorganic filler such as glass fiber
- c) Molded at high temperature and high pressure
- d) Including inorganic fiber and excluding fiber reinforced systems using liquid resin

5-3. Electric apparatus regulations and using temperature of insulators

Ministerial ordinance No. 85, issued by the former MITI in 1962, showed how to handle electrical apparatuses from a technological viewpoint and specified detailed new enforcement regulations¹¹⁾ An attached table of the enforcement regulations shows the upper temperature limits of insulators.

To officially decide the limits, the Japan Electrical Safety & Environment Technology Laboratories now conducts the test based on the practical rules of the insulator certification test¹²⁾. The upper temperature limit is decided by extrapolating the life line to 40 thousand hours.

Table 5 shows some upper limits sampled from the attached table. Refer to the enforcement regulations and check/test rules for details.

Table 5. Upper limits of useful temperatures of insulators^{a)}

Material name	Reinforced by	Upper limit (°C)	
		No.1 ^{c)}	No.2 ^{c)}
Polyethylene	-	50	80
Bridged polyethylene	-	90	120
Polypropylene	- G ^{b)}	105 110	110 120
Modified polyphenylene oxide (PPO)	-	75	120
	G	100	140
Polyacetal	-	100	120
	G	120	130
Polycarbonate	-	100	125
	G	120	130
Polyethylene terephthalate	-	120	125
	G	130	150
Polytetrafluoroethylene (Teflon)	-	250	
Silicone resin Lamination Mold	Minerals	180	220
	Minerals	180	220
Polyimide Film Lamination	-	210	250
	-	190	-

- a) This table is cited from the Details of Regulations of Electrical-Apparatus Technology Basis issued in 1979 by the Japan Electric Association, p. 319, for reference purposes. Refer to the Details.
- b) "G" indicates glass fiber reinforcement.
- c) No. 1 means that the material is generally known to maintain this temperature.
No. 2 means that the material can be used at this temperature on a trial basis according to predetermined procedures.

6. Conclusion

It has passed 28 years since IEC Pub. 85 on temperature classification was published in 1957, and a number of experts have reviewed it. This paper has pointed out that JEC147 and JIS C 4003 were established with reference to the IEC publication, and that the IEC concepts have been reflected in the UL standards and electrical apparatus regulations. ISO2578 is the corresponding international standard.

New materials with performance proven through long-term life evaluation tests have not been added to the IEC list. However, considering that the related JIS has been left unchanged for over 20 years, the descriptions should be updated.

Some quick evaluation methods have been investigated by the Institute of Electrical Engineers of Japan and IEC working groups. We hope that the investigation results will be reported soon.

<References>

- 1) IEC: International Electrical Commission. Organized in 1908; in charge of preparing/issuing international standards as an activity of the ISO's electrical/electronic department.
- 2) IEC Publication 85 (1957): Recommendations for classification of materials for the insulation of electrical machinery and apparatus in relation to their thermal stability in service.
- 3) JEC 147 (1960), "Types of electrical insulation" or IEEJ technical report No. 48 (Sept. 1961)
- 4) For example, IEC Pub. 172, 216, 290, 370, etc.
- 5) IEC Pub. 216-1; Part 1. General procedures for the determination of heat resistance properties, temperature indices, and thermal endurance profiles. (1974)
- 6) T. W. Dakin; AIEE Trans. 67, Pt. III 113 (1948)
- 7) IEEJ technical report No. 51 (June 1962)
IEEJ technical report II, No. 28 (August 1974)
IEEJ technical report II, No. 134 (August 1950)
- 8) JRS 15255 2197 15AR3 "General main motors" (revised on Nov. 30, 1963)
- 9) UL-746B (1975) Revised on 3/20/78, 5/25/78, and 12/14/78
- 10) For example, Isono's review paper, Industrial Materials Vol. 27, No. 11, pp. 21-27 (1979)
- 11) Revised version (Sept. 25, 1979) of Details of Regulations of Electrical-Apparatus Technology Basis, issued by Japan Electric Association
- 12) Practical Rules of the Organic Insulator Certification Test, issued by Japan Electrical Safety & Environment Technology Laboratories (June 1, 1981)

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Three Bond fine chemical products help the progress of optical communications

Optical fibers as thin as a human hair have brought technical innovations to the world of communications. Telephones, TV, fax machines, telex, and other emerging new media--the root of such forms of mass media is optical-communications systems using fiber optics.

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Their excellent moisture resistance, workability, and refractivity meet the demanding needs of optical communications.

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Keeps elasticity down to -40°C, with little light power loss at low temperatures, maintaining performance almost as high as that of silicone resin. It cures in seconds with UV exposure and features excellent moisture resistance.
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- **AVR-200: Optical-fiber core material, mold material for optical components**
When cured, this material has a high refractive index of n_D^{20} 1.558. It cures in seconds with UV exposure, features high transparency and high light transmissivity, as well as excellent moisture resistance. Useful as a plastic-fiber material for optical communications in combination with AVR-110.



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ThreeBond 2500 Series: Contact-conductivity restoring agent



This is a contact-conductivity restoring agent of which an extremely chemically stable, neutral polymer derivative is a major element. It prevents the sulfidization, oxidization, abrasion, and deformation of contacts, which are regarded as the key to the performance of electric instruments, thereby greatly extending their service life and preventing problems. It also works to clean and restore contacts whose functions have been impaired by sulfidization and oxidization. A variety of types are available to meet your needs.
<Major applications> Protection, lubrication and cleaning of volume dials, switches, and connectors
<Advantage> Various grades of products are available to meet a wide range of contact-pressure requirements.



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