



Allen-Bradley

Contact Block Performance/Selection



Bringing Together Leading Brands in Industrial Automation

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Contact Block Considerations

A combination of many factors affect the dependability, life expectancy, and suitability of a contact block in any given application. Understanding the most important of those factors can help you select the best switch for your needs. In the pages that follow you'll gain a basic understanding of switch materials and properties, and how they affect switch performance.

Contact Material

The contact material forms the surfaces that come in contact with each other to establish an electrical circuit. Typical contact materials include fine silver, nickel-silver, and silver alloys. Fine silver provides low electrical resistance between the movable and stationary contact interface. Silver alloys form harder surfaces to reduce wear and help prevent contact welding.

In low voltage applications (below 48V DC and 0.1 A, or below 24V AC and 0.4 A) where excess oil or dust is present, the use of more noble alloys (such as palladium, gold, and their alloys) in the contact material is recommended. These alloys are highly reliable in this type of environment.

Silver alloys are susceptible to chemical attack which can affect reliability at low voltages. Noble metals resist chemical attack, but are susceptible to frictional polymer formation, which can affect reliability. Combining gold and palladium will resist frictional polymer formation.

Contact Construction

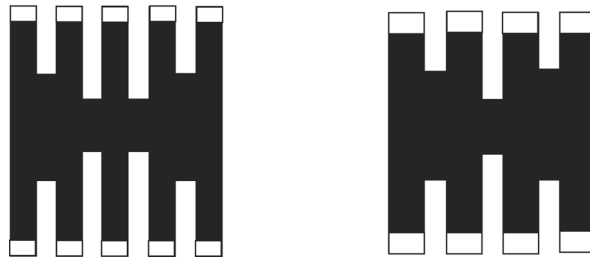
The perimeter of the contact is often shaped like a circle or rectangle and may have little effect on contact performance. The shape of the faces where the fixed and movable contacts meet is more important. This interface should not have two flat surfaces meeting. If one of the contacts has a flat surface, the other contact should be a rounded surface to provide a more defined and controlled touch point.

Figure 1. Bifurcated Spanner Example



The bifurcated style of construction provides a higher degree of reliability than the butt spanner because it divides each movable contact into two sections at the tip of the spanner. This minimizes the chance of foreign materials accumulating on contact surfaces and preventing the completion of the circuit. Even if foreign material accumulates on one of the contact tips, the second tip will most likely touch a clean spot establishing the circuit. Typically, the bifurcated spanner is designed for use in full voltage applications, where the arc between the spanner and stationary contacts will burn off small amounts of contamination in most cases. To aid contact cleaning the contact spanner is designed to flex, which wipes the stationary surface and allows each finger to act independently.

Figure 2. Pentafurcated and Quadfurcated Spanner Examples



In low voltage applications (below 48V DC and 0.1 A or below 24V AC and 0.4 A) pentafurcated/quadfurcated styles of construction provide the highest degree of reliability because they divide each movable spanner contact side into separate flexible fingers. Every part in the system is corrosion-resistant and the flexible spanner is designed to wipe the stationary contacts clean every time the circuit is opened or closed. This is important since the absence of an arc in low voltage environments means that contaminants will not be burned off, but will be eliminated by the wiping action. Therefore, the pentafurcated or quadfurcated are the most reliable styles of spanners available.

Some manufacturers use protrusions such as bars or nibs raised on the face of either the movable or stationary contact to help establish the circuit under low power conditions. These raised surfaces will tend to penetrate non-conducting films that may be present on contact surfaces. They may also lessen the chance of foreign matter preventing completion of the circuit. Such protrusions may, however, quickly burn away under arcing or higher current conditions.

Base materials to which the contact material is attached include copper alloys and steel. Copper alloy is preferable because of its thermal conductivity, electrical conductivity, and corrosion properties.

Contact Size/Volume — Stationary vs. Movable

Contact size refers to the size of the face of the contact or the areas that meet to form the interface between the movable and stationary contacts. Volume is the total amount of contact material.

It is desirable to make one of the contacts smaller than the other so it stays within the perimeter of the other contact when switch action takes place. This arrangement provides greater assurance that alignment of contacts is maintained under repeated operation and resulting wear. Misalignment can cause severe contact wear and shorten switch life.

In the contact set, the movable contact is most often the smaller contact in both size and volume, so that its mass and resulting inertia can be minimized. Partly because of its low volume, the movable contact operates at a higher temperature than the stationary contact. Consequently, the stationary contact will also contribute to a greater rate of wear on the movable contact. The stationary contact is generally attached to a more massive base structure that provides a better heat sink than the movable contact structure.

In alternating current applications, the higher temperature of the movable contact can cause material to be expelled from the surface of the contact. The higher temperature can cause transfer of material to the cooler surface of the stationary contact as well. In direct current applications, the relative polarity of the contacts has a major effect on how the contact material is transferred from one surface to the other.

Contact Reliability

Contact reliability pertains to the ability of contacts to establish a circuit across the interface between the stationary and movable contact set(s) each time the switch is operated. This reliability can be most often adversely affected by two conditions:

- Mechanical debris within the switch
- Non-conducting films that form on the contact surfaces

Mechanical debris or dirt can be introduced into the switch during assembly. Dirt and debris can also be interjected during installation or can be a product of switch action. The wear produced by internal switch components sliding past one another during operation can generate dirt. Care must be taken in the design of moving mechanisms to keep this wear to a minimum.

Non-conducting film and oxides can be formed from gaseous contaminants that enter the switch from an external environment as well as being formed from internally generated reactants. Sealing methods have been developed to isolate the switch interior from the external environment. An understanding of the relationship of all the material used in the construction of a switch is required to eliminate the internally generated reactants. This requires knowledge of the post curing outgassing of any plastics, elastomers, paint, and other components used in the construction of the system. Some gases will react in the presence of an electric arc to form non-conducting films that will cause reliability problems if deposited on the contact face. The tendency of many thermoset plastics to continue to outgas for a period of time after curing has led to the use of thermoplastic materials in switch interiors.

Contact Resistance

Contact resistance pertains to resistance across the interface between a pair of movable and stationary contacts. The higher the value of this resistance, the more difficult it is to establish a circuit when the contacts close. This is especially true in low power circuits. Higher resistance also contributes to contact heating.

The initial contact resistance of both fine silver contacts and noble contact materials (gold, palladium, and their alloys) is 10...15 milliohms. However, the resistance of noble contact materials will remain relatively constant during their lifetime compared to silver contacts, which typically increase over time. These resistance values could vary with the ambient conditions in the vicinity of the contacts themselves

Sealed switches have slightly higher initial contact resistances compared to silver contacts (80...150 milliohms, depending on type), but they remain stable over the life of the device.

Switch Design Considerations

In addition to the physical characteristics of the materials used in manufacturing, design considerations also affect the performance of a switching mechanism. In this section you'll gain an overview of those switch design fundamentals and how they affect switch performance.

Single Break vs. Double Break

Figure 3. Single Break Design



Figure 4. Double Break Design



Single break and double break refer to the number of contact pairs that are used to make or break the electrical circuit. Single break means the electrical circuit is controlled by one set of contacts. Double break means the electrical circuit is controlled by two sets of contacts in series.

In a single break design, the contact pair tends to repeatedly make and break the circuit on the same spot on the contact faces. This helps to keep the contact touch point clean, enhancing the contact reliability.

The double break design provides twice the length of air gap in the electrical circuit using the same stroke of the actuating member as with the single break design. The result is the electrical arc that is created by the opening of the circuit will be extinguished sooner and with less actuator movement as compared to a single break design.

Also, since the energy in the arc created upon contact opening is distributed across two air gaps, there is less tendency for the contacts to weld in the double break design.

On the other hand, because of the nature of the double break design, the contact points of the spanner may vary slightly with each actuation. This variation may, over time, affect switch reliability.

Contact Motion

Contact motion refers to the relative motion of the contact faces as they begin to touch one another. Various design techniques are utilized to increase the reliability of the contacts establishing the circuit as they meet.

A wiping or sliding action will help clear surfaces of dirt and oxides and break any non-conducting film that may have formed on contact surfaces. This type of action must be carefully controlled, especially with precious metal contacts, to avoid excessive mechanical wear of the contacts.

Contact tips on the end of the spanner must be capable of flexing and twisting to establish a seat on the surfaces of bifurcated/quadfurcated/pentafurcated stationary contacts.

A sliding action of one contact against the other could cause continuity interruptions if the moving contact slides up over a piece of debris.

Spring Force

The spring force discussed in the following paragraphs is the force provided within the contact block that returns the contact structure to its normal or unoperated state when the external force applied to the device operator is removed. This force holds the contact structure in its normal state until an external force is again applied to the device operator.

The amount of spring force is determined by the force required to insure contact reliability under the conditions in a variety of applications. Sufficient force is required to break through contaminants that may be present on the contact faces on the normally closed (N.C.) contacts. The force should insure that contacts stay stable under possible shock and vibration. Light welds created by contact arcing on the normally open (N.O.) contacts should be able to be broken by spring force. The spring force required to maintain circuit reliability is dependant on the contact material hardness. Greater force is required for harder materials.

Spring force directly affects the external force required to operate and to some extent contribute to internal switch friction. Consideration must be given to these factors when determining the spring force used.

Overtravel

Overtravel in a switch pertains to the amount of travel occurring in a switch beyond what is required to operate. Overtravel allows for wear within the switch mechanism. It helps to insure the switch will continue to function as the contacts wear or erode. Overtravel also provides contact stabilization under conditions of shock and vibration.

Contact Underlap vs. Contact Overlap

Contact underlap and overlap refer to the relative action of the N.O. and N.C. contacts when the switch is actuated.

Underlap is the more common type of switch action. As the device operator is moved from its rest position to initiate switch action, the following events take place in order:

1. The N.C. contact opens.
2. There is a duration where no electrical continuity is present.
3. The N.O. contact closes.

In overlap type switch action, the N.O. contact makes its circuit before the N.C. contact breaks its circuit. There is never a period of time when electrical continuity is absent:

1. The N.O. contact closes.
2. There is a duration where both circuits are active.
3. The N.C. contact opens.

The type of switch action selected is dependant on the requirements of the specific user circuit application.

Direct Drive

NFPA 79 and EN 418 both require that emergency stops must be a direct drive design. A direct drive design switch will have continuous mechanical linkage from the external operating member to the contact carrier. It will not employ the use of any resilient members or springs in the mechanical actuating path to open the N.C. contacts.

A special case of direct drive design is a switch that complies with IEC 60947-5-1. It is designed so that contact separation will take place even though the contacts may have been welded or "sticking" during fault circuit conditions. A direct drive switch is designed to allow contact separation even if the contacts have been lightly welded during fault circuit conditions. The manufacturer provides the fusing level requirements needed to protect these contacts from welding. The actuator movement and actuator force required affecting contact separation are specified by the switch manufacturer.

This type of switch construction is used to help ensure that contact action takes place when the external operating member is actuated. By avoiding the use of any springs in the actuating path, a solid connection is provided directly from the external mushroom operator to the contacts.

Contact opening should always take place at the same point in the actuating stroke and with the same operating force. By their nature, these types of switches fall into the slow break/slow make category of devices although some special designs have been developed that provide positive opening in snap action devices. With increased awareness of safety concerns and the movement toward designing devices that are used globally, greater emphasis has been placed on the direct drive feature.

Contact Action

Contact action refers to how contacts make and/or break the electrical circuit they intend to control. There are two basic types of contact action: slow make/slow break and snap action.

In slow make/slow break action, the contact carrier and contacts move at the same rate of travel as the actuating mechanism. This action is most often obtained with direct drive switch designs. Since the rate of movement of the contacts is solely dependant on the speed of the external actuator, it can result in slow separation of contacts and create a condition called "teasing".

In the teasing condition, the air gap created to break the electrical circuit opens so slowly that arcing occurs between the faces of the stationary and moveable contacts. This arcing is detrimental to the contacts because of accelerated contact wear and material transfer and can cause the contacts to weld rather than separate. The arcing can also cause circuit problems by introducing noise.

Snap action design incorporates a resilient member or springs between the actuator and contact carrier. The springs cause the contacts to move independently of the actuating mechanism. The mechanism is designed so that when actuator movement takes place, not only does the contact carrier movement take place, but energy is also built up in the spring system. Prior to the point in the travel of the actuator where contact separation takes place, the contact carrier and spring system are designed to go into an overcenter mode.

At the overcenter point, sufficient energy is available in the spring system allowing the carrier to move independently of any further actuator motion and the contacts snap open. This rapid opening prevents teasing and minimizes contact welding. Some snap action devices also incorporate direct opening action. The direct opening action occurs slightly later in the travel than the normal snapover point if the contacts were slightly welded.

Mechanically Linked Contacts

This construction has also been known as “positively guided contacts”. It combines a N.C. and N.O. contact combination to prevent N.C. and N.O. contacts from closing at the same time. This nomenclature is generally applied to control relays, but is also applicable to push buttons, pressure and temperature switches, and other control circuit devices. It is generally used for checking control circuit functions.

Time Delay

Time delay of a switching device is the interval between the time when the external operator of the switching device is actuated and the time when the contact action actually occurs.

In a switching device where time delay is provided, contact action takes place at a predetermined time interval after physical action has taken place to displace the external operator in a sufficient manner to operate the device. This time delay is fixed in some devices and adjustable in others to meet circuit requirements. Pneumatic timers are commonly used to perform this function.

Stacking

A switching device that has been designed for stacking has provisions for attaching multiple contact elements to the operator.

Stacking provides a means for multiple circuits to be actuated from a single external operator. A switching device with this capability can perform multiple functions or combinations of functions depending on the type of external operator. A selector switch type operator with several positions in combination with multiple contact elements is one example of this type of device.

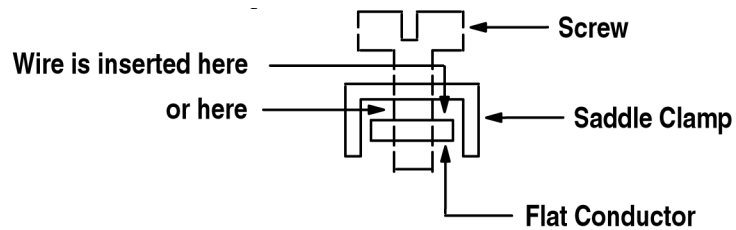
Wiring Termination

The following are examples of some of the more common methods of termination used.

Binding Head Screw — This screw has a larger than normal head. The underside of the screw head has a groove where the wire seats and is secured when the screw is tightened. It is most effective when used with solid wire. A cup washer can be added to accommodate stranded wire, but care must be exercised to ensure that all strands are secured.

Saddle Clamp — This is a U-shaped clamp with a screw in the center. The screw threads into a flat conductor on the switching device and the legs of the U slide over the edges of the flat conductor in order to trap the wire.

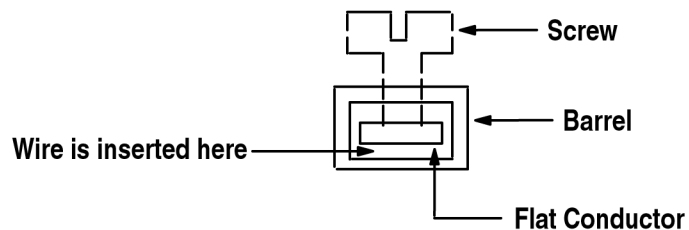
Figure 5.



The saddle clamp should be designed so it tilts to securely clamp a single wire on one side or a different wire size on each side of the clamp.

Barrel Type — This is similar to the saddle clamp design, but instead of a U-shaped clamp, the clamp is rectangular.

Figure 6.



The screw is not threaded into the flat conductor but rather bears against its top surface. This causes the barrel to be drawn upward clamping the wire between the undersurface of the flat conductor and the lower portion of the barrel. A major advantage is the wire is easy to insert into the clamping area.

Pressure Plate — A pressure plate is essentially a flat piece of material with a screw in the center. As with the saddle clamp, the screw threads into the flat conductor on the switching device. Even though the pressure plate is flat, it is designed to force the individual strands of wire to the center of the face plate that comes in contact with the conductor on the switching device where they are restrained. In addition, features are often designed into the body of the switching device that prevent any wire strands from escaping the pressure plate clamping action.

Stab Type — This type of termination is often termed quick-connect, push-on, fast-on, etc. The connection between the switching device and the wire is made with special complementary connection parts. The male part is normally built into the switching device and the female part is mechanically attached to the wire end. Termination is accomplished by mating the connector parts. This method provides a quick way to attach wires to the switching device and it is easy to remove the wires for service.

PC Pin — These are switching devices that can be soldered directly to a printed circuit board or plugged with pin connectors into receptacles mounted on the board.

Lugs and Ferrules — These devices are mechanically secured to the wire end. They make it easier to attach the wire to the switch terminal. They are normally used with stranded wire.

- Lugs provide a flat projection that is usually shaped like a fork or ring. The projection can be inserted under the head of the screw, inserted into saddle clamps, or slipped under pressure plates.
- Ferrules provide a pin type projection well suited for use with saddle clamps, pressure plates, and barrel type terminals.

Solder — Solder can be applied to the end of stranded wire to prevent the individual strands of wire from separating. The end of the wire becomes solid when soldered and can be used with saddle clamps, pressure plates, and barrel type terminals. It should be noted that the solder end will be quite hard and will resist the crushing effect of clamping means. Because of the irregular shape obtained through soldering, only partial contact between the wire and the terminal could result.

Spring-Clamp — This termination style is designed to minimize wiring time. The optimized spring-clamp is designed to reduce stress relaxation while maintaining contact force. An opening force is applied by a lever. The wire is then inserted and the opening force is removed. Upon force removal, the spring-clamp closes on the wire. This design is good for vibration environments.

Because of the large variety of termination options and the importance of establishing and maintaining a reliable connection between the switching device and the circuit, standards have been developed to address this area. The Underwriters Laboratories Pullout and Secureness test is used to insure that termination methods have sufficient strength to retain the wire under conditions of use. This test also determines if the wire strands have been damaged during the wiring process or are susceptible to breakage under conditions of use.

Finger-Safe

A finger-safe device provides a degree of protection from accidental, casual contact of live electrical parts by personnel. Only those components meeting or exceeding the requirements of IEC standard IP2X (listed under IEC 529) can be considered finger-safe.

Those standards describe a model test finger, along with guidelines for the manner in which the test finger is to be manipulated in the vicinity of the wiring terminals to determine if the switching device provides the required degree of protection.

Some switching devices achieve the finger-safe condition by basic device design while others require an external attachment.

The finger-safe feature is becoming more prevalent as safety issues take on added importance. Higher voltage levels pose a greater risk of injury and liability. A concern of finger-safe design is it may provide a false sense of security to personnel who have access to the area where electrical terminations are made.

Special Considerations

Every switch serves as just one element in a complete system. Where and how that system operates plays a significant role in which switch will deliver the most cost-effective performance over time. In the section that follows, you'll gain a better understanding of some of the extraordinary issues involved in switch specification.

Environmental Considerations

Careful consideration of the environment to which the switching device is subjected will help ensure proper operation and acceptable service life. Consideration of external environmental conditions of the operators includes temperature and humidity, shock and vibration, and exposure to washdown, cutting fluids, etc., encountered during operation.

In installations where an unfriendly external environment exists, the switching device should be housed in an enclosure designed to isolate it from the environment. Various enclosure ratings have been developed for use in specific environments and these ratings are regulated by industry standards. The external environment of the switching device can have a profound effect on the operation of the device and on its service life.

Conditions generated within enclosures can also have a negative effect on switch operation and life. Condensation, internally generated chemicals, or trapped dirt are some of the more common problems. In addition, since each switching device is made of a variety of materials, each produces its own internal environment. Caution must be taken during the design of the switching device to ensure the materials selected are proper for this kind of device and are compatible with one another.

The following information points out some key internal and external conditions affecting switching devices, as well as their effects.

Temperature — All electrical devices have a maximum operating temperature rating and this rating is generally understood by the user. The maximum storage temperature and the effects of low temperature are not as well-understood.

Exceeding the high temperature limits can cause degradation of materials within the switch. This degradation can weaken switch parts or release gases from plastics and elastomers. A change in physical dimensions may occur, affecting operational travel and force. A very low temperature environment can cause sticking of the actuator and compromise the return action provided by the internal springs within the switching devices. Great care should be taken to exclude freezing liquids from the vicinity of the external operator or the switch may be inoperative under available levels of operating force.

Large fluctuations in temperature can lead to condensation of water or other liquids, and result in the problems relating to humidity, chemicals, and gases listed below (in those cases it is generally helpful to ventilate the enclosure).

Humidity — Moisture can cause the formation of rust and corrosion on metallic parts as well as contribute to electrical problems such as arc tracking.

Chemicals and Gases — This class of contaminants can cause degradation of material used in the product in a variety of ways. Corrosion of metallic parts and the degradation of physical properties of plastics and elastomers are among the most common effects. The formation of conductive films on the surface of the insulation can cause arc tracking.

Dirt and Debris — Whether originating internally from wear or damage, or externally, this material can cause friction between moving parts, increase wear, and reduce switch life. Dirt on contacts increases resistance and contributes to contact reliability problems.

Shock and Vibration — Consideration must be given to the shock and vibration to which the switching device is subjected. Severe shocks can cause unintended momentary contact operation that could result in circuit malfunction. Long term exposure to vibration can cause premature wear of the switch elements and generation of internal dirt. Even a poorly designed panel door can repeatedly subject a switching device to damaging shock and vibration.

It's also important to handle a switch with care during installation to avoid damaging shock.

Physical Abuse — Improper handling of the switching device during shipping or installation can cause damage to device components that could affect operation.

Environmentally Sealed Devices

An environmentally sealed device isolates the contact area from the environment.

The most common type of construction has the contacts hermetically sealed within a glass envelope. Prior to sealing, the interior of the glass envelope is filled with an inert gas that keeps the environment around the contacts stable. This construction keeps out explosive gases or contaminants that could affect contact reliability. Since the contacts are not accessible for actuation by mechanical means, they are operated by means of magnetic flux.

A special version of the sealed switch known as a logic reed is used in logic circuits. The logic reed is characterized by very short contact bounce, typically less than 0.5 milliseconds.

Contact isolation can also be accomplished by mechanical means such as a flexible diaphragm. These methods do not, however, provide a true hermetic seal, and are more susceptible to wear and degradation.

Standards and Approvals

Standards have been developed by industry groups and governmental units to help ensure that switching devices meet certain requirements with regard to installation criteria, safe operation, load carrying ability, minimum mechanical and electrical life, etc.

Once a particular design has met the requirements of a specific standard, a marking may be affixed to devices constructed according to that design indicating that the standards of that particular agency have been met.

Users need to be aware of which standards pertain to the products used in their locations and which approvals are required. Requirements vary depending on the application and the governmental unit having jurisdiction. Some of the standards that apply to switching devices are listed below:

- UL 508
- NEMA ICS 5 part 1
- IEC 60947-5-1
- CSA 22.2 No. 14

Switch Life

Switch life can be defined in a variety of ways. It can be defined as the time when the switch physically fails and can no longer provide contact action. It can also be defined as the point when the operating characteristics change to such a degree that switch action is no longer reliable or the parameters fall outside those required for that application. Examples of the latter would be an increase in operating force or excessive travel to obtain contact action.

A switching device may wear out due to mechanical considerations. Repeated operations cause physical wear of parts due to friction, shock, and stress, and can lead to eventual component failure. Dirt and debris generated by the moving mechanism can cause binding and can be a source of contact contamination.

The electrical life of a switch is not necessarily related to its mechanical life. The electrical life of a switch is primarily load dependant, because the electrical load is the main source of heating in — and damage to — current carrying components. High current loads can also contribute to arcing at the contacts during contact action. This arcing action results in contact erosion and deformation and can lead to welding of the contacts. As a result, it is good practice to evaluate both mechanical and electrical life ratings before selecting a switching device.

The switch environment can cause corrosion. This may lead to friction, physical failure of components, and dirt or corrosion in the contact areas.

Low level switching and infrequent use may allow buildup of film on contact faces, affecting contact reliability. Logic reed switches or switches with precious metal contacts are ideal in these applications.

Shock and Vibration

Shock and vibration refer to the physical conditions that are present in the environment where the switch operates. These conditions often introduce undesirable motion into the device mechanism.

Sources of shock can be the normal motion of the equipment where the device is mounted or the expected movement of the entire control system. Such motion may be repetitive in nature or may occur only periodically under specific situations such as startup, etc. The user may try to anticipate random, abnormal conditions which could result in a high shock situation. One-time mishandling during shipping and installation can cause damage that will affect operation.

Another source of high shock is the slamming of control panel doors where the switching devices are mounted. In order to minimize the effect of known vibration, the axis of actuation of the switching device should not lie on the same plane as that of the direction of normal equipment vibration.

Contact reliability can be affected by shock and vibration. Continual vibration causes mechanical wear and under load conditions, arcing can lead to welding of contacts. A severe shock can cause unintended, momentary contact operation that could result in circuit malfunction.

The mechanical wear caused by long term exposure to vibration can result in the generation of dirt and debris which affects contact reliability and causes added friction in the sliding portions of the mechanism.

Dielectric Strength

Dielectric strength is a measure of the ability of the insulation used in the switching device to withstand the application of a voltage across its surface or through its mass. This will determine the maximum electrical rating of the device.

Degradation of the dielectric strength of insulation can lead to failure of the device. Unintended electrical continuity may be established between circuit elements and ground. In either case, the result is a failure of the switch to perform its intended function.

The most common type of failure is due to arc tracking across the surface of the insulation. The combination of a particular insulation and environmental conditions such as moisture and/or certain gases in the presence of an electrical arc can result in the buildup of a conducting path.

Contact Block Ratings

The contact block rating of a switching device is the electrical load that the device is capable of switching. This rating is expressed in voltage and current and typically refers to the maximum values that can be switched in a specified number of operations. Although contact blocks are usually rated for maximum conditions, there is a practical low load limit that the contacts will switch in a reliable manner.

Exceeding the high loads can cause burning and pitting of the contacts leading to welding and contributing to arc tracking. If the load to be switched is of a very low energy level, any contaminants or non-conducting films on the contacts may prevent a circuit from being established when the contacts are operated. If loads below 48V DC and 0.1 A, or below 24V AC and 0.4 A, are to be switched, the user must be cautious when selecting the contact materials. If the switching is within a typical Type 4/4X/13 environment, the quadfurcated/pentafurcated blocks should be used for ultimate reliability. If the switching is within Class 1 and 2 Division 2 environment, without a sealing well or a conduit seal off, logic reed, sealed switch, or stackable sealed switch contact blocks should be used. If this type of switch is used at the high end of the rating, then caution should be exercised if these contacts are used for switching low energy loads. The feature built in for establishment of low energy loads may have been burned away during high load switching operations.

Due to the growing popularity of solid-state devices being used in control circuits, the trend in industry is toward lower energy loads.

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