

Inspection of Metals, Volume II:

DESTRUCTIVE TESTING

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Volume III: Nondestructive Testing

Preface

This is the second of three volumes devoted to the inspection of metals. The series is dedicated to the better understanding of the behavior of metals through examination and testing. It is hoped that these volumes will become standard reference works in the inspection departments and metallurgical laboratories of all metalworking facilities, and perhaps will even be used as teaching aids.

It is further hoped that this material will act as another stepping-stone toward the long-sought goal of defect-free parts and equipment — a goal that in turn would reduce costly service failures and their toll of property damage and human suffering.

Like most books, this volume is a blend of personal experience and the work of many predecessors. Wherever possible, the work of others has been recognized and credited. If in any case such credit has been omitted, it has been omitted solely by error.

I would be remiss if I failed to recognize the help of the many persons who provided encouragement and lent assistance in the research, typing, proofreading, editing, preparation of photos and drawings, and printing. I would like particularly to recognize my wife, Aileen, for typing, editing, proofreading, and prodding me onward. My sons Stephen and Randall, co-

workers and second-generation metallurgists, were both of great help in advising me and in proofreading and editing the text. I also wish to thank Dr. Walter Bradley of Texas A & M University for assistance in the preparation of the chapter on fracture mechanics. The Metallurgical Supply Co., Inc., offered access to a great assortment of equipment and literature for photography and data acquisition. Employees who assisted above and beyond the call of duty were Dr. Ed Bravenec, Stan Cooper, Al Deaver, and Jill Cummins, who helped put it all together. Harvey Mohr of H. O. Mohr and Associates assisted with the chapter on pressure testing, as did Obert Nordin. Jack Braverman and others from ASM International gave much-needed encouragement and kept me moving forward when things slowed down. There are many others who also deserve my heartfelt thanks. It is gratifying that so many people are so willing to give their time and share their knowledge.

Contents

1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 HARDNESS TESTING	7
Defining the Subject	7
History of Indentation Hardness Testing	9
Brinell Hardness Testing	9
Operation and Performance of Brinell Testing	12
Equipment	14
Considerations Involving Materials to Be Tested	26
Preparation for Testing	27
Location of Test Impressions	27
Making the Test	28
Determining the Results of the Procedure	32
Interpreting the Results and Determining the	
Brinell Hardness Number	33
Helpful Hints and Interesting Facts	35
Specifications and Conversions	36
Calibration	39
Summary of Brinell Hardness Testing	43
Rockwell Hardness Testing	44
Equipment	45
Considerations Involving Materials	53
Preparation for Testing	56
Test Locations	58

Making the Test and Determining the Results	59
Helpful Hints and Interesting Facts	61
Specifications and Conversions	65
Calibration	68
Summary of Rockwell Hardness Testing	70
Microhardness Testing	70
Applications	71
Equipment	71
Indenters	71
Specimen Preparation	73
Making the Test	76
Other Hardness Tests	78
References	81

3 THE UNIVERSAL TESTING MACHINE 83

History	83
Description of Equipment	84
Mechanical or Screw-Type Machines	86
Hydraulic Testing Machines	86
Electromechanical/Hydraulic Machines	87
Tensile Testing	88
Test Specimens	88
Measurement and Gage Marking	94
Measurement of Specimen Extension (Extensometers)	97
Reduction in Area	98
The Significance of Tensile-Test Properties	99
Calibration of the Testing Machine	106
Helpful Hints and Technical Considerations	106
Compression Testing	109
Bend Testing	112
Flattening Tests	116
Shear Tests	118
Summary	119

4 IMPACT TESTING 121

History of Impact Testing	122
Defining the Subject	124
Charpy Impact Testing	126
Testing Machines	126
Specimens	128

Calibration	136
Making the Test	136
Test Temperature	136
Test Results	142
Technical Considerations for Charpy	
Impact Testing	148
Effect of Rolling Direction	150
Effects of Strength and Hardness	151
Effect of Heat Treatment	151
Choosing Materials for Notch Toughness	151
Impact Testing of Welds and Welded Structures	152
Specimen Size Correlation	153
Summary of Charpy Impact Testing	153
Izod Impact Testing	154
Drop Weight Testing and Drop Weight Tear Testing (DWT and DWTT)	157
Test Equipment	159
Drop Weight Test Procedure	159
Drop Weight Tear Test Procedure	162
Test-Specimen Anvil	164
Specimen Preparation	164
Test Procedure	165
Test Results	166
Other Impact-Type Tests	167
Specifications	169

5 FATIGUE TESTING

171

History of Fatigue	173
Basics of Fatigue Testing	174
Equipment for Fatigue Testing	175
Technical Considerations	179
Other Fatigue-Testing Equipment	182
Definitions Relating to Fatigue	185
Helpful Hints and Technical Considerations	189
Summary and Conclusions	192

6 MICROSCOPIC EXAMINATION OF METALS (METALLOGRAPHY)

193

History of Metallography	196
Specimen Removal	198

Specimen Mounting	204
Grinding	211
Polishing	218
Microscopes and Metallographs	225
Specimen Examination	232
Recording the Results	233
Summary	245

7 PRESSURE TESTING 247

Historical Background	248
Testing Procedures	248
Pumps	251
Gauges and Pressure-Measuring Equipment	253
Calculations in Pressure Testing	258
Examples	259
Standards	260
Arrangement of Testing Equipment	260
Tricks of the Trade	263

8 CHEMICAL ANALYSIS 265

Historical Background	272
Sampling	274
Methods of Chemical Analysis	275
Classical Wet Analytical Chemistry	275
Electrochemistry	276
Atomic Absorption Spectrometry (AAS)	277
Auger Electron Spectroscopy (AES)	280
High-Temperature Combustion (COMB)	280
Electron Probe Microanalysis (EPMA)	282
Inductively Coupled Plasma Atomic-Emission Spectroscopy (ICP-AES)	282
Inert-Gas Fusion (IGF)	285
Neutron-Activation Analysis (NAA)	285
Optical-Emission Spectroscopy (OES)	286
X-Ray Diffraction (XRD)	288
X-Ray Spectrometry or X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF)	289
Tricks of the Trade	289
Summary	292

9 FRACTURE-MECHANICS TESTING 295

- History of Fracture Mechanics 298
 Plane Strain Versus Plane Stress 301
 Fracture-Mechanics Test Procedures 304
 Specimen Geometry 305
 Fatigue Precracking of Specimens 307
 Testing Specimens to Failure 308
 Fixtures and Attachments 311
 Determining the Moment of Crack Extension 311
 Calculation of the Critical Values K_{Ic} , J_{Ic} ,
 and δ_c 316
 Variables Affecting K_{Ic} , J_{Ic} , and δ_c 318
 Comparison of Fracture Mechanics and Traditional
 Measures of Fracture Toughness 321
 Summary 323

10 MISCELLANEOUS DESTRUCTIVE TESTS 325

- Bearing Test, Pin Type 326
 Bend Testing 327
 Bend Testing To Determine Ductility 329
 Bend Testing To Ascertain the Quality of Welds 334
 Bend Testing for Spring Applications 337
 Bend Testing for Evaluation of Adhesion of
 Coatings 338
 Corrosion Testing 338
 Creep, Creep-Rupture, and Tension Testing 346
 Crush Test 349
 Cupping Tests 351
 Dilatometry Testing 358
 Expansion Testing 362
 Explosion Bulge Testing 362
 Extrusion Testing 364
 Flexural Testing (Transverse Bend Testing) 364
 Friction (Abrasion and Wear) Testing 367
 Grain-Size Fracture Tests 368
 High-Strain-Rate Testing 371
 Jominy Hardenability Testing 372
 Machinability Testing 376
 Macroetch Testing 377
 Magnetic-Permeability Testing 380

McQuaid-Ehn Test	383
Residual-Stress Measurement	383
Shear Testing	384
Spark Testing	387
Stiffness Testing	389
Stress-Relaxation Testing	390
Torque Testing	391
Torsion Testing	393
Wedge Test	396

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hardness Testing	397
The Universal Testing Machine	398
Impact Testing	399
Fatigue Testing	401
Microscopic Examination	402
Pressure Testing	403
Chemical Analysis	403
Fracture-Mechanics Testing	404
Miscellaneous Destructive Tests	405

INDEX

397

407

Introduction


The purpose of this volume is threefold. First, the information on the most common and widely used destructive tests (much of which can be found scattered through other books) will all be located in one place. Second, these tests will hopefully be described in simple usable form, uncomplicated by excessive technical jargon. Third, it is hoped that the "tricks of the trade," learned the hard way, through many years of practical experience, will make these testing procedures more usefully understandable.

Most of the tests described are not only commonly used, but also relatively simple to perform. There is, however, a shortage of information on such questions as:

1. What does the test do?
2. What do the test results really tell you?
3. How do you know when test results are in error?

In each chapter an effort will be made to include the following information:

1. A brief history and background of the testing procedure.
2. A description of the test.
3. How the test is performed.

- 
4. Equipment available for performing the test.
 5. Technical considerations including interpretation of results, sources of error, and helpful hints.
 6. Applicable specifications and conversion tables.
 7. Calibration of equipment and quality-assurance aspects.

It is recognized that there are a multitude of variations on each basic test method. There are also many testing procedures that are not commonly used. It is beyond the scope of this book to list each and every destructive test and each subvariety of the common tests. Some specialty tests along with some specialty equipment will be covered, but only to a limited degree.

It is hoped that by following this approach of providing good, basic, helpful data on the most commonly used destructive test procedures, this volume can become a readily used reference source. It is written to be useful both for those new to the field and for people with considerable training and experience. It is also hoped that it will be useful in avoiding the many pitfalls experienced by those who perform such tests. The ongoing theme of the three volumes of this "Inspection of Metals" series is "a better understanding of the behavior of metals through examination and testing." A clear and thorough understanding of testing procedures is one way of achieving the goal of superior quality control. This is the type of quality that is so badly needed for survival in today's multinational competition.

The term "destructive testing" is the subject of much controversy. As a case in point, the following is a description of a recent experience:

A part failure occurred which resulted in a serious lawsuit with sizable demands. The plaintiff was the owner and possessor of the broken parts. The defendant, a large manufacturer of considerable reputation, made demands of the plaintiff to obtain the parts for examination. The plaintiff realized the defendant had the right to such an examination. The plaintiff was concerned, and rightly so, that the defendant might alter or destroy these parts as part of his examination procedure. This would prevent their being used as evidence at the time of trial. An agreement was worked out in the presence of the judge whereby the plaintiff would release the parts for a certain period of

time if the defendant would agree to perform no destructive testing. This agreement was signed by both parties in the presence of the judge. At a later date, the parts were returned to the plaintiff. The parts had been subjected to hardness tests and a sizable segment had been removed from both sides of the fracture for microscopic examination. When questioned, the defendant claimed such cutting was not really destructive examination since the pieces were still present.

This case is presently under consideration by the court.

What constitutes destructive testing? Is a Brinell hardness test impression destructive testing? How about a Rockwell hardness impression — does this represent destructive testing? Does a microhardness test impression, which is not even visible to the naked eye, qualify as destructive testing? For the purpose of this volume and series, the following definition is proposed for the term "destructive testing." It is hoped that this definition will be universally accepted.

Destructive testing — Any test which alters the shape, form, size, or structure of the material being tested.

There is sound reasoning behind this definition. Small indentations such as hardness-testing impressions can act as stress raisers, causing crack initiation under subsequent load applications. Worse still are the hardness impressions in crack-sensitive materials that may in themselves initiate cracking (Fig. 1). In determination of the cause of a failure, a highly localized point of origin may hold the key. Even a microhardness impression made at that point could make the determination difficult or impossible.

When two dissenting parties are involved in determining the cause of a failure, there are various procedures which allow for destructive testing at the proper stage of the examination. Each party can separately perform nondestructive examinations (in accordance with the stated definition) such as visual examination, photographic studies, and the like. They can then agree on how and where destructive tests will be made. As an alternative, testing can be done jointly, with each party reserving the right to draw its own conclusions.

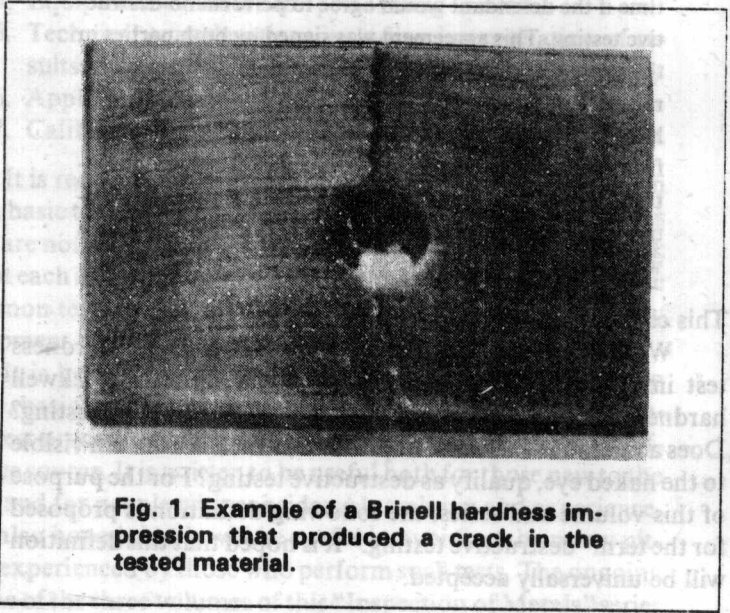


Fig. 1. Example of a Brinell hardness impression that produced a crack in the tested material.

A final item that we should mention before getting into the specifics of destructive testing is calibration of equipment. A test can be no more accurate than the capability of the equipment being used to run the test. Calibration equipment is highly specialized and can be expensive. It is generally desirable to utilize the services of a company specializing in such calibration work. This also provides an independent opinion, which is desirable in the case of test-result controversies. Such calibration may be necessary only once or twice a year, unless problems develop. This frequency depends on quality of equipment and frequency of use. It also depends on the care exercised by the operator. Dated certificates of calibration should be displayed prominently near the equipment or be readily available for inspection.

During the interim periods between visits from the calibration service, there are various methods of ensuring that the equipment is staying within its calibration limits. Use of known-value test samples, such as hardness test block standards, will alert the operator to equipment inaccuracy. A log book of such standard testing should be kept. This not only

shows that such tests have been performed regularly but also shows the trend of change which may occur over a period of time. A good working knowledge of the equipment plus the sense and feel that develop from regular usage often provide warnings of impending problems. Cleanliness, proper maintenance and, wherever possible, limiting the use of the equipment to a single well-trained operator (or to as few operators as possible) help assure reliable, repeatable results.

A quality-assurance manual can and should spell out all of these considerations. It may specify calibration requirements, routine maintenance intervals, and interim standard testing procedures.

CHAPTER 2

Next to visual examination and dimensional measurements, hardness testing is probably the tool most widely used for quality control of metal parts. It is accomplished quickly and easily with very little preparation of the part being tested. Under certain circumstances, hardness-testing results can be converted to ultimate tensile strengths with good reliability. In summary, the purpose of hardness testing is to determine physical properties, and the uniformity of such properties, in a manner which causes only minimal destructive effect.

Defining the Subject

Before proceeding, it is important that we try to understand what the property "hardness" really is and how it can be defined. In so doing, we will realize that it is perhaps the most complicated property dealt with in physical testing. It is more properly a combination of various physical properties. Its true definition has been pondered down through the ages. Therefore this subject becomes too confusing, a few standard definitions from various sources are in order.