

**2000 The Fifteenth Annual Battery Conference on
Applications and Advances**

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LONG BEACH 2000

**The Fifteenth
ANNUAL BATTERY CONFERENCE
on
APPLICATIONS AND ADVANCES**



Proceedings of the Conference held at
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH
LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA
11-14 January 2000

Compiled by
Radhe S. L. Das and Harvey Frank



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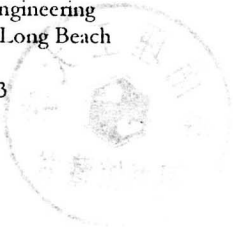
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CONTENTS

SESSION I — *Aircraft and Military Applications*

Chairs: Albert Himy, *NAVY/J J McMullen Associates, Inc*

Military Qualification of a High-Reliability, Light-Weight 24V/30Ah Aircraft Battery
B Jay and A Datta, *Electro source Inc*; A Godman, *NSWC-CD*; W Johnson, *NAVY/AIR*

High Pulse Power Batteries for Air Deployable Navy Applications
T Squires, P Keller, C Winchester and P Smith, *NSWC-CD*

Alternate Power Source for Land Warrior
L Jarvis, T Atwater and P Cygan, *US Army CECOM*

Saft ULM Technology Review and Applications Update
P Scardaville, *Scardaville & Associates, Inc*; B McRae, *SAFT-America, Inc*

SESSION II — *Space and Communications*

Chairs: Gopalkrishna Rao, *NASA Goddard Space Flight Center*
David Pickett, *AAAA Energy Enterprises, Inc*

Li-Ion LEO Constellation
Y Borthomieu, *SAFT-America*

A Comparison of Electrode Manufacturing Techniques for Aerospace Alkaline Cells
D Pickett Jr., *AAAA Energy Enterprises, Inc*

Stochastic Battery Discharge in Portable Communication Devices
C Chiasserini and R Rao, *University of California, San Diego*

SESSION III — *Fuel Cell Technologies in and Applications*

Chairs: Subbarao Surampudi, *Jet Propulsion Laboratory*
Patrick Grimes, *Grimes Associates*

Direct Methanol Fuel Cell Technology-Status, Challenges and Prospects
S R Narayanan, T Valdez, A Kindler, C Witham, S Surampudi, and H Frank,
Jet Propulsion Laboratory

Development of a 150-Watt Direct Methanol Fuel Cell System
T Valdez, S Narayanan and N Rohatgi, *Jet Propulsion Laboratory*

Historical Pathways for Fuel Cells
P Grimes, *Grimes Associates*

Development of 50 KW, High Efficiency, High Power Density, CO-Tolerant PEM Fuel Cell Stack System T Rehg, R Loda and N Minh, <i>Honeywell Engines and Systems</i>	47
Composite Membranes to Reduce Crossover in PEM Fuel Cells G Deluga, S Kelly, B Pivovar, D Shores, and W Smryl, <i>University of Minnesota</i>	51
Advanced Materials for Electric Double Layer Capacitors Y Matsuda, <i>Kansai University, Japan</i>	55
Status of Molten Carbonate Fuel Cell Development for Utility Applications P Patel and H Maru, <i>Fuel Cell Energy</i>	N/A

SESSION IV — *Electric Vehicles*

Chairs: Robert Weaver, *Weaver Consulting*
Phil Symons, *Symons/EECI*

The Status of High-Power Batteries for Hybrid Electric Vehicles F Kalhammer, <i>EPRI</i>	57
A Regenerative Zinc Air Fuel Cell For Industrial And Specialty Vehicles S Smedley, <i>Metallic Power, Inc</i>	65
Battery Condition Management- An Important Way to Protect a Critical Asset T Churchill, <i>MCM Enterprise Ltd</i>	71
Development of Advanced Lead Acid Batteries for Electric Vehicles J Wertz, <i>Trojan Battery Company</i> ; T Clough, <i>Ensci, Inc</i>	77
Field Evaluation of Honda's EV Plus Battery Packs A Paryani, <i>Honda R&D America</i>	83

SESSION V — *Advances in Small Batteries-Evaluation*

Chairs: Curtis Holmes, *Greatbatch-Hittman Inc*
Robert Powers, *Power Associates*

Advances and Trends in Primary and Small Secondary Batteries with Zinc Anodes and Manganese Dioxide and/or Air Cathodes B Schumm Jr., <i>Eagle Cliffs, Inc</i>	89
Advances in Sealed Nickel-Cadmium and Nickel Metal Hydride Cells R Powers, <i>Powers Associates</i>	95
Current Status of Lithium Ion and Lithium Polymer Secondary Batteries G Blomgren, <i>Blomgren Consulting Inc</i>	97
Comparative Analysis of Primary Lithium Cells P Krehl and E Takeuchi, <i>Wilson Greatbatch Ltd</i>	101

Lithium Polymer Electrolyte Rechargeable Batteries

H Venkatesetty, *H V Setty Enterprises, Inc*

10

Primary Zinc-Air for Portable Electronic Consumer Products

D Sieminski, *AER Energy Resources, Inc*

11

SESSION VI—Materials and Processes

Chair: George Zguris, *Hollingsworth & Vose Co*

AC Impedance Simulation for Lithium-Ion Cells

R Spotnitz, *Battery Design Co*

12

Evaluation of Plasma-Sprayed CoS₂ Cathodes for Thermal Batteries

R Guidotti, *Sandia National Laboratories*; J Dai, T Xiao and D Reisner, *US Nanocorp*

12

Specialty Plastic Molding for VRLA and other Battery Technologies

W Lincoln, *Accuma Corporation*

13

Health and Safety Aspects of Fiber Glass

T Hesterberg and G Hart, *Johns Manville Corp*

13

Glass Fiber, an Excellent Raw Material for Battery Separators

R Bender, *Evanite Glass Fiber Corp*

14

A Review of the Melt Blown Process

R Gahan And G Zguris, *Hollingsworth & Vose Co*

14

The Relationship Between Lignin Expander Structure and Performance in Lead Acid Batteries

B Myrvold, *Borregaard Lignotech*

15

SESSION VII—Methods of Testing and Evaluation

Chairs: Harry Brown, *NSWC Crane Division*

Advanced State of Charge Measurement Technique for Silver-Zinc Batteries

H Singh, T Palanisamy, P Rudai and S Hoenig, *Allied Signal Inc, Defense & Space Systems*,
D Mains, *NSWC-CD*; W Johnson, *NAVIR*

15

Electrochemical Voltage Spectroscopy for Analysis of Nickel Electrodes

L Thaller, A Zimmerman and G To, *The Aerospace Corporation*

16

Battery Pack State Of Charge Estimator Design Using Computational Intelligence Approaches

J Peng, Y Chen and R Eberhart, *Purdue School Of Engineering and Technology*,
IUPUI

17

SESSION VIII —Battery Selection & Management

Chairs: Ralph Brodd, *Broddarp of Nevada, Inc*
Vince Teofilo, *Lockheed Martin*

A Dynamic Voltage-Compensation Technique for Reducing Charge Time In Li-Ion Batteries

R Saint-Pierre, *Texas Instruments*

179

Capacity Fade of Li-Ion Cells: Comparison of DC and ENREV Charging Protocols

B Popov and A Durairajan, *University of South Carolina*; Y Podrazhanasky and R Cope, *ENREV Corp*

185

A Universal Battery Charger for Small Batteries

S Girard, *Eagle Picher Technologies*

N/A

Advanced Lithium-Ion Battery Charger

M Isaacson, R Hollandsworth, P Giampouli, F Linkowsky, A Salim and V Teofilo
Lockheed Martin

193

Fuzzy Logic-Enhanced Electrochemical Impedance Spectroscopy (FLEEIS) to Determine Battery State of Charge

P Singh, *Villanova University*; C Fennie and D Reisner, *US Nanocorp*; A Salkind, *Division of Bioengineering, UMDNJ*

199

SESSION IX—Advanced Lead Acid Batteries

Chairs: Robert Nelson, *Recombination Technologies*
John Olson, *Optima Batteries*

Operation of Lead-Acid Batteries for HEV Applications

J Olson and E Sexton, *Optima Batteries, Inc.*

205

Improved Charge Algorithms for Valve Regulated Lead-Acid Batteries

E Sexton and J Olson, *Optima Batteries, Inc.*; R Nelson, *Recombination Technologies LLC*

211

Lead-Acid Batteries: The Key to Electric Vehicle Commercialization

T Gage, *AC Propulsion, Inc*

217

Issues and Benefits with Fast Charging Industrial Batteries

B Dickinson and J Gill, *Aero Vironment, Inc*

223

Fast Charge Testing of Lead-Acid Batteries at SCE EV TechCenter

N Pinsky, J Argueta, T Knipe, V Grosvenor, L Gaillac, M Merchant and A Cabrera, *Southern California Edison*

231

Lab Testing of Battery Charge Management Systems for Electric and Hybrid Electric Vehicle Battery Packs to Evaluate Cycle Life Improvement

R MacDougall and J Bertolino, *Sacramento Municipal Utility District*; K Roden and E Alger, *Battery MD, Inc*

237

The Effect of VRLA Separator Saturation on EV Battery Life	
R Brost, <i>Ford Motor Co</i>	243

ALABC 2000	
P Moseley, <i>Advanced Lead Acid Battery Consortium</i>	249

SESSION X —*Power Sources R&D*

Chairs: Dwaine Coates, *Evercel Corp*
Christopher L Fox, *Eagle-Picher Technologies*

Performance Characteristics of Plastic-Bonded Electrodes in Electrochemical Capacitors	
S Lipka, <i>Florida Atlantic University</i> ; D Coates, <i>Evercel Corp</i> ; J Miller, <i>JME, Inc.</i>	N/A

High Conductivity Composite Sleeves for Large Nickel-Hydrogen Cells	
K Snyder, <i>Eagle-Picher Technologies</i>	257

The Uncharted Territory-Thin Metal Film Lead Acid Batteries	
J McDermott, <i>Bolder Technologies Corp</i>	265

SESSION XI —*Batteries in Defense Applications*

Chairs: Harvey Frank, *Jet Propulsion Laboratory*
Radhe Das, *California State University, Long Beach*

Development of the Nickel-Zinc Battery for Commercial Applications	
D Coates, J Rotondo and J O'Neill, <i>Evercel Corp</i>	271

Performance and Characteristic of Low Temperature Electrolytes Li-Ion Batteries for US Army Application	
G Au and L Locke, <i>US Army CECOM</i>	277

New Lithium Oxyhalide Reserve Battery Technology	
S McKay and M Peabody, <i>Eagle-Picher Technologies</i> ; J Brazzell, <i>THAAD Program Office</i>	283

Lithium-Ion System Advances	
W McCracken, B Parmley, C Kelly, M Crites, and S Wilson <i>Eagle-Picher Technologies</i>	287

SESSION XII —*Advancement in Lead Acid Batteries & UPS System*

Chairs: Basant Mahato, *Bipolar Power International*
Bill Brecht, *Trojan Battery Company*

Some Functional Aspects of Gas Recombining Catalyst in VRLA Cells	
T Noveske, S Misra, S Mraz and J Dillon III, <i>C & D Technologies, Inc</i>	293

Float Life Verification of a High Purity VRLA Battery System F Fleming and L Gao, <i>Hawker Energy Products</i>	299
Increasing Material Utilization of Lead-Acid Batteries Using BPI Technology B Mahato, D Boughn and J Arias, <i>Bipolar Power International</i>	305
VRLA Batteries: Reflections on and Realities of Previous Intelec Conferences F Vaccaro, J Rhoades, R Malley, K Marion and B Le, <i>Power Battery Company, Inc</i>	309
Evaluation of Two Paste Additives on Cell Performance D Edwards, <i>University of Idaho</i> ; T Dayton, <i>C & D Technologies</i>	317
A Light Weight Engine Start Battery Based on TMF Technology R Bhardwaj and P Brantner, <i>Bolder Technology Corp</i>	323
Author Index	329
 PROCEEDINGS-<i>The Eleventh Annual Battery Conference</i>	
Contents	A-1
 PROCEEDINGS-<i>The Twelfth Annual Battery Conference</i>	
Contents	B-1
 PROCEEDINGS-<i>The Thirteenth Annual Battery Conference</i>	
Contents	C-1
 PROCEEDINGS-<i>The Fourteenth Annual Battery Conference</i>	
Contents	D-1

Military Qualification of a High-Reliability, Light-Weight 24V/30Ah Aircraft Battery

XV. The Fifteenth Annual Battery Conference on Applications and Advances

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ABSTRACT

The United States Navy has flown Valve Regulated Lead-Acid Batteries (VRLA) for approximately 18 years. The first VRLA aircraft batteries were cylindrical cell design and evolved to a prismatic design to save weight, volume, and to increase rate capability. This paper discusses the next generation of the VRLA aircraft battery. The HORIZON composite grid VRLA design reduces weight, increases high rate performance, and is expected to increase service life. This Commercial Operations and Support Cost Savings Initiative (COSSI) is being jointly funded by Electrosources, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) - Joint Dual Use Program Office, and Naval Air Systems Command. This paper discusses the weight reduction over the present 30 Ah prismatic VRLA aircraft battery design; improvements in high rate engine start performance, and present status of the development effort. Finally, the paper discusses the applications for the 30 Ah composite grid VRLA aircraft battery, and shows the future application opportunities for light weight VRLA both in the military and commercially.

INTRODUCTION

Aircraft batteries have historically represented one of the most troublesome aircraft systems. Major problem areas have been corrosion, thermal-run-away, and labor intensive battery maintenance. Vented lead-acid and nickel-cadmium batteries were primarily used in the past for main aircraft batteries. These batteries had high failure rates and required expensive maintenance.

During the middle 1970's various new advances in battery technology were emerging. The development of valve regulated lead-acid (VRLA) technology was one of the most important technological advances in batteries in the last 30 years. The first VRLA introduced was the Gates Energy Products commercial

cylindrical cell VRLA battery used in uninterruptable power source applications (cell size available at that time was limited to 5 ampere-hour). This type of battery required no scheduled maintenance, no special charger, and operates in any orientation. Naval Air Systems Command and Naval Surface Warfare Center, Crane Division decided to evaluate VRLA technology for use in high performance aircraft to reduce battery maintenance, aircraft battery life cycle costs, and the need for a dedicated aircraft battery charger. In 1978 the Navy began the development of large VRLA technology cells capable of meeting the requirements of AV-8B main aircraft battery applications.

The VRLA technology was first introduced in a 15 Ampere-hour (Ah) battery on the AV-8B "Harrier II" aircraft in 1981. Based on the success of the

technology on the AV-8B the Navy decided to use VRLA in all of its' vented lead-acid and vented nickel-cadmium aircraft battery applications where the technology was compatible. The Navy decided to use a VRLA 7.5 Ah battery on the F/A-18 "Hornet". The VRLA technology was retrofitted into F/A-18 production aircraft in 1983. The 7.5 Ah battery was also retrofitted into the H-46 helicopter resulting in greatly improved reliability. This battery was also applied to the F-117 aircraft during its' production.

In 1985 the Navy awarded a development contract for a monobloc design (car battery configuration) VRLA battery to replace the cylindrical 15 ampere-hour VRLA battery. With the more efficient packaging, there was a reduction in weight from 57.3 pounds to 47.4 pounds (9.9 pound reduction) realized with the monobloc design. The physical envelope was reduced in height by 1.5 inches. The high rate (engine start) performance was also increased in the monobloc (flat plate) design. The cylindrical VRLA 7.5 Ah battery was converted to the monobloc design with physical envelope and weight kept constant.

Based on the success of the 7.5 Ah and 15 Ah monobloc developments a decision was made to convert present vented lead-acid batteries, produced to MIL-B-83769, on several Navy aircraft and ground support equipment to VRLA technology. This change resulted in maintenance cost savings, reduced corrosion, and improved reliability.

In 1997 ELECTROSOURCE, DARPA, and The Naval Air Systems Command jointly initiated the development of the next generation of VRLA for aircraft application. With cost saving and weight reduction being the technology drivers, the development of a 30 Ah composite grid VRLA aircraft battery based on the HORIZON technology began during FY98.

DISCUSSION

The COSSI initiative was to take existing HORIZON commercial 24V/3 battery under flight evaluation in Turbo-Thrush and under initial stage Federal Aviation Authority certification and Qualify it to MIL-B-8565 requirements followed by government mandated flight evaluation. The initiative was just on a 20:1 cost benefit and should achieve a payback period of 4.2 years. The goals were to be achieved by: (1) extension of service life of the existing battery from the then 2 years to 3 years resulting in decreased annual battery procurement costs and reduced maintenance manpower costs and (2) reduced consumption and fatigue costs due to projected 25% weight reduction.

Batteries are typically used on aircraft to provide emergency power for flight and engine start capability. Batteries used for engine start applications require high output current. The new prismatic VRLA battery design provides high rate current outputs that rivals those of vented nickel-cadmium batteries of the same application. Figures 1 and 2 present the 14 volt discharge curves at 75 and -15 degrees Fahrenheit from present 30 Ah prismatic VRLA and 30 Ah nickel-cadmium batteries used by the fleet.

The 14 volt discharge curves of the first batteries delivered by Electrosource under the COSSI effort delivered substantially lower output than required D8565/5-1 specification output and present 30 Ah prismatic battery curves shown in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 3 shows the original output of Electrosource 30 Ah VRLA aircraft battery at -15 degrees Fahrenheit. The Navy worked with Electrosource to renegotiate milestones and suggested that they enter into using cold temperature expander to change electrolyte concentration to improve 14-volt discharge performance. This effort ended with output performance at 75 and -15 degrees Fahrenheit.

increasing to values shown in figures 4 and 5 respectfully.

Presently, Electrosource is working on finalizing the design that will pass the vibration of specification sheet D8565/5-1. Problems in this area have been with keeping the plates from moving during vibration and failure of the grids due to corrosion. Part of the problem could be attributed to having too many plate pairs for the Electrosource design as shown by the extremely high 14 volt output.

The present 30 Ah Electrosource battery is only exhibiting a 12 % weight reduction due to using a metal case. Plans are to use a plastic battery case once production quantities can justify the high investment price of a plastic case mold.

Plans are to complete Qualification testing by April FY00. Following the Laboratory Qualification testing being conducted by Naval Surface Warfare Center, Crane Division a 1-year flight evaluation will occur on the P-3, C-130, and T-37 aircraft. Plans are to introduce the technology via preferred spare by reducing the D8565/5-1 weight by 15 to 20 percent.

Extensive commercial applications for the 24V/30Ah aircraft battery are in a variety of business jets and other aircraft and accounts for 25,000 unit sales on a world-wide basis per year. A partial list of aircraft and helicopters using this battery is shown in Table I.

A list of current qualified military aircraft batteries with application is provided in Table II. The US Navy plans to convert the applications shown to this third generation design beginning with the D8565/7-2 battery used in the V-22, VH-60, and AV-8B aircraft.

Make	Model
Aerospatiale	AB204, ATR72, Other
Agusta	AB204, AB205, AB212
BAE	31 Jetstream
Beech King Air	200, 300, Other
Bell Helicopter	204
Boeing Vertol	107, 114
Cessna	Caravan, Conquest, Other
Dehavilland	DHC6 Twin Otter
Embraer	Bandeirante, Brazilia, Other
Falcon	20, 200, 2000, Other
Fokker	900, F27
Gates Lear	24, 25, 55
Gulfstream	GI, GII, GIII
Lockheed	Jetstar I, L100 Hercules, Other
Mitsubishi	10, 25, 26, 36, Other
Rockwell	Turbocommander, Others
Rockwell/Gulfstream	Command, Other
Short Bros.	320, 360, Other
Sikorsky Helicopter	S76, SH58, SH55, Other

Table I. Commercial Aircraft for Use with the Horizon 24V/30Ah Battery

Battery Military P/N	Rated Capacity	Maximum Weight (Kg)	Aircraft
D8565/4-1	7.5	11.8	F/A-18, H-46, F-117
D8565/5-1	30.0	36.4	C-130, P-3 GSE, T-37, H-58
D8565/6-1	1.5	2.9	V-22, H-47, S-3, E-2C, C-2
D8565/7-2	24.0	29.0	V-22, VH-60, A/V-8B
D8565/9-1	24.0	28.6	T-34 & GSE
D8565/11-1	9.5	15.9	F-4, H-60, C-141
D8565/14-1	15.0	20.5	F/A-18 E & F
D8565/15-1	35.0	40.7	KC-135, C-130J

Table II. Present Military Battery Applications

CONCLUSIONS

The use of VRLA batteries in aircraft applications over the past 18 years has reduced airframe corrosion, battery thermal-run-away, and labor-intensive battery maintenance resulting in the savings of millions of dollars. Both reliability and availability of aircraft has been improved.

The chemistry continues to improve its' market share in both the military and commercial aircraft markets world wide. Other chemistries are under development and being introduced which will slow this market penetration; however, this important investment by DARPA in solving VRLA battery weight and service life limitations could continue the present trend.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Naval Air Systems Command would like to thank Commercial Operations and Support Cost Savings Initiative (COSSI) Program of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) - Joint Dual Use Program Office (JDUPO), and JDUPO Navy Representatives Daniel Hoffman & Cathy Nodgaard for their continued support of this effort. This project will allow the

US Navy aircraft to be the most reliable, cost effective, and available aircraft in the world.

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Constant Voltage (14.0V) Discharge @ Ambient

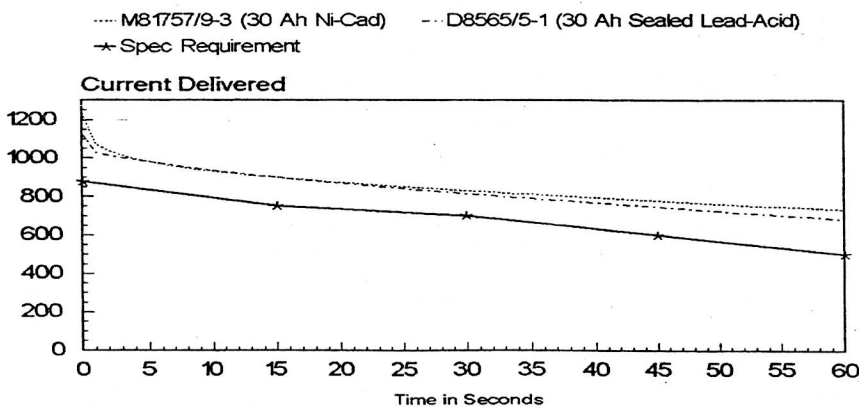


Figure 1

Constant Voltage (14.0V) Discharge @ -15 F

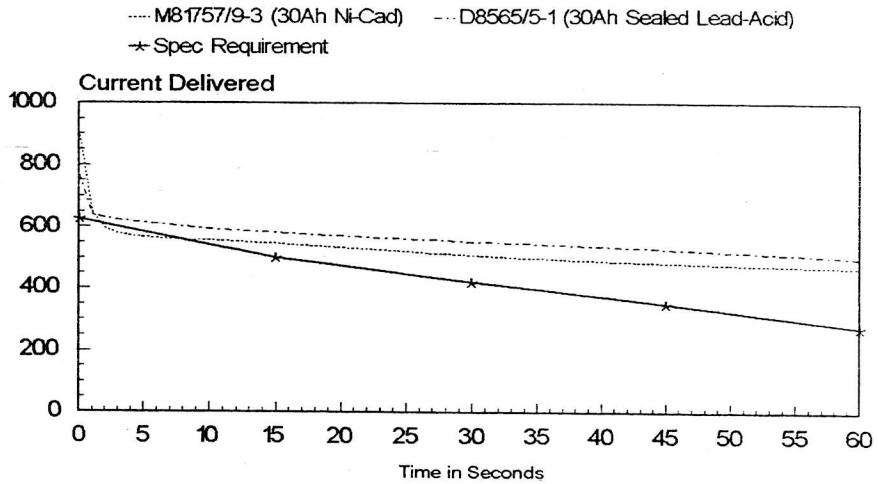


Figure 2

Initial Constant Voltage (14.0V) Discharge @ -15 F

Electrosource Battery

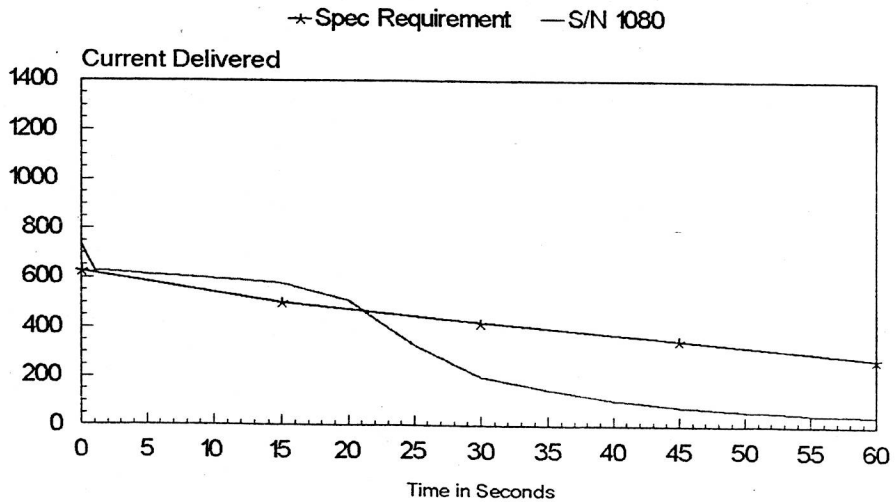


Figure 3

Constant Voltage (14.0V) Discharge @ -15 F

Electrosorce Battery

★ Spec Requirement — S/N 1132

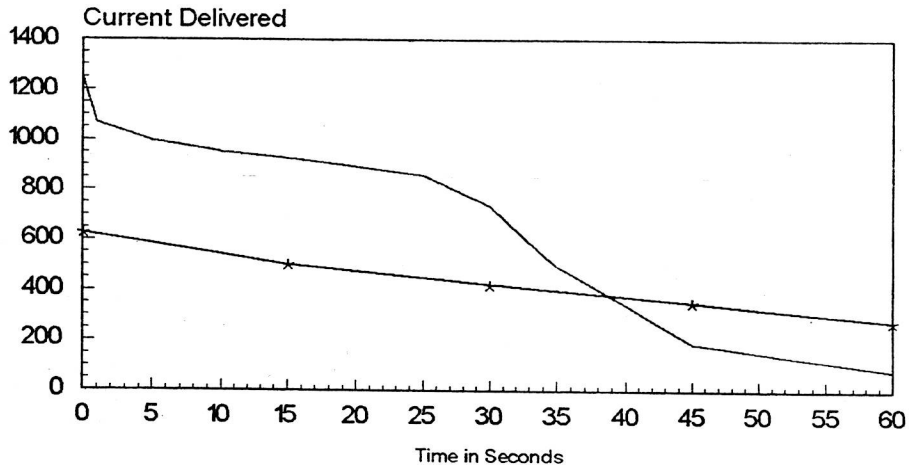


Figure 4

Constant Voltage (14.0V) Discharge @ Ambient

Electrosorce Battery Redesigned

★ Spec Requirement — S/N 1132

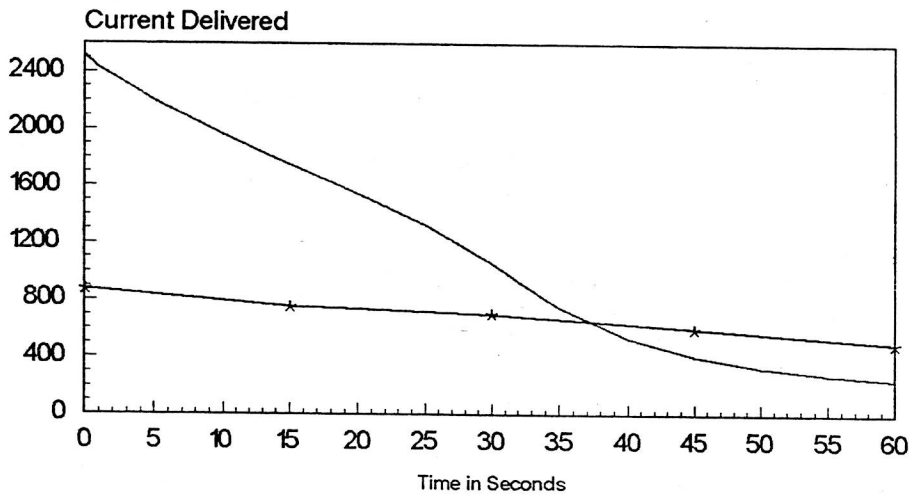


Figure 5

High Pulse Power Batteries for Air Deployable Navy Applications

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West Bethesda, MD 20817-5700

The Navy needs a high power battery for an advanced sonobuoy. Several chemistries and designs have been examined and reported on (1-4). The main focus at this point is on thermal batteries and lithium/sulfur dioxide (Li/SO_2) batteries. Other chemistries have been evaluated (e.g. lithium/manganese dioxide and lithium/thionyl chloride), however only lithium/sulfur dioxide and thermals have the combination of high power, energy, and low cost (producibility) that is required.

Thermal batteries, which are primary reserve molten-salt electrolyte systems, have demonstrated the ability to provide high power (5). However, they have difficulties with long life duration due to parasitic discharge and thermal management. Specialized, long-life designs are also typically expensive. Ambient electrolyte lithium/sulfur dioxide batteries are able to operate for long durations and at a lower cost, but suffer from voltage loss and overheating, due to excessive polarization, during sustained high power pulses (6).

The battery goals for the advanced sonobuoy are listed in Table 1 (4).

Table I. Sonobuoy Battery Goals

Power:	5,500 watts
Pulse Time:	140 seconds
Pulse Width:	.5 to 10 seconds
Duty Cycle:	Up to 30%
Mission Life:	6 hours
Storage Temperature:	-20 to +55 °C
Operating Temperature:	0 to +35 °C
Power Supply Cavity:	4.7"d x 12"l
Cost (in production):	\$400
Voltage:	65-150 volts
Weight:	19 pounds maximum

Thermal Batteries

Thermal batteries have a history of providing high power for short periods of time. They are also exceptionally safe (7) and have an extremely long shelf life, usually 10 to 20 years. However, they are conventionally limited in duration from several seconds to approximately 2 hours, well under

the 6 hour goal for the advanced sonobuoy. Since they are not available commercially and are "purpose" built, they are relatively expensive, potentially costing more than the desired total for the sonobuoy. Two contractors, ENSER and InvenTek, are looking into resolving these problems (8,9). A small business innovative research (SBIR) effort is in place with InvenTek.

ENSER has developed and demonstrated a 3-1/4 hour battery life. InvenTek has demonstrated the capability to meet six-hour mission-lives in thermal mock-ups and smaller batteries. Efforts are underway to improve the design optimization and thermal management of the cell stack to demonstrate this performance in full-up prototypes and active batteries.

Table II. Thermal Battery Status

Operational Life:	3.25 hours
Power:	5,500 watts
Operating Temperature:	Ambient

Lithium/Sulfur Dioxide Batteries

A focused lithium/sulfur dioxide cell chemistry development effort has demonstrated increased pulse power capability. NSWC Carderock has tested several of the Li/SO_2 cells and battery modules. A test equipment suite capable of measuring individual cell voltages and temperatures continuously, during the application of pulse loads, has been assembled. The battery packs have demonstrated the ability to provide the high power required, however, there are continuing concerns about initial depassivation, voltage reversal, and thermal management.

The standard pulse profile for all tests consists of a 10-second load followed by a 90-second rest period, representing a 10% duty-cycle. Specialized testing and pulse needs include duty-cycles up to 30%. Actual usage may include combinations of high duty-cycle pulses followed by long periods of inactivity. Standard temperatures for these tests are 0 and 35°C. Pre-conditioning at -20°C with pulse discharge testing at 0°C has been demonstrated. Tests with a 55°C precondition which were then discharged at 35°C have shown the ability