



BSI Standards Publication

Guide to methods for assessing the acceptability of flaws in metallic structures

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Contents

Foreword	<i>ix</i>
0	Introduction <i>0/1</i>
1	Scope <i>1/1</i>
2	Normative references <i>1/1</i>
3	Symbols and definitions <i>1/1</i>
4	Types of flaw <i>4/1</i>
5	General guidance on assessment <i>5/1</i>
5.1	Modes of failure and material damage mechanisms <i>5/1</i>
5.2	Sequence of assessment <i>5/2</i>
5.3	Fracture assessment options <i>5/3</i>
6	Information required for assessment <i>6/1</i>
6.0	Symbols and definitions <i>6/1</i>
6.1	General <i>6/1</i>
6.2	Essential data <i>6/2</i>
6.3	Non-destructive testing <i>6/2</i>
6.4	Stresses to be considered <i>6/4</i>
7	Assessment for fracture resistance <i>7/1</i>
7.0	Symbols and definitions <i>7/1</i>
7.1	Background <i>7/4</i>
7.2	Procedure <i>7/32</i>
7.3	Assessment (Options 1 to 3) <i>7/34</i>
7.4	Further points <i>7/39</i>
8	Assessment for fatigue <i>8/1</i>
8.0	Symbols and definitions <i>8/1</i>
8.1	Assessment procedures <i>8/3</i>
8.2	Data required for assessment <i>8/7</i>
8.3	Probability of survival <i>8/14</i>
8.4	General procedure for fracture mechanics assessment of planar flaws <i>8/15</i>
8.5	Basis of procedure for assessing flaws using quality categories <i>8/16</i>
8.6	Assessment of planar flaws using quality categories <i>8/19</i>
8.7	Assessment of embedded non-planar flaws using quality categories <i>8/37</i>
8.8	Assessment of shape imperfections using quality categories <i>8/39</i>
8.9	Estimation of tolerable sizes of flaws <i>8/41</i>
9	Assessment of flaws under creep and creep/fatigue conditions <i>9/1</i>
9.0	Symbols and definitions <i>9/1</i>
9.1	General <i>9/3</i>
9.2	Background to methods <i>9/4</i>
9.3	Background to assessments <i>9/4</i>
9.4	Factors involved in the safe use of the procedure <i>9/5</i>
9.5	Creep exemption criteria <i>9/5</i>
9.6	Creep-fatigue exemption criteria <i>9/8</i>
9.7	Crack behaviour at high temperature <i>9/9</i>
9.8	Assessment of components containing a known or postulated defect <i>9/11</i>
9.9	Further guidance on the assessment procedure <i>9/15</i>
9.10	Basic calculations <i>9/17</i>
9.11	Material data for predicting crack initiation and growth under creep and creep/fatigue <i>9/19</i>
9.12	Guidance on performing assessment calculations <i>9/20</i>
9.13	Assess significance of results <i>9/22</i>
10	Assessment for other modes of failure <i>10/1</i>
10.0	Symbols and definitions <i>10/1</i>
10.1	Yielding due to overloading of remaining cross-section <i>10/1</i>
10.2	Leakage in pressure, liquid or vacuum containing equipment <i>10/2</i>

10.3 Environmental effects 10/2

10.4 Instability (buckling) 10/7

Annexes

Annex A (informative) Evaluation under mode I, II and III loads A/1

Annex B (informative) Assessment procedures for tubular joints in offshore structures B/1

Annex C (informative) Assessment procedures for pressure vessels and pipelines C/1

Annex D (informative) Stress due to misalignment D/1

Annex E (informative) Flaw recharacterization E/1

Annex F (informative) Procedure for leak-before-break (LbB) assessment F/1

Annex G (informative) The assessment of locally thinned areas (LTAs) G/1

Annex H (informative) Reporting of assessments H/1

Annex I (informative) The significance of strength mismatch on the fracture behaviour of welded joints I/1

Annex J (informative) Use of Charpy V-notch impact tests to estimate fracture toughness J/1

Annex K (informative) Probabilistic assessment K/1

Annex L (informative) Fracture toughness determination for welds L/1

Annex M (informative) Stress intensity factor solutions M/1

Annex N (informative) Allowance for constraint effects N/1

Annex O (informative) Consideration of proof testing and warm prestressing O/1

Annex P (informative) Compendium of reference stress and limit load solutions for homogeneous and strength mismatched structures P/1

Annex Q (informative) Residual stress distributions in as-welded joints Q/1

Annex R (informative) Determination of plasticity interaction effects with combined primary and secondary loading R/1

Annex S (informative) Information for making high temperature crack growth assessments S/1

Annex T (informative) Guidance on the use of NDT with ECA T/1

Annex U (informative) Worked examples in fatigue assessment using the quality category approach U/1

Annex V (informative) Strain-based assessment (SBA) V/1

List of figures

Figure 0.1 – Example of integrity management procedure for flaws 0/2

Figure 6.1 – Linearization of stress distributions 6/5

Figure 6.2 – Procedure for resolving flaws normal to principal stress 6/8

Figure 7.1 – General flowchart for fracture assessment 7/5

Figure 7.2 – Flowchart for Option 1 fracture assessment 7/6

Figure 7.3 – Flowchart for Option 2 fracture assessment 7/7

Figure 7.4 – Flowchart for Option 3 fracture assessment 7/8

Figure 7.5 – Flowchart for flaw characterization 7/10

Figure 7.6 – Definitions of flaw dimensions 7/11

Figure 7.7 – Flaw alignment rules for non-coplanar flaws 7/12

Figure 7.8 – Flaw interaction rules for coplanar flaws 7/13

Figure 7.9 – Definition of terms used in tensile testing 7/15

Figure 7.10 – De-rating values for yield/proof strength and tensile strength at temperatures above room temperature in C-Mn steels and duplex stainless steels 7/17

Figure 7.11 – Treatment of sets of between three and five tests 7/25

Figure 7.12 – Treatment of sets of more than six tests 7/26

Figure 7.13 – Example of a Failure Assessment Diagram 7/34

Figure 7.14 – Ductile tearing assessment 7/38

Figure 7.15 – Example of non-unique solutions 7/40

Figure 8.1 – Schematic crack growth relationships 8/6

Figure 8.2 – Recommended fatigue crack growth laws 8/11

Figure 8.3 – Quality category S-N curves 8/17

- Figure 8.4 – Quality category approach: assessment of surface flaws in plates under axial loading 8/22
- Figure 8.5 – Quality category approach: assessment of surface flaws in plates (no weld toe or other stress raiser) in bending 8/24
- Figure 8.6 – Quality category approach: assessment of embedded flaws in axially loaded joints 8/26
- Figure 8.7 – Quality category approach: assessment of weld toe flaws in axially loaded joints 8/28
- Figure 8.8 – Quality category approach: assessment of weld toe flaws in joints loaded in bending 8/34
- Figure 9.1 – Determination of temperature T_c at which 0.2% creep strain is accumulated at a stress level equal to the proof strength 9/7
- Figure 9.2 – Insignificant creep curves for austenitic steels 9/8
- Figure 9.3 – Insignificant creep curves for ferritic steels 9/8
- Figure 9.4 – Schematic behaviour of crack subjected to steady loading at elevated temperature 9/10
- Figure 9.5 – Schematic representation of crack propagation and failure conditions 9/11
- Figure 9.6 – Flowchart for overall creep assessment procedure described in 9.8.2 9/12
- Figure 10.1 – Schematic diagrams of typical relationships between crack velocity and stress intensity factor during SCC 10/4
- Figure 10.2 – Types of corrosion fatigue crack growth behaviour 10/6
- Figure A.1 – Definitions of loading modes A/2
- Figure B.1 – Assessment method for fatigue crack growth in tubular joints B/4
- Figure E.1 – Flowchart for recharacterization of flaws E/2
- Figure E.2 – Rules for recharacterization of flaws E/3
- Figure F.1 – The leak-before-break diagram F/4
- Figure F.2 – Flow chart for LbB procedure F/6
- Figure G.1 – Flow chart of assessment procedure G/4
- Figure G.2 – Dimensions of an LTA G/5
- Figure G.3 – Dimensions of a bend G/6
- Figure G.4 – Dimensions of a sphere and vessel end G/7
- Figure G.5 – Interaction between LTAs G/9
- Figure I.1 – Idealized weld geometry – the parent and weld metals have yield strengths of σ_Y^W and σ_Y^P respectively I/4
- Figure I.2 – Idealized definition of mismatch ratio, M , and construction of the equivalent stress-strain curve (weighted average of the other two curves) I/5
- Figure J.1 – Flowchart for selecting an appropriate correlation for estimating fracture toughness from Charpy data J/3
- Figure M.1 – Through-thickness flaw geometry M/5
- Figure M.2 – Edge flaw geometry M/5
- Figure M.3 – Surface flaw M/6
- Figure M.4 – Stress intensity magnification factor M_m for surface flaws in tension M/8
- Figure M.5 – Stress intensity magnification factor M_b for surface flaws in bending M/10
- Figure M.6 – Finite surface flaw in an infinite width plate M/11
- Figure M.7 – Extended flaw geometry M/15
- Figure M.8 – Extended surface flaw in an infinite width plate M/16
- Figure M.9 – Embedded flaw M/17
- Figure M.10 – Stress intensity magnification factor M_m for embedded flaws in tension (at point nearest material surface) M/18
- Figure M.11 – Stress intensity magnification factor M_b for embedded flaws in bending M/20
- Figure M.12 – Corner flaw geometry M/21
- Figure M.13 – Corner flaw at hole geometry M/23
- Figure M.14 – Through-thickness flaw in cylinder oriented axially M/27
- Figure M.15 – Internal surface flaw in cylinder oriented axially M/32

- Figure M.16 – Extended internal surface flaw in cylinder orientated axially *M/34*
- Figure M.17 – External surface flaw in cylinder oriented axially *M/35*
- Figure M.18 – Extended axial external surface flaw in cylinder *M/36*
- Figure M.19 – Through-thickness flaw in cylinder oriented circumferentially *M/38*
- Figure M.20 – Internal surface flaw in cylinder oriented circumferentially *M/43*
- Figure M.21 – Extended internal surface flaw in cylinder *M/45*
- Figure M.22 – Extended external surface flaw in cylinder *M/46*
- Figure M.23 – Through-thickness flaw in spherical shell *M/49*
- Figure M.24 – Flaws in bars and bolts *M/50*
- Figure M.25 – Fully circumferential flaw in a round bar *M/54*
- Figure M.26 – Welded joint geometries *M/55*
- Figure M.27 – Transverse load-carrying cruciform joint *M/56*
- Figure N.1 – Schematic showing curve fitting of low constraint test data to obtain a and k *N/9*
- Figure N.2 – Modifications to the Option 1 failure assessment curve (continuous yielding) for various values of the material parameter, α , and constraint levels, β (< 0) *N/11*
- Figure N.3 – FAD analysis for (a) fracture initiation and (b) ductile tearing *N/12*
- Figure O.1 – Schematic illustration of a proof test argument *O/4*
- Figure O.2 – Typical warm prestress cycles *O/6*
- Figure P.1 – Double edge cracked plate under tension *P/8*
- Figure P.2 – Extended embedded flaw in a plate *P/10*
- Figure P.3 – Circumferential internal and external surface flaws in thick-walled cylinders under combined tension and bending *P/19*
- Figure P.4 – Classification of plasticity deformation patterns for mismatched structures *P/22*
- Figure P.5 – Centre cracked plate under tension *P/26*
- Figure P.6 – Double edge cracked plate under tension *P/29*
- Figure P.7 – Single edge cracked plate under in-plane bending *P/33*
- Figure P.8 – Fully circumferential internal flaw in thin-walled pipe/cylinder under tension *P/35*
- Figure P.9 – Centre through-thickness crack in a clad plate under tension *P/36*
- Figure Q.1 – Components of longitudinal residual stress distribution for plate butt welds and pipe axial seam welds (austenitic steel) *Q/4*
- Figure Q.2 – Components of transverse stress distribution for plate butt welds and axial seam welds (austenitic and ferritic steels) *Q/5*
- Figure Q.3 – Components of longitudinal stress distribution for pipe butt welds (ferritic and austenitic steels) *Q/6*
- Figure Q.4 – Components of transverse stress distribution for pipe butt welds (ferritic steels) *Q/7*
- Figure Q.5 – Components of longitudinal stress distribution for plate to plate T-butt welds (ferritic steels) *Q/10*
- Figure Q.6 – Components of transverse stress distribution for plate to plate T-butt welds (austenitic and ferritic steels) *Q/12*
- Figure Q.7 – Components of longitudinal stress distribution for tubular T-butt welds (ferritic steels) *Q/13*
- Figure Q.8 – Components of transverse stress distribution for tubular T-butt welds (ferritic steels) *Q/14*
- Figure Q.9 – Residual stress profile for repair welds (transverse and longitudinal) *Q/15*
- Figure S.1 – General form of a creep curve defining the average and secondary creep strain rates *S/2*
- Figure S.2 – General form of a creep curve defining the average and secondary creep strain rates *S/3*
- Figure T.1 – Assessment of flaw tolerance using ECA *T/5*
- Figure T.2 – Assessment of detected flaw *T/6*
- Figure U.1 – Butt weld containing embedded flaw *U/2*
- Figure U.2 – Derivation of actual quality category for a flaw *U/3*

- Figure U.3 – Fillet weld containing a surface flaw U/4
 Figure U.4 – Derivation of actual quality category for a flaw U/5
 Figure U.5 – Obtaining the quality category for the flaw U/6
 Figure V.1 – Flow chart for a strain-based assessment (SBA) using the methods of Annex V V/7
 Figure V.2 – Distribution of stress and strain across the location of the flaw being assessed from an uncracked stress analysis V/8
 Figure V.3 – Derivation of the reference stress, σ_{ref} , and the reference strain, ϵ_{ref} , from the applied nominal strain, ϵ_{nom} , and the material true stress-true strain curve V/8
 Figure V.4 – Derivation of the flow strain, ϵ_f , from the material flow strength, σ_f , using the true stress-true strain curve V/9
 Figure V.5 – Single edge-notched tension (SENT) specimen V/10
 Figure V.6 – SBA FAL together with tearing lines used to determine the instability load level for a 0.4 mm deep flaw in a SENT specimen loaded in tension. V/12

List of tables

- Table 7.1 – Engineering definitions of yield and tensile strengths for Options 1, 2, 3 7/14
 Table 7.2 – Coefficient of variation (COV) for tensile properties for ferritic steels 7/16
 Table 7.3 – Elastic modulus 7/16
 Table 7.4 – Guidance for determining whether yielding is continuous or discontinuous in rolled steel plate 7/19
 Table 7.5 – Minimum of three equivalent (MOTE) 7/27
 Table 7.6 – Values of $k_{0.90}$ at the lower 20th percentile for the one-sided tolerance limit for a normal distribution 7/28
 Table 7.7 – Limits for slag inclusions and porosity 7/40
 Table 8.1 – Procedure for assessment of known flaws 8/4
 Table 8.2 – Stress ranges used in fatigue assessments 8/8
 Table 8.3 – Recommended fatigue crack growth laws for steels in air 8/10
 Table 8.4 – Recommended fatigue crack growth laws for steels in a marine environment 8/12
 Table 8.5 – Recommended fatigue crack growth threshold, ΔK_0 , values for assessing welded joints 8/14
 Table 8.6 – Details of quality category *S-N* curves 8/17
 Table 8.7 – Minimum values of $\Delta\sigma_j$ for assessing non-planar flaws and shape imperfections 8/38
 Table 8.8 – Limits for non-planar flaws in as welded steel and aluminium alloy weldments 8/39
 Table 8.9 – Limits for non-planar flaws in steel weldments stress-relieved by PWHT 8/39
 Table 8.10 – Acceptance levels for misalignment expressed in terms of stress magnification factor, k_m 8/40
 Table 8.11 – Acceptance levels for weld toe undercut in material thicknesses from 10 mm to 40 mm 8/40
 Table 9.1 – Temperature below which creep is negligible in 200,000 h for carbon manganese and ferritic steels 9/6
 Table D.1 – Formulae for calculating the bending stress due to misalignment in butt joints D/4
 Table D.2 – Formulae for calculating the bending stress due to misalignment in cruciform joints D/7
 Table F.1 – Guidance on selection of assessment sites around a pipe system F/5
 Table F.2 – Crack opening area methods for simple geometries and loading F/8
 Table F.3 – Summary of short wave length surface roughness values F/12
 Table F.4 – Particulates in primary system water F/16
 Table K.1 – Examples of target reliabilities specified by codes and standards K/6
 Table K.2 – Paris Law parameters including uncertainty in *A* for a one-stage model (*N*, mm) K/12

- Table K.3 – Paris Law parameters including uncertainty in A for a two-stage model (N , mm) *K/13*
- Table M.1 – Geometry functions for a finite surface flaw in an infinite width plate – deepest point of flaw *M/13*
- Table M.2 – Geometry functions for a finite surface flaw in an infinite width plate – intersection of flaw with free surface *M/14*
- Table M.3 – Geometry functions for an extended surface flaw in an infinite width plate *M/16*
- Table M.4a) – M_1 for axial through-thickness in cylinders: membrane loading *M/28*
- Table M.4b) – M_2 for axial through-thickness in cylinders: membrane loading *M/29*
- Table M.4c) – M_3 for axial through-thickness in cylinders: bending loading *M/30*
- Table M.4d) – M_4 for axial through-thickness in cylinders: membrane loading *M/31*
- Table M.5 – M_m and M_b for axial internal surface flaw in cylinder *M/33*
- Table M.6 – M_m and M_b for extended axial internal surface flaw in cylinder *M/34*
- Table M.7 – M_m and M_b for axial external surface flaw in cylinder *M/35*
- Table M.8 – M_m and M_b for extended axial external surface flaw in cylinder *M/36*
- Table M.9a) – M_1 for circumferential through-thickness in cylinders: membrane loading *M/39*
- Table M.9b) – M_2 for circumferential through-thickness flaws in cylinders: membrane loading *M/40*
- Table M.9c) – M_3 for circumferential through-thickness flaws in cylinders: bending loading *M/41*
- Table M.9d) – M_4 for circumferential through-thickness flaws in cylinders: bending loading *M/42*
- Table M.10 – M_m and M_b for circumferential internal surface flaw in cylinder *M/44*
- Table M.11 – M_m and M_b for extended circumferential internal surface flaw in cylindrical shell *M/45*
- Table M.12 – Influence coefficients at points A and B for an equatorial through-thickness flaw in a sphere *M/47*
- Table M.13 – M_m for semi-elliptical flaw in a round bar under tension loading *M/51*
- Table M.14 – M_b for semi-elliptical flaw in a round bar under bending loading *M/51*
- Table M.15 – Values of v and w for axial and bending loading *M/56*
- Table N.1 – Polynomial coefficients defining β_T for CCP *N/13*
- Table N.2 – Polynomial coefficients defining β_T for CCPB *N/14*
- Table N.3 – Polynomial coefficients defining β_T for DENT *N/14*
- Table N.4 – Polynomial coefficients defining β_T for SENT *N/15*
- Table N.5 – Polynomial coefficients defining β_T for SEB *N/15*
- Table N.6 – Polynomial coefficients defining β_T for SENB *N/16*
- Table N.7 – Polynomial coefficients defining β_T for CT *N/16*
- Table N.8 – Polynomial coefficients defining β_T for SCP: uniaxial tension *N/17*
- Table N.9 – Polynomial coefficients defining β_T for SCPB *N/18*
- Table N.10 – Polynomial coefficients defining β_T for extended internal circumferential surface flaw in a cylinder *N/19*
- Table N.11 – Polynomial coefficients defining β_T for internal circumferential surface flaw in a cylinder (biaxial tension) *N/20*
- Table N.12 – Polynomial coefficients defining β_T for internal circumferential surface flaw in a cylinder (uniaxial tension) *N/21*
- Table N.13 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 5$ *N/23*
- Table N.14 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 6$ *N/24*
- Table N.15 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 7$ *N/25*
- Table N.16 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 8$ *N/26*

Table N.17 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 9$	N/27
Table N.18 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 10$	N/28
Table N.19 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 11$	N/29
Table N.20 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 12$	N/30
Table N.21 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 13$	N/31
Table N.22 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 14$	N/32
Table N.23 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 15$	N/33
Table N.24 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 16$	N/34
Table N.25 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 17$	N/35
Table N.26 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 18$	N/36
Table N.27 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 19$	N/37
Table N.28 – a and k defined with respect to T/σ_Y for $n = 20$	N/38
Table P.1 – Calculation of bending stresses as functions of moments	P/5
Table P.2 – Values of χ for bending loading	P/21
Table Q.1 – Assessment ranges for as-welded residual stress distributions in ferritic steels	Q/2
Table Q.2 – Assessment ranges for as-welded residual stress distributions in austenitic stainless steels (pipe butt welds only)	Q/2
Table Q.3 – Components of longitudinal stress and K_{sb}^{max} for plate butt welds and pipe axial seam welds (austenitic steel)	Q/4
Table Q.4 – Components of transverse stress and K_{sb}^{max} for plate butt welds and axial seam welds (austenitic and ferritic steel)	Q/5
Table Q.5 – Components of longitudinal stress and K_{sb}^{max} for pipe butt welds (ferritic and austenitic steels)	Q/6
Table Q.6 – Components of transverse stress and K_{sb}^{max} for pipe butt welds (ferritic steel)	Q/9
Table Q.7 – Components of transverse stress and K_{sb}^{max} for pipe butt welds (austenitic steel)	Q/9
Table Q.8 – Components of longitudinal stress and K_{sb}^{max} for plate to plate T-butt welds (ferritic steels)	Q/11
Table Q.9 – Components of transverse stress and K_{sb}^{max} for plate to plate T-butt welds (ferritic and austenitic steels) and longitudinal stress and K_{sb}^{max} for plate to plate T-butt welds (austenitic steels)	Q/12
Table Q.10 – Components of longitudinal stress and K_{sb}^{max} for tubular T-butt welds (ferritic steels)	Q/13
Table Q.11 – Components of transverse stress and K_{sb}^{max} for tubular T-butt welds (ferritic steels)	Q/14
Table Q.12 – Components of transverse and longitudinal stress distribution for repair welds (ferritic and austenitic steels)	Q/15
Table S.1 – Mean uniaxial creep properties for different steels for short (<10 000 h) and long term tests	S/5
Table S.2 – Mean uniaxial creep properties for different steels for short (<10 000 h) and long term tests	S/7
Table T.1 – Examples of inspection capabilities for sub-surface flaws	T/8
Table T.2 – Examples of inspection capabilities for back surface flaws	T/8
Table T.3 – Examples of inspection capabilities for flaws at the accessible surface	T/9
Table T.4 – Capabilities for detection and length measurement of surface-breaking flaws by MPI	T/15
Table T.5 – Flaw detection capability for liquid penetrant testing	T/16

Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i to x, pages 0/1 to V/14, an inside back cover and a back cover.

Foreword

Publishing information

This British Standard is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 31 December 2019. It was prepared by Technical Committee WEE/37, *Acceptance levels for flaws in welds*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

Supersession

This British Standard supersedes BS 7910:2013+A1:2015, which is withdrawn.

Information about this document

This is a full revision of the standard. It introduces the following principal changes, which reflect both advances in structural integrity technology and feedback from users.

- Annex A to Annex U are now all designated as “informative” (in earlier editions they were classified as either “informative” or “normative”. This minor change reflects the nature of the document, i.e. it provides guidance rather than prescribing a particular set of rules.
- A new Annex V has been added, addressing strain-based assessment and design.
- The document has been broken down into self-contained clauses and annexes, each with its own bibliography, tables, equations, figures and symbols. This has inevitably introduced an element of repetition, e.g. of key reference documents, but is intended to improve the flexibility and agility of the document in years to come.
- New bibliographic references have been added, in particular to a series of papers published in a special BS 7910-focussed issue of the *International Journal of Pressure Vessels and Piping*. These cover the major damage/failure mechanisms covered by BS 7910 (fracture, fatigue, creep, corrosion), plus specific topics related to the annexes (residual stress, constraint, reliability, NDT, strain-based assessment) and the application of BS 7910 to pipelines. Whilst the background papers are based mainly on BS 7910:2013, the information is equally applicable to BS 7910:2019 in most cases.
- New rules for flaw interaction criteria and some new materials property clauses have been introduced in Clause 7.
- Annex F (Procedure for leak-before-break (LbB) assessment) has been simplified; the detectable leakage procedure has been retained and the full LbB removed.
- In Annex J (Use of Charpy V-notch impact tests), a new subclause addresses interpretation of incomplete transition curves and gives more guidance on use of the Master Curve approach.
- Annex K (Probabilistic assessment) has been updated; the tables of generic partial safety factors (PSFs) for use with fracture assessment have been removed.
- Annex M (Stress intensity factor solutions) contains solutions for finite and extended surface-breaking flaws in plates subjected to non-linear stress fields. These were previously included in Annex Q (Residual stress distributions in as-welded joints) but have been moved to Annex M in the interests of consistency and to underline their potential use with primary, as well as secondary, stresses.

- Annex N (Allowance for constraint effects) has been simplified by removing the look-up tables based on the Q parameter.
- Annex P (Compendium of reference stress and limit load solutions) includes additional information on the source of the solutions, in particular on the distinction between global and local solutions. Limit load solutions for offshore tubular joints and clad plates containing a repair weld have been removed. As a result of this change, Equation (P.31) has been removed; however, in order to maintain continuity with the 2013 edition, subsequent equations have not been renumbered.
- Annex R (Determination of plasticity interaction effects) has been simplified. In the interests of continuity with earlier revisions, both plasticity interaction factors (ρ and V) have been retained; the simplified approach has been kept and the alternative approaches described in the 2013 edition have been removed. Moreover, the simplified approach to the calculation of V has been revised to reflect the most recent amendments to the R6 procedure.

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As a guide this British Standard takes the form of guidance and recommendations. It should not be quoted as if it were a specification or a code of practice and claims of compliance cannot be made to it.

Presentational conventions

The guidance in this standard is presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Any recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is "should".

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Where words have alternative spellings, the preferred spelling of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary is used (e.g. "organization" rather than "organisation").

Contractual and legal considerations

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

0 Introduction

The background to the development of BS 7910 is given in reference [0.1].

Where it is necessary to examine critically the integrity of new or existing structures by the use of non-destructive testing (NDT) methods, acceptance levels are required for any flaws that might be revealed. These often already exist as quality control levels (for example in a construction code); however, in this British Standard the derivation of acceptance levels for flaws is based upon the principle of fitness-for-service.

By this principle a structure is considered to be adequate for its purpose, provided the conditions to cause failure are not reached. A distinction has to be made between acceptance based on quality control and acceptance based on fitness-for-service.

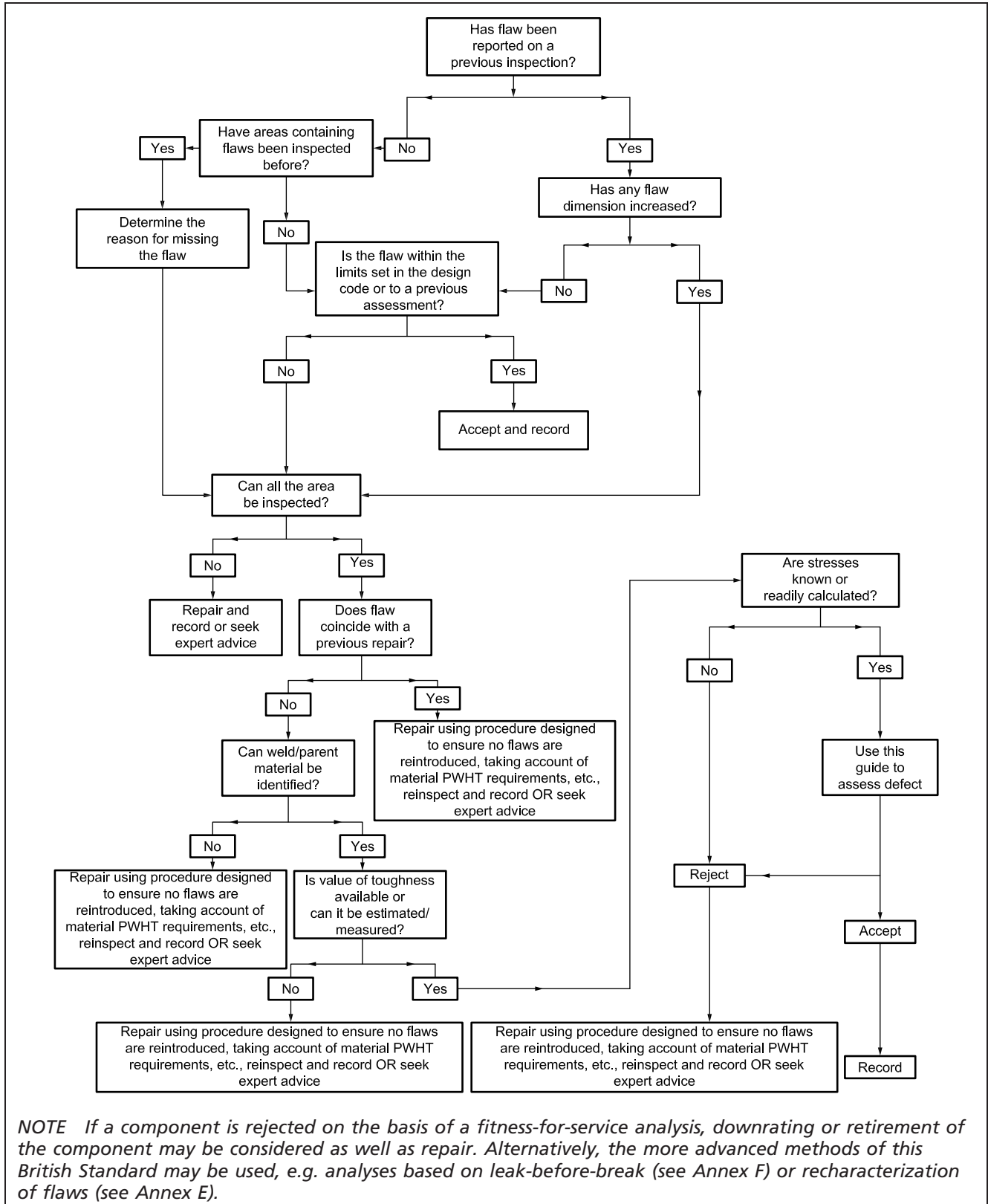
Quality control levels are usually both arbitrary and conservative, but are of considerable value in the monitoring and maintenance of quality during production. Flaws that are less severe than such quality control levels as given, for example, in current construction codes, are acceptable without further consideration. If flaws are more severe than the quality control levels, rejection is not necessarily automatic. Decisions on whether rejection, down rating and/or repairs are required may be based on fitness-for-service, either in the light of previously documented experience with similar material, stress and environmental combinations or on the basis of an engineering critical assessment (ECA) (see Figure 0.1). It is with the latter that this document is concerned. It is emphasized, however, that a proliferation of flaws, even if shown to be acceptable by an ECA, is regarded as indicating that quality is in need of improvement. The use of an ECA is not intended to be viewed as an alternative to good workmanship. The response to flaws not conforming to workmanship criteria needs to be the correction of the fault in the process causing the non-conformity. The methods covered by this British Standard are complementary to, and not a replacement for, good quality workmanship.

A procedure for an ECA is described throughout whereby the significance of flaws under a particular set of circumstances can be determined. All parties need to agree to its use.

It is impossible to provide a single list of flaws that are known not to cause premature failure, as a large number of variables are involved as enumerated in this British Standard. Where relevant experience and data already exist it is possible to dispense with the full ECA procedure and to use authenticated previous assessments as a basis for the establishment of acceptability limits. An ECA may also be used as a basis for deferring necessary repairs to a time mutually agreeable to the contracting parties. Unsatisfactory repair of innocuous flaws can result in the substitution of more harmful and/or less readily detectable flaws.

Flaw assessment on a fitness-for-service basis requires thorough examination by non-destructive testing (NDT) using techniques capable of locating and sizing flaws in critical areas. This British Standard may be used to identify such areas and to assist in optimizing the NDT procedures by identifying those aspects of flaw characterization, size and position that need to be determined. Such NDT is normally carried out after any post-weld heat treatment (PWHT) and/or proof test. However, since a major objective of this British Standard is to reduce costs by eliminating unnecessary repair, careful consideration needs to be given to the level of inspection required to implement this British Standard, and to the limitations of NDT methods.

Figure 0.1 Example of integrity management procedure for flaws



Where NDT has revealed the presence of flaws, the following options apply.

- If the flaws do not exceed the quality control levels in the appropriate application standard, no further action is required.
- If acceptance limits have already been established on the basis of an ECA for the appropriate combination of materials, fabrication procedure, welding

consumables, stress and environmental factors, flaws need to be assessed on that basis.

- If no relevant documented experience exists, then an ECA based on the guidance given in this document may be carried out.

An ECA helps to identify the limiting conditions for failure or the limiting design conditions. It is emphasized that some aspects of an ECA are based on new concepts that could be subject to review.

The application of ECA principles means that “safe” results are obtained. The option of using appropriate safety factors has been incorporated or is inherent throughout the standard. If the accuracy of the input information employed (e.g. stress levels, materials properties at the appropriate temperature, flaw size determination) is in question, appropriate additional safety factors need to be agreed. Equally a flaw is not necessarily unacceptable when it is found initially to exceed the acceptance levels that are derived from this standard. A further assessment may be made following the principles given in this standard incorporating more precise input data or analysis methods or by testing structurally relevant components.

This British Standard also gives guidance on the use of probabilistic methods. These factors and methods do not constitute a full risk analysis of the component undergoing assessment as they do not quantify the consequences of a failure. Where failure of the structure under assessment could pose an unjustifiable or intolerable risk to the surrounding environment or population, a full risk analysis might be needed, with due recognition of both individual and societal risk [0.2].

The assessment methods given in this British Standard provide a quantitative measure of the acceptability of a flaw in a structure. They are not to be used in isolation but are to be used as part of an overall process for the management of flaws. The management of flaws is part of a wider integrity management plan for the structure or system. The management processes for flaws address factors such as:

- the cause of the flaw and remedial action to prevent further occurrences or growth;
- whether a previous inspection failed to detect this flaw. If so, the reasons for not detecting the flaw need to be determined. The inspection technique or assumptions about sub-critical crack growth rates might need to be reviewed;
- the previous history of the structure and whether it is consistent with the nature, location and size of the flaw;
- whether an inspection suggests that the flaw has grown and the observed growth is consistent with assumptions about loading and sub-critical crack growth rates after allowing for uncertainty in the inspection results;
- the implications for other structures of the same or similar design and whether modifications to the structure or a change in the service conditions might be required;
- whether there is a pattern of this flaw being detected in other structures of the same design.

An example algorithm for managing the assessment of flaws is shown in Figure 0.1. Alternative approaches may be developed.

Bibliography for Introduction

Standards publications

There are no standards publications in the Introduction.

Other documents

- [0.1] HADLEY, I. BS 7910:2013 in brief. *In: International Journal of Pressure Vessels and Piping*, August 2018, 165, 263–269.
<<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpvp.2018.07.010>>
- [0.2] ROYAL SOCIETY. *Risk analysis, perception, management*.
London: The Royal Society, 1992.

1 Scope

This British Standard gives guidance and recommendations for assessing the acceptability of flaws in all types of structures and components. Although emphasis is placed on welded fabrications in ferritic and austenitic steels and aluminium alloys, the procedures can be used for analysing flaws in structures made from other metallic materials and in non-welded components or structures. The methods described are applicable at the design, fabrication and operational phases of the life of a structure.

Specific applications include:

- assessing a known flaw in order to determine the fitness-for-service of a flawed structure;
- calculating the defect-tolerance of a structure in order to inform materials selection, load capacity or inspection requirements;
- justifying waiver of post-weld heat-treatment in thick-walled steel structures.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

NOTE Informative references are listed in individual clauses and annexes.

3 Symbols and definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard, the symbols, definitions and units given in individual clauses and annexes apply.