Modern electronic circuits and devices are more sensitive than ever to transients, and this has led to an increased need for transient protection. Designers are often faced with a difficult task in terms of the level of protection required and the ability of the individual components to withstand given transients or pulses. Whilst there is a great deal of information available on the capability of semiconductors, other components, such as resistors, are often neglected or misunderstood by designers.

As resistors are often located in areas likely to experience transients, with power supplies or lighting circuits for example, their transient or pulse capability is a critical issue.

The most common type of resistors used for transient protection are wirewound resistors. However, this is a product range for which pulse capability data is not often given on data sheets. The following pages detail the pulse handling and overload characteristics of TT electronics most popular wirewound resistors.

In addition to providing a comprehensive range of standard wirewound resistors, TT electronics has worked closely with designers to custom build resistors for specific protection applications.

- Data given for Metal Clad, axial Cement and Vitreous Enamelled wirewounds
- Detailed pulse graphs
- Custom parts available
Overloading of Wirewound Resistors

In order to limit their temperature rise, wirewound resistors have maximum continuous power ratings. However, they also have an overload rating, often referred to as Short Term Overload on data sheets.

For example, the W22 is rated as a 6 watt device, however it is capable of dissipating 60 watts for 5 seconds. In terms of energy, this corresponds to 300 joules.

It might be thought that this device is capable of handling 300 joules irrespective of the pulse width. However, because it takes a finite time for the heat produced to be properly distributed throughout the resistor body, it is necessary to impose limits on the applied pulse energy so as to prevent excessive stresses due to thermal shock damaging the component.

For example, if we consider a W22-R22 subjected to 200 Volts for 1.5 milliseconds.

Using \( E = \frac{V^2}{R} \), the energy is 270 joules.

This is within the 300 joules quoted above, but because it would take longer than 1.5 ms for the heat produced in the wire to flow into the surrounding materials, the temperature of the wire would rise far beyond that intended.

For these reasons, we have produced the “Energy Capability” and “Overload Rating” graphs which should be referred to for all pulse applications. (The term pulse implies a single pulse applied to a resistor, which is not already dissipating power and is in an ambient temperature of 70°C or less.)

For pulses of up to 100 ms duration, the “Energy Capability” graph should be used. For longer pulses (>100 ms), the “Overload Rating” graph should be used. However, the energy applied in the first 100 ms should not exceed that allowed on the “Energy Capability” Graph. For very short pulses, <1 ms, reference should be made to the 1.2/50μs table. “Overload Rating” graphs are not provided for the WA80 and W31 Series; for these products, the table above should be used.

It is important to realize that forced air-cooling and/or heat sinks have no effect on overload ratings within the first few seconds.
Repellent or Superimposed Pulses

As there is a maximum temperature to which the wire can rise during an overload, if the resistor is already dissipating heat, then the pulse energy applied should be less than that allowed by the graph.

Using the formula below we can estimate the "equivalent" energy of a pulse applied to a resistor that is already dissipating power.

\[ E_{ap} = E \times (1 + \frac{P_{av}}{P_r}) \]

Where: \( E_{ap} \) = Equivalent pulse energy  
\( E \) = Actual pulse energy  
\( P_r \) = Resistor power rating  
\( P_{av} \) = Mean power being dissipated

For example, consider a W23-43K. The voltage required to dissipate the rated power of 9 Watts is 622 Volts. However the L.E.V of the part is only 500 Volts. Therefore, as this cannot be exceeded for continuous operation, the power is limited to 5.81 Watts.

Whilst the L.E.V cannot be exceed for continuous conditions, wirewound resistors are capable of withstanding many times their L.E.V for pulse applications.

For any additional information or to discuss your specific requirements please contact the Resistor Applications Team.

Example

A W21 resistor with a 3W rating experiences repetitive pulses with an energy per pulse of 1.5J and one pulse every 750ms giving a mean power of 2W. The equivalent energy is therefore

\[ E_{ap} = 1.5J \times (1 + \frac{2W}{3W}) = 2.5J \]

So the W21 must have a pulse capacity of at least 2.5J. Referring to the graph on Page 4, this condition is met for values below about 47Ω.

For a calculation tool to assist in evaluating single and repetitive (or continuous) pulses, go to http://www.welwyn-tt.com/products/resistors/calculation-tools.asp and select Pulse Calculator.

Limiting Element Voltage (L.E.V)

The L.E.V is the maximum continuous voltage that can be applied to a resistor.

Generally for lower values the power rating is exceeded before the L.E.V is reached. With higher values the L.E.V imposes limitations on the applied power.

Graphs

The following pages contain the “Energy Capability” and “Overload Rating” graphs described above for the most popular types of wirewound resistor. Information is also available on request for tubular resistors and other wirewound products. In addition to this, TT electronics is able to offer custom design parts to meet specific customer requirements.
PULSE & OVERLOAD CAPABILITY OF WIREWOUND RESISTORS - Application Note

**W20 Series “Energy Capability” Graph**

- Value (Ohms)
- Energy (Joules)

**W20 Series “Overload Rating” Graph**

- Overload Duration (Seconds)
- Multiple of Rated Power

**WA80 & WP-S Series “Energy Capability” Graph**

- Value (Ohms)
- Energy (Joules)

Based on a wire temperature rise of 75°C

**Fixed Resistors**
W31 Series “Energy Capability” Graph

WH Series “Energy Capability” Graph

WH Series “Overload Rating” Graph

Based on a wire temperature rise of 75°C
PULSE & OVERLOAD CAPABILITY OF WIREWOUND RESISTORS - Application Note

1.2/50μs Voltage Capability

The graphs below give the maximum voltage that may be applied in the form of a 1.2/50μs pulse as defined in IEC 61000-4-5 and ANSI C62.41. This has a 1.2μs risetime and decays exponentially with a 50% amplitude pulse width of 50μs. The maximum permitted resistance change is 2%. Voltages above 6kV have not been tested, although parts can be tested up to 12kV on request.

Customisation

The pulse performance of a wirewound resistor is very dependent on the wire alloy and diameter used to wind the resistive element. Where enhanced performance is required, it is possible to create customised, pulse withstanding versions of the standard products listed here. Typical performance gains achievable are increases in energy capacity by a factor of two or three. Please contact our Applications Engineering team to discuss your high energy pulse requirements.

TT electronics: leading in fixed resistor technology.