

PROCEDURE FOR WELDING OF ALUMINIUM BUSES

A. Recommended welding procedures to insure a sound weld are as follows:

Pure aluminum melts at 660 Deg. C while aluminum alloy melts in the range of 519 Deg. C depending on the alloy content of the particular metal involved. When aluminum alloy are heated there is no change in color. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to tell metal is near the welding temperature.

The ever present surface oxide films on aluminum have a melting point of 1982 Deg. C. The parent aluminum or aluminum alloy can therefore be melted without fusing the surface oxides. Unless this film is removed, cleanliness of the molten filler metal and the parent metal cannot be completed and both strength and conductivity may be sacrificed. Therefore, it is of prime importance that aluminum oxides be removed from the aluminum alloys before welding is started. In the shielded arc welding method the shielding gas has a tendency to clean the material as welding progresses.

B. CLEANING OF BUSES & FITTINGS:

It is very important to remove all greases and oxides from the surfaces to be welded. This can be accomplished by using a mild alkaline solution or standard degreasing solution. The preferred method is to use a stainless steel wire brush and vigorously scrub the surfaces to be welded. The stainless steel brushes are specified because the stainless steel has fewer tendencies to pick up particles of aluminum.

C. WELDING METHODS

The following types of welding methods for welding aluminum fittings and buses are recommended.

1. TUNGSTEN-ARC WELDING (TIG)

The inert-gas shielded tungsten arc process is widely used for welding aluminum bus fittings. In this process the arc is established between a non-consumable tungsten electrode and the section to be welded. Inert gas envelopes the arc to prevent oxidation during welding.

Hence no flux is required. A bare filler rod supplies filler metal to the weld area. To initiate the arc the tungsten electrode is placed in contact with the component and then withdrawn to establish an arc length of approximately 3/16". The arc is given a circular motion until the base metal liquefies and the weld puddle is established. Filler metal is added by hand as required. In this process, if more than one pass is required for a sufficient weld, the weld should be wire brushed between passes, to remove any surface dirt or oxides which have accumulated from the previous pass. Since no flux is used the finished weld does not require cleaning. In this process the heat of the tungsten arc is concentrated in a smaller area and is much faster than the conventional type of welding and distortion of the weld is negligible since the heat is concentrated in a small area. In this process, if thickness is greater than 0.5" arc to be welded, pre-heating of parts will increase the arc speed.

2. METALLIC ARC INERT GAS SHIELDED WELDING

MIG welding process combines the advantages of tungsten arc welding with the increased welding speed. Welding can be done from any position and the process can be either manual or automatic. Manual welding techniques are somewhat different from other methods. However, a welder can be trained to use the MIG process with only a few days concentrated training. In the MIG process the bare filler rod is supplied as a coil of bare wire. In the commercially available equipment this wire is added to the weld at predetermined rate by a motor driven feed that can be adjusted to the magnitude of the welding current. In this process as well as the tungsten arc process, gas forms a shield around the arc to prevent oxidation during welding.

Either helium, argon or a mixture of helium and argon are suitable shielding gases. Pure argon is most widely used on the gas arc usually mixed to combine the hotter arc argon. If exceptionally hot arc characteristics are required pure helium can be substituted for the gas mixture. Precaution should be exercised if this substitution is made in that it is very easy to burn through the items that are to be welded with a pure helium atmosphere.

As it is readily apparent, the basic difference between the two types of welding apparatus is the automatic feeding mechanism for the filler wire. In both types of apparatuses the electrode holder and the welding gun can or cannot be cooled by water. If welding currents of more than 125 Amps are required, both methods will have to have water cooling apparatuses to the electrode holder and the welding gun.

D.WELDERS QUALIFICATIONS

No welding should be done until the operator has had experience with welding aluminum alloys by the methods described above. Men with previous experience with in metal welding should be selected for training in welding aluminum for a period of training of not less than one week after which time the man can be considered to be proficient in the use of the equipment and in the welding of aluminum joints. After this period there should be no difficulty experienced in welding aluminum alloys. It is suggested, if practical, that welders should practice on actual fittings or buses before proceeding with the welding of the required job.

The following is the recommended specification for the current fittings wire feeds, gas flows etc. These specifications are of a general nature to the extent that many factors have to be considered such as:

1. Type of equipment used, whether water cooled or not.
2. The size and mass of the piece to be welded.
3. The position of the weld.
4. And most important of all, the operator's skill
5. All persons in the welding area would wear the proper shields. The arc is approximately twice as strong as the standard AC welding arc. Extreme caution should be exercised for the protection of eyes.

ACCEPTANCE STANDARDS FOR NON-DESTRUCTIVE TESTING **LIQUID PENETRANT EXAMINATION OF WELDED JOINTS**

- a) Evaluation of indications:
 - Relevant indications are those which result from mechanical discontinuities.
 - Linear indications are those indications in which the length is more than three times with width.
 - Rounded indications or indication, which are circular or elliptical with the length less than three times, the width.
 - Any questionable or doubtful indications shall be re-tested to verify whether or not actual defects are present.
 - Localised surface imperfections, such as may occur from machining marks, surface conditions, may produce similar indications, which are not relevant to detection of unacceptable discontinuities.

b) **Acceptance standards:**

- Linear indications
- Four or more rounded defects with any dimensions more than 1.6 mm in a line separated by 1/16 inch (1.6 mm) or less (edge to edge)

c) **Defect removal and repair:**

Unacceptable imperfections shall be removed and reexamination made to assure the complete removal. Whenever a defect is removed and subsequent repair by welding is not required, the excavated area shall be blended into the surrounding surface so as to avoid sharp notches, crevices or corners. Where welding is required after removal of a defect, the area shall be cleaned and welding performed in accordance with a qualified welding procedure. Completed repairs shall be re-examined by the method originally used for detection of the defect.

d) **Treatment of imperfections believed non-relevant.**

Any indication of an imperfection, which is believed to be non-relevant, shall be regarded as defect unless, on re-evaluation, it is shown by re-examination by the same method or by the use of other non-destructive methods and/ or by surface conditioning that no unacceptable defect is present.

e) **Examination of areas from which defects have been removed:**

After a defect is thought to have been removed and prior to making weld repairs, the area shall be examined by suitable methods to ensure the defect has been eliminated.

f) **Re-examination of repaired areas:**

After repairs are made, the repaired areas shall be blended.

ACCEPTANCE STANDARDS FOR NON-DESTRUCTIVE TESTING
RADIOGRAPHIC EXAMINATION OF WELDED JOINTS

Radiographic examination shall cover minimum 10% of weld seam and acceptance standard for visual examination and Radiography shall be as follows:

Any of the following imperfections shall not be acceptable.

1. Cracks
2. Zone of incomplete fusion or penetration, which exceed 10% of the weld length of the joint in longitudinal or transverse butt weld, where full penetration is intended by the weld procedure, some lack of penetration acceptable. The total length of weld with lack of penetration shall not exceed 10% of the overall weld length. At no place, shall weld penetration be less than 90% of the thickness of the material. Continuous occurrence of lack of penetration is permitted, but shall not exceed 50 mm in any 500 mm length of weld.
3. Inadequate weld dimensions, root cavity (shrinkage) and incompletely filled groove greater than 10% effective throat thickness.

4. Excess penetration shall be permitted provided it does not exceed 25% of the wall thickness or 4 mm whichever is smaller
5. Weld reinforcement: Build up in excess of 25% of the effective throat thickness shall be dressed. Any reinforcement shall be substantially symmetrical about the center line of the weld and shall be of smooth contour blending smoothly at the toes with the parent material.
6. Undercutting and overlapping, greater than 10% effective throat thickness.
7. Elongated cavities and/or worm holes exceeding 3 mm dia or equivalent area in length provided the limitations on porosity are met with.
8. Copper, tungsten or oxide inclusions greater than $t/1$ or 3 mm whichever is smaller.
9. Crater pipes exceeding 25% effective throat thickness or 3 mm whichever is smaller.
10. Porosity: Scattered porosity not exceeding 0.5% by volume is acceptable. In general, the size of the pores shall not exceed 0.8 mm dia, but occasional 1.6 mm dia pores may be acceptable, provided the following limits are not exceeded.
 - a) Where pore size is 0.4 mm or less, up to 150 pores may be permitted in 1000 mm sq. area of radiograph.
 - b) Where pore size is 0.8 mm or less, up to 19 pores may be permitted in 1000 mm. sq. area of radiograph.
 - c) Where pore sizes are generally 0.8 mm dia or less, but occasional 1.6 mm dia/pores are present, up to 9 pores of 0.8 mm dia may be permitted in 1000 sq. mm area of radiograph, provided the number of pores up to 1.6 mm in dia does not exceed it.
 - d) However, visible surface porosity > 1 mm dia is not acceptable.

Note:

- i. In all cases, t = thickness of the thinnest section of the weld under examination.
- ii. Unacceptable weld defects shall be repaired in accordance with the original welding procedure. All repairs shall be 100% inspected in accordance with original testing procedure.