

BEPC Encoders In Inhospitable Environments



BEPC encoders are often times called to duty in an environment that is not conducive to a long life. For protection against corrosion of the housing, shafts, connectors, etc., all BEPC housings are made of 6061-T6 or 6063-T6 aluminum with a tough powder coated finish. This combination provides a rugged unit that is protected against most industrial environments.

Some applications call for frequent wash downs with caustic chemicals. Some of these chemicals can attack the aluminum and cause corrosion, eventually shortening the life of the Encoder. Some Encoder models are available in stainless steel housing. These all stainless steel units will provide an additional level of corrosion protection where needed.

For extremely harsh environments, an Encoder isolated from the corrosive elements is often the best long term choice.

One method of isolation is to provide a sealed and corrosion proof enclosure to place the Encoder in. However, this can be an expensive alternative and often it makes the unit so large that it becomes quite cumbersome.

A more economical solution is to use a flexible drive shaft and place the Encoder in a remote location, out of the corrosive environment. These flexible drive shafts are similar to the speedometer drive cable used in automobiles. They transmit rotary motion around curves, obstacles, etc. The portion of the flexible drive shaft that is exposed to the hostile environment can usually be replaced quicker and more economically than the Encoder.

Some of these flexible drive shafts can be obtained with conformal coatings which will enhance their life in harsh environments. Or it is usually a simple matter to coat the outer sheath with some type of corrosion resistant compound like heavy grease or Cosmoline*coating. There are many different configurations of flexible drive shafts available and they are available in any reasonable length. The S.S. White Technology Company carries a complete line of flexible drive shafts, and provides custom designs any application. Please contact them directly and ask for their Flexible Shaft Division.

A few known examples of where these flexible shafts have been used with Encoder encoders are in the nuclear industry where the position of valves, rods, etc, in a radioactive environment existed. The radiation would shorten the life of the solid state electronic components of the Encoder. By placing the Encoder external to the machine environment, the problem was solved. Another example was in a food processing plant where the machinery has to be completely washed down every shift or every few hours. Stainless steel plumbing was used throughout the plant and it was considered "routine maintenance" to completely replace all the plumbing and associated equipment every six months as a matter of course. Naturally, the BEPC encoders were replaced along with all the rest of the equipment. When this customer went to the flexible shaft drive to the Encoder, he found out that over a period of three years, the Encoder was the ONLY item in the plant that was still original! Many thousands of dollars were spent replacing stainless steel drive motors, pumps, plumbing, etc., but the BEPC encoders were still performing like new!

Torsional windup is one concern when implementing flexible drive shafts. With the proper flexible drive shaft (configuration, length, etc), and correct installation (proper bend radius, sealing), windup can be greatly reduced. The migration of liquids inside the inner sheath of the flexible cable can also cause problems. With proper sealing methods on each end of the cable, this should not be a problem. Remember that liquids flow downhill, so be sure to provide a drain loop at the end of the cable, or have the Encoder elevated above the rest of the machine.

If you have additional questions please contact BEPC Customer Service at +44(0)1978 262100 or email sales@encoder.co.uk

If you have questions regarding the usage of flexible rotary motion shafts, please call Technical Support at +44(0)1978 262100 or email steve.dixon@encoder.co.uk

TB-112.doc, Rev C, 09/30/05, BEPC Version

*Cosmoline Is a register product for Schafco Packaging Company

TB112 Page 1 of 1

British Encoder Products Company Tel: +44(0)1978 262100 Fax: +44 (0)1978 262101 www.encoder.co.uk sales@encoder.co.uk