

Recommendations for Improving the Life of Hi-Density Cartridge Heaters

Tempco Hi-Density Cartridge Heaters have been widely used in many demanding and diverse applications since 1972. The commonly used basic applications are platen, plastic mold and die heating, liquid immersion and air heating.



Note: Selection of the wrong termination for a particular application is the primary reason for all heater failures. However, failure to consider other important criteria can also have a negative effect on the life of the heater. To get the best performance and assure long life, it is important to carefully evaluate the following factors.

Operating Temperature

Operating temperature of a heater is a major factor in determining the life expectancy of a heating element. The heater life depends on the actual temperature of the resistance wire within the heater and not on the process operating temperature. The graph in Fig. 1 demonstrates the proper relationship between operating temperature and watt density; the higher the operating temperature, the lower the maximum recommended watt density.

Heater Watt Density

Cartridge heater watt density is defined as the wattage dissipated per square inch of the heated sheath surface. For a particular application a heater's watt density governs internal resistance wire temperature, which determines the outer sheath temperature. These factors are critical to the proper heating of the application and to the life expectancy of the heater. Special construction features that promote excellent heat transfer permit Hi-Density Cartridge Heaters to operate at higher watt densities while maintaining the lowest possible resistance wire temperatures of any style cartridge heater.

Heater watt density (w/in^2) is calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Watt Density} = \frac{\text{Heater wattage}}{\text{Heated length} \times \text{Heater diameter} \times 3.1416}$$

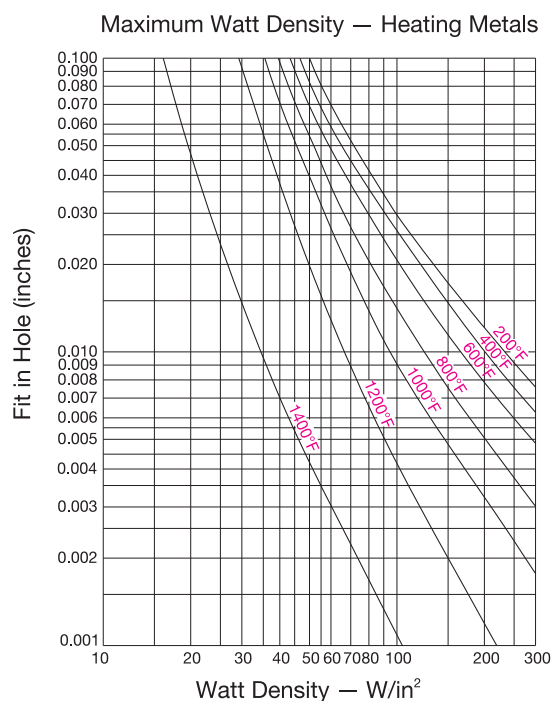
Heated length is the overall length of the heater minus any unheated (cold) sections. Standard Type N, Hi-Density cartridge heaters have 3/8" at the lead end and 1/4" at the disc end unheated. This would mean a 6" long heater would have 5-3/8" effective heated length. Unheated sections vary with type of heater termination. For descriptions of terminations and options, see pages 2-39 through 2-60.

The graph in Fig. 1 shows the maximum recommended watt density for Hi-Density Cartridge Heaters when used in a steel platen. Watt density limitations for various materials are given in the engineering section of this catalog. For liquid immersion heaters the maximum watt density depends on the type of liquid being heated. The more viscous, or thicker the liquid, the lower the maximum watt density. Higher watt density can cause the liquid to carbonize and accumulate on the heater sheath, which will cause premature heater failure. It is advisable to use heaters that have watt densities below the maximum recommended watt density to get the longest heater life. If the actual heater watt density is close to the maximum recommended watt density, you can correct the problem by:

1. Increasing the number, diameter and length of heaters.
2. Lowering the total wattage; however, this may increase the heat-up time.
3. Obtaining tighter fit (see Fig. 2 — Determining Fit).

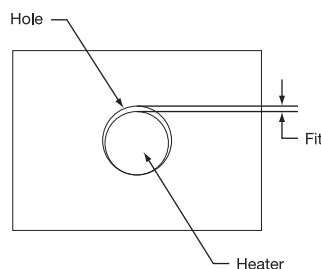
A Hi-Density cartridge heater designed at the maximum recommended watt density allows the smallest heater to be used to obtain the required wattage with good service life. All things being equal, using a lower watt density heater will typically provide optimized service life.

FIG. 1
Recommended Watt Density for Heating Metal Parts



The graph shows the recommended maximum watt density for Tempco Hi-Density cartridge heaters at different operating temperatures and fit, when the heater is installed in an oxidized mild steel block. The thermocouple is located 1/2" from the heater. When heating other materials, the data needs to be extrapolated based on the thermal conductivity of the material. Consult Tempco with your requirements.

FIG. 2
Determining Fit



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