

Energy Tips

Tip Sheet #7 • Revised June 2001



Steam



Motors



Compressed Air

Clean Boiler Waterside Heat Transfer Surfaces

Even on small boilers, the prevention of scale formation can produce substantial energy savings. Scale deposits occur when calcium, magnesium, and silica, commonly found in most water supplies, react to form a continuous layer of material on the waterside of the boiler heat exchange tubes.

Scale creates a problem because it typically possesses a thermal conductivity an order of magnitude less than the corresponding value for bare steel. Even thin layers of scale serve as an effective insulator and retard heat transfer. The result is overheating of boiler tube metal, tube failures, and loss of energy efficiency. Fuel waste due to boiler scale may be 2% for water-tube boilers and up to 5% in fire-tube boilers. Energy losses as a function of scale thickness and composition are given in the table below.

Monitor Flue Gas Temperature

An indirect indicator of scale or deposit formation is flue gas temperature. If the flue gas temperature rises (with boiler load and excess air held constant), the effect is possibly due to the presence of scale.

Perform Visual Inspections

Visually inspect boiler tubes when the unit is shut down for maintenance. Scale removal can be achieved by mechanical means or acid cleaning. If scale is present, consult with your local water treatment specialist and consider modifying your feedwater treatment or chemical additives schedule.

Energy Loss Due to Scale Deposits*

Scale Thickness, inches	Fuel Loss, % of Total Use		
	"Normal"	Scale Type High Iron	Iron Plus Silica
1/64	1.0	1.6	3.5
1/32	2.0	3.1	7.0
3/64	3.0	4.7	–
1/16	3.9	6.2	–

Note: "Normal" scale is usually encountered in low-pressure applications. The high iron and iron plus silica scale composition results from high-pressure service conditions.

*Extracted from National Institute of Standards and Technology, Handbook 115, Supplement 1.

Example

A boiler annually uses 450,000 million Btu (MMBtu) of fuel while operating for 8,000 hours at its rated capacity of 45,000 pounds-per-hour (lbs/hr) of 150-psig steam. If scale 1/32nd of an inch thick is allowed to form on the boiler tubes, and the scale is of "normal" composition, the table indicates a fuel loss of 2%. The increase in operating costs, assuming energy is priced at \$3.00/MMBtu, is:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Annual Operating Cost Increase} &= 450,000 \text{ MMBtu/year} \times \$3.00/\text{MMBtu} \times 0.02 \\ &= \$27,000 \end{aligned}$$

Steam Tip Sheet information adapted from material provided by the Industrial Energy Extension Service of Georgia Tech and reviewed by the DOE BestPractices Steam Technical Subcommittee. For additional information on steam system efficiency measures, contact the OIT Clearinghouse at (800) 862-2086.



Suggested Actions

Any scale in a boiler is undesirable. The best way to deal with scale is not to let it form in the first place. Scale formation is prevented by:

- Pretreatment of boiler make-up water (using water softeners, demineralizers, and reverse osmosis to remove scale-forming minerals),
- Chemical injection into the boiler feedwater, and
- Adopting proper boiler blowdown practices.



BestPractices is part of the Office of Industrial Technologies' (OIT's) Industries of the Future strategy, which helps the country's most energy-intensive industries improve their competitiveness. BestPractices brings together the best-available and emerging technologies and practices to help companies begin improving energy efficiency, environmental performance, and productivity right now.

BestPractices focuses on plant systems, where significant efficiency improvements and savings can be achieved. Industry gains easy access to near-term and long-term solutions for improving the performance of motor, steam, compressed air, and process heating systems. In addition, the Industrial Assessment Centers provide comprehensive industrial energy evaluations to small and medium-size manufacturers.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Peter Salmon-Cox
Office of Industrial Technologies
Phone: (202) 586-2380
Fax: (202) 586-6507
Peter.Salmon-Cox@hq.doe.gov
www.oit.doe.gov/bestpractices

OIT Clearinghouse
Phone: (800) 862-2086
Fax: (360) 586-8303
clearinghouse@ee.doe.gov

Please send any comments, questions, or suggestions to webmaster.oit@ee.doe.gov

Visit our home page at www.oit.doe.gov

Office of Industrial Technologies
Energy Efficiency
and Renewable Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585-0121



DOE/GO-10099-952
Revised June 2001
Steam Tip Sheet #7

About DOE's Office of Industrial Technologies

The Office of Industrial Technologies (OIT), through partnerships with industry, government, and non-governmental organizations, develops and delivers advanced energy efficiency, renewable energy, and pollution prevention technologies for industrial applications. OIT is part of the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

OIT encourages industry-wide efforts to boost resource productivity through a strategy called Industries of the Future (IOF). IOF focuses on the following nine energy- and resource-intensive industries:

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------|
| • Agriculture | • Forest Products | • Mining |
| • Aluminum | • Glass | • Petroleum |
| • Chemicals | • Metal Casting | • Steel |

OIT and its BestPractices program offer a wide variety of resources to industrial partners that cover motor, steam, compressed air, and process heating systems. For example, BestPractices software can help you decide whether to replace or rewind motors (MotorMaster+), assess the efficiency of pumping systems (PSAT), or determine optimal insulation thickness for pipes and pressure vessels (3E Plus). Training is available to help you or your staff learn how to use these software programs and learn more about industrial systems. Workshops are held around the country on topics such as "Capturing the Value of Steam Efficiency," "Fundamentals and Advanced Management of Compressed Air Systems," and "Motor System Management." Available technical publications range from case studies and tip sheets to sourcebooks and market assessments. The *Energy Matters* newsletter, for example, provides timely articles and information on comprehensive energy systems for industry. You can access these resources and more by visiting the BestPractices Web site at www.oit.doe.gov/bestpractices or by contacting the OIT Clearinghouse at 800-862-2086 or via email at clearinghouse@ee.doe.gov.