

INSTRUCTION MANUAL

 **BK PRECISION®**

MODEL PR-261

NEAR FIELD “SNIFFER” PROBE

 **BK PRECISION®**

SAFETY

The probes have been designed and tested in accordance with *IEC Publication 1010-1, Safety requirements for electrical equipment for measurement, control, and laboratory use*. The CENELEC regulations EN 61010-1 correspond to this standard. They have left the factory in a safe condition. This instruction manual contains important information and warnings which have to be followed by the user to ensure safe operation and to retain the probes in a safe condition.

Whenever it is likely that protection has been impaired, the instrument shall be made inoperative and be secured against any unintended operation. The protection is likely to be impaired if, for example, the instrument

- shows visible damage,
- fails to perform the intended measurements,
- has been subjected to prolonged storage under unfavourable conditions (e.g. in the open or in moist environments),
- has been subject to severe transport stress (e.g. in poor packaging).

Symbols



ATTENTION - refer to manual



Danger - High voltage



Protective ground (earth) terminal

Safety Notice

Basically, it is not permissible to perform measurements on parts that are live above 40 V. Since a significant part of the measurements are performed on exposed parts, it is a prerequisite that the user is familiar with any potential electrical hazard. Under no circumstances may the probes be used on equipment that is not safety grounded. When in doubt, a safety isolation transformer must be used.

Think also of ecology. The power supply for the probes should be, whenever possible, be made by use of the supplied 1.5 m supply cable connected to the spectrum analyzer. If this is not possible, rechargeable batteries should be used. If non-rechargeable batteries are used, they should be disposed of properly.

**Instruction Manual
for
Model PR-261
NEAR FIELD
“SNIFFER” PROBE**



BK PRECISION®

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INTRODUCTION

General Information

Users are advised to read through these instructions so that all functions are understood. Immediately after unpacking, the instrument should be checked for mechanical damage and loose parts in the interior. If there is transport damage, the supplier must be informed immediately. The probes must then not be put into operation.

Electromagnetic compatibility continues to be an important issue in the electronics industry worldwide. The main goal of design engineers is to meet ever more demanding specifications, while also making circuitry quieter and more robust to meet tough EMC regulations. The design of microcontroller-based products which fully comply with present and imminent EMC regulations isn't an easy task to undertake with the use of current technologies. Even with the best PCB layout techniques and the most substantial decoupling, at the speeds of today's designs, radiation from boards and the consequent noise impinging on PCBs is becoming a growing problem that will not go away.

By the date of January 1, 1996, every electronic instrument or device which can be imported to the European community must meet the EMC regulations according to EN 55011 to 22, EN 50081-1 and CISPR-Publications 11 to 22. The EMC directive refers to both electromagnetic emissions and electromagnetic immunity. The manufacturer of electronic equipment or devices declares the conformity of his product with the above regulations by the placement of the CE-sign on the device or equipment. By doing so the manufacturer is liable for all violations of the above regulations. Goods without the CE-sign are not allowed to be sold in the European Community.

In order to be sure that the manufactured equipment meets all specifications according to the EMC regulations, extensive test during the design phase of every electronic device must be done. One of the methods of CE certification is to use the services of a professional testing lab that specializes in the compliance certification process. The lab will have precise test equipment and a shielded, screen room within which the inspection is performed. Since many products being certified will require modification and redesign, the customer is charged on an hourly basis for test time used. Quite often, many trips are made between the test lab and the design/development facility. In order to minimize the cost of the test, it is recommended that a "Pre-Compliance" phase in product development first be conducted. This phase would use a spectrum analyzer such as the **B+K Precision** 2600 Series in conjunction with PR-261 close field sniffer probes, to inspect for emission and leakage; isolate the source, design and correct the problem and then retest. Once the product appears electromagnetically "quiet", it is submitted to the compliance certification laboratory. This should save the expense for much of the test time, since the submitted unit has already been pretested. Typically, the test time and money saved should represent many times the purchase price of the spectrum analyzer.

Operating Conditions

The probes have been designed for indoor use. The permissible ambient temperature range during operation is +10°C (+50°F) ... +40°C (+104°F). It may occasionally be subjected to temperatures between +10°C (+50°F) and -10°C (+14°F) without degrading its safety. The permissible ambient temperature range for storage or transportation is -40°C (+14°F) ... +70°C (+158°F).

INTRODUCTION

The maximum relative humidity is up to 80%.

If condensed water exists in a probe it should be acclimatized before switching on. In some cases (e.g. probe extremely cold) two hours should be allowed before the probe is put into operation.

The PR-261 is the ideal toolkit for the investigation of **RF electromagnetic fields**. It is indispensable for **EMI pre-compliance testing** during product development, **prior to third party** testing. The set **includes three hand-held probes** with a built-in pre-amplifier covering the frequency range from **100kHz** to over **1000 MHz**.

The probes - one **magnetic field** probe, one **electric field** probe, and one **high impedance** probe - are all matched to the 50Ohm inputs of **spectrum analyzers or RF-receivers**. The power can be supplied either from batteries, Ni-Cads or through a power cord directly connected to a Model 2625 or 2630 spectrum analyzer.

Signal feed is via a 1.5m BNC-cable. When used in conjunction with a spectrum analyzer or a measuring receiver, the probes can be used to locate and **qualify EMI sources**, as well as evaluate EMC problems at the **breadboard and prototype level**. They enable the user to evaluate radiated fields and perform **shield effectiveness comparisons**. Mechanical screen-

ing performance and immunity tests on cables and components are easily performed.

H-Field Probe

The **magnetic probe** incorporates a high degree of rejection of both stray and direct electric fields, and provides far greater repeatability than with conventional field probes. Measurements can be made on the **very near field area** that is close to components or radiation sources. It is especially suited to locate **emission "hot spots"** on PCBs and cables.

E-Field Probe

The electric field (mono-pole) probe has the **highest sensitivity** of all three probes. It can be used to check screening and **perform pre-compliance** testing on a comparative basis.

High Impedance Probe

The high impedance probe is used to measure **directly on the components** under test or at the conductive trace of a PC board. It has an **input capacitance** of only 2pF and supplies **virtually no electrical charge** to the device under test.

SPECIFICATIONS

Frequency range: 0.1 MHz to 1000 MHz
 (lower frequency limit depends on probe type)

Output impedance: 50 Ohm

Output connector: BNC-jack

Input capacitance: 2pF
 (high imp. probe)

Max. Input Level: +10 dBm
 (without destruction)

1dB-compression point: -2 dBm
 (frequency range dependent)

DC-input voltage: 20 V max.

Supply Voltage: 6 V DC
 4 AA size batteries or power from Model 2625 or 2630 Spectrum Analyzer

Supply Current: 8 mA (H-Field Probe)
 15 mA (E-Field Probe)
 24 mA (High imp. Probe)

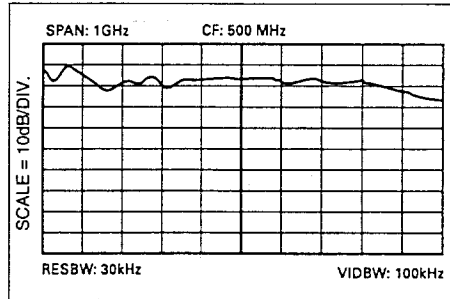
Probe Dimensions: 40x19x195mm (WxDxL)

Housing: Plastic;
 (electrically shielded internally)

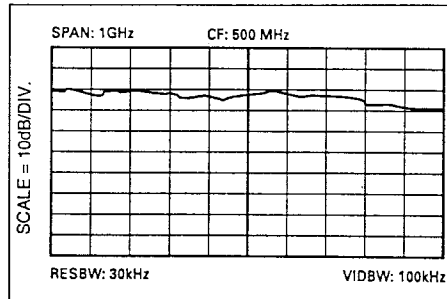
Package contents: Carrying case
 1 H-Field Probe
 1 E-Field Probe
 1 High Impedance Probe
 1 BNC cable (1.5m)
 1 Power Supply Cable

(Batteries or Ni-Cads are not included)

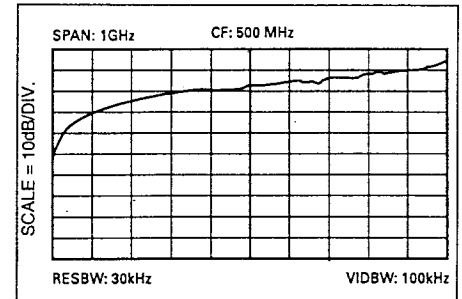
Values without tolerances are typical for an average instrument.



Frequency Response E-Field Probe (typical)



Frequency Response High-impedance Probe (typical)



Frequency Response H-Field Probe (typical)

OPERATION OF THE PROBES

Before performing measurements with two of the PR-261 probes, the High Impedance (Hi-Z) Probe and the E-Field Probe, they must be configured for testing. The 0.8 mm diameter wires which are used as antennas are located in the plastic bag that is in the case for the probes. The wires are plugged into the probe by use of pliers and a light force. The opening for the antenna is located on the narrower front of the probes. The short wire is intended as a contact for the Hi-Z probe. The two longer antennas are to be used on the E-field probe. Depending on the frequency range either the short antenna (6.5 cm) or the long antenna (9.5 cm) is used.

Battery Operation

Next, power must be provided to the probes. If a **B+K Precision** Model 2625 or 2630 spectrum analyzer is used, the necessary voltage is obtained from the instrument by use of a provided special cable. In this case, batteries are not required. If another spectrum analyzer, oscilloscope or RFI measurement set is used for the measurement, the supply must be provided via 4 AA-Cells either NiCad or rechargeable batteries.

Prior to each measurement the switch needs to be actuated. This switch is located adjacent to the BNC connector. This switch must be turned on when either the battery or spectrum analyzer supply are used. However, when not in use, the switch must be turned off to save the batteries which have a life of 20 - 30 hours when turned on.

Output Impedance Matching

The connection of the probe to the spectrum analyzer, oscilloscope or measurement receiver is made via a supplied BNC cable of approximately 1.5 meters length. This length is generally sufficient for most measurements. If for special reasons a longer cable is used, the insertion loss of this cable must be added to the output values at the higher frequencies.

For the normal measurements, the probes are connected to a spectrum analyzer. These instruments generally have an input impedance of 50 ohms. This impedance is the normal termination impedance for the probes. If an oscilloscope or measurement receiver with a different impedance is used, the correct (50 ohm) termination impedance must be used. If the 50 ohm termination impedance is not used, the probe output is not calibrated.

Use of different probe types

The different probes are used for different tests since their electrical characteristics are quite different. The E-field probe is normally used at a distance of 0.5 to 1.5 meters from the RFI source. The thereby observed frequencies are then further localized near the source by use of the H-field probe. The high impedance (Hi-Z) probe makes further localization possible by directly contacting the source and to judge the effectiveness of suppression measures.

Because of its electrical characteristics, the E-field probe is not intended to perform measurements within an equipment or directly on parts that are live. Electrical contact of the antenna with live parts exceeding 20 VDC or + 10 dBm at RF may cause damage to the built-in pre-amplifier. These limits also apply to the Hi-Z probe; however, electrical contact to parts that are below 20 VDC or + 10 dBm are permitted.

Accuracy Notice

The probes may not be used to perform accurate quantitative measurements. It is not possible to relate the probe measurements directly to final values of field strength in V/m necessary for certification tests. The probe kit is intended as an aid for developmental tests to obtain a qualitative amplitude as a function of frequency. These values are strongly influenced by the limiting conditions of the measurement which may change as a function of frequency.

BASIS FOR NEAR-FIELD PROBE MEASUREMENTS

The H-Field Near-Field Probe

The H-Field probe provides a voltage to the connected measurement system which is proportional to the magnetic radio frequency (RF) field strength existing at the probe location. With this probe, circuit RF sources may be localized in close proximity of each other. This effect is caused by the interference sources which in modern electronic circuits are of low resistance (relatively small changes in voltage cause large changes in current). The sources of radiated interference begin as a primarily magnetic radio frequency field (H-Field) directly at its origin. Since in the transition from the near- to the far-field, the relationship between the magnetic- to the far-field must reach the free-space impedance of 377 ohms, the H-field will decrease as the cube of the distance from the source. A doubling of the distance will reduce the H-field by a factor of eight ($H = 1/d^3$); where d is the distance.

In the actual use of the H-field sensor one observes therefore a rapid increase of the probe's output voltage as the interference source is approached. While investigating a circuit board, the sources are immediately obvious. It is easily noticed which (e.g.) IC causes interference and which does not. In addition, by use of a spectrum analyzer, the maximum amplitude as a function of frequency is easily identified. Therefore one can eliminate early in the development components which are not suitable for EMC reasons. The effectiveness of countermeasures can be judged easily. One can investigate shields for "leaking" areas and cables or wires for conducted interference.

The High-Impedance Probe

The high-impedance probe (Hi-Z) permits the determination of the radio frequency interference (RFI) on individual contacts or printed circuit traces. It is a direct-contact probe. The probe is of very high impedance (near the insulation resistance of the printed circuit material) and is loading the test point with only 2 pF (80 ohm at 1 GHz). Thereby one can measure directly in a circuit without significantly influencing the relationships in the circuit with the probe.

One can, for example, measure the quantitative effectiveness of filters or other blocking measures. Individual pins of IC's can be identified as RFI sources. On printed circuit boards, individual problem tracks can be identified. With this Hi-Z probe individual test points of a circuit can be connected to the 50 ohm impedance of a spectrum analyzer.

The E-Field Monopole Probe

The E-field monopole probe has the highest sensitivity of the three probes. It is sensitive enough to be used for use as an antenna for radio or TV reception. With this probe the entire radiation from a circuit or an equipment can be measured.

It is used, for example, to determine the effectiveness of shielding measures. With this probe, the entire effectiveness of filters can be measured by measuring the RFI which are conducted along cables that leave the equipment and may influence the total radiation. In addition, the E-field probe may be used to perform relative measurements for certification tests. This makes it possible to apply remedial suppression measures so that any re-qualification results will be positive. In addition, pre-testing for certification tests may be performed so that no surprises are encountered during the certification tests.

PROBE APPLICATIONS

Practical Selection of Signal-Line Filters

The steadily increasing operating speed of modern digital logic causes significantly greater concerns with EMC problems. This has become more noticed by all manufacturers of electrical and electronic devices since January 1, 1996, the effective compliance date for the European Union EMC Directive. The EMC Directive does not cause the radiated interference problems, but it causes conflict with the requirements of compliance for each manufacturer.

The times are long gone when the EMC problems could be left to the EMC department or a non-compliant product was not noticed and could be sold anyhow. Every circuit designer must at the beginning of a development be aware of potential EMC problems to even allow the successful certification of a product. Printed circuit boards must be built differently than was possible several years ago. A reasonable broadband decoupling of the supply voltages is the present state-of-the-art.

But also the design of signal lines must be considered and can not be left to chance. Digital signals have a spectrum with a bandwidth, B , that is related by:

$$B = 1 / (3.14tr), \quad \text{where } tr \text{ is the risetime.}$$

Consequently, the risetime of a digital signal transition is the determinant. The shorter the risetime, the wider the frequency range. However, the calculated bandwidth is not as important as the one that actually exists which can be significantly different than the calculated one. The reason for this is that the calculated value is referenced to a capacitive total load. For most practical cases this does not occur. An approximate calculation shows that one half of the capacitive load means a twice faster risetime; e.g. a micro-

processor has a specified risetime of $2 \times 10E-9$ s (2 ns). The capacitive load is supposed to be 150 pF. If a signal from this processor is loaded only with a CMOS gate of 12.5 pF, the risetime will be 12 times faster and a value of $200 \times 10E-12$ s (200 ps) must be expected. In the frequency domain, 200 ps is equivalent to a bandwidth of 1.6 GHz. Even in practical circuits, where additional capacitance can be expected, actual bandwidths of over 1 GHz are measurable.

From an EMC point of view, this is naturally very damaging. The actual risetime in CMOS circuits is not easily measurable in most digital labs. To measure the actual risetimes, oscilloscopes with the ability to measure 100 ps ($10E-10$ s) must be used. Such oscilloscopes are available but at a significant price.

Such fast oscilloscopes are not really necessary to observe the digital system operation. This is the reason that these fast oscilloscopes are not used in digital laboratories and slower oscilloscopes are used. However, slow scopes simulate a risetime which in reality do not exist because they measure only the internal risetimes of the oscilloscope.

This exposes a measurement problem: The relevant EMC characteristics cannot be measured with existing equipment in many cases and the necessary oscilloscope is very expensive.

A practical solution is to perform the measurements in the frequency domain: The digital function is observed with a slower and economical oscilloscope and the relevant EMC characteristics are measured with a spectrum analyzer. Since the spectrum analysis of corresponding frequency ranges is technically simpler than the measurement of the equivalent risetimes, basic spectrum equipment can be obtained which is relatively

more economical. Spectrum analyzers with a bandwidth of 1,000 MHz are already suitable for analyzing CMOS circuits. The corresponding oscilloscopes are still very expensive.

Spectrum analyzers are high frequency equipment and have therefore an input impedance of 50 ohms. They are therefore not suitable to measure directly in digital circuits because of this impedance which will influence the circuit behavior. As a minimum the measurement results are false. Consequently, for the measurement in digital circuits a high impedance probe is required which does not load the circuit and convert the signal to a 50 ohm system over a wide frequency range.

The following measurement results were measured with the High Impedance Probe PR-261 connected to a Spectrum Analyzer and with a digital scope.

In principle, it is easy to assume that it is possible to select signal-line filters from catalog values. Well-known manufacturers offer filters with measurement data in the time- and frequency- domain. Unfortunately, the filter data is performed with an entirely resistive load and therefore the data looks very good. However, in practice an entirely resistive circuit seldom exists. Therefore, the filters must be evaluated when installed in a practical circuit. It is then observed that the performance of the filters is not as promised in the catalog. This shall be demonstrated with a series of illustrative examples which are measured in circuits of the 74 ACT family. The gates are always operated with a 5 MHz frequency.

Figure 1 shows the time and frequency domain outputs of such a gate which is mounted on a printed circuit and is not loaded. The frequency spectrum is measurable to 1,000 MHz. In fact, it extends even above 1,000 MHz, but for comparison purposes all measurements are scaled only to 1,000 MHz. In the time domain relatively strong over and under shoot and fast risetimes are observable. This signal is very poor relative to the

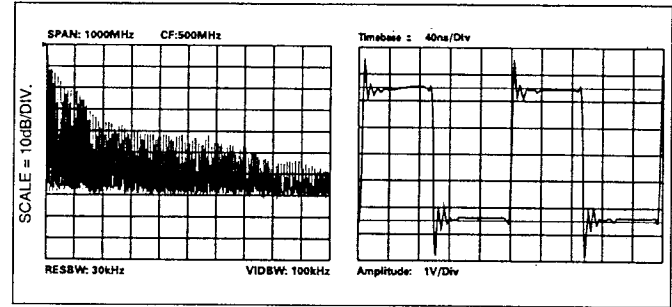


Fig. 1.

EMC characteristics. The excessive bandwidth permits radiation to take place on relatively small printed circuit boards. When this signal is conducted to other parts, it is especially important to limit the spectrum to avoid excessive shielding structures.

As a first measure to limit the spectrum, a resistor is recommended between the gate output and the conductor connection. The conductor is simulated by an individual gate input to obtain a realistic circuit. The connection and the conductor length must correspond to the actual relationship to make the measurements of signal line filter evaluation meaningful. The effectiveness of line filters is strongly influenced by their termination.

Figure 2 shows the results when a 47 ohm resistor is used. In the time domain a significant improvement occurs. The overshoot is reduced and the risetimes are somewhat slower. The linear dynamic range of an oscilloscope can not demonstrate adequately the EMC characteristics of the signal. The frequency spectrum shows only a slight decrease of the upper frequencies.

PROBE APPLICATIONS

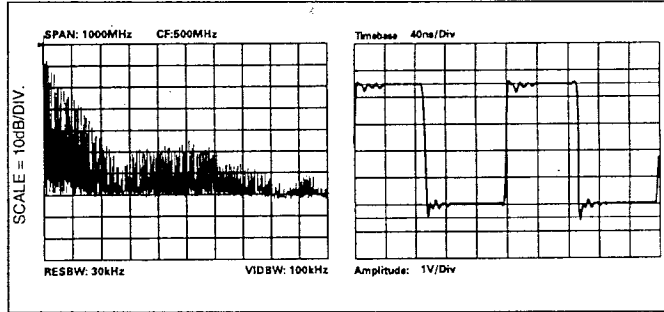


Fig. 2.

The oscilloscope probe is partially responsible for this error since the probe has a capacitance of 6 pF. The Hi-Z probe has only a load capacitance of 2 pF. By selecting specific values of resistors the EMC characteristics may be slightly improved, but an EMC success can not be scored with only the insertion of a resistor. Another improvement can be made by inserting a capacitor to form an RC filter.

Figure 3 shows the results when 100 pF is added to the 47 ohm resistor. The load continues to be the printed circuit track and another gate input. In the time domain, the difference appears negligible. In the frequency domain, the middle and upper frequency range is significantly improved. If a slower oscilloscope is used, any improvement would no longer be recognizable in the time domain. The limitation of using an oscilloscope and using only time domain measurements is easily recognizable: The EMC relevance of a suppression measure is not noticeable.

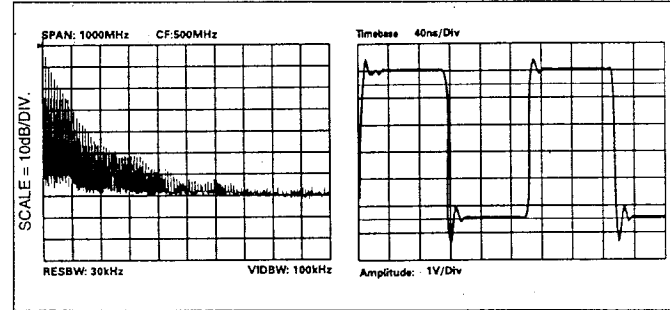


Fig. 3.

The next step is to insert a 47ohm, 100 pF, 47ohm T-filter.

Figure 4 shows that the change is quite noticeable when compared to Figure 3. The frequency range is now practically reduced to 200 MHz. At the same time the risetime is significantly slowed down. The approach may be questionable if this slow risetime influences the digital operation. In this case, the component values may be varied to find a compromise between desired EMC characteristics and digital functionality. This suitable example demonstrates the effectiveness of the measurement procedures recommended here.

Several complete signal-line filters are commercially available. The effectiveness of these filters can be evaluated using the same procedures.

Figure 5 shows the use of a three-pole capacitor used as a signal-line filter in the same circuit as used in the previous examples. The results are disappointing: Even though the risetime is significantly reduced, the fre-

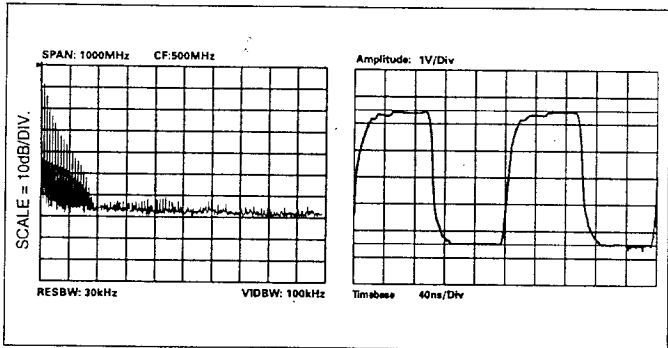


Fig. 4.

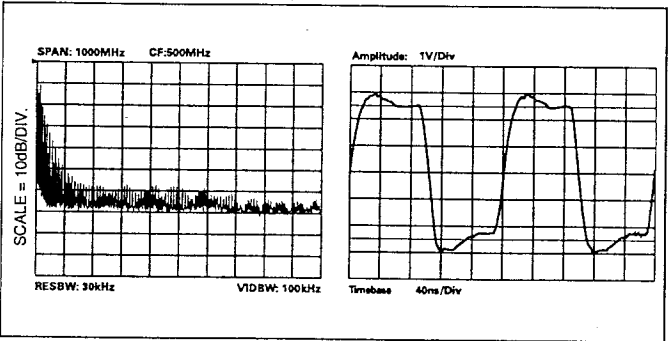


Fig. 5.

quency spectrum is only marginally reduced. This results from the generally poor ground connection of a three-pole capacitor which is relatively high in inductance compared to a R-C-R combination in surface mount technology (SMT). Some offered three-pole capacitors are poor high frequency filters.

Another example is a wideband choke used as a signal line filter.

Figure 6 shows the results. The frequency spectrum is poorly suppressed, but the risetimes are significantly slowed down. It should be noticed here that a time domain analysis only will lead to poor EMC performance and the wrong conclusions. This is an expensive measure that will influence the digital function with disappointing EMC suppression.

As a final example a modern SMT chip filter consisting of two ferrite beads and a feed-through capacitor is shown.

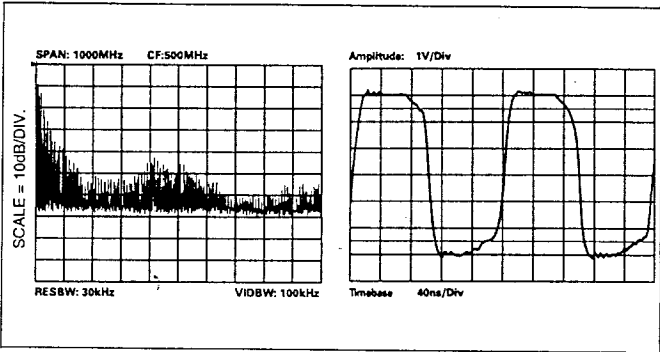


Fig. 6.

Figure 7 shows the results which are relatively good. The spectrum is limited and the risetime is surprisingly fast. The over- and under-shoot is somewhat disappointing. This occurs in filters which consist of only inductance and capacitance.

In conclusion, it is observed that the digital circuit designer who is aware of EMC problems, must look at the frequency domain and not only at the time domain or a false picture may result. Theoretically, everything is contained in the time domain which is only differently presented in the frequency domain. The problem rests with the linear presentation and the resolution of the oscilloscope. Using a generally poor oscilloscope will not lead to a theoretically optimal solution.

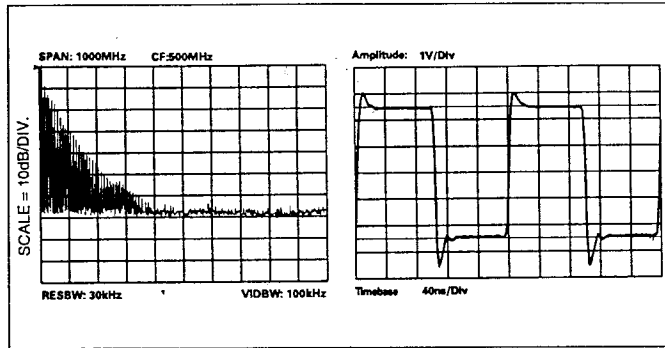


Fig. 7.

Measurement of the Shielding Attenuation of Shielded Housings with the E-Field Probe

What are the results if I surround the entire equipment in a shielded housing? This question will be asked if I fail the CE-Mark EMC test. Unfortunately, this question can not be answered in general because a metallic housing is not always a good shield. No one wants to wait until the next full-scale EMC test for the results. What if the unit under test fails again? What is needed is a simple measurement procedure to determine the relative improvement of the radiated RFI. For this purpose the highly sensitive E-Field probe is used, which is used as broad bandwidth measurement antennas to help answer the above questions.

First, before the E-field probe is used, determination must be made if the probe has sufficient sensitivity and bandwidth. In general, all passive probes are not usable since they have insufficient sensitivity. The simplest solution to determine the sensitivity and bandwidth is to measure the existing ambient field in the practitioner's laboratory that is generated by the surrounding transmitters from 0 to 1,000 MHz. Figure 8 shows the result of such a measurement which was made with the active E-field probe from the PR-261 probe kit connected to a spectrum analyzer. From 0 to 50 MHz, Figure 8 shows relative high levels which originate from transmitters in the broadcast band and shortwave region. In the frequency range near 100 MHz signals from FM stations are noticeable. Since in the particular case measured, there were no nearby FM transmitters, the amplitudes are relatively low. The strongest signal observed was a UHF TV transmitter at 474 MHz which was located only 15 km from the laboratory. Then up to 800 MHz are several weaker (more distant) UHF TV transmitters. The final signals occur above 900 MHz which are related to cellular telephones. This data shows that the probe is wideband and has sufficient sensitivity. From the AM band around 1 MHz to the cellular telephone band there are spectrum

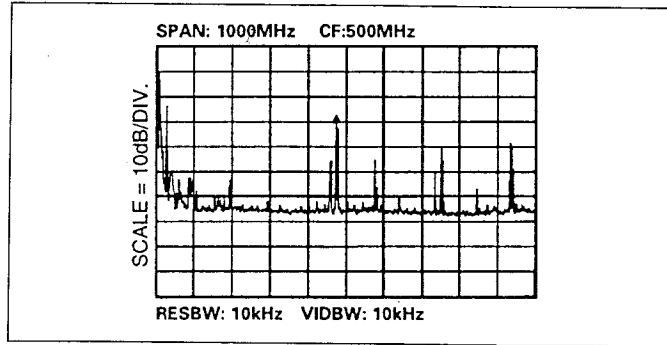


Fig. 8. Measurement of the Ambient Spectrum

lines which are significantly above the noise level. Of course, the spectrum display will be different at each location depending on the relative distance of transmitters. Even in rural areas cellular telephone frequencies must show. Absence of these frequencies show that the probe has insufficient sensitivity at the higher frequencies.

The measurement of the ambient spectrum serves not only to determine probe sensitivity. If the measurements are not performed in a shielded room, the ambient signals can also serve as a reference to recognize the most important frequencies which do not originate from the unit under test.

To perform the measurements, the unit under test is set up, without the additional shield, at a minimum distance of 0.5 meter from the probe. Then the unit under test is rotated in azimuth to find the maximum of the radiation. At this point the data is recorded as shown in **Figure 9**.

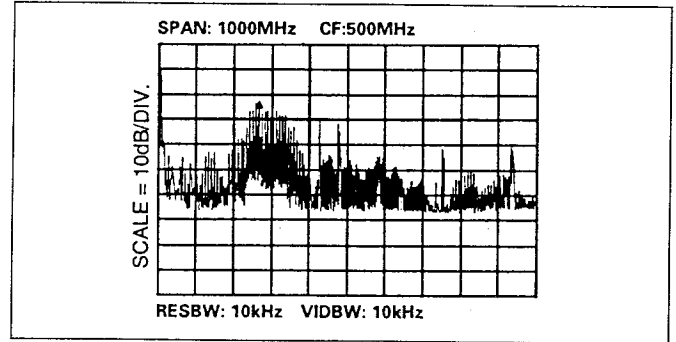


Fig. 9. RFI Characteristics without Additional Shield

Comparison of Figure 9 with Figure 8 shows that RFI is radiated up to a frequency of 1 GHz. The maximum of the radiated power occurs at frequencies between 250 to 350 MHz. The strongest signal is at the marker frequency of 275 MHz at a level of 42.8 dBm.

Next, the same measurement is performed with the additional shielding around the unit under test. Again the unit under test must be rotated in azimuth until the maximum RFI is observed. The direction may be different than in the non-shielded equipment.

Figure 10 shows the data with the additional shield. By comparing Figure 10 with Figure 9, it is observed that the entire spectrum is lower. The shielding attenuation can be determined from these two figures. For the marker frequency of 275 MHz a signal of -55.9 dBm gives a shielding effectiveness of [-42.8(-)-55.9 dBm] of 13.1 dB. For the frequency of

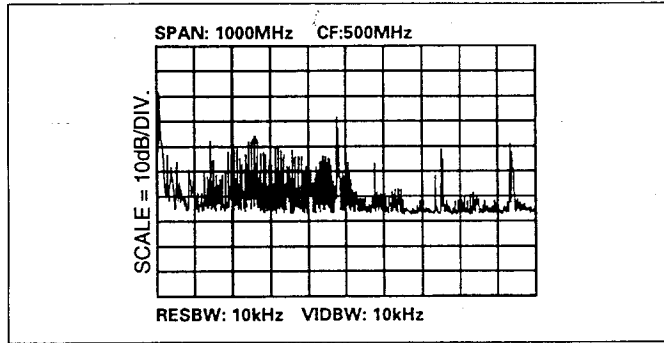


Fig. 10. RFI Characteristics with the Additional Shield

800 MHz, the shielding effectiveness is only 9 dB. Shielding effectiveness of this magnitude are hardly worth the additional sheet metal. But such results are quite common. These measurements were performed on a low-price frequency counter. There is other equipment where similar results are obtained because the radiation may also occur from windows and other openings in the housing or cables connected to the unit under test. However, it is cost-effective to measure before spending money for sheet metal.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PRE-COMPLIANCE EMISSIONS TESTING

The EMC Directive has prompted a large selection in the choice of EMC test instruments. In particular, a new class of low-cost pre-compliance instruments has opened a debate on the merits of this new class of instruments compared with established high-cost EMC compliance test equipment. In this situation it's not surprising that a high degree of confusion prevails. In order to get a clear view of the situation, the first step is to define compliance and pre-compliance EMC test equipment and then establish how they differ.

B+K Precision Instruments has considerable experience with both types of equipment. We use high-cost equipment for compliance testing and also specify and design low-cost pre-compliance equipment. As a result, we are well positioned to express a balanced view in this debate.

The following questionnaire is a summary of commonly asked questions concerning the practical use of **B+K Precision** measuring equipment for EMC pre-compliance testing and how useful EMC pre-compliance instruments are in general.

How can pre-compliance instruments be defined?

EMC standards for both radiated and conducted emissions require that compliance measuring equipment conforms to CISPR 16-1. This requirement implies that for full compliance tests you need expensive, high-quality receivers. On the other hand, you can use pre-compliance equipment as tools to build EMC conformance into your products during design and development. Often the debate over compliance or pre-compliance instruments reduces to a choice between a test receiver or a spectrum analyzer. However, these definitions and choices are not the whole story because the way you

make EMC measurements can have more influence on the validity of a test than the type of equipment you use.

Why is there such a cost difference between compliance and pre-compliance test instruments?

Instruments for making compliance measurements must conform to CISPR 16. This standard details stringent requirements, and some are costly to implement. Pre-compliance instruments provide valuable measurements and possess some of the features of compliance equipment. Generally, though, pre-compliance instruments do not need to conform fully to CISPR 16 and therefore can cost less.

Compliance equipment is your first choice if money is no object. In reality, often you cannot justify the cost of such equipment and need a more economical approach. Pre-compliance instruments cost less and can provide useful measurements, but you must be aware of the difference between the two types of equipment and what you get as a measurement result. It is entirely possible to make meaningless measurements with a \$50,000 CISPR-compliant receiver. Equally, you can make valuable measurements with a \$3,000 pre-compliance set-up.

How important is EMC training?

EMC training is vital irrespective of whether you make compliance or pre-compliance measurements. Much of the current debate regarding the two types of instruments is rooted in misconceptions that arise because of lack of knowledge and training. Without proper training you can make meaningless measurements regardless of the type of equipment you use.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PRE-COMPLIANCE EMISSIONS TESTING

How important is an instrument's amplitude accuracy?

An instrument's amplitude accuracy is important, but uncertainty for the whole measurement is of equal importance. If total measurement uncertainty is ± 6 dB, the additional uncertainty between a ± 0.5 dB receiver accuracy and a ± 2 dB spectrum analyzer accuracy is small.

Should pre-compliance instruments contain CISPR bandwidths?

The significance of CISPR bandwidths depends if your objective is full compliance or pre-compliance testing. Not all pre-compliance equipment necessarily contains CISPR-compliant bandwidths.

How will the level of ambient signals affect my radiated emissions measurements and will using fully compliant measuring equipment help?

The level of ambient signals that exist in your laboratory or at a particular "open area test site" directly affects your ability to make radiated emissions measurements. In some industrial environments, the existing ambient may make obtaining radiated emissions measurements very difficult. There is no advantage in using compliance instruments in such locations.

Will a screened room overcome the problem of ambient signals?

Any Faraday cage structure provides screening from externally generated ambient signals. However, in an unlined screened room, any electromagnetic energy inside from the unit under test, for instance - reflects from all the metallic surfaces of the room. The result is a very uneven and position sensitive field, and you will measure different levels depending on the positions of both the unit and the antenna. You may encounter errors up to ± 40 dB regardless of the instruments you use.

Can I make meaningful radiated emissions measurements with a near field probe instead of an antenna?

The two types of measurements are different. In fact, they are complementary and not alternatives. A near field probe only operates in the "near field", whereas an antenna operates in the "far field". In the near field you cannot easily quantify the impedance of the source, whereas in the far field the impedance of free space is a constant 377 Ohm.

For example, a near field probe allows you to detect RF currents on printed circuit boards, and consequently enables you to pin-point problem signals that you first observed using an antenna on an open area test site. If you are going down to detect the source of the radiation (e.g. a transistor, IC, or any other component) on the contact-level, the high-impedance probe of the PR-261 probe set is indispensable for measurements due to its ultra-low input capacitance of only 2 pF.

Do spectrum analyzers have any advantages over receivers?

Yes. Spectrum analyzers are generally more flexible, particularly for design and diagnostic testing. The main advantage is that you can observe large frequency spans, whereas a receiver only displays one amplitude and one frequency at a time. An additional advantage of the B+K Precision 2600 Series Spectrum Analyzer is their fast sweep rate. The display is "updated" every 23 ms which allows very fast tracking of the test signal.

Will a spectrum analyzer allow me to make sensible emissions measurements?

The main problem with noise floor occurs when you make radiated emissions measurements. Radiated emissions limits for residential, commercial, or light industrial environments with a 10-meter separation between a unit under test and an antenna are 30 to 230 MHz for 30 dB $\mu\text{V/m}$, and 230 to 1000 MHz for 37 dB $\mu\text{V/m}$. A typical maximum receiver noise floor

is 1-5 dB uV, whereas for a spectrum analyzer the noise floor is around 10-20 dB uV. Clearly, sensible measurements at some frequencies are not easily obtained with a spectrum analyzer because the noise floor is comparable with the limit.

You can overcome this limitation by using a 3-meter test distance, or by use of a pre-selector or preamplifier (which is built-in for example in the E-Field probe of the PR-261) with the spectrum analyzer. Each of these methods effectively increases the limit or reduces the noise floor of the measurement.

On the other hand we observed in many cases clearly noticeable radiation from the test receiver or measuring equipment itself. Concerning this phenomena the **B+K Precision** spectrum analyzer have a big advantage due to their strictly analog design. There is no self generated radiation measurable from the analyzer within its own sensitivity range.

Does a spectrum analyzer's response to pulsed interference influence the measurement result?

CISPR 16 contains a curve that defines how quasi-peak detectors respond to a pulsed signal. The curve is based upon the signal's pulse repetition frequency (PRF). For a 30 MHz to 1000 MHz radiated emissions measurement, the measured value of the input signal can potentially be reduced by a figure up to about 40 dB. This number is also known as the overload factor. The design of a compliance receiver ensures this response. However, pulsed

signals can overload a spectrum analyzer's input circuitry, particularly on signals with a very low PRF. In practice, few signals have such a low PRF and therefore errors occur infrequently.

What are the results if I surround the entire equipment under test in a shielded housing?

This question is often asked if a CE-Mark EMC test is failed. Unfortunately, this question can not be answered in general because a metallic housing is not always a good shield. No one wants to wait until the next full-scale EMC test for the results. What if the unit fails again? What is needed is a simple measurement procedure to determine the relative improvement of the radiated RFI. For this purpose the highly sensitive E-Field probe is used, which is used as broad bandwidth measurement antenna to help answer the above questions.

Does the E-Field-Monopole of the PR-261 have sufficient sensitivity for pre-compliance testing?

First, before the E-field probe is used, determination must be made if the probe has sufficient sensitivity and bandwidth. In general, all passive probes are not usable since they have insufficient sensitivity. The E-Field-Monopole is sensitive enough to be used as an antenna for radio or TV reception. With this probe the entire radiation from a circuit or an equipment can be measured.



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