



Radiation

INTRODUCTION

Most arc welding and cutting processes, laser, electron beam, and torch welding, cutting, and brazing, or soldering may produce quantities of radiation requiring protective measures. Some processes, such as resistance welding and cold pressure welding, ordinarily produce negligible quantities of radiant energy.

DEFINITION

In the welding environment, radiation is electromagnetic energy that can injure eyes and burn skin. A welder can see visible light radiation but cannot see ultraviolet or infrared radiation. Radiation is often silent and undetected, yet injury occurs. Have all users learn about the effects of radiation.

EFFECTS OF RADIATION

The effects of radiation depend on its wavelength, intensity, and length of time one is exposed to the radiant energy. Although a variety of effects is possible, the following two injuries are most common:

- Skin burns.
- Eye damage.

TYPES OF RADIATION

There are two types of radiation that can be associated with welding operations:

- Ionizing (such as X-rays or radioactive materials).
- Nonionizing (such as ultraviolet, visible light, laser or infrared).

IONIZING RADIATION

- Produced by the electron beam welding process. Controlled within acceptable limits by using suitable shielding around the electron beam welding area.
- Dust produced during grinding (pointing) of thoriated tungsten electrodes for Gas Tungsten Arc Welding (GTAW) process is radioactive. Controlled by using local exhaust and, if necessary, an approved respirator.

NONIONIZING RADIATION

- Intensity and wavelength of energy produced depend on the process, welding parameters, electrode and base metal composition, fluxes, and any coatings or plating on the base material.

- Ultraviolet radiation increases approximately as the square of the welding current.
- Visible brightness (luminance) of the arc increases at a much lower rate. Processes using argon shielding produce larger amounts of ultraviolet radiation than those using most other shielding gases.

Note: Paints using titanium dioxide or zinc oxide as major pigmentation media have a low reflectance for ultraviolet radiation.

HOW TO PROTECT AGAINST IONIZING RADIATION

- Required protection varies with time of exposure, distance from source, and shielding used.
- Use thorium-free electrodes whenever possible. When grinding (pointing) thoriated tungsten electrodes, use dust collecting grinders. Always use local exhaust and, if necessary, respiratory protection to prevent inhalation of dust.

HOW TO PROTECT AGAINST NON-IONIZING RADIATION

- Use welding helmet with correct shade of filter plate according to AWS F2.2.

Note: Transparent welding curtains are not intended as welding filter plates, but rather are intended to protect passersby from incidental exposure.

- Protect exposed skin with adequate gloves and clothing according to ANSI Z49.1.
- Be aware of reflections from welding arcs and protect all persons from intense reflections.

- Locate welding operations so that other workers are not exposed to either direct or reflected radiation. Use screens, curtains, or adequate distances from other work stations, aisles, or walkways to avoid exposure.
- Wear safety glasses with UV protective side shields in addition to a proper welding helmet with filter plate. The side shields provide needed protection from reflected radiation.
- Have all persons wear safety glasses with UV protective side shields anytime near welding or cutting areas.
- Choose safety glasses conforming to ANSI Z87.1.

INFORMATION SOURCES

American Welding Society (AWS).
Recommended Practices for Electron Beam Welding (AWS C7.1), published by the American Welding Society, 8669 NW 36 Street, #130, Miami, FL 33166; telephone 800-443-9353; Web site: www.aws.org.

Manufacturers' Product Information Literature

American National Standards Institute (ANSI). *Practice for Occupational and Educational Eye and Face Protection* (ANSI Z87.1), available from ANSI, 25 West 43rd Street, New York, NY 10036 (telephone: 212-642-4900; web site: www.ansi.org).

American National Standards Institute (ANSI). *Safety in Welding, Cutting, and Allied Processes* (ANSI Z49.1), published by the American Welding Society, 8669 NW 36 Street, #130, Miami, FL 33166; telephone 800-443-9353; Web site: www.aws.org.

American National Standards Institute (ANSI). *Safe Use of Lasers* (ANSI Z136.1), available from ANSI, 25 West 43rd Street, New York, NY 10036 (telephone: 212-642-4900; web site: www.ansi.org).

Hinrichs, J. F. *Project Committee on Radiation - Summary Report*, *Welding Journal* 57(62): 1978 (telephone 800-443-9353; web site: www.aws.org).

Moss, C. E. *Optical Radiation Transmission Levels Through Transparent Welding Curtains*, *Welding Journal* 58(69-75s): 1979 (telephone 800-443-9353; web site: www.aws.org).

Moss, C. E., et al. *Optical Radiation Levels Produced by Air-Carbon Arc Cutting Processes*, *Welding Journal* 59(43-46): 1980 (telephone 800-443-9353; web site: www.aws.org).

Moss, C. E. and Murray, W. E. *Optical Radiation Levels Produced in Gas Welding, Torch Brazing and Oxygen Cutting*, *Welding Journal* 89(37-46): 1979 (telephone 800-443-9353; web site: www.aws.org).

National Technical Information Service (NTIS). *Evaluation of the Potential Hazards from Actinic Ultraviolet Radiation Generated by Electric Welding and Cutting Arcs*, Nonionizing Radiation Protection Special Study No. 42-0053-77, NTIS, Springfield, VA (telephone: 703-605-6000; web site: www.ntis.gov).

National Technical Information Service (NTIS). *Evaluation of the Potential Retinal Hazards from Optical Radiation Generated by Electric Welding and Cutting Arcs*, Nonionizing Radiation Protection Special Study No. 42-0312-77, NTIS, Springfield, VA (telephone: 703-605-6000; web site: www.ntis.gov).

Sliney, D. H. and Freasier, B. C. *Evaluation of Optical Radiation Hazards*, *Applied Optics*, Vol 12, pp. 1-24, January 1973.

Naidoff, M. A. and Sliney, D. H. *Retinal Injury from a Welding Arc*, *American Journal of Ophthalmology*, Vol. 77, No. 5, pp. 663-668, May 1974.

Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 30 Mineral Resources, Parts 1 to 199, available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954 (telephone: 202-693-9400; web site: www.msha.gov).

American Welding Society (AWS). *Ultraviolet Reflectance of Paint*, published by the American Welding Society, 8669 NW 36 Street, #130, Miami, FL 33166; telephone 800-443-9353; Web site: www.aws.org.