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PROPER INSTALLATION OF ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT IN AN INDUSTRIAL ENVIRONMENT

THIS MANUAL CONTAINS INSTALLATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT. PLEASE READ THOROUGHLY. FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS COULD RESULT IN DAMAGE OR IMPROPER OPERATION OF RELATED EQUIPMENT.

PROPER INSTALLATION OF ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT IN AN INDUSTRIAL ENVIRONMENT

In today's refrigeration plants, electronic controls have found their way into almost every aspect of refrigeration control. Electronic controls have brought to the industry more precise control, improved energy savings and operator conveniences. Electronic control devices have revolutionized the way refrigeration plants operate today.

The earlier relay systems were virtually immune to radio frequency interference (RFI), electromagnetic interference (EMI), and ground loop currents. Therefore installation and wiring were of little consequence and the wiring job consisted of hooking up the point-to-point wiring and sizing the wire properly. In an electronic system, improper installation will cause problems that outweigh the benefits of electronic control. Electronic equipment is susceptible to RFI, EMI, and ground loop currents which can cause equipment shutdowns, processor memory and program loss, erratic behavior, and false readings. Manufacturers of industrial electronic equipment take into consideration the effects of RFI, EMI, and ground loop currents and incorporate protection of the electronics in their designs. These manufacturers require that certain installation precautions be taken to protect the electronics from these effects. All electronic equipment must be viewed as sensitive instrumentation and therefore requires careful attention to installation procedures. These procedures are well known to instrument engineers, but are usually not followed by general electricians.

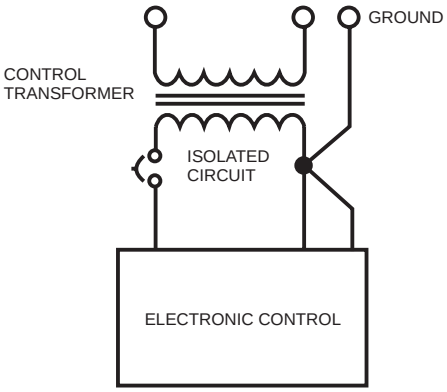
There are a few basics, that if followed, will result in a trouble-free installation. The National Electric Code (NEC) is a guideline for safe wiring practices, but it does not deal with procedures used for electronic control installation. **Use the following procedures for electronic equipment installation.** These procedures do not override any rules by the NEC, but are to be used in conjunction with the NEC code.

WIRE SIZING

Size supply wires one size larger than required for amperage draw to reduce instantaneous voltage dips caused by large loads such as heaters and contactors and solenoids. These sudden dips in voltage can cause the processor, whether it be a microprocessor, a computer, or a PLC to malfunction momentarily or cause a complete reset of the control system. If the wire is loaded to its maximum capacity, the voltage dips are much larger, and the potential of a malfunction is very high. If the wire is sized one size larger than required, the voltage dips are smaller than in a fully loaded supply wire, and the potential for malfunction is much lower. The NEC code book calls for specific wire sizes to be used based on current draw. An example of this would be to use #14 gauge wire for circuits up to 15 amp or #12 gauge wire for circuits of up to 20 amp. Therefore, when connecting the power feed circuit to an electronic industrial control, use #12 gauge wire for a maximum current draw of 15 amp and #10 wire for a maximum current draw of 20 amp. Use this rule of thumb to minimize voltage dips at the electronic control.

VOLTAGE SOURCE

Selecting the voltage source is extremely important for proper operation of electronic equipment in an industrial environment. Standard procedure for electronic instrumentation is to provide a "clean" separate source voltage in order to prevent EMI, from other equipment in the plant, from interfering with the operation of the electronic equipment. Connecting electronic equipment to a breaker panel (also known as lighting panels and fuse panels) subjects the electronic equipment to noise generated by other devices connected to the breaker panel. This noise is known as electromagnetic interference (EMI). EMI flows on the wires that are common to a circuit. EMI cannot travel easily through transformers and therefore can be isolated from selected circuits. **Use a control transformer to isolate the electronic control panel from other equipment in the plant that generate EMI. (Figure 1)**



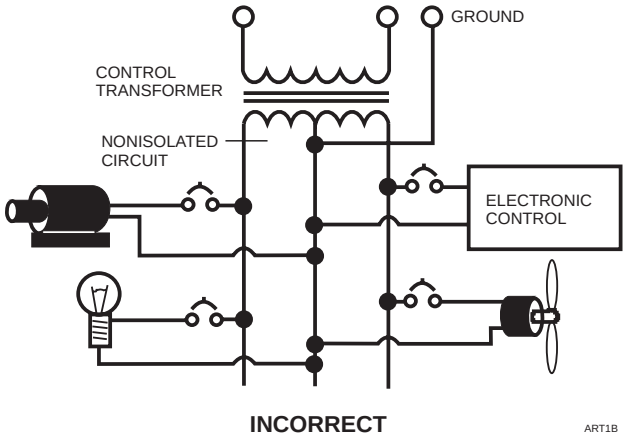


Figure 1

GROUNDING

Grounding is the most important factor for successful operation and is also the most overlooked. The NEC states that control equipment may be grounded by using the rigid conduit as a conductor. This worked for the earlier relay systems, but it is not acceptable for electronic control equipment. Conduit is made of steel and is a poor conductor relative to a copper wire. Electronic equipment reacts to very small currents and must have a good ground in order to operate properly; therefore, **copper grounds are required for proper operation. Note: aluminum may be used for the large three-phase ground wire.**

The ground wire must be sized the same size as the supply wires or one size smaller as a minimum. The three phase power brought into the plant must also have a ground wire, making a total of four wires. In many installations that are having electronic control problems, this essential wire is usually missing. A good ground circuit must be continuous from the plant source transformer to the electronic control panel for proper operation. (Figure 2) Driving a ground stake at the electronic control will cause additional problems since other equipment in the plant on the same circuits will ground themselves to the ground stake causing large ground flow at the electronic equipment.

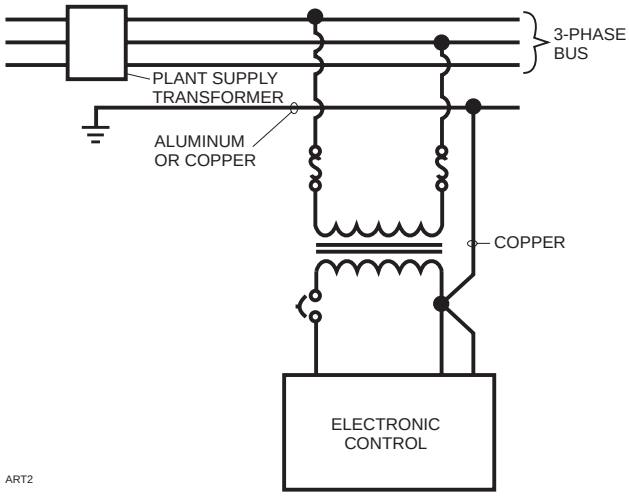


Figure 2

WIRING PRACTICES

Do not mix wires of different voltages in conduit. An example of this would be the installation of a screw compressor package. The motor voltage is 480 volts and the panel control power is 120 volts. **The 480 volt circuit must be run from the motor starter to the motor in its own conduit. The 120 volt circuit must be run from the motor starter control transformer to the control panel in its own separate conduit.** If the two circuits are run in the same conduit, transients on the 480 volt circuit will be inducted into the 120 volt circuit causing functional problems with the electronic control. Dividers must be used in wire way systems (conduit trays) to separate unlike voltages. The same rule applies for 120 volt wires and 220 volt wires. **Also, never run low voltage wires in the same conduit with 120 volt wires. (Figure 3)**

Never run any wires through an electronic control panel that do not relate to the function of the panel. Electronic control panels should never be used as a junction box. These wires may be carrying large transients that will interfere with the operation of the control. An extreme example of this would be to run the 480 volts from a motor starter through the control panel to the motor.

When running conduit to an electronic control panel, take notice of the access holes (knockouts) provided by the manufacturer. These holes are strategically placed so that the field wiring does not interfere with the electronics in the panel. **Never allow field wiring to come in close proximity with the controller boards since this will almost always cause problems.**

Do not drill a control panel to locate conduit connections. You are probably not entering the panel where the manufacturer would like you to since most manufacturers recommend or provide prepunched conduit connections. Drilling can cause metal chips to land in the electronics and create a short circuit. **If you must drill the panel, take the following precautions:** First cover the electronics with plastic and tape it to the board with masking or electrical tape. Second, place masking tape or duct tape on the inside of the panel where you are going to drill. The tape will catch most of the chips. Then clean all of the remaining chips from the panel before removing the protective plastic. It would be a good idea to call the manufacturer before drilling the panel to be sure you are entering the panel at the right place.

When routing conduit to the top of an electronic control panel, condensation must be taken into consideration. Water can condense in the conduit and run into the panel causing catastrophic failure. **Route the conduit to the sides or bottom of the panel and use a conduit drain.** If the conduit must be routed to the top of the panel, use a sealable conduit fitting which is poured with a sealer after the wires have been pulled, terminated and the control functions have been checked. **A conduit entering the top of the enclosure must have an "O" ring-type fitting between the conduit and the enclosure,** so that if water gets on top of the enclosure, it cannot run in between the conduit and the enclosure. This is extremely important in outdoor applications.

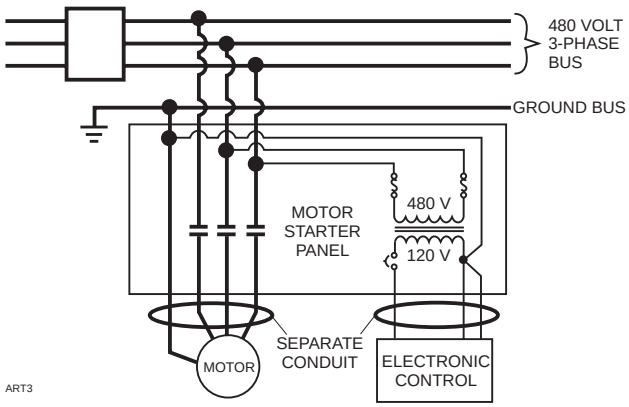


Figure 3

Never add relays, starters, timers, transformers, etc. inside an electronic control panel without first contacting the manufacturer. Contact arcing and EMI emitted from these devices can interfere with the electronics. Relays and timers are routinely added to electronic control panels by the manufacturer, but the manufacturer knows the acceptable device types and proper placement in the panel that will keep interference to a minimum. If you need to add these devices contact the manufacturer for the proper device types and placement.

Never run refrigerant tubing inside an electronic control panel. If the refrigerant is ammonia, a leak will totally destroy the electronics.

If the electronic control panel has a starter built into the same panel, be sure to run the higher voltage wires where indicated by the manufacturer. EMI from the wires can interfere with the electronics if run too close to the circuitry.

Never daisy-chain or parallel-connect power or ground wires to electronic control panels. Each electronic control panel must have its own supply wires back to the power source. Multiple electronic control panels on the same power wires create current surges in the supply wires which can cause controller malfunctions. Daisy-chaining ground wires allows ground loop currents to flow between electronic control panels which also causes malfunctions. (Figure 4)

It is very important to read the installation instructions thoroughly before beginning the project. Make sure you have drawings and instructions with your equipment. If not, call the manufacturer and have them send you the proper instructions. Every manufacturer of electronic equipment should have a knowledgeable staff, willing to answer your questions or fax additional information. Following correct wiring procedures will ensure proper installation of your electronic equipment.

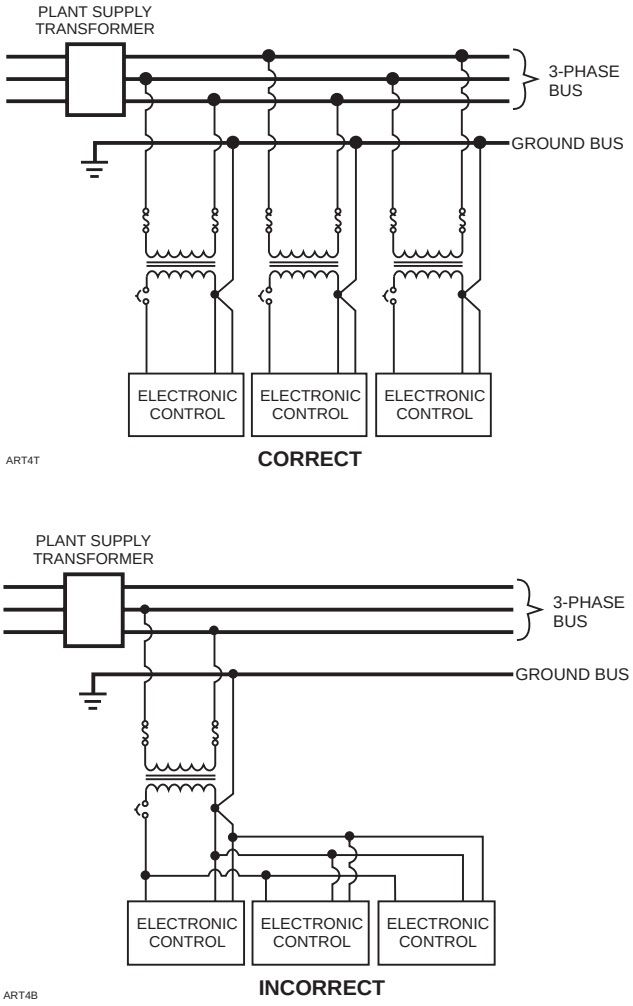


Figure 4

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