Steam Traps

Selecting and Sizing Steam Traps

Selecting the proper steam trap is important in effective operation of steam systems. Steam traps are automatic valves that open to pass condensate and close to prevent the flow of steam. The functions of a steam trap in a steam system are to:

- Vent air from the system so steam can enter
- Hold steam in the system until the steam latent heat is removed
- Drain condensate from the system as it is formed after the latent heat is removed.

Removing condensate from piping helps prevent erosion and water hammer. Removing condensate from heat exchangers is required to make room for new steam for the heating process.

There are many types of steam traps. The Steam Trap Selection Guide Chart (page 131) points out system conditions that may be encountered and suggests the trap type(s) that may best handle the requirement. Several types of traps may be used for a specific application (refer to the Steam Trap Application Guide, page 132). Use these charts only as guides.

Factors to consider in selecting the type of trap include:

- Constant or modulating condensate load
- Constant or fluctuating pressure
- Speed of air venting required
- Trap location

The Steam Trap Criteria Comparison (page 130) identifies additional factors that may be considered in selecting a steam trap type.

For computer aided selection of steam traps, please refer to the "Steam Specialty Component Selectors" on the Hoffman Specialty website, www.hoffmanspecialty.com or, for a stand-alone version of ESP-PLUS, contact your local Hoffman Specialty Representative (see back cover for listing).

TRAP SIZING

1. Determine the maximum condensate load (capacity) requirement for the trap by one of the following:
   - Referring to the manufacturers' specifications for the system equipment.
   - Approximating condensate loads using the "General Usage Formulas " (page 128).
   - Using the "CalcLoad" Load Calculator available through "Steam Specialty Component Selector" on the Hoffman Specialty website or ESP-Plus.
2. Determine the available steam inlet pressure at the trap (This pressure could be different than supply pressure at boiler.)
3. Determine the outlet pressure (backpressure) at the trap discharge. (Pressure against the outlet can be due to static pressure in return line or due to lifting to an overhead return).
4. Determine the pressure differential across the trap. (inlet pressure - outlet pressure = differential pressure).
5. Determine a Safety Factor. The Safety factor will depend on accuracy in determining condensate load, inlet and outlet pressures. Recommendations:
   - Float & Thermostatic Trap 1.5 to 2.5
   - Bucket Trap 2 to 4
   - Thermostatic Trap 2 to 4
   - Thermodisc Trap 1 to 1.2
6. Multiply normal maximum condensate load (as determined above) by Safety Factor.
7. Use the Capacity Tables for the selected type of trap to determine the trap model number.
8. Use Ordering Information Charts to determine the part number.

Guidelines:

- The trap seat rating must always be higher than the maximum inlet pressure at the trap.
- When a modulating control valve controls the inlet to equipment, select a trap size with a pressure rating greater than the maximum inlet pressure at the trap.
- Trap capacity should be checked at the minimum differential pressure to assure complete condensate removal under all possible conditions.

Inverted Bucket Trap Operating Pressure Selection:

- Bucket traps are offered with various orifice sizes that determine the maximum operating pressure rating.
- A trap with a lower seat pressure rating has a larger sized orifice than a trap with a higher seat pressure rating. The larger orifice provides a larger condensate rating. When the actual operating pressure is higher than the seat rating, the pressure differential across the seat will prevent the trap from opening. Thus, an inverted bucket trap must be selected for the maximum differential pressure that will be encountered by the trap.
- Trap Capacity Tables show trap capacities at lower differential pressures than the trap rating. This allows selection of a trap at various operating points. A trap with a higher seat pressure rating may be used at lower pressure differentials. However, the capacity rating at that pressure differential will be less than the same size trap with a lower seat pressure rating.

Steam Traps (continued)

Selecting and Sizing Steam Traps (continued)

Lifting Condensate to Overhead Return
Condensate must be lifted in applications where the trap is installed below the return line.

Guidelines:

– Steam pressure at the trap inlet lifts the condensate. Differential steam pressure across the steam trap of 1 psi (0.07 bar) will lift condensate 2 ft. (0.6 m).

– Do not return condensate to an overhead return if modulating control valves are installed. Modulating control valves may cause the inlet pressure to modulate to 0 psi (0 bar). This condition will result in no differential pressure to push the condensate into the overhead return. When this happens, condensate will back up into the steam chamber and result in water hammer. Use a Hoffman condensate unit to collect condensate and pump it to the overhead return

Steam Trap Criteria Comparison

CRITERIA	F&T	Inverted Bucket	Thermostatic	Thermodisc
Response to Load Changes	Fast	Moderate	Moderate	Slow
Air Venting	Medium/High	Low	High	Low
Thermal Efficiency	Medium/High	Medium	High	Medium
Primary Applications	Drip Legs Process Equip.	Drip Legs Process Equip.	Drip Legs Process Equip. Tracing	Drip Legs Tracing
Affected by Ambient Temperatures	No (Susceptible to freezing)		No	Yes (unless insulated)
Relative Cost	Medium/High	Medium/Low	Low	Low
Capacity	High	High	Medium	Low
Pressure Range	to 250 psig (17.3 bar)	to 250 psig (17.3 bar)	to 125 psig (8.6 bar)	to 600 psig (41.4 bar)
Size vs. capacity	Large	Large	Small	Medium
Ease of Maintenance	Moderate	Moderate	Very Easy	Very Easy
Orientation limits	Yes	Yes	No	No