



NSK Bearing Doctor

Diagnosis of Bearing Problems



Objective: Smooth & reliable operation.

On the occasion of the “New Bearing Doctor” pamphlet being published, we would like to express our sincere thanks for your continuous patronage of NSK products.

This pamphlet contains explanations about correct bearing handling, mounting, lubrication, and maintenance to prevent premature failure along with color photos of bearing failures. Please be sure to consult the NSK Rolling Bearing Catalog (CAT. No. E1101a) for more details regarding handling, maintenance, etc.

Bearings become unserviceable when they suffer premature failure which is due to a lack of attention to proper handling and/or maintenance. Premature failure is completely different from flaking (life) due to rolling fatigue. This pamphlet is useful in determining causes of and countermeasures against premature failure. It’s our pleasure to offer you this pamphlet.



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1. Introduction

When a rolling bearing is damaged during machine operation, the entire machine or equipment may seize or malfunction. Since bearings that fail prematurely or unexpectedly cause trouble, it is important to be able to identify and predict failure beforehand, if possible, so that preventative measures can be adopted.

Generally, bearing inspection or housing inspection can identify the cause of the problem. Often the cause is attributable to poor lubrication, improper handling, selecting the wrong bearing, or not enough study of the shaft and housing. Usually the cause can be determined by considering operation of the bearing before the failure, investigating the lubrication conditions and the mounting condition, and carefully observing the damaged bearing itself.

Sometimes bearings are damaged and fail both quickly and unexpectedly. Such premature failure is different from fatigue failure which is due to flaking. Bearing life can be separated and categorized into two types: premature failure and normal rolling contact fatigue.

2. Bearing Handling

2.1 Precautions for Handling

Since rolling bearings are high precision machine parts, they must be handled carefully. Even if high quality bearings are used, their expected life and performance cannot be attained if they are used improperly. The main precautions to be observed are as follows:

(1) Keep the Bearings and Surrounding Area Clean

Dust and dirt, even if invisible to the naked eye, have harmful effects on bearings. It is necessary to prevent the entry of dust and dirt by keeping the bearings and their environment as clean as possible.

(2) Careful Handling

Heavy shocks during handling may scratch or cause other damage to the bearing possibly resulting in bearing failure. Strong impacts may cause brinelling, breaking, or cracking.

(3) Use Proper Tools

Always use the proper tool when handling bearings and avoid general purpose tools.

(4) Prevent Corrosion

Since perspiration on the hands and various other contaminants may cause corrosion, keep your hands clean when handling bearings. Wear gloves if possible.

2.2 Mounting

It is advisable to study the bearing mounting thoroughly since the quality of the bearing mounting influences the bearing's running accuracy, life, and performance. It is recommended that the mounting method include the following steps:

- (1) Clean the bearing and surrounding parts;
- (2) Check the dimensions and finish conditions of related parts;
- (3) Follow mounting procedure;
- (4) Check if the bearing is mounted correctly;
- (5) Supply with correct kind and quantity of lubricant.

Since most bearings rotate with the shaft, the bearing mounting method is generally an interference (tight) fit for the inner ring and shaft while giving a clearance (loose) fit for the outer ring and housing.

2.3 Check the Operation

After mounting the bearing, it is important to carry out an operating test to confirm that the bearing is mounted properly. Table 2.1 indicates operating test methods. If irregularities are detected, immediately suspend the test and consult Table 2.2 which lists appropriate countermeasures to specific bearing problems.

Table 2.1 Methods to check operation

Machine size	Operating procedure	Bearing condition checks
Small machine	Manual operation. Turn the bearing by hand. If no problems are detected, then proceed to operate the machine.	Stick-slip (Debris, cracks, dents). Uneven rotating torque (Faulty mounting). Excessive torque (Error in mounting or insufficient radial internal clearance).
	Power operation. Initially start at a low speed and without a load. Gradually increase speed and load to reach rating.	Check for irregular noise. Check for bearing temperature rise. Lubricant leakage. Discoloration.
Large machine	Idle operation. Turn ON power and allow machine to rotate slowly. Turn OFF the power and allow the bearing to coast to a stop. If no irregularities are detected by the test, then proceed to the loaded rotation testing.	Vibration. Noise, etc.
	Power operation. Follow the same power operation testing as used for small machine testing.	Follow the same checkpoints as the small machine test.

Table 2.2 Causes and countermeasures for operating irregularities

Irregularities		Possible causes	Countermeasures
Noise	Loud Metallic Sound	Abnormal load	Improve the fit, internal clearance, preload, position of housing shoulder, etc.
		Incorrect mounting	Improve the machining accuracy and alignment of shaft and housing, accuracy of mounting method.
		Insufficient or improper lubricant	Replenish the lubricant or select another lubricant.
		Contact of rotating parts	Modify the labyrinth seal, etc.
	Loud Regular Sound	Flaws, corrosion, or scratches on raceways	Replace or clean the bearing, improve the seals, and use clean lubricant.
		Brinelling	Replace the bearing and use care when handling bearings.
		Flaking on raceway	Replace the bearing.
	Irregular Sound	Excessive clearance	Improve the fit, clearance and preload.
		Penetration of foreign particles	Replace or clean the bearing, improve the seals, and use clean lubricant.
Flaws or flaking on balls		Replace the bearing.	
Abnormal Temperature Rise	Excessive amount of lubricant	Reduce amount of lubricant, select stiffer grease.	
	Insufficient or improper lubricant	Replenish lubricant or select a better one.	
	Abnormal load	Improve the fit, internal clearance, preload, position of housing shoulder.	
	Incorrect mounting	Improve the machining accuracy and alignment of shaft and housing, accuracy of mounting, or mounting method.	
	Creep on fitted surface, excessive seal friction	Correct the seals, replace the bearing, correct the fitting or mounting.	
Vibration (Axial runout)	Brinelling	Replace the bearing and use care when handling bearings.	
	Flaking	Replace the bearing.	
	Incorrect mounting	Correct the squareness between the shaft and housing shoulder or side of spacer.	
	Penetration of foreign particles	Replace or clean the bearing, improve the seals.	
Leakage or Discoloration of Lubricant	Too much lubricant. Penetration by foreign matter or abrasion chips.	Reduce the amount of lubricant, select a stiffer grease. Replace the bearing or lubricant. Clean the housing and adjacent parts.	

3. Bearing Maintenance

It is necessary to periodically inspect and maintain the bearing and its operating conditions in order to maximize the bearing life. In general, the following method is adopted:

(1) Inspection under operating conditions

To determine the bearing replacement periods and replenishment intervals for lubricant, investigate the lubricant properties and consider factors such as operating temperature, vibration, and bearing noise. (Refer to Section 4 for more details.)

(2) Inspection of the bearing

Be sure to investigate the bearing thoroughly during times of periodic machine inspection and part replacement. Check the raceway condition. Determine if damage exists. Confirm if the bearing can be reused or should be replaced. (Refer to Section 5 for more details.)

4. Bearing Performance Factors

Key bearing performance factors during operation are bearing noise, vibration, temperature, and lubricant state. Please refer to Table 2.2 if any operation irregularities are detected.

4.1 Bearing Noise

During operation, sound detection instruments (stethoscope, NSK Bearing Monitor, etc.) can be used to investigate the volume and characteristics of the bearing rotation noise. It is possible to distinguish bearing damage such as small flaking by means of its unusual yet characteristic noise.

4.2 Bearing Vibration

Bearing irregularities can be analyzed by measuring the vibrations of an operating machine. A frequency spectrum analyzer is used to measure the magnitude of vibration and the distribution of the frequencies. Test results enable the determination of the likely cause of the bearing irregularity. The measured data varies depending on the operating conditions of the bearing and the location of the vibration pick-up. Therefore, the method requires the determination of evaluation standards for each measured machine.

It is useful to be able to detect irregularities from the bearing vibration pattern during operation. Please refer to the NSK pamphlet Pr. No. 410 (Bearing Monitor) for more information about such a device.

4.3 Bearing Temperature

Generally, the bearing temperature can be estimated from the temperature of the housing outside surface, but a preferable way is to obtain direct measurements from the bearing outer ring by a probe going through an oil hole.

Usually, the bearing temperature gradually increases after the start of operation until reaching a steady state condition about 1 or 2 hours later. The bearing steady state temperature depends on load, rotational speed and heat transfer properties of the machine. Insufficient lubrication or improper mounting might cause the bearing temperature to rise rapidly. In such a case, suspend the machine operation and adopt an appropriate countermeasure.

4.4 Effects of Lubrication

The two main purposes of lubrication are to minimize friction and reduce wear inside bearings that might otherwise fail prematurely. Lubrication provides the following advantages:

(1) Reduction of Friction and Wear

Direct metallic contact between the bearing rings, rolling elements and cage, which are the basic components of a bearing, is prevented by an oil film which reduces the friction and wear in the contact areas.

(2) Extension of Fatigue Life

The rolling fatigue life of bearings depends greatly upon the viscosity and film thickness between the rolling contact surfaces. A heavy film thickness prolongs the fatigue life, but it is shortened if the viscosity of the oil is too low so that the film thickness is insufficient.

(3) Dissipation of Frictional Heat and Cooling

Circulation lubrication may be used to carry away either frictional heat or heat transferred from the outside to prevent the bearing from overheating and the oil from deteriorating.

(4) Sealing and Rust Prevention

Adequate lubrication also helps to prevent foreign material from entering the bearings and guards against corrosion or rusting.

4.5 Selection of Lubrication

Bearing lubrication methods are divided into two main categories: grease lubrication and oil lubrication. A lubrication method is adopted that matches the application conditions and application purpose in order to attain best performance from the bearing. Table 4.1 shows a comparison between grease and oil lubrication.

Table 4.1 Comparison between grease and oil lubrication

Item	Grease lubrication	Oil lubrication
Housing structure and seal method	Simple	May be complex. Careful maintenance required.
Speed	Limiting speed is 65%~80% of that with oil lubrication	High limiting speed
Cooling effect	Poor	Heat transfer is possible using forced oil circulation
Fluidity	Poor	Good
Lubricant replacement	Sometimes difficult	Easy
Removal of foreign material	Removal of particles from grease is impossible	Easy
External contamination due to leakage	Surroundings seldom contaminated by leakage	Often leaks if proper countermeasures are not taken. Not suitable if external contamination must be avoided.

(1) Grease lubrication

Grease is a lubricant that is made from base oil, thickener, and additives. When selecting a grease, it is necessary to select a grease that is suitable to the bearing application conditions. There are large differences in performance even between different brands of the same type of grease. Therefore special attention must be given to grease selection. **Table 4.2** gives examples of applications and grease consistency.

(2) Oil lubrication

There are several different oil lubrication methods: Oil bath, Drip feed, Splash, Circulating, Jet, Oil mist, and Oil air. Oil lubrication methods are more suitable for higher speed and higher temperature applications than are grease lubrication methods. Oil lubrication is especially effective in the case where it is necessary to dissipate heat to the exterior.

Be sure to select a lubricating oil that has suitable viscosity at the bearing operating temperature. Generally, an oil with a low viscosity is used for high speed application while an oil with high viscosity is used for applications with heavy loads. For normal application conditions, **Table 4.3** lists the suitable viscosity range for the operating temperature.

For reference when making a selection, **Fig. 4.1** shows the relationship between temperature and viscosity for the lubricating oil. **Table 4.4** gives examples of how to select the lubrication oil for different bearing application conditions.

Table 4.3 Required viscosity by bearing type

Bearing type	Viscosity at operating temperature
Ball bearings, Cylindrical roller bearings	13 mm ² /s or more
Tapered roller bearings, Spherical roller bearings	20 mm ² /s or more
Spherical thrust roller bearings	32 mm ² /s or more

Remarks: 1 mm²/s = 1 cSt (Centi-Stokes)

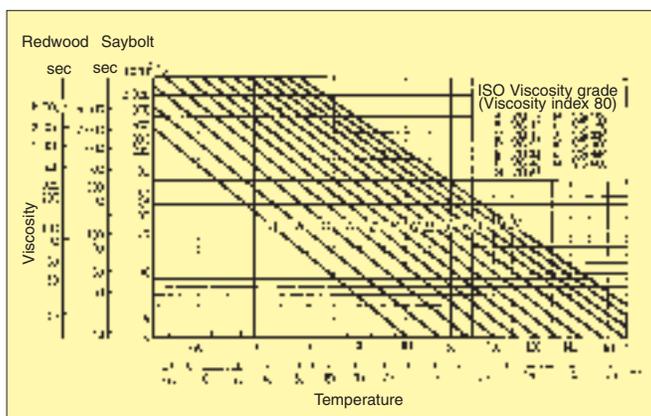


Fig. 4.1 Relation between oil viscosity and temperature

Table 4.2 Examples of applications and grease consistency

Consistency number	# 0	# 1	# 2	# 3	# 4
Consistency (1/10 mm)	355~385	310~340	265~295	220~250	175~205
Application	Central grease supply	Central grease supply, Low temperature	General grease	General grease, High temperature	High temperature
	Where fretting occurs easily	Where fretting occurs easily	Sealed ball bearings	Sealed ball bearings	Where grease is used as a seal

Table 4.4 Selection of lubricating oils for different bearing applications

Operating temperature	Speed	Light or normal load	Heavy or shock load
-30 ~ 0°C	Below limiting speed	ISO VG 15, 22, 32 (Refrigerator oil)	-
0 ~ 50°C	Below 50% of limiting speed	ISO VG 32, 46, 68 (Bearing oil, Turbine oil)	ISO VG 46, 68, 100 (Bearing oil, Turbine oil)
	Between 50% and 100% of limiting speed	ISO VG 15, 22, 32 (Bearing oil, Turbine oil)	ISO VG 22, 32, 46 (Bearing oil, Turbine oil)
	Above limiting speed	ISO VG 10, 15, 22 (Bearing oil)	-
50 ~ 80°C	Below 50% of limiting speed	ISO VG 100, 150, 220 (Bearing oil)	ISO VG 150, 220, 320 (Bearing oil)
	Between 50% and 100% of limiting speed	ISO VG 46, 68, 100 (Bearing oil, Turbine oil)	ISO VG 68, 100, 150 (Bearing oil, Turbine oil)
	Above limiting speed	ISO VG 32, 46, 68 (Bearing oil, Turbine oil)	-
80 ~ 110°C	Below 50% of limiting speed	ISO VG 320, 460 (Bearing oil)	ISO VG 460, 680 (Bearing oil, Gear oil)
	Between 50% and 100% of limiting speed	ISO VG 150, 220 (Bearing oil)	ISO VG 220, 320 (Bearing oil)
	Above limiting speed	ISO VG 68, 100 (Bearing oil, Turbine oil)	-

Notes:

- As for the limiting speed, use the value listed under oil lubrication in the Bearing Dimension Tables of "NSK Rolling Bearings" (No. E140).
- Refer to refrigerator oil (JIS K2211), Bearing oil (JIS K2239), Turbine oil (JIS K2213), Gear oil (JIS K2219).
- Temperature ranges are shown in the left column in the table above. For operating temperatures that are on the high temperature side, a high viscosity lubrication oil is recommended.

4.6 Replenishment and Replacement of Lubricant

(1) Grease replenishment intervals

As time passes, grease deteriorates and the lubricating ability is degraded. Be sure to replenish the grease at the correct interval. The grease replenishment interval depends on factors like the bearing type, dimensions, and rotation speed. Fig. 4.2 shows approximate grease replenishment intervals as a function of operating time and rotational speed. As a general rule, the grease replenishment interval should be halved for each 15°C bearing temperature rise above 70°C.

(2) Lubrication oil replacement interval

The oil replacement intervals depend on the operating conditions and the oil quantity. In general, for an operating temperature under 50°C, and in clean environments, the replacement interval is 1 year. If the oil temperature is above 100°C, then the oil should be changed at least once every three months.

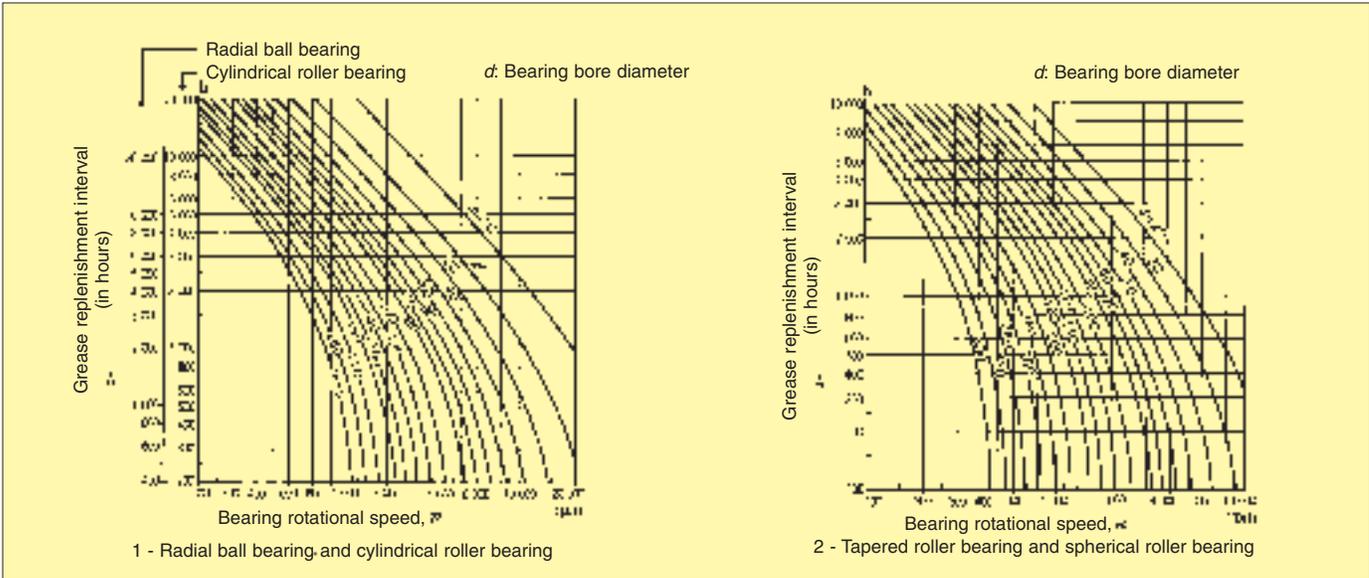


Fig. 4.2 Grease replenishment intervals

5. Bearing Inspection

When inspecting a bearing during periodic inspection of equipment, operating inspections, or replacement of adjacent parts, determine the condition of the bearing and if its continued service is advisable.

A record should be kept of the inspection and external appearance of dismantled bearings. After taking a grease sample and measuring the quantity of residual grease, the bearing should be cleaned. Also, determine whether abnormalities and damage exist in the cage, fitting surfaces, rolling element surfaces, and raceway surfaces. Refer to Section 6 regarding the observation of running traces on the raceway surface.

When evaluating whether a bearing can be reused or not, the following points need to be considered: degree of bearing damage, machine performance, critical nature of the application, operating conditions, inspection interval. If the inspection reveals bearing damage or abnormalities, then try to confirm the cause and determine a countermeasure by referring to Section 7 and then carry out the countermeasure.

If your inspection discovers any of the following kinds of damage, which would prevent the bearing from being reused, then the bearing must be replaced with a new one.

- (1) Cracks or chipping in the cage, rolling elements, or raceway ring.
- (2) Flaking in the rolling elements or raceway ring.
- (3) Notable scoring on the rolling elements, rib face (collar), or raceway surface.
- (4) Notable wear on the cage or loose rivets.
- (5) Flaws or rust on the rolling elements or raceway surface.
- (6) Notable dents on the rolling elements or raceway surface.
- (7) Notable creep of the outer ring outside surface or inner ring bore.
- (8) Discoloration due to heating.
- (9) Serious damage on shield or seal of grease packed bearings.

6. Running Traces and Applied Loads

As the bearing rotates, the raceways of the inner ring and outer ring make contact with the rolling elements. This results in a wear path on both the rolling elements and the raceways. Running traces are useful, since they indicate the loading conditions, and should be carefully observed when the bearing is disassembled.

If the running traces are clearly defined, it is possible to determine whether the bearing is carrying a radial load, axial load or moment load. Also, the roundness condition of the bearing can be determined. Check whether unexpected bearing loads or large mounting errors occurred. Also, determine the probable cause of the bearing damage.

Fig. 6.1 shows the running traces generated in deep groove bearings under various load conditions. **Fig. 6.1 (a)** shows the most common running trace generated when the inner ring rotates under a radial load only. **Figs. 6.1 (e)** through **(h)** show several different running traces that result in a shortened life due to their adverse effect on the bearings.

Similarly, **Fig. 6.2** shows different roller bearing running traces: **Fig. 6.2 (i)** shows the outer ring running trace when a radial load is properly applied to a cylindrical roller bearing which has a load on a rotating inner ring. **Fig. 6.2 (j)** shows the running trace in the case of shaft bending or relative inclination between the inner and outer rings. This misalignment leads to the generation of slightly shaded (dull) bands in the width direction. Traces are diagonal at the beginning and end of the loading zone. For double-row tapered roller bearings where a single load is applied to the rotating inner ring, **Fig. 6.2 (k)** shows the running trace on the outer ring under radial load while **Fig. 6.2 (l)** shows the running trace on the outer ring under axial load. When misalignment exists between the inner and the outer rings, then the application of a radial load causes running traces to appear on the outer ring as shown in **Fig. 6.2 (m)**.

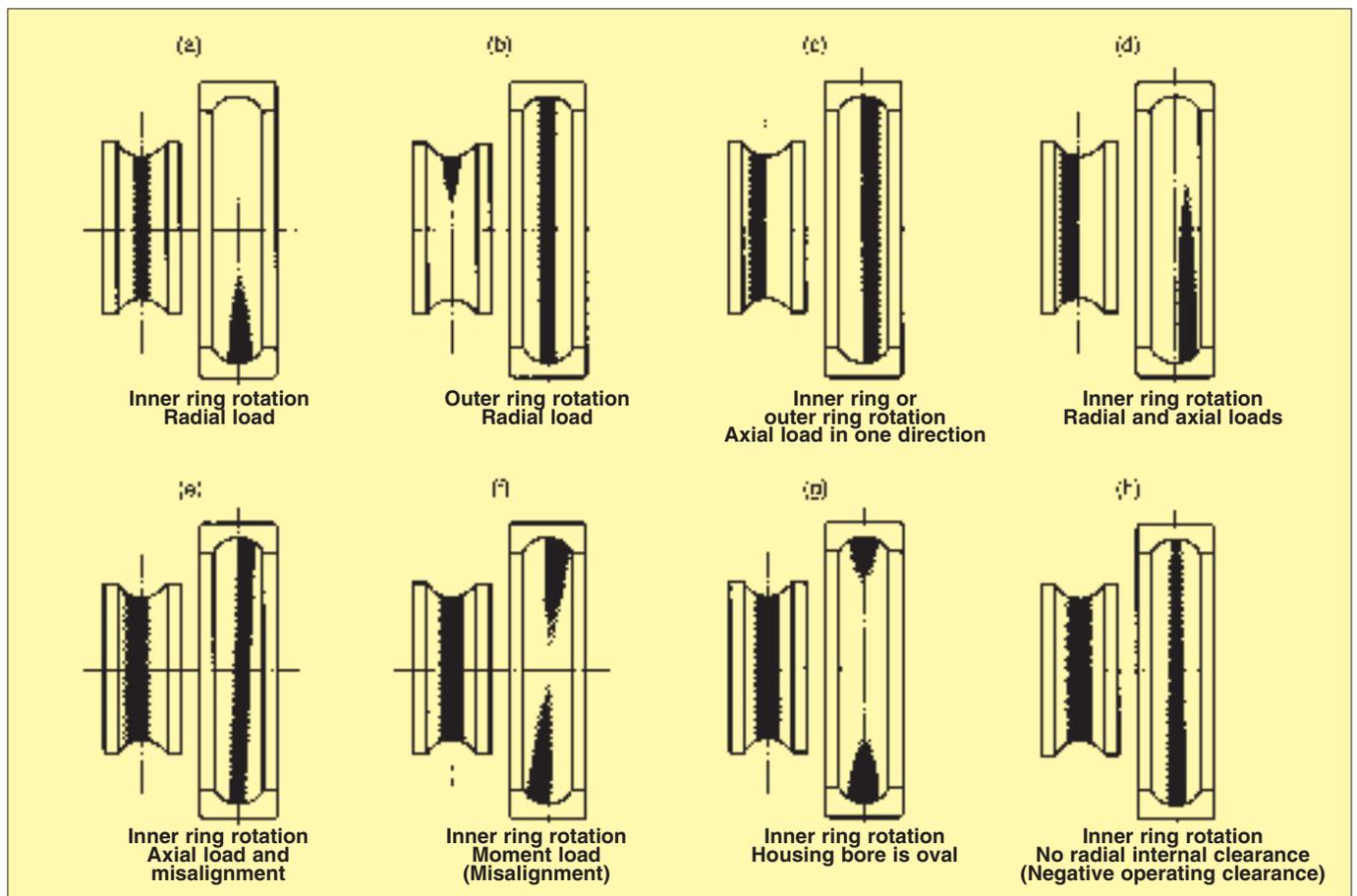
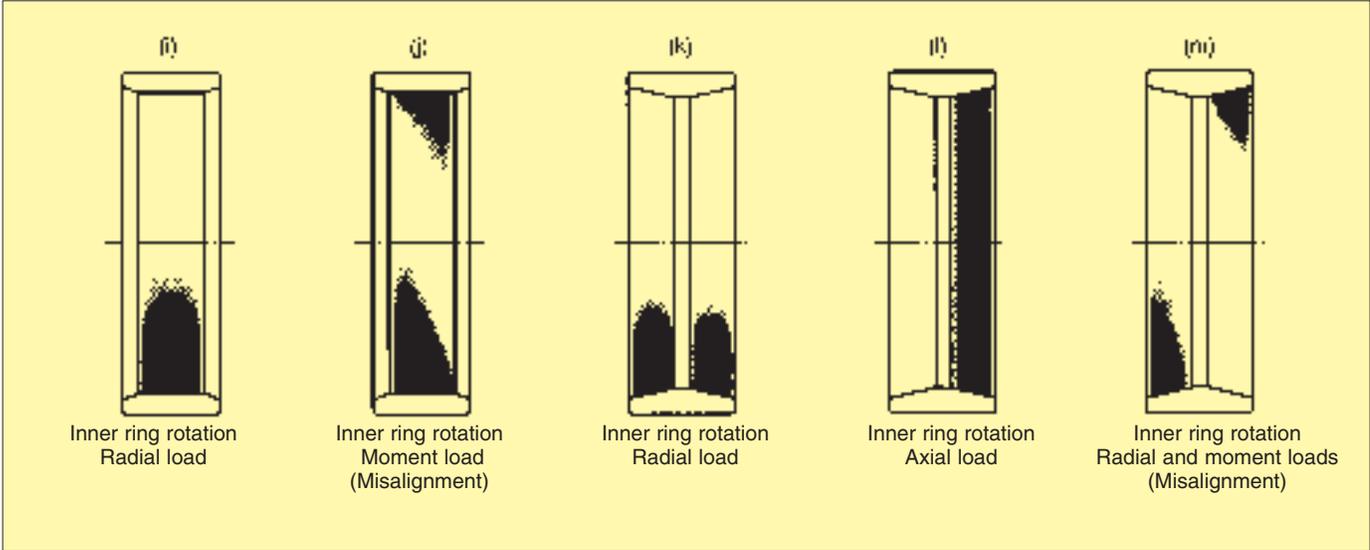


Fig. 6.1 Typical running traces of deep groove ball bearings

Fig. 6.2 Typical running traces on roller bearings



7. Bearing Damage and Countermeasures

In general, if rolling bearings are used correctly, they will survive to their predicted fatigue life. Bearings, however, often fail prematurely due to avoidable mistakes. In contrast to fatigue life, this premature failure is caused by improper mounting, mishandling, poor lubrication, entry of foreign matter or abnormal heat generation.

For example, one cause of premature failure is rib scoring which is due to insufficient lubrication, use of improper lubricant, faulty lubrication system, entry of foreign matter, bearing mounting error, excessive deflection of the shaft or some combination of these. If all conditions are known for the times both before and after the failure, including the

application, the operating conditions, and environment, then a countermeasure can be determined by studying the nature of the failure and its probable causes. A successful countermeasure will reduce similar failures or prevent them from happening again.

Sections 7.1 through 7.18 give examples of bearing damage and countermeasures. Please consult these sections when trying to determine the cause of bearing damage. By the way, the bearing diagnostic chart in the Appendix may be useful as a quick reference guide.

7.1 Flaking

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
Flaking occurs when small pieces of bearing material are split off from the smooth surface of the raceway or rolling elements due to rolling fatigue, thereby creating regions having rough and coarse texture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive load • Poor mounting (misalignment) • Moment load • Entry of foreign debris, water penetration • Poor lubrication, Improper lubricant • Unsuitable bearing clearance • Improper precision for shaft or housing, unevenness in housing rigidity, large shaft bending • Progression from rust, corrosion pits, smearing, dents (Brinelling) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconfirm the bearing application and check the load conditions • Improve the mounting method • Improve the sealing mechanism, prevent rusting during non-running • Use a lubricant with a proper viscosity, improve the lubrication method • Check the precision of shaft and housing • Check the bearing internal clearance



Photo 7-1-1

Part: Inner ring of an angular contact ball bearing

Symptom: Flaking occurs around half of the circumference of the raceway surface

Cause: Poor lubrication due to entry of cutting coolant into bearing

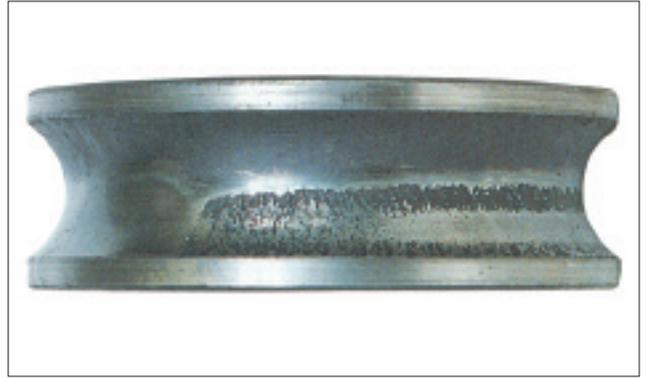


Photo 7-1-2

Part: Inner ring of an angular contact ball bearing

Symptom: Flaking occurs diagonally along raceway

Cause: Poor alignment between shaft and housing during mounting

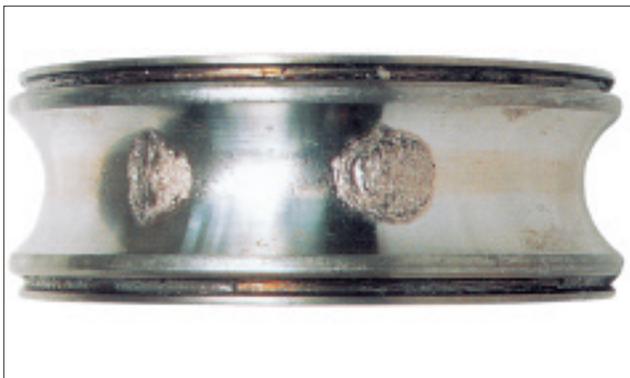


Photo 7-1-3

Part: Inner ring of deep groove ball bearing

Symptom: Flaking of raceway at ball pitch

Cause: Dents due to shock load during mounting



Photo 7-1-4

Part: Inner ring of an angular contact ball bearing

Symptom: Flaking of raceway at ball pitch

Cause: Dents due to shock load while stationary



Photo 7-1-5

Part: Outer ring of **Photo 7-1-4**

Symptom: Flaking of raceway surface at ball pitch

Cause: Dents due to shock load while stationary



Photo 7-1-6

Part: Balls of **Photo 7-1-4**

Symptom: Flaking of ball surface

Cause: Dents due to shock load while stationary



Photo 7-1-7

Part: Inner ring of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Flaking of only one raceway over its entire circumference

Cause: Excessive axial load



Photo 7-1-8

Part: Outer ring of **Photo 7-1-7**

Symptom: Flaking of only one raceway over its entire circumference

Cause: Excessive axial load



Photo 7-1-9

Part: Inner ring of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Flaking of only one row of raceway

Cause: Poor lubrication



Photo 7-1-10

Part: Rollers of a cylindrical roller bearing

Symptom: Premature flaking occurs axially on the rolling surfaces

Cause: Scratches caused during improper mounting

7.2 Peeling

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
Dull or cloudy spots appear on surface along with light wear. From such dull spots, tiny cracks are generated downward to a depth of 5 ~ 10 μm. Small particles fall off and minor flaking occurs widely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsuitable lubricant • Entry of debris into lubricant • Rough surface due to poor lubrication • Surface roughness of mating rolling part 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a proper lubricant • Improve the sealing mechanism • Improve the surface finish of the rolling mating parts

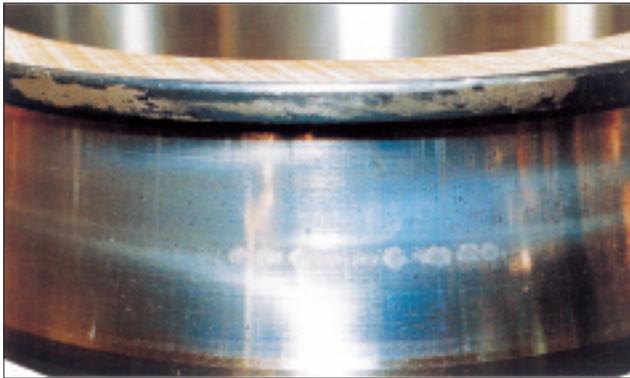


Photo 7-2-1

Part: Inner ring of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Round shaped peeling pattern occurs on the center of the raceway surface

Cause: Poor lubrication



Photo 7-2-2

Part: Enlargement of pattern in **Photo 7-2-1**



Photo 7-2-3

Part: Convex roller of **Photo 7-2-1**

Symptom: Round shaped peeling pattern occurs on the center of the rolling surfaces

Cause: Poor lubrication



Photo 7-2-4

Part: Outer ring of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Peeling occurs near the shoulder of the raceway over the entire circumference

Cause: Poor lubrication

7.3 Scoring

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
<p>Scoring is surface damage due to accumulated small seizures caused by sliding under improper lubrication or under severe operating conditions. Linear damage appears circumferentially on the raceway surface and rolling surface.</p> <p>Cycloidal shaped damage on the roller end.</p> <p>Scoring on rib surface contacting roller end.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive load, excessive preload • Poor lubrication • Particles are caught in the surface • Inclination of inner and outer rings • Shaft bending • Poor precision of the shaft and housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the size of the load • Adjust the preload • Improve the lubricant and the lubrication method • Check the precision of the shaft and housing



Photo 7-3-1

Part: Inner ring of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Scoring on large rib face of inner ring

Cause: Roller slipping due to sudden acceleration and deceleration



Photo 7-3-2

Part: Convex rollers of **Photo 7-3-1**

Symptom: Scoring on roller end face

Cause: Roller slipping due to sudden acceleration and deceleration

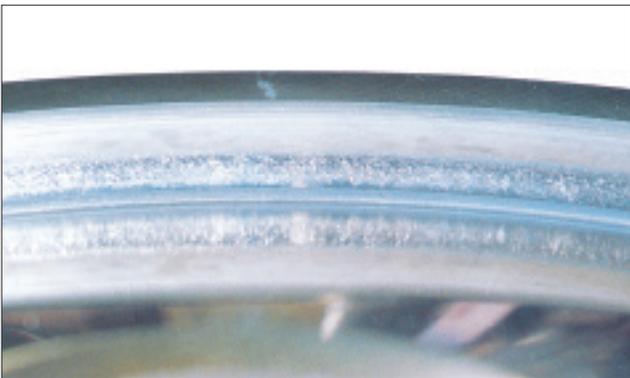


Photo 7-3-3

Part: Inner ring of a tapered roller thrust bearing

Symptom: Scoring on the face of inner ring rib

Cause: Worn particles become mixed with lubricant, and breakdown of oil film occurs due to excessive load



Photo 7-3-4

Part: Rollers of a double-row cylindrical roller bearing

Symptom: Scoring on the roller end face

Cause: Poor lubrication and excessive axial load



Photo 7-3-5

Part: Inner ring of a spherical thrust roller bearing

Symptom: Scoring on the rib face of inner ring

Cause: Debris, which is caught in surface, and excessive axial loading



Photo 7-3-6

Part: Convex rollers of **Photo 7-3-5**

Symptom: Scoring on the roller end face

Cause: Debris, which is caught in surface, and excessive axial loading



Photo 7-3-7

Part: Cage of a deep groove ball bearing

Symptom: Scoring on the pressed-steel cage pockets

Cause: Entry of debris

7.4 Smearing

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
Smearing is surface damage which occurs from a collection of small seizures between bearing components caused by oil film rupture and/or sliding. Surface roughening occurs along with melting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High speed and light load • Sudden acceleration/deceleration • Improper lubricant • Entry of water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the preload • Improve the bearing clearance • Use a lubricant with good oil film formation ability • Improve the lubrication method • Improve the sealing mechanism



Photo 7-4-1

Part: Inner ring of a cylindrical roller bearing

Symptom: Smearing occurs circumferentially on raceway surface

Cause: Roller slipping due to excessive grease filling



Photo 7-4-2

Part: Outer ring of **Photo 7-4-1**

Symptom: Smearing occurs circumferentially on raceway surface

Cause: Roller slipping due to excessive grease filling

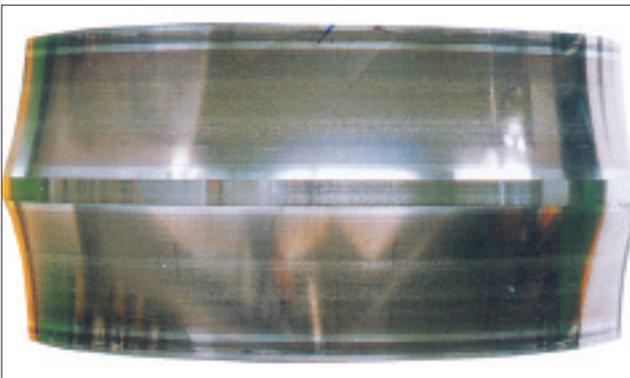


Photo 7-4-3

Part: Inner ring of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Smearing occurs circumferentially on raceway surface

Cause: Poor lubrication

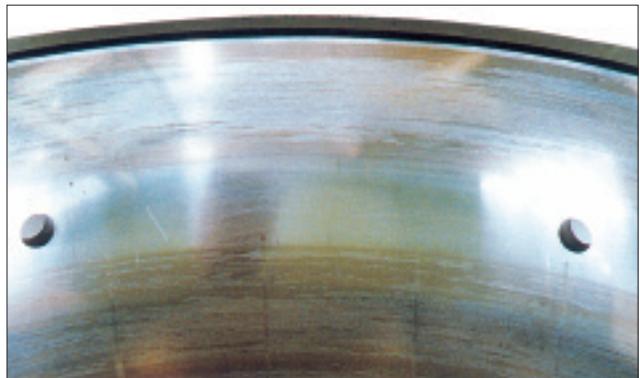


Photo 7-4-4

Part: Outer ring of **Photo 7-4-3**

Symptom: Smearing occurs circumferentially on raceway surface

Cause: Poor lubrication

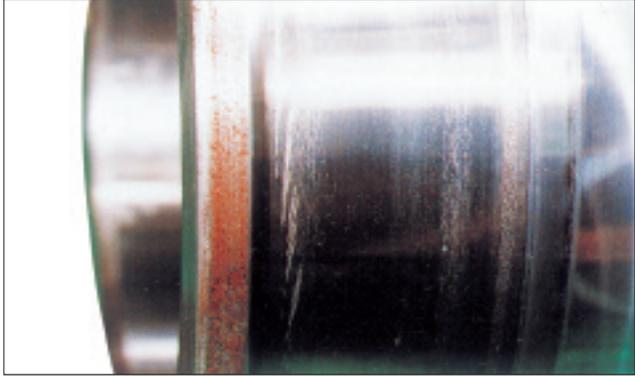


Photo 7-4-5

Part: Inner ring of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Partial smearing occurs circumferentially on raceway surface

Cause: Poor lubrication

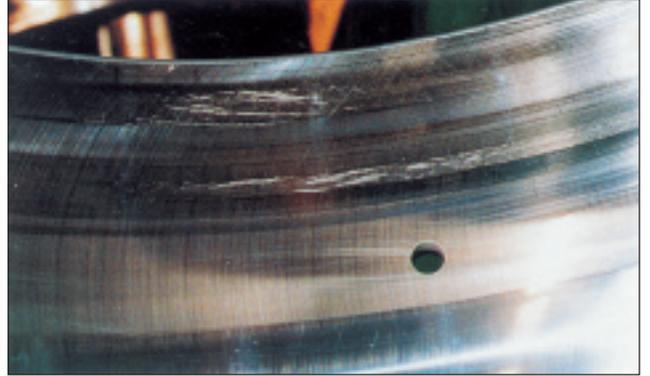


Photo 7-4-6

Part: Outer ring of **Photo 7-4-5**

Symptom: Partial smearing occurs circumferentially on raceway surface

Cause: Poor lubrication



Photo 7-4-7

Part: Convex rollers of **Photo 7-4-5**

Symptom: Smearing occurs at the center of the rolling surface

Cause: Poor lubrication

7.5 Fracture

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
Fracture refers to small pieces which were broken off due to excessive load or shock load acting locally on a part of the roller corner or rib of a raceway ring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact during mounting • Excessive load • Poor handling such as dropping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the mounting method (Shrink fit, use of proper tools) • Reconsider the loading conditions • Provide enough back-up and support for the bearing rib



Photo 7-5-1

Part: Inner ring of a double-row cylindrical roller bearing

Symptom: Chipping occurs at the center rib

Cause: Excessive load during mounting

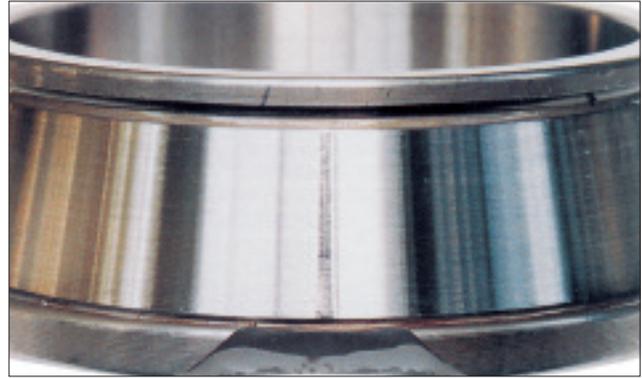


Photo 7-5-2

Part: Inner ring of a tapered roller bearing

Symptom: Fracture occurs at the cone back face rib

Cause: Large shock during mounting



Photo 7-5-3

Part: Inner ring of a spherical thrust roller bearing

Symptom: Fracture occurs at the large rib

Cause: Repeated load



Photo 7-5-4

Part: Outer ring of a solid type needle roller bearing

Symptom: Fracture occurs at the outer ring rib

Cause: Roller inclination due to excessive loading (Needle rollers are long compared to their diameter. Under excessive or uneven loading, rollers become inclined and push against the ribs.)

7.6 Cracks

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
Cracks in the raceway ring and rolling elements. Continued use under this condition leads to larger cracks or fractures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive interference • Excessive load, shock load • Progression of flaking • Heat generation and fretting caused by contact between mounting parts and raceway ring • Heat generation due to creep • Poor taper angle of tapered shaft • Poor cylindricality of shaft • Interference with bearing chamfer due to a large shaft corner radius 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct the interference • Check the load conditions • Improve the mounting method • Use an appropriate shaft shape

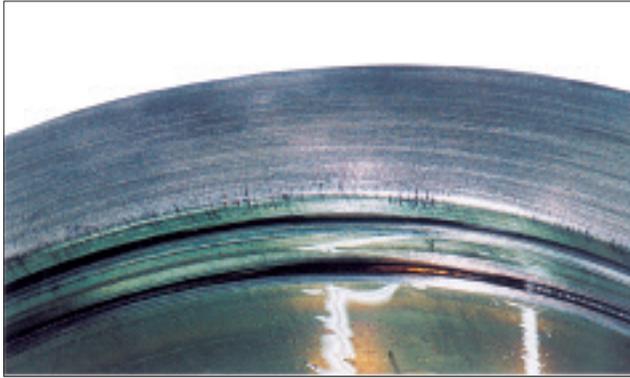


Photo 7-6-1

Part: Outer ring of a double-row cylindrical roller bearing

Symptom: Thermal cracks occur on the outer ring side face

Cause: Abnormal heat generation due to contact sliding between mating part and face of outer ring



Photo 7-6-2

Part: Roller of a tapered roller thrust bearing

Symptom: Thermal cracks occur at large end face of roller

Cause: Heat generation due to sliding with the inner ring rib under poor lubrication



Photo 7-6-3

Part: Outer ring of a double-row cylindrical roller bearing

Symptom: Cracks propagated outward in the axial and circumferential directions from the flaking origin on the raceway surface

Cause: Flaking from a flaw due to shock

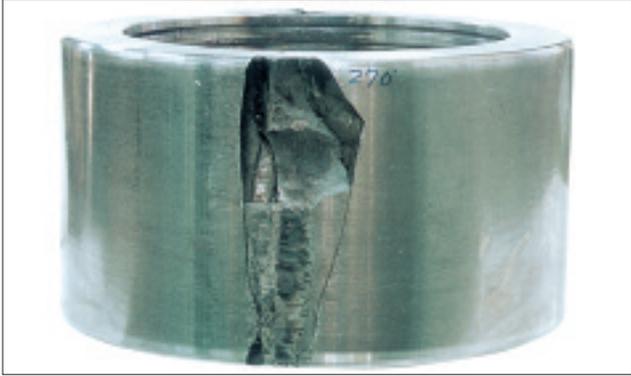


Photo 7-6-4

Part: Outer ring of a double-row cylindrical roller bearing used for outer ring rolling (Outer ring rotation)

Symptom: Cracks occur on outside surface

Cause: Flat wear and heat generation due to non-rotation of the outer ring



Photo 7-6-5

Part: Raceway surface of outer ring in **Photo 7-6-4**

Symptom: Outside surface crack developing on the raceway



Photo 7-6-6

Part: Inner ring of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Axial cracks occur on raceway surface

Cause: Large fitting stress due to temperature difference between shaft and inner ring



Photo 7-6-7

Part: Cross section of a fractured inner ring in **Photo 7-6-6**

Symptom: Origin is directly beneath the raceway surface



Photo 7-6-8

Part: Roller of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Axial cracks occur on rolling surface

7.7 Cage Damage

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
Cage damage includes cage deformation, fracture, and wear. Fracture of cage pillar. Deformation of side face. Wear of pocket surface. Wear of guide surface.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor mounting (Bearing misalignment) • Poor handling • Large moment load • Shock and large vibration • Excessive rotation speed, sudden acceleration and deceleration • Poor lubrication • Temperature rise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the mounting method • Check the temperature, rotation, and load conditions • Reduce the vibration • Select a cage type • Select a lubrication method and lubricant



Photo 7-7-1

Part: Cage of a deep groove ball bearing

Symptom: Fracture of pressed-steel cage-pocket



Photo 7-7-2

Part: Cage of an angular contact ball bearing

Symptom: Pocket pillar fractures from a cast iron machined cage

Cause: Abnormal load action on cage due to misaligned mounting between inner and outer rings

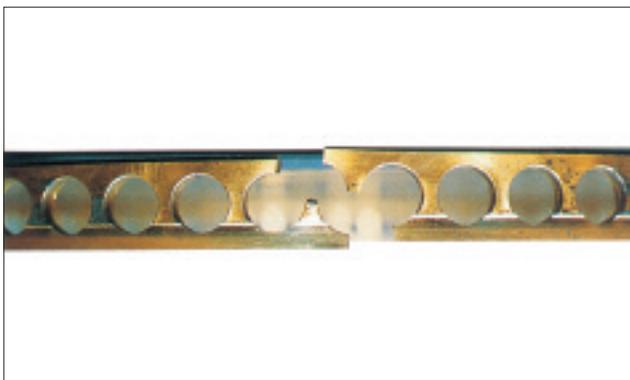


Photo 7-7-3

Part: Cage of an angular contact ball bearing

Symptom: Fracture of machined high-tension brass cage



Photo 7-7-4

Part: Cage of a tapered roller bearing

Symptom: Pillar fractures of pressed-steel cage



Photo 7-7-5

Part: Cage of an angular contact ball bearing

Symptom: Pressed-steel cage deformation

Cause: Shock load due to poor handling

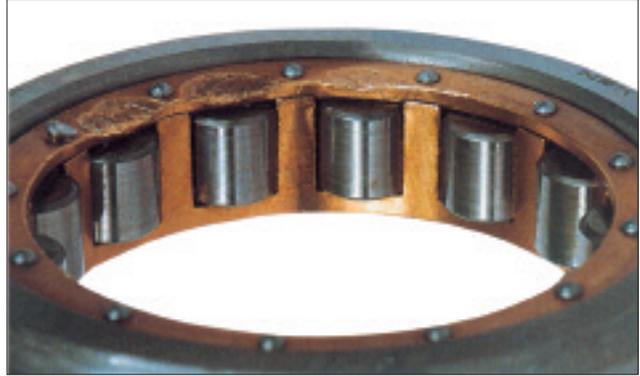


Photo 7-7-6

Part: Cage of a cylindrical roller bearing

Symptom: Deformation of the side face of a machined high-tension brass cage

Cause: Large shock during mounting



Photo 7-7-7

Part: Cage of a cylindrical roller bearing

Symptom: Deformation and wear of a machined high-tension brass cage



Photo 7-7-8

Part: Cage of an angular contact ball bearing

Symptom: Stepped wear on the outside surface and pocket surface of a machined high-tension brass cage

7.8 Denting

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
<p>When debris such as small metallic particles are caught in the rolling contact zone, denting occurs on the raceway surface or rolling element surface.</p> <p>Denting can occur at the rolling element pitch interval if there is a shock during the mounting (Brinell dents).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debris such as metallic particles are caught in the surface • Excessive load • Shock during transport or mounting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash the housing • Improve the sealing mechanism • Filter the lubrication oil • Improve the mounting and handling methods



Photo 7-8-1
Part: Inner ring of a double-row tapered roller bearing
Symptom: Frosted raceway surface
Cause: Debris caught in the surface



Photo 7-8-2
Part: Outer ring of a double-row tapered roller bearing
Symptom: Indentations on raceway surface
Cause: Debris caught in the surface

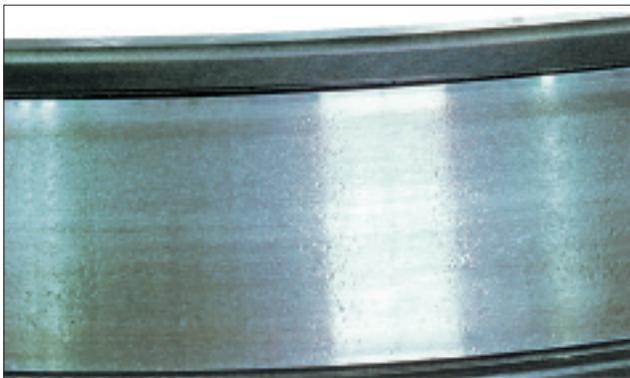


Photo 7-8-3
Part: Inner ring of a tapered roller bearing
Symptom: Small and large indentations occur over entire raceway surface
Cause: Debris caught in the surface



Photo 7-8-4:
Part: Tapered rollers of **Photo 7-8-3**
Symptom: Small and large indentations occur over the rolling surface
Cause: Debris caught in the surface

7.9 Pitting

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
The pitted surface has a dull luster which appears on the rolling element surface or raceway surface.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debris becomes caught in the lubricant • Exposure to moisture in the atmosphere • Poor lubrication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the sealing mechanism • Filter the lubrication oil thoroughly • Use a proper lubricant



Photo 7-9-1

Part: Outer ring of a slewing bearing

Symptom: Pitting occurs on the raceway surface

Cause: Rust at bottoms of indentations



Photo 7-9-2

Part: Ball of **Photo 7-9-1**

Symptom: Pitting occurs on the rolling element surface

7.10 Wear

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
Wear is surface deterioration due to sliding friction at the surface of the raceway, rolling elements, roller end faces, rib face, cage pockets, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry of debris • Progression from rust and electrical corrosion • Poor lubrication • Sliding due to irregular motion of rolling elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the sealing mechanism • Clean the housing • Filter the lubrication oil thoroughly • Check the lubricant and lubrication method • Prevent misalignment



Photo 7-10-1

Part: Inner ring of a cylindrical roller bearing

Symptom: Many pits occur due to electrical corrosion and wave-shaped wear on raceway surface

Cause: Electrical corrosion



Photo 7-10-2

Part: Outer ring of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Wear having a wavy or concave-and-convex texture on loaded side of raceway surface

Cause: Entry of debris under repeated vibration while stationary



Photo 7-10-3

Part: Inner ring of a double-row tapered roller bearing

Symptom: Fretting wear of raceway and stepped wear on the rib face

Cause: Fretting progression due to excessive load while stationary



Photo 7-10-4

Part: Tapered rollers of **Photo 7-10-3**

Symptom: Stepped wear on the roller head end face

Cause: Fretting progression due to excessive load while stationary

7.11 Fretting

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
<p>Wear occurs due to repeated sliding between the two surfaces.</p> <p>Fretting occurs at fitting surface and also at contact area between raceway ring and rolling elements.</p> <p>Fretting corrosion is another term used to describe the reddish brown or black worn particles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor lubrication • Vibration with a small amplitude • Insufficient interference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a proper lubricant • Apply a preload • Check the interference fit • Apply a film of lubricant to the fitting surface



Photo 7-11-1

Part: Inner ring of a deep groove ball bearing

Symptom: Fretting occurs on the bore surface

Cause: Vibration



Photo 7-11-2

Part: Inner ring of an angular contact ball bearing

Symptom: Notable fretting occurs over entire circumference of bore surface

Cause: Insufficient interference fit



Photo 7-11-3

Part: Outer ring of a double-row cylindrical roller bearing

Symptom: Fretting occurs on the raceway surface at roller pitch intervals

7.12 False Brinelling

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
<p>Among the different types of fretting, false brinelling is the occurrence of hollow spots that resemble brinell dents, and are due to wear caused by vibration and swaying at the contact points between the rolling elements and raceway.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oscillation and vibration of a stationary bearing during such times as transporting • Oscillating motion with a small amplitude • Poor lubrication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure the shaft and housing during transporting • Transport with the inner and outer rings packed separately • Reduce the vibration by preloading • Use a proper lubricant

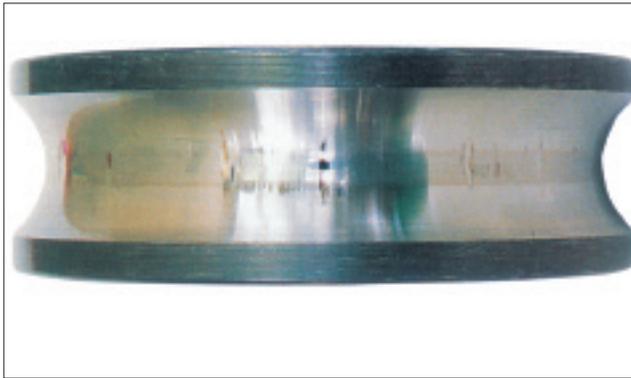


Photo 7-12-1

Part: Inner ring of a deep groove ball bearing

Symptom: False brinelling occurs on the raceway

Cause: Vibration from an external source while stationary



Photo 7-12-2

Part: Outer ring of Photo 7-12-1

Symptom: False brinelling occurs on the raceway

Cause: Vibration from an external source while stationary



Photo 7-12-3

Part: Outer ring of a thrust ball bearing

Symptom: False brinelling of raceway surface at ball pitch

Cause: Repeated vibration with a small oscillating angle



Photo 7-12-4

Part: Rollers of a cylindrical roller bearing

Symptom: False brinelling occurs on rolling surface

Cause: Vibration from an external source while stationary

7.13 Creep

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
<p>Creep is the phenomenon in bearings where relative slipping occurs at the fitting surfaces and thereby creates a clearance at the fitting surface.</p> <p>Creep causes a shiny appearance, occasionally with scoring or wear.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient interference or loose fit • Insufficient sleeve tightening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the interference, and prevent rotation • Correct the sleeve tightening • Study the shaft and housing precision • Preload in the axial direction • Tighten the raceway ring side face • Apply adhesive to the fitting surface • Apply a film of lubricant to the fitting surface



Photo 7-13-1

Part: Inner ring of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Creep accompanied by scoring of bore surface

Cause: Insufficient interference



Photo 7-13-2

Part: Outer ring of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Creep occurs over entire circumference of outside surface

Cause: Loose fit between outer ring and housing

7.14 Seizure

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
When sudden overheating occurs during rotation, the bearing becomes discolored. Next, raceway rings, rolling elements, and cage will soften, melt and deform as damage accumulates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor lubrication • Excessive load (Excessive preload) • Excessive rotational speed • Excessively small internal clearance • Entry of water and debris • Poor precision of shaft and housing, excessive shaft bending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study the lubricant and lubrication method • Reinvestigate the suitability of the bearing type selected • Study the preload, bearing clearance, and fitting • Improve the sealing mechanism • Check the precision of the shaft and housing • Improve the mounting method



Photo 7-14-1

Part: Inner ring of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Raceway is discolored and melted. Worn particles from the cage were rolled and attached to the raceway

Cause: Insufficient lubrication



Photo 7-14-2

Part: Convex rollers of **Photo 7-14-1**

Symptom: Discoloration and melting of roller rolling surface, adhesion of worn particles from cage

Cause: Insufficient lubrication

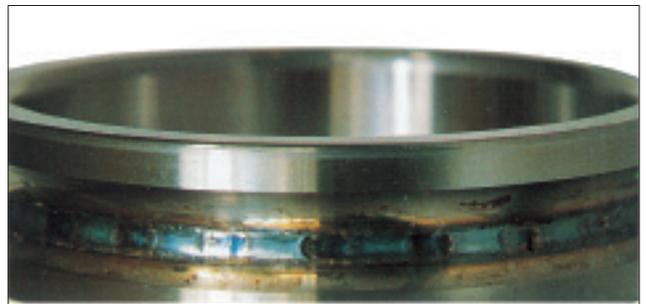


Photo 7-14-3

Part: Inner ring of an angular contact ball bearing

Symptom: Raceway discoloration, melting occurs at ball pitch intervals

Cause: Excessive preload

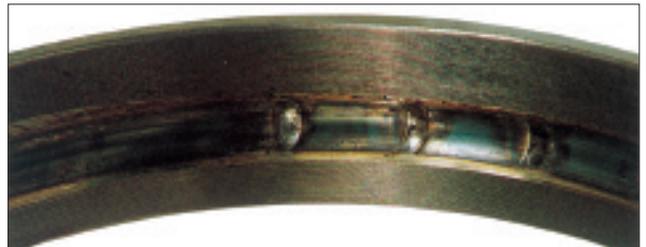


Photo 7-14-4

Part: Outer ring in **Photo 7-14-3**

Symptom: Raceway discoloration, melting occurs at ball pitch intervals

Cause: Excessive preload



Photo 7-14-5

Part: Balls and cage of **Photo 7-14-3**

Symptom: Cage is damaged by melting, balls become discolored and melted

Cause: Excessive preload

7.15 Electrical Corrosion

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
<p>When electric current passes through a bearing, arcing and burning occur through the thin oil film at points of contact between the race and rolling elements. The points of contact are melted locally to form “fluting” or groove-like corrugations which are seen by the naked eye. The magnification of these grooves will reveal crater-like depressions which indicate melting by arcing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrical potential difference between inner and outer rings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design electric circuits which prevent current flow through the bearings • Insulation of the bearing



Photo 7-15-1

Part: Inner ring of a tapered roller bearing

Symptom: Striped pattern of corrosion occurs on the raceway surface



Photo 7-15-2

Part: Tapered rollers in **Photo 7-15-1**

Symptom: Striped pattern of corrosion occurs on the rolling surface



Photo 7-15-3

Part: Inner ring of a cylindrical roller bearing

Symptom: Belt pattern of electrical corrosion accompanied by pits on the raceway surface



Photo 7-15-4

Part: Balls of a deep groove ball bearing

Symptom: Electrical corrosion has a dark color that covers the entire ball surface

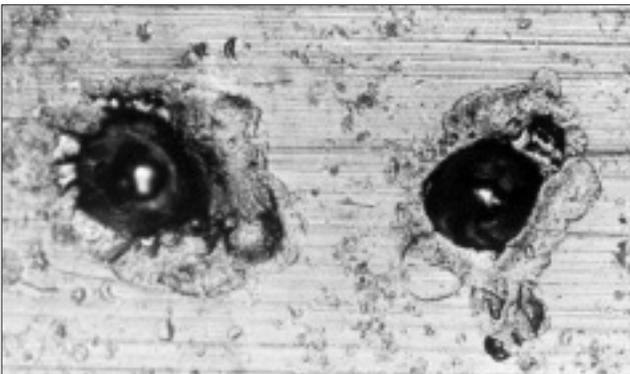


Photo 7-15-5

Part: ???

Symptom: ???

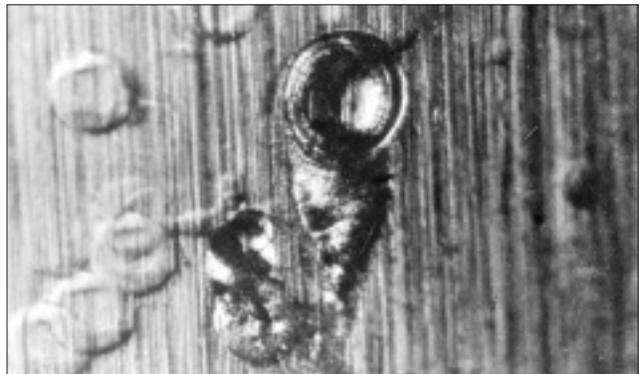


Photo 7-15-6

Part: ???

Symptom: ???

7.16 Rust and Corrosion

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
Bearing rust and corrosion are pits on the surface of rings and rolling elements and may occur at the rolling element pitch on the rings or over the entire bearing surfaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry of corrosive gas or water • Improper lubricant • Formation of water droplets due to condensation of moisture • High temperature and high humidity while stationary • Poor rust preventative treatment during transporting • Improper storage conditions • Improper handling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the sealing mechanism • Study the lubrication method • Anti-rust treatment for periods of non-running • Improve the storage methods • Improve the handling method



Photo 7-16-1

Part: Outer ring of a cylindrical roller bearing

Symptom: Rust on the rib face and raceway surface

Cause: Poor lubrication due to water entry

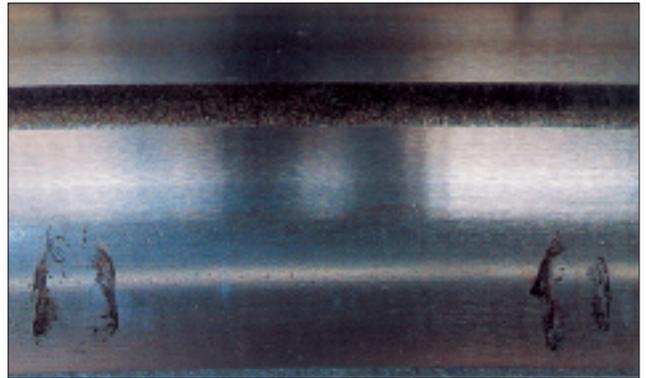


Photo 7-16-2

Part: Outer ring of a slewing ring

Symptom: Rust on raceway surface at ball pitch

Cause: Moisture condensation during stationary periods

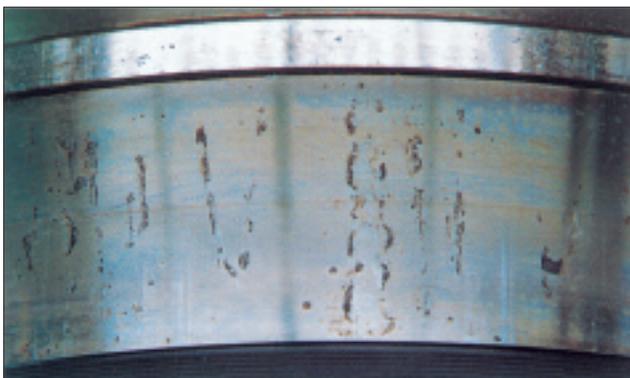


Photo 7-16-3

Part: Inner ring of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Rust on raceway surface at roller pitch

Cause: Entry of water into lubricant



Photo 7-16-4

Part: Rollers of a spherical roller bearing

Symptom: Pit-shaped rust on rolling contact surface.
Corroded portions

Cause: Moisture condensation during storage

7.17 Mounting Flaws

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
Straight line scratches on surface of raceways or rolling elements caused during mounting or dismounting of bearing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclination of inner and outer rings during mounting or dismounting • Shock load during mounting or dismounting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use appropriate jig and tool • Avoid a shock load by use of a press machine • Center the relative mating parts during mounting

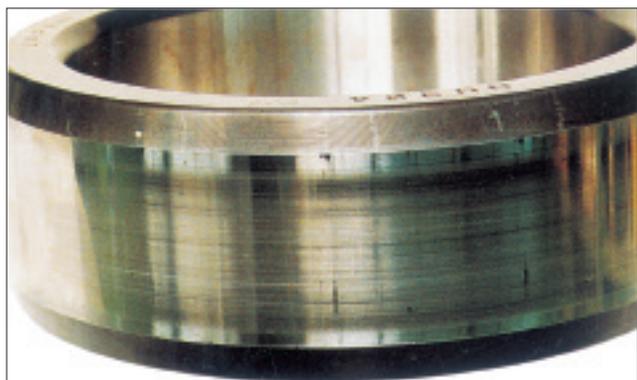


Photo 7-17-1

Part: Inner ring of a cylindrical roller bearing
Symptom: Axial scratches on raceway surface
Cause: Inclination of inner and outer rings during mounting



Photo 7-17-2

Part: Outer ring of a double-row cylindrical roller bearing
Symptom: Axial scratches at roller pitch intervals on raceway surface
Cause: Inclination of inner and outer rings during mounting



Photo 7-17-3

Part: Rollers of a cylindrical roller bearing
Symptom: Axial scratches on rolling surface
Cause: Inclination of inner and outer rings during mounting

7.18 Discoloration

Damage Condition	Possible Cause	Countermeasure
Discoloration of cage, rolling elements, and raceway ring occurs due to a reaction with lubricant and high temperature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor lubrication • Oil stain due to a reaction with lubricant • High temperature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the lubrication method

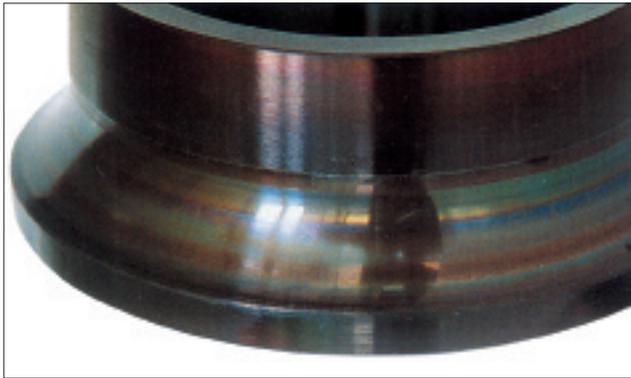


Photo 7-18-1

Part: Inner ring of an angular contact ball bearing

Symptom: Bluish or purplish discoloration on raceway surface

Cause: Heat generation due to poor lubrication

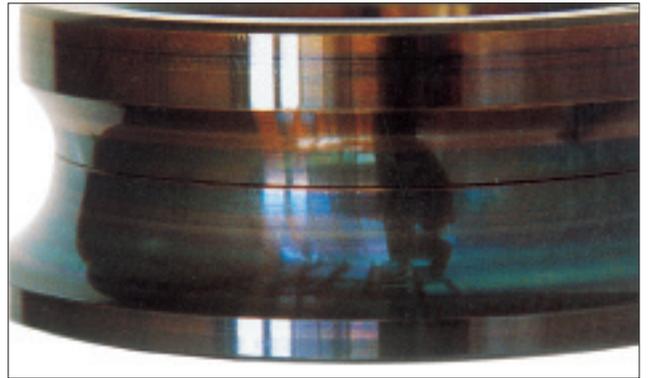


Photo 7-18-2

Part: Inner ring of a 4-point contact ball bearing

Symptom: Bluish or purplish discoloration on raceway surface

Cause: Heat generation due to poor lubrication

Appendix - Bearing Diagnostic Chart

Damage name	Location (Phenomenon)	Cause												Remarks	
		Handling		Bearing surrounding			Lubrication		Load			Speed			
		Stock - Shipping	Mounting	Shaft Housing	Sealed device Water - Debris	Temperature	Lubricant	Lubrication method	Excessive load Impact load	Moment	Ultra small load	High speed, High acceleration & deceleration	Shaking - Vibration Stationary		Bearing Selection
1. Flaking	Raceway, Rolling surface		○	○	○		○	○	○	○				○	
2. Peeling	Raceway, Rolling surface				○		○	○			○	○			
	Bearing outside surface (Rolling contact)			○*	○		○	○							* Mating rolling part
3. Scoring	Roller end face surface, Rib surface		○	○	○		○	○	○	○		○			
	Cage guide surface, Pocket surface		○		○		○	○							
4. Smearing	Raceway, Rolling surface				○		○	○			○	○			
5. Fracture	Raceway collar, Rollers	○	○	○					○	○					
6. Cracks	Raceway rings, Rolling elements		○	○		○			○	○					
	Rib surface, Roller end face, Cage guide surface (Thermal crack)			○				○	○	○					
7. Cage damage	(Deformation), (Fracture)		○	○					○	○					
	(Wear)		○		○		○	○	○	○		○			
8. Denting	Raceway, Rolling surface, (Innumerable small dents)				○			○							
	Raceway (Debris on the rolling element pitch)	○	○						○				○		
9. Pitting	Raceway, Rolling surface				○		○	○							
10. Wear	Raceway, Rolling surface, Rib surface, Roller end face		○		○		○	○							
11. Fretting	Raceway, Rolling surface	○	○	○			○	○	○			○	○		
	Bearing outside & bore, side surface (Contact with housing and shaft)		○	○					○						
12. False brinelling	Raceway, Rolling surface	○					○	○					○		
13. Creep	Fitting surface		○	○		○	○*	○*	○			○			* Clearance fit
14. Seizure	Raceway ring, Rolling element, Cage		○	○	○		○	○	○	○		○		○	
15. Electrical corrosion	Raceway, Rolling surface		○*	○*											* Electricity passing through the rolling element
16. Rust and corrosion	Raceway ring, Rolling element, Cage	○	○		○	○	○	○							
17. Mounting flaws	Raceway, Rolling surface		○	○											
18. Discoloration	Raceway ring, Rolling element, Cage					○	○	○							

Remark: This chart is not comprehensive. It lists only the more commonly occurring damages, causes, and locations.

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