The Tobinmeter Company first introduced magnetic flowmeters for commercial use in Holland in 1952. Foxboro (www.foxboro.com) introduced them in the United States in 1954. Since then, more than 35 suppliers worldwide have entered the magnetic flowmeter market, and magnetic meters are now among the most widely used meter types for measuring the flow of water and other conductive liquids.

Magnetic flowmeters generate more revenues worldwide than any other meter type, including Coriolis, positive displacement, turbine, and differential pressure (DP) meters. The story is different, however, in terms of units. More positive displacement, turbine, DP, and variable-area flowmeters are sold annually than are magnetic flowmeters. Yet, because magnetic meters typically cost more than other flowmeter types, they account for more annual revenue.

Magmeters, as they are often called, are most widely used in the water and wastewater and chemical industries. These two sectors alone account for about half of the revenues generated by magmeters. Magmeters are also widely used in the food and beverage and pharmaceutical industries, which require flowmeters that can conform to sanitary requirements. And magmeters can be outfitted with sanitary liners to meet these demands.

**Operating Characteristics**

Magnetic flowmeters use Faraday’s Law of Electromagnetic Induction. According to this principle, when a conductive medium passes through a magnetic field, a voltage is generated. This voltage is directly proportional to the velocity of the conductive medium, the density of the magnetic field, and the length of the conductor. In Faraday’s Law, these three values are multiplied together, along with a constant, to yield the magnitude of the voltage.

Magnetic flowmeters use wire coils mounted within or outside of the meter body. A current is then applied to these coils to generate a magnetic field. As the conductive liquid passes through the body of the meter, a voltage is generated. This voltage is detected by electrodes, which are mounted on either side of the meter body. The flowmeter uses this value to compute flowrate.

Magnetic flowmeters are used to measure the flow of conductive liquids and slurries, including paper pulp slurries and black liquor. Their main limitation is that they cannot measure hydrocarbons, which are nonconductive. This makes them a bad fit for oil and gas and refining applications. Magmeters are, however, highly accurate and resistant to pressure drop.

The initial purchase cost for magmeters is comparable to...
Reasons for Popularity

Magnetic flowmeters are widely used overseas. In fact, since they were first introduced in Holland, they have essentially become the flowmeter of choice in Europe. Part of the reason is because water is a highly valued resource in Europe, and magmeters are a good fit for water-based applications. The food processing and pulp and paper industries, where magnetic flowmeters are also widely used, are prevalent industries in Europe as well. And three of the top suppliers of magnetic flowmeters, Endress+Hauser (www.endress.com), Krohne (www.krohne-mar.com), and ABB (www.abb.com), are based in Europe. All of these factors contribute to the popularity of magnetic flowmeters in Europe.

Advantages

In an industrial environment that places a high value on automation and process control and has published numerous market research studies in industrial automation and process control and has published numerous market research studies in industrial automation and process control and has published numerous market research studies in industrial automation and process control and has published numerous market research studies in industrial automation and process control and has published numerous market research studies in industrial automation and process control and has published numerous market research studies in industrial automation and process control and has published numerous market research studies in industrial automation, at least in terms of revenue, the foreseeable future.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Magnetic Flowmeters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No obstruction in flowstream</td>
<td>Cannot meter nonconductive liquids (e.g., hydrocarbons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No pressure drop</td>
<td>Medium to high initial cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High accuracy</td>
<td>Electrodes can be subject to coating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does well on dirty liquids</td>
<td>Limited use in the oil &amp; gas and refining industries because it does not meter hydrocarbons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and other liquids</td>
<td>Minimum conductivity required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluid Type</th>
<th>Size Range</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water and other liquids</td>
<td>1/10 inch to 100 inches</td>
<td>Limited use in the oil &amp; gas and refining industries because it does not meter hydrocarbons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applying Notes: When Magmeters Make Sense

The construction of the magnetic flowmeter is such that the only wetted parts are the liner and electrodes, both of which can be made from materials that can withstand corrosion. In addition, the straight-through (obstructionless) nature of the design reduces both the loss of hydraulic energy across the flowmeter (pressure drop) and the potential for abrasion from the flowing liquid. Therefore, magnetic flowmeters can measure many corrosive liquids and abrasive slurries.

Magnetic flowmeters are highly accurate, which is among the most prominent characteristics users look for in a flowmeter. Published accuracies for many magmeters are in the 0.5 percent range. In addition, magnetic flowmeters generate very little pressure drop. Insertion magnetic meters are an exception, but even here pressure drop is limited. Also, magmeters support a variety of liners that allow them to be used for a range of specific applications. Also, newer DC-type magmeters have eliminated the zero-calibration problems that AC-type meters experienced, which has further boosted their appeal.

Now, suppliers are finding ways to enable magmeters to measure lower-conductivity liquids. Some new magnetic flowmeters can measure liquids with conductivity below the five microsiemens/cm level. While it is unlikely that magmeters will ever be able to measure hydrocarbons, technological advances are making magnetic flowmeters usable in a wider range of applications.

Disadvantages

Despite improvements in the minimum amount of conductivity required for measuring with magnetic flowmeters, the inability of magmeters to measure the flow of nonconductive liquids remains a barrier to wider use in certain industries. While they are used to measure water flow in the oil and gas and refining industries, the inability of magmeters to measure the flow of hydrocarbons severely limits their use in oil and gas applications. For example, magnetic flowmeters aren’t receiving much uptake in the fast-growing flowmeter market for custody transfer of natural gas because they cannot be used to measure gas flow. This fundamental fact about magnetic flowmeters is not likely to change, even though magmeters have been developed that can measure liquids of minimal conductivity.

The coils in a magnetic flowmeter can be excited by either alternating current (AC) or direct current (DC). Magnetic flowmeters that sense velocity and level can measure the flow of liquids in partially filled pipes, such as interceptor sewers and stormwater culverts. Magnetic flowmeters with fast response times can measure liquids that flow for relatively short periods of time, such as in batch and fill operations.

Magnetic flowmeters measure liquid velocity, from which the volumetric flow rate is inferred. The measurement is linear with liquid velocity and exhibits a relatively large turnaround. In addition, the range of accurate flow measurement is relatively large and easy to change after installation.

Replacing an existing two-wire instrument with a four-wire instrument typically requires the installation of an extensive amount of conduit/cable to provide power to the new instrument. Two-wire magnetic flowmeters that do not require power wiring can often replace an existing flowmeter using the existing wiring with little electrical rewiring.


Choosing a Magnetic Flowmeter

Choosing a magnetic flowmeter is a matter of comfort. The first step is to identify the application. The second step is to decide what the flowmeter must be able to measure.

Jesse Yoder, PhD, is a regular contributor to Flow Control magazine. He has been a lead-in analyst in the process control industry since 1986. He specializes in flowmeters and other field devices, including pressure, level, and temperature products. Dr. Yoder has written 60 market research studies in industrial automation and process control and has published numerous journal articles. His latest study, The World Market for Flow Measurement, is one of the most prominent flowmeter types in the gas measurement field. Currently, Dr. Yoder is the president of Flow Research Inc. He can be reached at jesse@flowresearch.com or 781-245-3200.

www.flowresearch.com

www.endress.com

www.abb.com

www.FlowControlNetwork.com

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