# Simulation of operating loads of ablative composite shields used in flight data recorders

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### **Article Info**

# ABSTRACT

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The objects of the mathematical simulation were two covers of the same shape, but different geometrical dimensions. The covers were made of aramid fabric, and uniformly distributed alternating in the composite in a polymer matrix of epoxy resin, modified with 15% addition of MMT. For each of the two guards, four variants of the composite material were considered in correlation with the metal casing, as well as three load cases, in accordance with the normative documents. A numerical analysis of dynamic tests was performed to determine the durability of the recorder. As a result of the conducted analyses, stress values were obtained in all load cases and for all kinds of placement of the composite in correlation with the metal reinforcement casing. The displacements of the entire model and stress  $\sigma_x$  were analyzed as a possible cause of delamination, while the shear stress  $\tau_{yz}$  is a possible cause of inter-cutting. Also, a detailed distribution of stresses reduced in subsequent layers of the cover material was analyzed. The distribution of kinetic and potential energy during piercing of the composite thermo-protective casing was determined by numerical simulation and the design of the recorder housing made of an epoxy ablation composite, with a metal casing located inside the casing, was considered.

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# **1. Introduction**

The term ablation refers to the exchange of heat and mass in the body's upper layer in thermochemical and mechanical processes. There are many technical applications for ablative material. Polymeric ablation materials are increasingly used in the field of thermal protection systems. They can be used in the design of passive refractories for load-bearing structures of large-size buildings (NIST NCSTAR 1, 2005); Wilkinson, 2002), communication tunnels (Haack, 2004; Ono & Otsuka, 2006) and for protection of data stored on electronic, optical, magnetic, etc.

Good protective properties in buffering of fire and thermal shock can be obtained using composite polymer coverings with typical ablative composite matrices like silicone resin (Yuan et al., 2018), phenol resins (Kucharczyk et al., 2013; Pulci et al., 2010; Bahramian, 2013; Zhou et al., 2019) or epoxy resins (Kucharczyk, 2010; Bakar et al., 2016; Camino et al., 2005; Kucharczyk et al., 2018; Krzyżak et al., 2018; Stawarz et al., 2019) with fillers that increase the thermal stability of a composite. Pure resins are good ablative materials. They require reinforcement (Xie et al., 2020), however, due to their low decomposition temperature, porosity and fragility of the ablative layer (Rallini etal., 2018). Addition of powders (Yuan

et al., 2018; Kucharczyk et al., 2013; Bakar et al., 2016; Camino et al., 2005; Lombardi et al., 2012; Fino et al., 2012), nanopowdwers (Stawarz et al., 2019) or fibre reinforcement (Pulci et al., 2010; Bahramian, 2013; Kucharczyk, 2010; Xie et al., 2020; Alagar et al., 2000; Minkook et al., 2016) or reinforcing plates (Yuan et al., 2018; Fino et al., 2012; Shi et al., 2020) of high melting temperatures build a composite structure that substantially improves thermoprotective, thermomechanical (Shi et al., 2020) and mechanical (Xie et al., 2020; Bieniaś & Jakubczak, 2017) properties of a polymer ablative composite.

Flight Data Recorders (FDR) (Ministere des Transports, 2005; EUROCAE, 2013; Polak & Rypulak, 2002; Przybyłek & Opara, 2010) are designed to record the main flight parameters and operational parameters of the work of aircraft assemblies for evaluation (NHTSA, 2010; NHTSA, 2015): flight safety, piloting techniques, the status of on-board systems, causes of an accident or plane crash.

In addition, the recorders of operation parameters of various operational objects are increasingly used by car manufacturers (ADAC, 2015; GM, 2016; IEEE 1616, 2004), locomotives, ships, and even architecture, in order to assist all emergency services involved in removing the consequences, and then determining the causes of the existing communication (building) disasters. Usually it is a measurement and diagnostic module SDM (Sensing and Diagnostics Module), from which information is read and archive during technical inspections. They support the diagnostic process and enable to analyze the causes of faults. It is the basis for modifying procedures used when locating disabilities and determining selected reliability indicators.

Requirements for registrars concern many different aspects of their exploitation. The most important criterion was the possibility of recovering archived information.

The construction of the protective casing must ensure resistance to a number of factors causing accidents or disasters (Tab. 1).

Requirement	Flight Data Recorders	Railway recorder	Data registration systems for building objects		
Impact loading	3400/6.5 ms	23 g/250 ms or energy equivalent			
Puncture resistance	10 ft. drop 500 lbs., 0.05 in <sup>2</sup> (mass ~ 227 kg dropped from ~3 m)	Not required	Mass 227 kg dropped from a height 3 m ~1.2 m		
Static load	5,000 lbf/5 min., surface and slanted (~2268 kg/5 min)	25,000 lbf/5 min., on the entire surface (~11340 kg/5 min.)	25,000 lbf/5 min. (~7620 m/5 min.)		
Head crush	Not required	10,000 lbf/5 min. on the 25% surface (~4536 kg/5 min)	Not required		
Flame, high temperature heat flux	1100°C, 60 min.	1000°C, 60 min.	1200°C, 60 min.		
Low-temperature heat flux	260°C, 10 hours	260°C, 10 hours	260°C,10 hours		
Immersion in fuel /operating fluids	48 godz.	48 hours	48 hours		
Immersion in sea water	9 ft/30 days (~3 m/30 days)	48 hours	Not required		
Immersion in extinguishing media	8 hours	48 hours	8 hours		
Hydrostatic pressure	20 000 ft/30 days (6000 m/30 days)	48 hours	Not required		

Table 1. Quality requirements for the protection of recorded information (Przybyłek & Opara, 2010).

To determine the full ability of a universal thermo-protective cover to protect the recorder's data carriers after an accident or disaster, all tests described in Table 1 should be performed. Endurance tests of recorder covers are very destructive, causing damage to them, and even complete desolation during the tests. Test of resistance to static load involves checking the strength of the protective housing subjected to a force of 22.25 kN for 5 minutes, along specific directions for a given shape. Their implementation requires the design and execution of a measurement station and the production of a series of covers that will be subjected to strength tests. These are usually destructive tests. A complementary method of strength analysis is mathematical

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modeling. Software supporting engineering design allows you to conduct model tests with a much smaller amount of funds and analysis of various configurations, dimensions and method of spreading the laminate sheath on the housing material of the flight recorder (Ryabov et al., 2003). The ANSYS 15.0 software was used for numerical analysis of dynamic loads of guards.

## 2. Mathematical modeling

Two covers with the same shape but different sizes (Tab. 2 and Fig. 1) were selected for the model tests. The wall thickness of the model (cover) was 12.65 mm (Przybyłek, 2018).



Figure 1. The shape and dimensions of the composite shell.

The objects of the mathematical simulation were two covers of the same shape, but different geometrical dimensions. The protective covers were made of the following components: 14 layers of aramid fabric with a weight of  $230 \text{ g/m}^2$ , alternating and uniformly distributed in the composite - in a polymer matrix of *Epidian 52* epoxy resin, crosslinked *TFF* hardener, modified with 15% addition of layered aluminosilicate *Bentonit Specjal Extra* with 75% content of calcium montmorillonite *MMT* (Przybyłek, 2018).

The following cases were considered for both covers:

- 1. The housing of the flight recorder is the cover made only of ablative polymer composites.
- 2. Cover made of ablative polymer composites is placed outside the metal housing of flight recorder.
- 3. Cover made of ablative polymer composites is placed inside the metal housing of flight recorder.
- 4. Cover made of ablative polymer composites is placed inside and outside the housing of the flight recorder, in a way that its total thickness is the same as in the case of the two previous variants.

Cover	1, (mm)	Cover 2, (mm)				
H36	135	H40	12.65			
H40	12.65	H45	21.5			
R41	172.69	R41	175.09			
V35	153	V35	135			
V37	12.65	V37	12.65			
V43	12.65					

Table 2. Dimensions of thermo-protective covers (Przybyłek, 2018).

Due to the way the sample is made for experimental tests of a composite cover the numerical model was adopted consisting of three permanently connected elements: groundwork, cylinder and bowl (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Numerical 3D model divided into individual elements of a composite cover.

The modeled object was divided into finite elements Tet10 and Hex20. Numerical calculations were carried out for the assumed boundary conditions and loads. The mass and volume fractions of carbon fiber  $f_w$  and aramid  $f_c$  were also determined (Tab. 3).

Table 3. Values of mass and volume share of fibers and matrix in epoxy composites (Przybyłek, 2018).

Mass shares of reinforcement and matrix in laminate									
Carbon fiber $m_w$ , (%) Aramid fiber $m_{A_s}$ (%) Epoxy resin $m_o$ , (%)									
7.24	24.3	68.46							
Volume shares of the reinforcement and matrix in the laminate									
7.04	27.06	65.9							

According to normative documents (14 CFR § 121.344, 2011), each of the modeled covers has been subjected to the following loads:

- 1. A concentrated force of 22 250 N on the square surface (38.5 mm × 38.5 mm for the cover from an epoxy ablation composite and 25.0 mm × 25.0 mm for layers arranged on the metal surface of the recorder housing), directed towards the *y* axis (compression) (Fig. 3).
- 2. A concentrated force of 22 250 N on the node of the edge connecting the bowl with the cylinder, directed at an angle of 45° (Fig. 4).
- 3. A concentrated force of 22 250 N on the surface of the rectangle (12.55 mm × 7.0 mm for the cover from an epoxy ablation composite, 5.00 mm × 7.0 mm for the cover placed on the inner metal surface, 8.0 mm × 6.0 mm placed on the inside and the external surface of the metal housing of the recorder), on the side plane (wall) of the cylinder (Fig. 5).



Figure 3. The load of the cover with concentrated force acting in the direction of the axis y.



Figure 4. The load of the cover with concentrated force at an angle of 45°.



Figure 5. The load of the cover with concentrated force on the side plane (wall) of the cylinder.

In all cases, the adopted boundary conditions corresponded to the fixed groundwork of the model. In addition, a numerical analysis of dynamic tests was performed to determine the durability of the recorder. It consisted in dropping a weight of 227 kg, terminated witha properly shaped tip (width 0.65 cm), from a height of 3 m, onto the protective housing of the recorder, according to the most vulnerable for its damage load direction. In the case of this trial numerical calculations were carried out in the ANSYS Explicit Dynamics module, which allows simulation of dynamic conditions, e.g. for piercing the surface of composites. For this purpose, three three-dimensional models have been developed: weight, composite housing and rigid base, on which the housing is located (Fig. 6).



Figure 6. Numerical 3D model adopted for dynamic calculations for penetration of the composite zone.

The numerical model of the weight and the base has been assumed as a non-deformable element (rigid), made of steel with the Young's modulus of 200 GPa and a Poisson ratio of 0.3.

The composite zone was characterized by orthotropic properties and was treated as a deformable body. The models were divided into six-sided finite elements of the Hex8 type (Hexahedrons). The data presented in Table 4 were used for the calculations.

Table 4. Data accepted for calculating the durability of the recorder housing (Przybyłek, 2018).

Parametr	Value
The discharge height of the weight, (m)	3.0
Velocity adopted for calculations, (Value determined for <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> of energy), (m/s)	4.95

Due to the axial symmetry of the dome, the calculation was limited to its section, constituting  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the whole (Fig. 7). For such a slice there is  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the kinetic energy of the weight, what has been taken into account by reducing the speed accordingly. It allowed to shorten the calculation time.



**Figure 7.** Division into finite elements of type Hex8 (Hexahedrons) of numerical models, accepted into calculation of dynamic resistance of composite sphere to puncture.

Modeled objects are in interaction, treated as a kind of contact (Body Interaction). It was assumed that the modeled base is rigid and immovable, without the possibility of moving in the direction of the x-axis and the z-axis.

### 3. Analysis of results

Based on the results obtained from numerical calculations, the adhesive strength of the joints was assessed. The displacements of the entire model and stress  $\sigma_x$  were analyzed that can cause delamination and stress  $\tau_{yz}$  causing inter-layer shear. Results of stress calculations in all load cases and for all types of placement of the composite in correlation with the metal housing are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

division into load cases and the way of strengthening in MPa (Przybyłek, 2018).	<b>Table 5.</b> Maximum directional stresses of composite layers of the 3D model of cover 1, with	
	division into load cases and the way of strengthening in MPa (Przybyłek, 2018).	

					Bas	sis					Cyli	nder					В	owl			
		lises del)		Maximum stress imposed on adhesive joints																	
		on M ses le mo	Norm	al stress	ses $\sigma_y$	Contact stresses $\tau_{xz}$			Normal stresses $\sigma_{\rm x}$			Contact stresses $\tau_{yz}$			Norn	ial stres	ses $\sigma_y$	Contact stresses $\tau_{xz}$			
Cases		Maximum v stress (in the who	Composite inside	Metal	Composite outside	Composite inside	Metal	Composite outside	Composite inside	Metal	Composite outside	Composite inside	Metal	Composite outside	Composite inside	Metal	Composite outside	Composite inside	Metal	Composite outside	
	1.	120	0,46			0,27			4,53			3,32			7,57			8,29			
Composite cover	2.	50,4	5,6			2			19,3			13,5			7,8			9,8			
	3.	334	37			10,3			112,8			39,8			14,1			7,5			
	4.	242	-	90	13	-	30,5	6	-	22	30	-	62	19	-	10	1,5	-	20	4,3	
Composite cover + metal inside	5.	45,6	-	5,7	2,3	-	14	1,9	-	4	14	-	12,7	12,3	-	2,8	5,3	-	10	0,87	
	6.	90,2	-	0,4	0,1	-	0,26	0,4	-	0,29	0,1	-	0,13	0,08	-	21,8	30	-	16,3	9,7	
	1.	492	0,12	1,12		0,06	1,67		0,3	1,19		0,6	3,1		53	91		3,7	85		
+metal outside	2.	66,8	0,19	10,7		0,34	5,03		0,9	21,7		0,8	24,4		1,13	19		0,28	17,5		
	3.	814	4,8	101		2,5	12,4		5,9	153		13	126		2,3	25		2,1	7,9		
Metal+composite	1.	238,9	0,21	0,75	0,05	0,16	1,65	0,1	0,16	1,76	1,16	0,63	1,76	0,59	0,88	5,06	5,39	3,83	54,79	4,38	
outer cover	2.	33,92	0,075	13,21	1,59	0,34	4,8	0,13	1,19	13,47	1,21	0,81	12,5	0,57	1,18	23,53	0,85	0,31	11,7	0,27	
+composite inner cover	3.	873,5	7,7	46,52	21,02	3,35	18,98	1,12	9,48	16,48	162,8	15,48	135,2	30,53	3,9	40,39	6,8	2,79	19,82	1,71	
												•									

				Bas	sis			Cylinder						Bowl						
	lises del)			Maximum stress imposed on adhesive joints																
Cases		/on M ses le mo	Norm	al stress	es $\sigma_y$	Contact stresses $\tau_{xz}$			Normal stresses $\sigma_x$		Contact stresses $\tau_{yz}$		Normal stresses $\sigma_y$			Contact stresses $\tau_{xz}$				
		Maximum v stresi (in the who	Composite inside	Metal	Composite outside	Composite inside	Metal	Composite outside	Composite inside	Metal	Composite outside	Composite inside	Metal	Composite outside	Composite inside	Metal	Composite outside	Composite inside	Metal	Composite outside
	1.	119,5	0,62	0,62			0,38			5,31			3,87			29,79			10,11	
Composite cover	2.	60,83	0,23	7,05			2,67			24,71			16,2			9,43			11,67	
	3.	464,3	1,51	57,79			6,012			230,2			41,05			12,41			7,78	
Commenting	1.	202	0,34	-	63	13	-	16	1,4	-	23	16	-	66	5	-	9	3	-	6,4
+ metal inside	2.	48	0,05	-	6	2,3		11	0,6	-	4,8	13	-	19	16	-	2,4	6,8	-	5
	3.	130	0,26	-	0,9	0,05	-	0,4	0,13	-	4,5	0,28	-	4,1	0,6	-	7,8	19	-	46,8
a 1	1.	406,4	0,16	0,081	1,48		0,08	1,82		1,8	5,59		1,59	7,2		1,54	34,01		3,29	93,32
+metal outside	2.	62,79	0,04	0,22	13,8		0,42	5,93		0,76	21,76		0,89	23,14		0,43	32,46		0,57	17,04
inetar outside	3.	1080	0,36	4,81	122,3		2,76	11,22		13,17	199,7		15,01	185,5		0,41	48,13		1,28	13,47
Metal+composite	1.	88,79	0,51	0,32	0,03	0,05	0,23	0,15	0,015	0,53	0,82	0,62	2,84	1,92	2,56	4,4	0,1	25,05	7,13	3,79
+composite inner	2.	83,05	0,053	0,3	6,38	3,18	0,69	9,08	0,94	0,83	4,98	19,42	1,18	17,06	20,5	1,42	9,36	11,13	0,34	6,26
cover	3.	397,1	0,81	12,7	20,83	3,34	3,43	28,36	1,97	16,97	26,41	91,64	8,85	80,09	45,07	3,53	26,97	4,32	1,21	15,71

**Table 6.** Maximum directional stresses of composite layers of the 3D model of cover 2, with division into load cases and the way of strengthening in MPa (Przybyłek, 2018).

The use of numerical analysis also enables the development of graphical depiction of stress distributions in the universal cover of the recorder housing (Fig. 8 and 9).



**Figure 8.** Stresses in the universal housing of the aircraft recorder, done from epoxy ablation composite, laden with concentrated force in the direction of the *y* axis (from the top): a) normal stresses that can cause delamination of  $\sigma_y$ , b) shear stresses that may cause inter-layer shear  $\tau_{xz}$ .



**Figure 9.** Stresses in the universal housing of the aircraft recorder, made of epoxy ablation composite, with metal housing placed inside the cover, laden with concentrated force in the direction of the *y* axis (from the top): a) normal stresses that can cause delamination of  $\sigma_y$ , b) shear stresses that may cause inter-layer shear  $\tau_{xz}$ .

The model of the universal cover of the flight recorder also allows determination of the distribution of reduced stresses in individual layers of the cover material (Fig. 10).



**Figure 10.** Stresses reduced in the composite material of the universal housing of the aircraft recorder, made of polymeric ablative composite, laden with concentrated force in the direction of the *y* axis (from the top).

Calculation of the maximum load in the whole model of the universal cover of the recorder (Tables 7 and 8).

	(	Cover 1						
The way of charging	Composite cover	Composite cover + metal inside	Metal + outer composite cover + composite cover inside	Composite cover + metal outside				
	Deformations, (mm)							
Load with concentrated force applied on the side plane of the cylinder	0.60	0.39	0.28	0.22				
Loading force concentrated on the node connecting the canopy with the cylinder pointing at an angle of 45°	0.22	0.03	0.033	0.032				
Load with concentrated force directed along the y direction	1.9	0.043	0.67	0.39				

Table 7. Maximum displacement in the whole model, cover 1 (Przybyłek, 2018).

The distribution of kinetic and potential energy during piercing of the composite thermo-protective casing was determined by numerical simulation for the housing of recorder made of an epoxy ablation composite, with a metal layer located inside the casing.

Analysis of energy changes allows you to observe the reflection of the weight from the material of the spherical cap in 23 400 modeled load cycles for a composite shell (Fig. 11) and 33 650 modeled load cycles for the flight recorder cover made of a polymeric ablative composite with a metal casing placed inside (Fig. 12).

	(	Cover 2						
The way of charging	Composite cover	Composite cover + metal inside	Metal + outer composite cover + composite cover inside	Composite cover + metal outside				
	Deformations, (mm)							
Load with concentrated force applied on the side plane of the cylinder	0.62	0.34	0.51	0.16				
Loading force concentrated on the node connecting the canopy with the cylinder pointing at an angle of 45°	0.23	0.05	0.053	0.04				
Load with concentrated force directed along the <i>y</i> direction	1.51	0.26	0.81	0.04				

Table 8. Maximum displacement in the whole model, cover 2 (Przybyłek, 2018).



**Figure 11.** Graphs of potential energy changes during piercing (dark line) and kinetic energy (light line) universal composite thermo-protective cover (Przybyłek, 2018).



Figure 12. Graphs of potential energy changes during piercing (dark line) and kinetic energy (light line) recorder housing, made of polymer composite, with a metal layer inside the cover (Przybyłek, 2018).

Numerically obtained results in the form of maximum values of reduced stresses (von Misessa), shown in Figure 13, refer to the calculation results for a composite cover.



Figure 13. The average value of von Misess's stresses in the elements of the composite cover (Przybyłek, 2018).

Von Misess stresses, when trying to penetrate the composite cover, obtain the maximum value after time t = 0.00036 s (Fig. 14).



Figure 14. Graph of mean von Misessa stress values in cover elements, including the point (t = 0.00036 s), with the highest value of stresses during piercing (Przybyłek, 2018).

Changes in the energy and von Mises stress values during penetration of the composite shell show the process of the weight reflecting off the protective cover. Normal stress values in the direction of the *y*-axis are important for individual cases, as they suggest partial damage to the cover material (Fig. 15).





There is an analogic observation in the case of shear stresses in the xz plane for a composite shell (Fig. 16) and for the housing of a recorder made of a polymeric ablative composite with a metal layer placed inside the cover. Stress values in the metal layer are negligible.



Figure 16. The average value of tangential stresses in the xz plane in elements of an autonomous composite shell, likely to cause inter-layer shear (Przybyłek, 2018).

# 4. Conclusions

The numerical analyses carried out are subject to uncertainty due to the inability to verify them with the experiment. However, they enable preliminary assessment of the considered types of placement of the composite cover in combination with the metal layer of the recorder. The influence of geometrical dimensions on the stress value  $\sigma_x$  was considered, which can cause delamination of the composite layers and  $\tau_{yz}$  stresses that may cause inter-cutting shear.

Based on the analysis carried out, it can be concluded that the metal layer will not be damaged during breakthrough, while the composite layer will be partially damaged in both cases, which will reduce its thermo protective properties. In both cases the punch will be reflected from the tested structure. When loading a model reinforced with an inner metal layer, higher stresses in the composite can be observed compared to the second case. Results have been analyzed and conclusions have been made regarding the possibility of creating a real shield for the recorder, which will meet the normative requirements.

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