

Reed Switch Protection

The hermetically-sealed reed switch used in GEMS level switches are extremely rugged and designed to operate reliably for many years – 2 million cycles under ideal conditions. To achieve the maximum service life, reed switches benefit from protected electrical supply.

IMPORTANT:

- Don't be misled by the resistive ratings of the switches. Most applications involve inductive loads.
- Don't be misled by the wattage ratings of loads. Low wattage loads are often high inductive devices, making contact protection very important.

Contact Protection Requirements

When switching inductive loads such as relays, solenoids and transformers, reed switch contacts require protection in order to ensure long, dependable life. When current is interrupted, the inductance or electrical inertia of the load generates a large high frequency voltage, which appears across the switch contacts. If the voltage is large enough, it can break down the medium in the gap between them, making a conductive path. This phenomenon, called "arcing," is the spark you see. Arcing can cause the contacts to burn, weld together or stick; thus, giving unreliable performance. The purpose of protection circuits is to prevent arcing, by shorting this voltage through an alternate path.

Recommended Protection

D.C.

A 1N4004 diode (or equivalent) connected cathode-to-positive, as shown in Figure 1, is recommended. The diode does not conduct when the load is energized, but conducts and shorts out the generated voltage when the switch opens. The generated voltage always acts in series with the applied voltage.

A.C.

A resistor and capacitor, connected in parallel with the switch, as shown in Figure 2, is recommended. The capacitor is a high impedance to 60 hertz, but is essentially a short circuit to high frequencies of generated voltages.

Transient suppressors or varistors may also be used to dissipate the transient and protect the switch contacts.

Notes:

1. Don't be misled by low voltage $\leq 10V$, low current $\leq 1mA$ type of loads. These loads may require special gold plating on contact surfaces to operate reliably at these low voltage/low current levels. For long term reliable low current switching action, Gems 20VA switches should be operated at a minimum of 12V to assure contact make; e.g., break through an oxide film which may form over long periods of time.
2. Incandescent lamp loads are very destructive to reed switch applications. These type of loads have a 6-10 time the normal operating current (inrush current) when first energized. This high current level is a prime factor which decreases the life of the switch.
3. The following rating may be used for selection.

$$V_{RMS} = 130 \text{ volts} \quad \text{Energy} = 30\text{-}50 \text{ joules} \quad \text{Peak Amps} = 4000\text{-}6000$$

The dependable reed switch is at the heart of most level switch shown in this catalog.

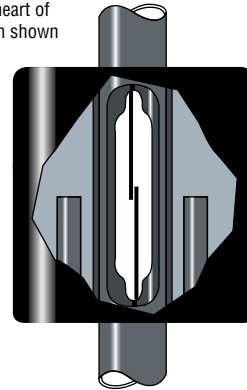


Figure 1
D.C. Contact Protection
(Drain the Load)

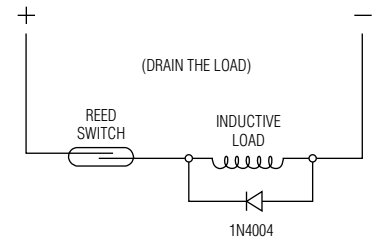


Figure 2
A.C. Contact Protection
(Protect the Switch)

