

How Accurate Is Your ac Measurement?

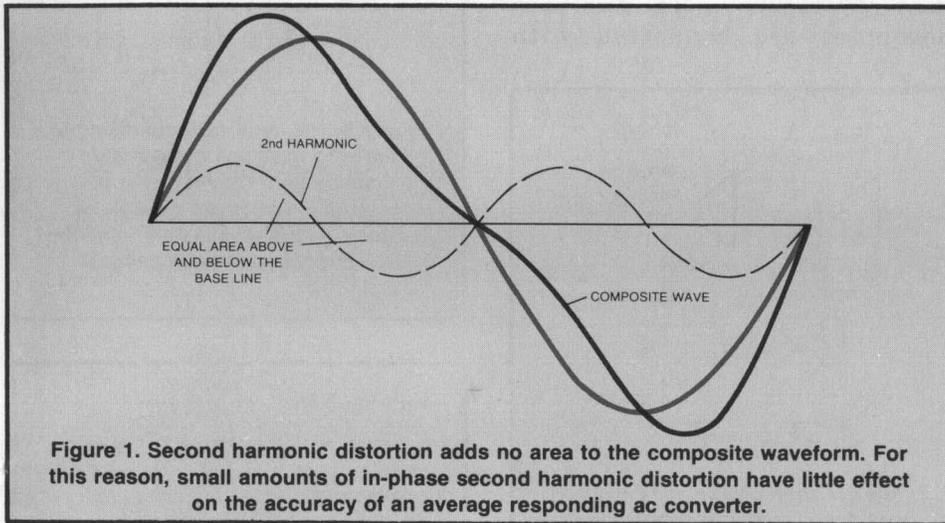


Figure 1. Second harmonic distortion adds no area to the composite waveform. For this reason, small amounts of in-phase second harmonic distortion have little effect on the accuracy of an average responding ac converter.

by Ken Jessen,
HP Loveland Division

Making ac measurements? Just hook up an ac meter and read the voltage. Right? Maybe. The vast majority of ac meters on the market today are average responding and calibrated to read the rms value of a sine wave. This type of meter works fine for many applications, but will produce large errors for distorted sine waves, square waves, pulses, or signals superimposed on noise.

Average responding ac meters are popular because they are easy to build. The internal circuitry consists of a diode bridge producing rectified output that is simply filtered into dc to drive the meter (very much like a common power supply). The meter may say "RMS VOLTS" on its face, but it actually measures average value and adds an 11% calibration factor to obtain the rms value. The 11% calibration factor is only accurate for pure sine waves. Suppose

you take an average responding ac meter and use it to measure a signal composed of numerous frequencies mixed together — something other than a pure sine wave. An average responding meter will produce large errors for these complex signals. Only a pure sine wave devoid of harmonics will be read accurately. Even very small amounts of distortion, not visible on an oscilloscope, cause errors.

The accuracy of an average responding ac meter depends on many things such as the type of distortion and even its phase shift relative to the fundamental. Let's say that the fundamental is mixed with some second harmonic (Figure 1). During a half cycle, there is as much area above the base line as below for the second harmonic. For small amounts of second harmonic distortion, or any other even harmonic for that matter, little error is produced in an average responding ac meter.

For a third harmonic signal, an extra half cycle is either added (Figure 2a) or subtracted (Figure 2b) depending on phase. Readings taken with an average responding ac meter become unpredictable for odd harmonics. In this example, as the phase of the third harmonic is changed, an average responding ac meter will undergo fluctuations above and below the true rms value

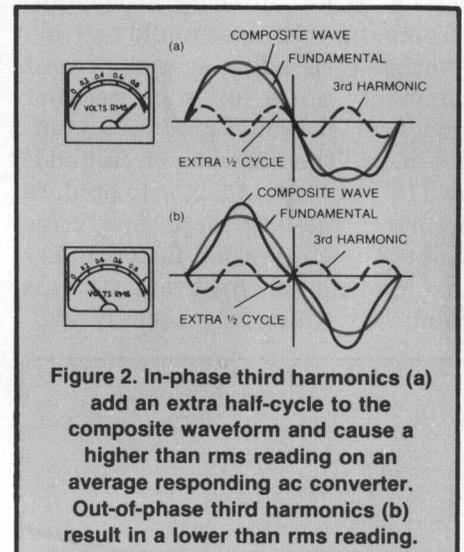


Figure 2. In-phase third harmonics (a) add an extra half-cycle to the composite waveform and cause a higher than rms reading on an average responding ac converter. Out-of-phase third harmonics (b) result in a lower than rms reading.

(Figure 3). Odd harmonics are the biggest source of errors; errors produced by even harmonics are not as severe. The point is that the type, phase, and amount of distortion are usually not known.

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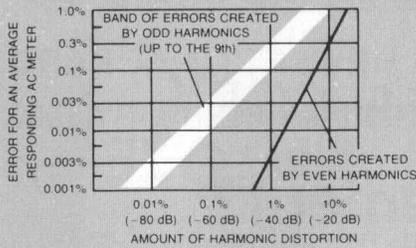


Figure 3. Error produced when an average responding ac meter is used to read the fundamental.

Trying to measure a square wave with an average responding ac meter is next to hopeless. For example, the square wave in Figure 4 has a peak-to-peak amplitude of 2V. The heating or rms value is 1V. This voltage as measured by an average responding voltmeter would be 1.1V. Average responding ac meters most commonly use a full wave rectifier bridge which would produce an output of 1V. The metering circuit adds an 11% calibration factor to produce a correct reading for a sine wave input. The calibration factor makes the reading too high and at this point, everything may seem bleak.

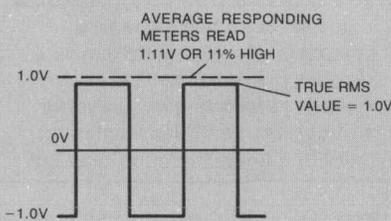


Figure 4. Average responding ac meters will read 11% higher than the true rms value of a symmetrical square wave.

Don't Give Up

If you are trying to measure the true rms value of something other than a sine wave, you need a true rms ac meter. The simplest type puts the ac signal into a fine heater wire. A thermocouple in close proximity to the wire measures the temperature

rise in the wire. Obviously, a wire is insensitive to the ac signal's geometry.

One limitation to this technique is that ambient temperature adds to the heat produced by the ac signal. To overcome this, a second, carefully matched thermocouple is placed in series with the measuring thermocouple (Figure 5). The two thermocouples are connected with

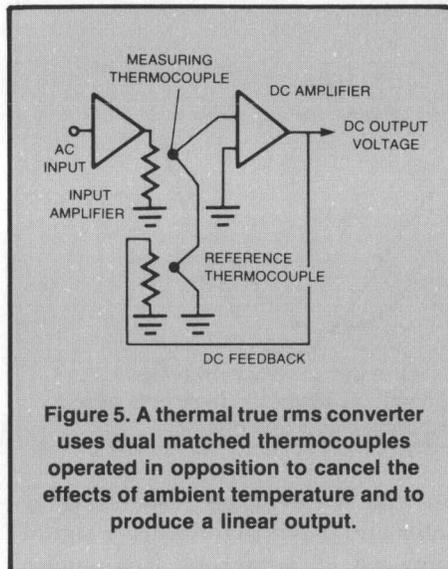


Figure 5. A thermal true rms converter uses dual matched thermocouples operated in opposition to cancel the effects of ambient temperature and to produce a linear output.

polarities opposing to offset changes in ambient temperature and also to remove any nonlinearities. Unfortunately, the fine heater wire is difficult to protect from overvoltage. Protection circuitry combined with the cost of the matched thermocouples makes this type of true rms responding ac meter expensive. However, you get what you pay for because the true rms ac meter can accurately measure a wide variety of wave shapes and pulses.

For a pulse originating at the zero base line (Figure 6), the dc component will be ignored when measured by most true rms meters because they are capacitively coupled. There are a few true rms responding meters, however, that do have a dc-coupled mode and are able to measure "ac + dc."

Average responding ac meters are inexpensive and are fine for measuring sine waves where high accuracy is not required. But for non-sinusoids, only a true rms responding ac meter will do.

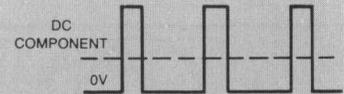


Figure 6. These pulses originating at the zero base line contain a dc component. Only a true rms responding ac meter capable of measuring ac + dc can determine the true rms value of such a signal.

Editor's Note

In the last issue of *Bench Briefs* the Capacitor article had two typesetting errors that affected readability and sense. On page 5, the formula under step c should read $f = \frac{1}{2\pi\sqrt{LC}}$. And on page 5, the last line in the middle column should be moved to the space between the bottom of Figure 9 and the text that has "allowed" as the first word. The sentence would read - "If the amplified signal current was also allowed to flow in R1, the dc bias. . ."

We also received a letter from Square D Company concerning my example 1.0 farad capacitor.

Dear Sir:

The one farad capacitor exercise appearing in the September-October, 1979 issue of the "Bench Briefs" is grossly distorted by the use of an air dielectric and super-wide plate spacing. Using that same criteria, even a one pf. capacitor would have plates of over three square feet each.

In reality, one farad capacitors are available (with low working voltages) in sizes approximating that of a Coors beer can.

Yours truly,

William Keys
Supervisor,
Electronics and Controls

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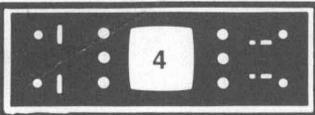
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Model 1615A	April 16 - 18 October 15 - 17	Colorado Springs Division	\$300/student	Jerry Lopez
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Models 8566A Microwave/ 8568A Programmable	September 15 - 19	Santa Rosa Division	\$400/student	Jim Boyer
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supplement to
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745A AC CALIBRATOR

745A-17B-S. Serials 00741-00101 through 1319A01670 and 745A-H18's 1319A01671 and above. Modification to eliminate safety hazard at Counter Output B and C.

745A-19. All serials. New troubleshooting and calibration procedure.

905A COAXIAL SLIDING LOAD

905A-1. All serials. Procedure to lubricate coaxial sliding load body.

907A COAXIAL SLIDING LOAD

907A-1. All serials. Procedure to lubricate coaxial sliding load body.

911A AND 911C COAXIAL SLIDING LOAD

911A-1/911C-1. All serials. Procedure to lubricate coaxial sliding load body.

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1332A-11. Serials 1616A6300 and below. Modification to improve +158V power supply stability.

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1821A TIME BASE

1821A-10. All serials. Preferred replacement for transistors Q107 and Q305.

1821F TIME BASE

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2804A QUARTZ THERMOMETER

2804A-1. Serials 1744A00277 and below. Modification to correct EOI and line with HP-IB.

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3325A SYNTHESIZER/ FUNCTION GENERATOR

3325A-1A. Serials 1748A01200 and below. Modification to the over-voltage protection circuit of the A2 power supply.

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3455A-14. All serials. Modifications to improve A/D converter performance.

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3469B DIGITAL MULTIMETER

3469B-7. Serials 1233A01150 and below. Procedure to replace panel meter.

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3745A/B-18B. Serials 1812U and below. Retrofit kit for special option H07.

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3771A/B-4. Serials below 1926U. Modification to improve gain hits, dropouts and input balance.

3771A/B-5. Serials below 1851U-00123 (3771A) and 1851U-00120 (3771B). New carrying handle.

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4940A-15. Modification to improve low frequency phase jitter measurement.

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5301A-U-1. Serials 1902U-01151 to 1902U-01180. Modification to improve addressable mode.

5314A UNIVERSAL COUNTER

5314A-2. Serials 1828 and below. New A2 power supply assembly.

5328A UNIVERSAL COUNTER

5328A-19B. Serials 1816 and below. Modification to improve trigger level settings.

5328A-22A. Series 1624 and 1632. Signature analysis troubleshooting procedure for option 011.

5328AF/096, 5328A/F098, 5328A/H42, C96-5328A MHz UNIVERSAL FREQUENCY COUNTERS

5328A-24. All serials. Revision of the A12 amplifier assembly sensitivity-offset adjustment procedure.

5340A FREQUENCY COUNTER

5340A-12. All serials. A1 and A2 preamplifier troubleshooting information.

5341 FREQUENCY COUNTER

5341-5. All serials. Preferred replacement part for assembly A4.

**5342A MICROWAVE
FREQUENCY COUNTER**

5342A-13. All serials. Modification to eliminate talk only problem.

5345A ELECTRONIC COUNTERS

5345A-14. All serials. Elimination of shorting between circuit boards and board sockets.

5345A-15. Serials 1920A and below. Modification to improve mechanical interconnection with plug-ins.

5345A-16. A13 boards with series 1820 and 1912. Modification to prevent miscounting on REG CLK line.

5363A/B TIME INTERVAL PROBE

5363A-4/5363B-3. All serials. Preferred replacement part for diode assembly CR1.

5363B-1. Serials 1832A and below. Modification to prevent trigger output oscillations.

5363B-2. Serials 1920A00190 and below. Modification to prevent the metal mounting flange of the variable resistor R18, which is ground, from shorting to the +5V printed trace.

5420A DIGITAL SIGNAL ANALYZER

5420A-16. List of 5420A control cartridges.

5420A-20. 5441A display: serials 1836 and below. 5443A keyboard/controller: Serials 1904 and below. Modification to change LED's to prevent sticky keys.

5526A LASER INTERFEROMETER

5526A-5. 5500C laser head: Serials below 1920A. Replacement of the high voltage and PZT power supplies.

5500C LASER HEAD

5526A-5. 5500C laser head: Serials below 1920A. Replacement of the high voltage and PZT power supplies.

6824A DC POWER SUPPLY

6824A-1. Serials 1914A02730 and below. Preferred replacement part for transistor Q2, Q13, Q14.

**8160A PROGRAMMABLE PULSE
GENERATOR**

8160A-1. Serials 1804G00187 and below. Modification to improve burst function.

8165A PROGRAMMABLE SIGNAL SOURCE

8165A-4. Serials 1821G00340 and below. Modification to improve remote operation.

8165A-5. Serials 1812G00340 and below. Modification to improve LED driver circuit.

8165A-6. Serials 1812G00400 and below. Modification to keep PC boards in position.

8165A-7. Serials 1812G00420 and below. Modification to improve sweep linearity.

**8481A/8482A/8483A THERMOCOUPLE
POWER SENSORS**

8481A-2A/8482A-1/8483A-1. 8481A serials 1550A and below, 84482A serials 1551A and below, and 8483A serials 1602A and below. Preferred replacement for input amplifier assembly.

**8481H/8482H THERMOCOUPLE
POWER SENSORS**

8481H-1/8482H-1. 8481H serials 1545A and below and 8482H serials 1545A and below. Preferred replacement for connector assembly.

8568A SPECTRUM ANALYZER

8568A-18. All serials. Improved A23FL1 low pass filter assembly.

8640A/B SIGNAL GENERATOR

8640A-29. All serials. Test procedure for modulation performance tests and adjustments.

8640B-34. All serials. Test procedure for alternate modulation performance tests and adjustments.

**8660A/B/C SYNTHESIZED SIGNAL
GENERATOR**

8660A-19A. 8660A: All serials. Preferred power transformer replacement.

8660A-30. 8660A: All serials. List of A3A1 and A3A2 remote programming interface assemblies.

8660B-18C. 8660B serials 1343A and below. Recommended replacement for A7 power line module.

8630C-10. 8660C: All serials. List of A3A1 and A3A2 remote programming interface assemblies.

8672A SYNTHESIZED SIGNAL GENERATOR

8672A-6. All serials. Modifications necessary to allow an external signal generator to be substituted for the 20 to 30 MHz phase lock loop in the 8672A (option H04 retrofit).

8750A STORAGE-NORMALIZER

8750A-9. All serials. W2 digital interface cable assembly replacement kit.

8754A NETWORK ANALYZER

8754A-1. Serials 1825A00175 and below. New insulator for A7 source assembly heat sink.

9571A - DTS 70

9571A-4. All serials. DTS70 software BUG/DIR modification.

9571A-6. All serials. Modification to prevent DM, MP errors in regenerated systems.

9571A-7. All serials. Modification to the welcome file when memory is reconfigured.

9571A-8. All serials. Explanation of two bugs in Rev. D software used with F Series computers. New Rev. E software eliminates these bugs.

10264A LOGIC STATE ANALYZER

10264A-1. Serials 1837A01706 and below (1611A option 001). Modification to prevent randomly incorrect triggering.

33311B/C COAXIAL SWITCHES

33311B-2/33311C-1. Serials 1560A and below. Modification to improve contact reliability of coaxial switches.

86245A RF PLUG-IN

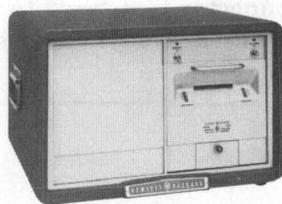
86245A-1. Serials 1818A and 1837A. Installation of a clamp circuit to prevent frequency lock up.

86290B RF PLUG-IN

86290B-1. Serials 1852A and below. 10 kHz amplitude modulation on the RF output of the 86290B RF Plug-In.

Safety-Related Service Notes

Service Notes from HP relating to personal safety and possible equipment damage are of vital importance to our customers. To make you more aware of these important notes, they are printed on paper with a red border, and the service note number has a "-S" suffix. In order to make you immediately aware of any potential safety problems, we are highlighting safety-related service notes here with a brief description of each problem. Also, in order to draw your attention to safety-related service notes on the service note order form at the back of *Bench Briefs* each appropriate number is highlighted by being printed in color.

**562A Digital Recorder**

A shock hazard from the ac power switch terminals is present whenever the front panel door is open. This condition is corrected by insulating the terminals with silicone rubber compound (DOW Corning 731 RTV or equivalent, HP pn 0470-0012) according to the directions in Safety Service Note 562A-2-S.

1. Unplug the ac power cord and open the hinged front panel door.

2. Loosen the two printer mechanism retaining screws located on the lower front corners of the mechanism by turning them 1/4 turn CCW.
3. Slide the printer mechanism out of the cabinet.
4. Apply a 1/8 inch (.3cm) thick coating of silicone rubber to the power switch terminals. Allow the coating to dry.
5. Apply a second coating of silicone rubber over the first, covering the entire back side of the switch at least 1/8 inch (.3cm) thick.
6. Replace the printer mechanism.

Please order Safety Service Note 562A-2-S with the form at the back of *Bench Briefs*.

If you want service notes, please check the appropriate boxes below and return this form separately to one of the following addresses.

Hewlett-Packard
1820 Embarcadero Road
Palo Alto, California 94303

For European customers (ONLY)

Hewlett-Packard
Central Mailing Dept.
P. O. Box 529
Van Hueven Goedhartlaan 121
AMSTELVEEN—1134
Netherlands

NAME _____

COMPANY NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 495A-8B | <input type="checkbox"/> 2804A-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3779A-5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5341-5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8568A-18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 562A-2-S | <input type="checkbox"/> 3312A-2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3779A-8 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5342A-13 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8640A-29 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 745A-17B-S | <input type="checkbox"/> 3325A-1A | <input type="checkbox"/> 3779A-9 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5345A-14 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8640B-34 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 745A-19 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3325A-3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3779B-7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5345A-15 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8660A-19A |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 905A-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3325A-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3779B-8 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5345A-16 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8660A-30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 907A-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3438A-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3779B-9 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5363A-4/5363B-3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8660B-18C |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 911A-1/911C-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3455A-12C | <input type="checkbox"/> 3780A-9A-S | <input type="checkbox"/> 5363B-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8660C-10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1332A-10 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3455A-14 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3780A-14A | <input type="checkbox"/> 5363B-2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8672A-6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1332A-11 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3467A-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3780A-17 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5420A-16 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8750A-9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1333A-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3469B-7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4940A-15 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5420A-20 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8754A-1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1333A-5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3710A-21 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5045A-17 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5526A-5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 9571A-4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1333A-8 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3745A/B-14A | <input type="checkbox"/> 5045A-19 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6824A-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 9571A-6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1335A-9 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3745A/B-18B | <input type="checkbox"/> 5062C-2A | <input type="checkbox"/> 8160A-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 9571A-7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1336P-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3745A/B-20B | <input type="checkbox"/> 5301-U-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8165A-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 9571A-8 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1350A-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3770A-38 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5314A-2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8165A-5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 10264A-1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1820A-8 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3770B-14A | <input type="checkbox"/> 5328A-19B | <input type="checkbox"/> 8165A-6 | <input type="checkbox"/> 33311B-2/33311C-1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1821A-10 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3771A/B-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5328A-22A | <input type="checkbox"/> 8165A-7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 86245A-1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1821F-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3771A/B-5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5328A-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8481A-2A/8482A-1/8483A-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 86290B-1 |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> 5340A-12 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8481H-1/8482H-2 | |

Does A Sliding Load Need Lubrication?

You bet it does. HP models 905, 907, and 911 50 ohm coaxial sliding loads require a small amount of

PML grease (pn 6040-0024) between the connector and body to reduce friction. Please order Service Notes

905A-1, 907A-1, or 911A-1/911C-1 with the order form at the rear of *Bench Briefs*.

HEWLETT-PACKARD COMPANY

1820 Embarcadero Road
Palo Alto, California 94303

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