

Radial Lip Seal Torque—Measurement Method and Results

1. **Scope**—This SAE Recommended Practice provides information on procedures, tools, and fixtures useful in determining frictional torque measurement of radial lip oil seals. Information on the effect of various operational environments on oil seals are discussed and a means of calculation of power consumption of seals is provided.
2. **References**
 - 2.1 **Applicable Publications**—The following publications form a part of this specification to the extent specified herein. Unless otherwise specified, the latest issue of SAE publications shall apply.
 - 2.1.1 **SAE PUBLICATIONS**—Available from SAE, 400 Commonwealth Drive, Warrendale, PA 15096-0001.
 - SAE J110—Seals Testing of Radial Lip
 - SAE J946—Application Guide to Radial Lip
 - SAE J1901—Lip Force Measurement, Radial Lip Seals
 - SAE Paper 841145—The Effect of Operating Parameters Upon Radial Lip Seal Performance, September, 1984, L. A. Horve, CR Industries, Elgin, IL
 - 2.1.2 **RMA PUBLICATIONS**—Available from Rubber Manufacturers Association, Washington DC.
 - RMA OS-1—Shaft Finishing Techniques for Rotating Shaft Seals, RMA Handbook
 - RMA OS-6—Radial Lip Type Shaft Seals—Radial Force Measurement, RMA Handbook
 - RMA OS-9—The Effect of Test Variables Upon Shaft Lip Seal Performance, RMA Technical Bulletin
 - RMA OS-15—Measuring Radial Lip Seal Torque and Power Consumption, RMA Technical Bulletin
3. **Radial Lip Oil Seal Frictional Torque**—The radial lip oil seal is designed to retain lubricants and exclude contaminants. Retaining lubricants depends upon maintaining an interference fit between the shaft and the sealing lip throughout the life of the seal (Figure 1). The interference fit between the shaft and the sealing lip results in radial forces that create the sealing force. These forces also generate frictional torque when the shaft rotates. This frictional torque consumes power and reduces the efficiency of operating equipment. Frictional torque also generates heat that can be detrimental to the sealing element, the lubricant, and the bearings contained within the mechanical device. It is, thus, important to define consistent methods of measuring seal torque. The methods described and data generated in this document pertain to a radial lip oil seal operating with oil only as the lubricant. Seals with grease as a lubricant may require different test procedures. The torque trend of seals operating in grease may not parallel the trends discussed in this document.

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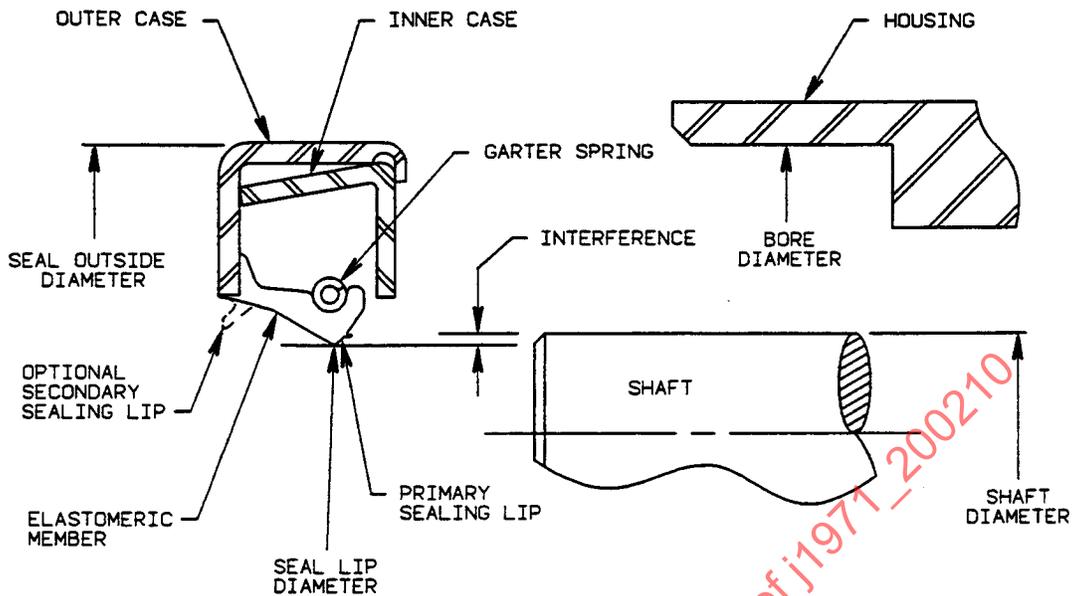


FIGURE 1—TYPICAL RADIAL LIP OIL SEAL

4. Test Equipment and Procedure

4.1 Torque Measurement with a Torque Wrench—A crude measurement of seal torque can be obtained with a fixture to hold the seal and a torque wrench. The recommended procedure is as follows:

4.1.1 A fixture similar to the one shown in Figure 2 shall be used. Zero shaft-to-bore misalignment (STBM) is desired, but readings of 0.08 mm (0.003 in) or less shall be acceptable.

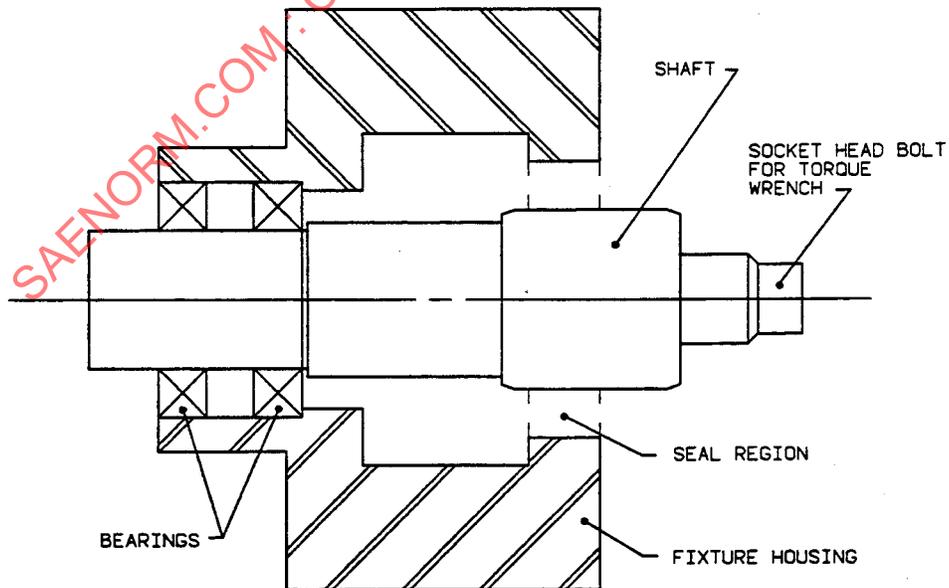


FIGURE 2—FIXTURE TO MEASURE SEAL TORQUE WITH TORQUE WRENCH

4.1.2 The shaft size shall be recorded and must conform to SAE standards shown in Table 1. (Reference SAE J946.)

TABLE 1—SHAFT DIAMETER TOLERANCES

| Shaft Diameter mm | Tolerance mm | Shaft Diameter in | Tolerance in |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| through 75.0 | ±0.08 | through 3.000 | ±0.003 |
| 75.01 to 150.0 | ±0.10 | 3.001 to 6.000 | ±0.004 |
| 150.01 to 250.0 | ±0.13 | 6.001 to 10.000 | ±0.005 |

4.1.3 The shaft must conform to SAE standards with a surface roughness of 0.25 to 0.50 μm (10 to 20 μin) Ra, a machine lead angle of 0 min \pm 3 min and a hardness of Rockwell C30 minimum. (Reference SAE J946 and SAE J110.)

4.1.4 The dynamic runout of the shaft shall be measured with a dial indicator and should be less than 0.08 mm (0.003 in) TIR.

4.1.5 The seal lip ID and radial force (reference SAE J1901 and SAE 841145) shall be measured and recorded.

4.1.6 The test shall normally be conducted at room temperature. If values at elevated temperatures are desired, then the test fixture shown in Figure 2 should be equipped with heaters and controlled within ± 3 °C (± 5 °F). It is recommended that the fixture head be filled with a fluid to promote heat transfer and prevent hot spots.

4.1.7 The seal lip should be lubricated lightly with oil (SAE 30 engine oil is recommended).

4.1.8 The seal shall be installed in the fixture.

4.1.9 A torque wrench divided into 0.01 N·m (1.43 oz·in) increments or smaller is placed on the end of the shaft and turned slowly (about 60 rpm). The torque required to move the shaft is recorded. This procedure will provide relative information for guidance only. It will not predict the torque of a seal operating under actual application conditions.

4.2 Torque Measurement with an Electronic Device—An electronic transducer can be placed between a drive motor and a test head (Figure 3) to provide accurate torque readings at a variety of application conditions (shaft speed, sump temperature, pressure, etc.). The test head must meet the standard SAE requirements (Reference RMA OS-1). It is recommended that air bearings be used to reduce system friction. The intrinsic friction of the spindle assembly should be held to less than 1% of the seal torque to be measured. This can be verified by measuring the spindle torque without a seal installed. The recommended test procedure is:

4.2.1 The shaft size shall be recorded and must conform to the SAE standards of Table 1 (Reference SAE J946).

4.2.2 The shaft must conform to SAE standards with a surface roughness of 0.25 to 0.50 μm (10 to 20 μin) Ra, a machine lead angle of 0 min \pm 3 min and a hardness of Rockwell C30 minimum (Reference SAE J946 and SAE J110).

4.2.3 The dynamic runout of the shaft shall be measured with a dial indicator and recorded.

4.2.4 The seal lip ID and radial load (Reference SAE J1901 and SAE 841145) shall be measured and recorded.

4.2.5 The seal shall be installed in a suitable end plate and assembled onto the housing.

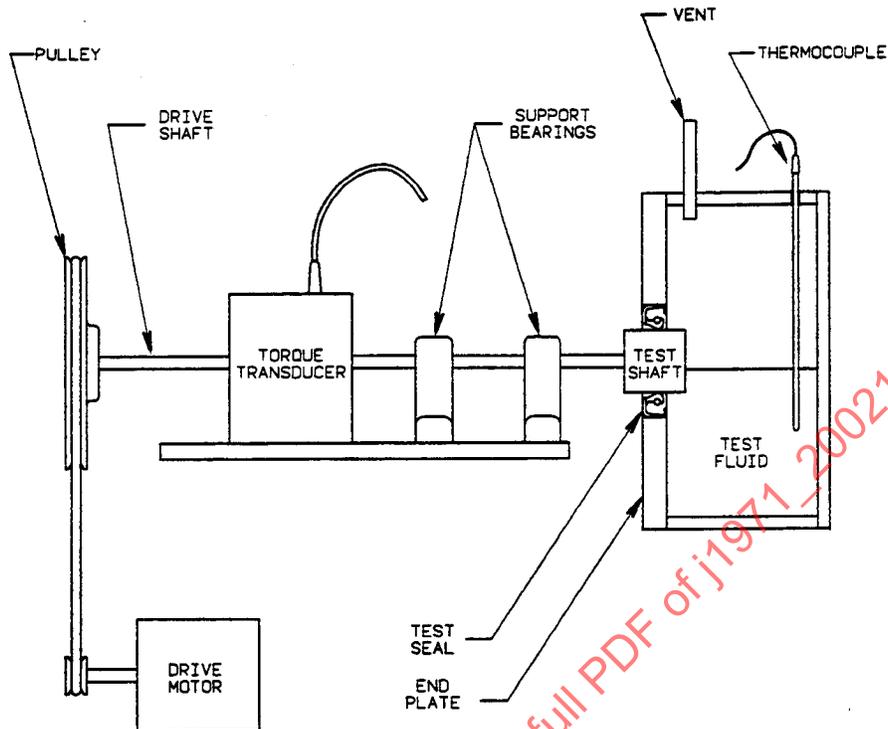


FIGURE 3—ELECTRONIC TORQUE MEASURING MACHINE

- 4.2.6 The shaft shall be inserted into the seal. It is important that the depth of insertion be standardized since fluid drag on the shaft can influence torque readings. It is also important to standardize the sump volume when constructing more than one test machine.
- 4.2.7 The shaft-to-bore misalignment shall be measured and recorded.
- 4.2.8 The sump shall be filled to the desired level with the test lubricant. It is important to fill the sump to the same level when comparing different seal designs and/or materials since the amount of fluid in the sump can affect torque readings.
- 4.2.9 The fluid shall be heated to the desired temperature and the shaft shall be rotated at a surface speed of 8.65m/s (1700 ft/min) for 20 h to break-in a new seal.
- NOTE—If data are generated at different sump temperatures, then a chart of lubricant viscosity versus temperature will be useful.
- 4.2.10 The torque of the seal shall be measured at 500 rpm after the torque has stabilized to less than 1% change within any 10 min period.
- 4.2.11 The shaft speed shall be increased in 500 rpm increments until the maximum desired surface speed is reached. The torque is recorded at each speed after the torque value has stabilized to less than 1% variation within a 10 min period.

4.2.12 A curve of seal torque versus shaft speed shall be generated.

NOTE—Even if the sump temperature is maintained constant, seal underlip temperature will increase with speed and affect the viscosity of the fluid in the immediate vicinity of the seal lip. This will have a diminishing effect on true seal torque and must be considered when analyzing torque versus speed results.

4.2.13 Torque data should always be qualified by specifying the following conditions:

- a. Speed
- b. Sump temperature
- c. Fill level and volume
- d. Oil type and viscosity
- e. Set-up geometry (Shaft-to-bore Misalignment (STBM), Dynamic Run-Out (DRO), and Angular Misalignment or Seal Cock)
- f. Direction of shaft rotation

5. **Calculation of Power Consumption**—The power (Pkw or Php) consumed by the oil seal is the product of torque (T) and shaft speed(s). Torque is usually measured in Newton meters or ounce inches and the shaft speed is measured in revolutions per minute (rpm). The following equations are used to calculate power:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Php} &= 9.917 \times 10^{-7} (\text{Toi S}) \text{ horsepower} \\ \text{Php} &= 1.404 \times 10^{-4} (\text{Tnm S}) \text{ horsepower} \\ \text{Pkw} &= 7.395 \times 10^{-7} (\text{Toi S}) \text{ kilowatts} \\ \text{Pkw} &= 1.046 \times 10^{-4} (\text{Tnm S}) \text{ kilowatts} \\ \text{Tnm} &= 7.063 \times 10^{-3} \text{Toi} \\ \text{Toi} &= 141.6 \text{Tnm} \\ \text{Pkw} &= 0.7457 \text{Php} \\ \text{Php} &= 1.341 \text{Pkw} \end{aligned}$$

where:

Toi is torque in ounce inch
 Tnm is torque in Newton meters
 S is shaft speed in rpm
 Php is power in horsepower
 Pkw is power in kilowatts

6. **Effects of Operating Conditions on Oil Seal Torque Measurements**—Oil seal torque depends upon many variables which include seal design, material, and operating parameters. Actual test data are presented to define how variations in operating parameters affect seal torque and power consumption. These data are meant to be used as a guide only and the absolute values obtained are valid only for the seal design and material tested. The trends shown in the curves will apply to other seal designs and material. Absolute torque values for other seal designs and materials must be measured with electronic equipment similar to that described in 4.2.

6.1 **Oil Seal Torque and Power Consumption versus Shaft Speed**—At a constant temperature with a full sump, seal torque dips slightly from the breakaway value at low speeds and then increases approximately linearly with speed (Figure 4). See power consumption increases as speed increases (Figure 5).

SEAL MATERIAL ————— FLUOROELASTOMER
 SHAFT SIZE ————— 76.2 mm (3.000 in)
 BORE SIZE ————— 101.6 mm (4.000 in)
 WIDTH ————— 12.7 mm (0.500 in)
 TEST FLUID ————— MOBIL 1
 STBM ————— 0.0
 D.R.O. ————— LESS THAN 0.08 mm (0.003 in)
 DIRECTION OF SHAFT ROTATION ——— CW
 BREAK IN PROCEDURE ————— 20 HOUR BREAK IN AT 2000 RPM AND
 149°C (300°F)
 SUMP LEVEL ————— FULL
 SUMP TEMPERATURE ————— 149°C (300°F)

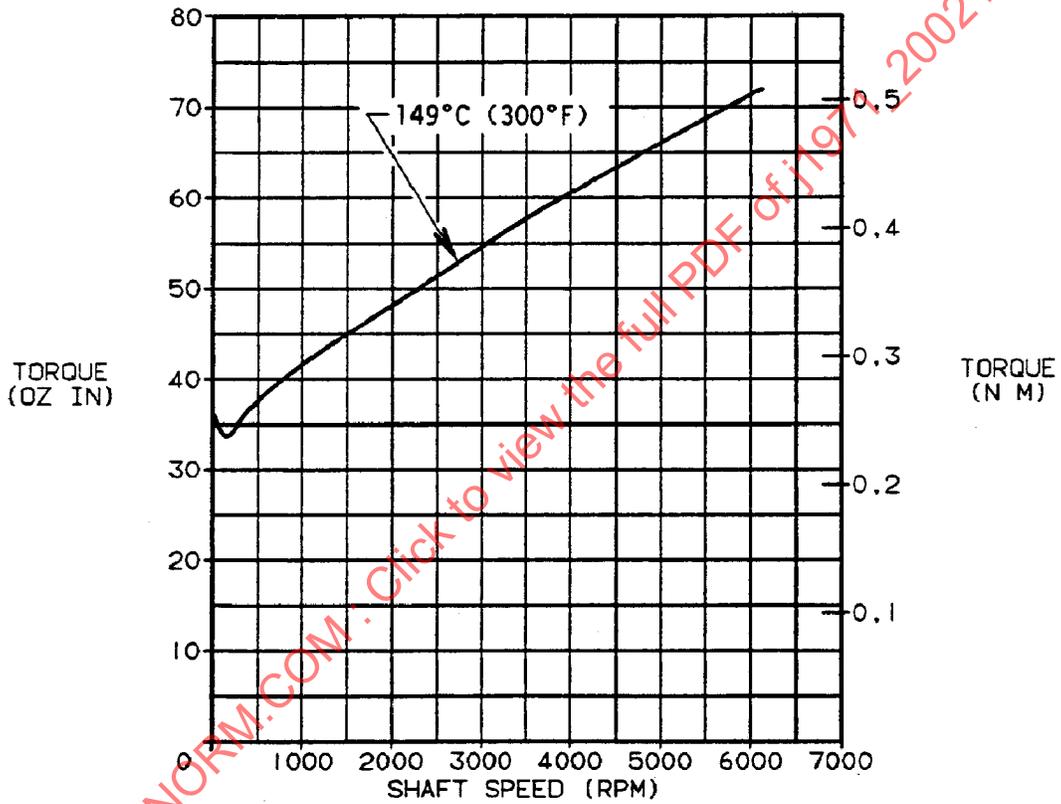


FIGURE 4—SEAL TORQUE VERSUS SHAFT SPEED

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| SEAL MATERIAL ----- | FLUROELASTOMER |
| SHAFT SIZE ----- | 76.2 mm (3.000 in) |
| BORE SIZE ----- | 101.6 mm (4.000 in) |
| WIDTH ----- | 12.7 mm (0.500 in) |
| TEST FLUID ----- | MOBIL 1 |
| STBM ----- | 0.0 |
| D.R.O. ----- | LESS THAN 0.08 mm (0.003 in) |
| DIRECTION OF SHAFT ROTATION --- | CW. |
| BREAK IN PROCEDURE ----- | 20 HOUR BREAK IN AT 2000 RPM AND 149° C (300° F) |
| SUMP LEVEL ----- | FULL |
| SUMP TEMPERATURE ----- | 149° C (300° F) |

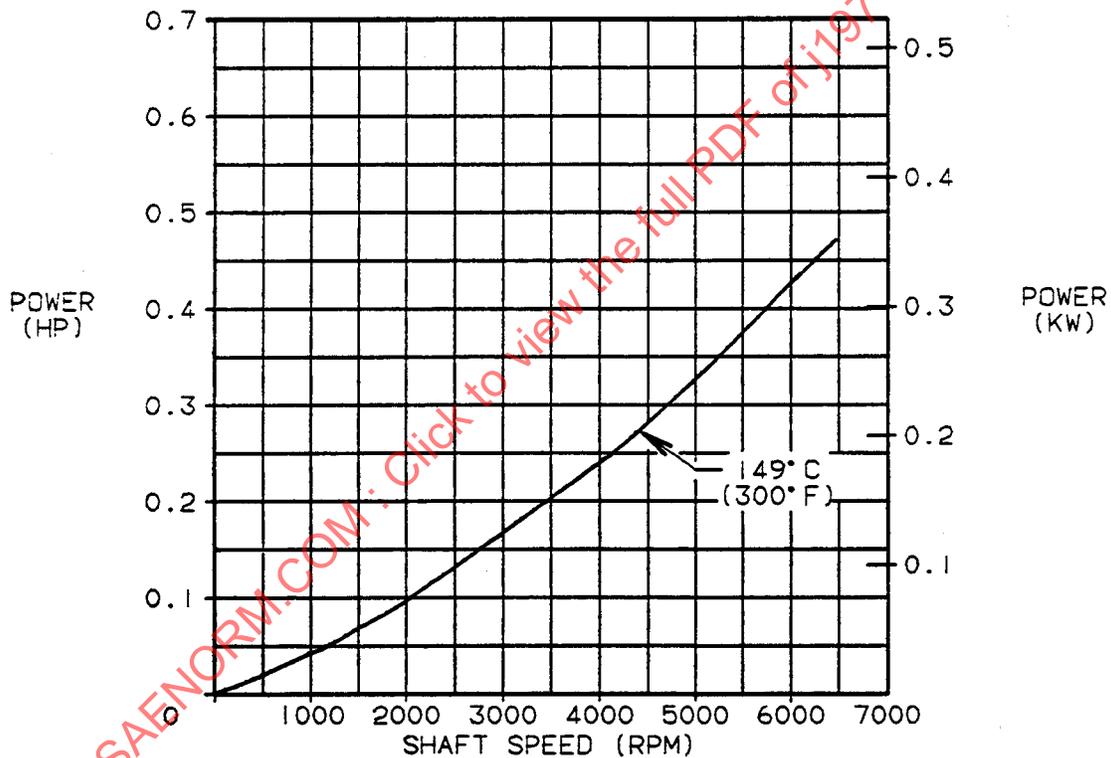


FIGURE 5—POWER VERSUS SHAFT SPEED

6.2 Oil Seal Torque and Power Consumption versus Sump Temperature—Increasing sump temperature reduces fluid viscosity (Figure 6), softens elastomeric materials and causes the seal lip ID to change. The net short term result is a reduction in torque (Figure 7) and power consumption (Figure 8) as sump temperatures increase. Increasing the sump temperature to reduce torque and power consumption is not recommended since excessive heat could degrade seal lip materials and lubricants, thus causing early failures (References RMA OS-6 and RMA OS-9).

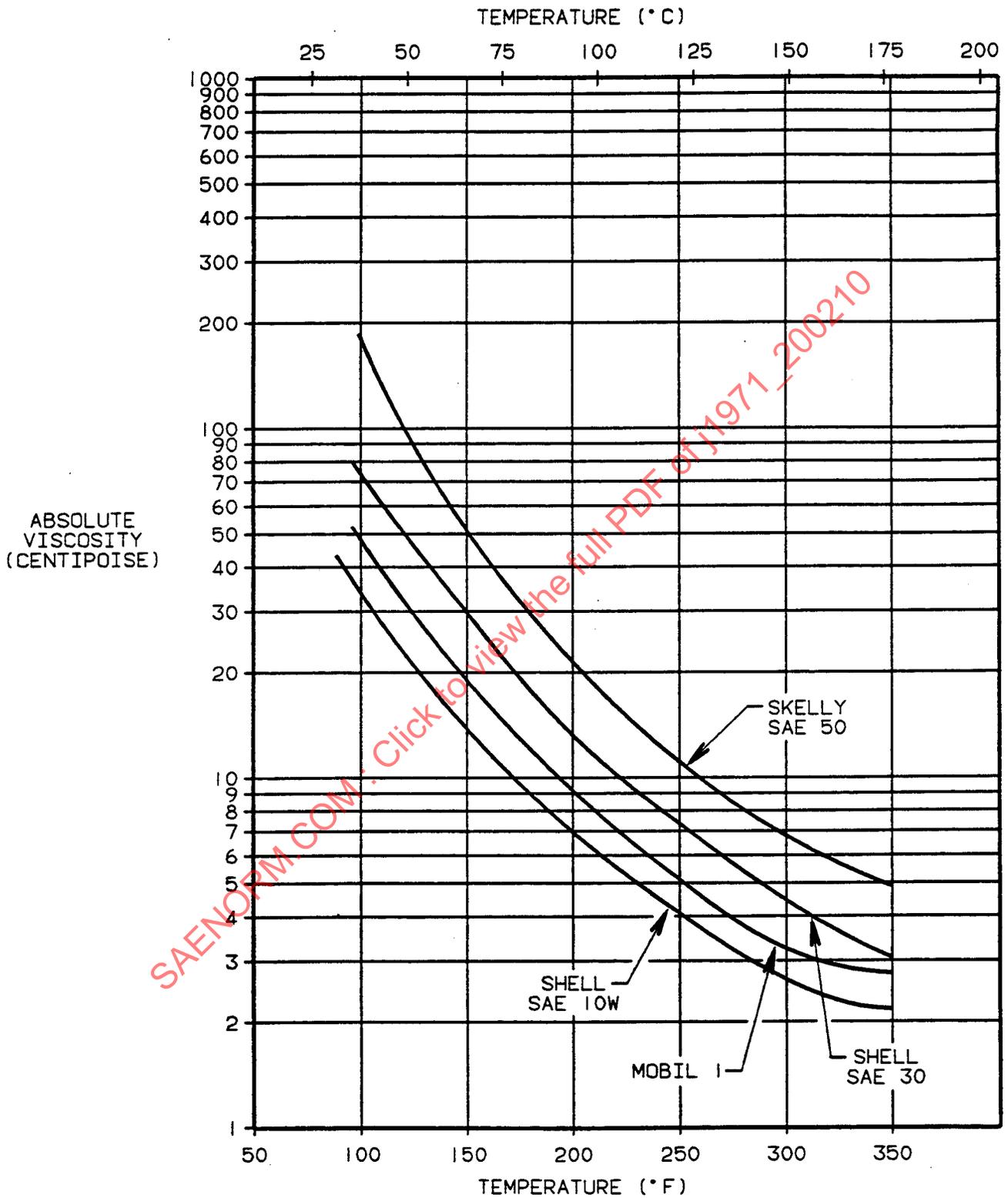


FIGURE 6—ABSOLUTE OIL VISCOSITY VERSUS TEMPERATURE

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SEAL MATERIAL ----- FLUOROELASTOMER
 SHAFT SIZE ----- 76.2 mm (3.000 in)
 BORE SIZE ----- 101.6 mm (4.000 in)
 WIDTH ----- 12.7 mm (0.500 in)
 TEST FLUID ----- MOBIL 1
 STBM ----- 0.0
 D.R.O. ----- LESS THAN 0.003 INCH (0.076 mm)
 DIRECTION OF SHAFT ROTATION --- CW
 BREAK IN PROCEDURE ----- 20 HOUR BREAK IN AT 2000 RPM AND
 149°C (300°F)
 SUMP LEVEL ----- FULL

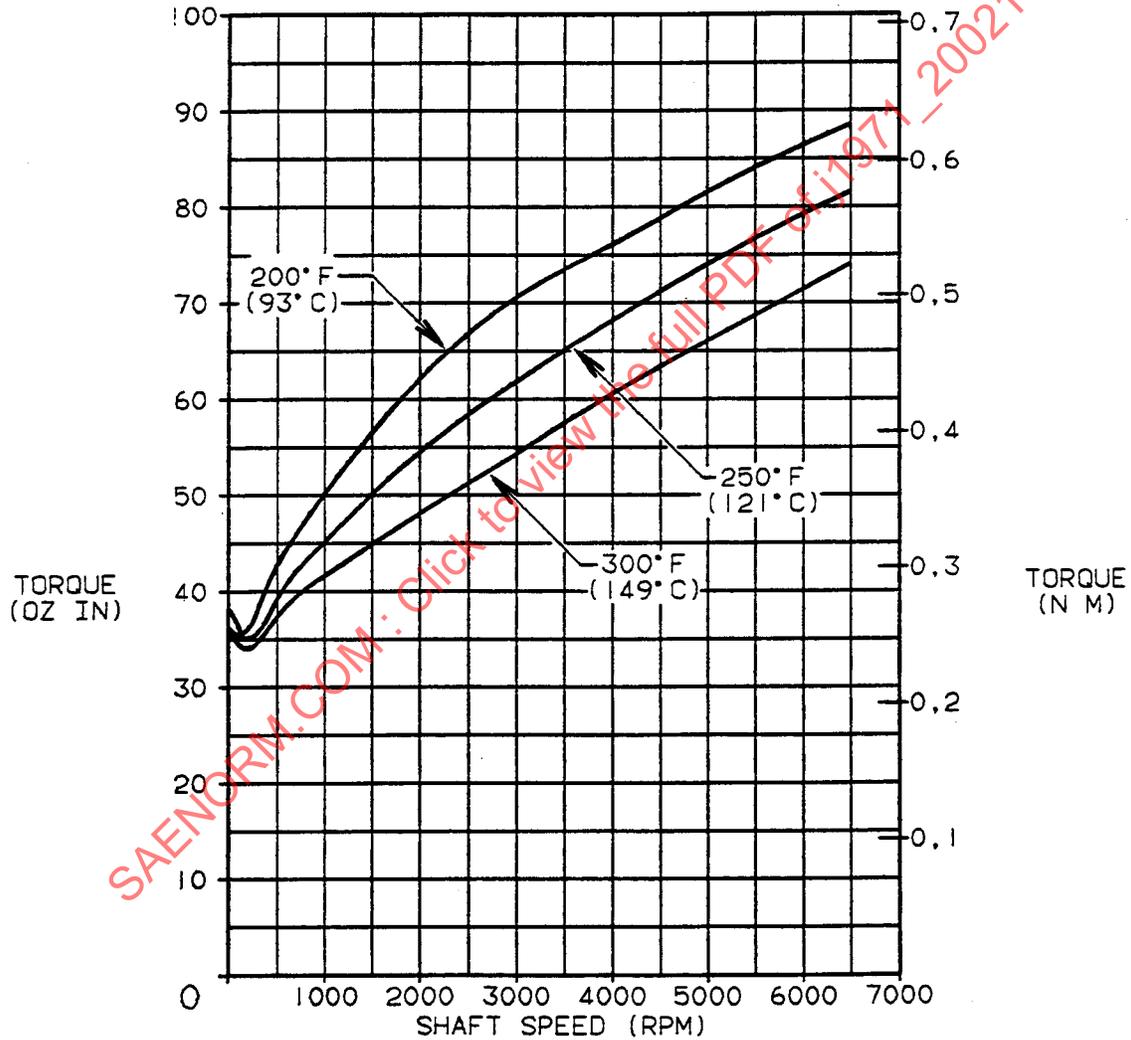


FIGURE 7—EFFECT OF SUMP TEMPERATURE ON SEAL TORQUE

SEAL MATERIAL ----- FLUOROELASTOMER
 SHAFT SIZE ----- 76.2 mm (3.000 (n))
 BORE SIZE ----- 101.6 mm (4.000 (n))
 WIDTH ----- 12.7 mm (0.500 (n))
 TEST FLUID ----- MOBIL 1
 STBM ----- 0.0
 D.R.O. ----- LESS THAN 0.08 mm (0.003 (n))
 DIRECTION OF SHAFT ROTATION --- CW
 BREAK-IN PROCEDURE ----- 20 HOUR BREAK-IN AT 2000 RPM AND
 149°C (300°F)
 SUMP LEVEL ----- FULL

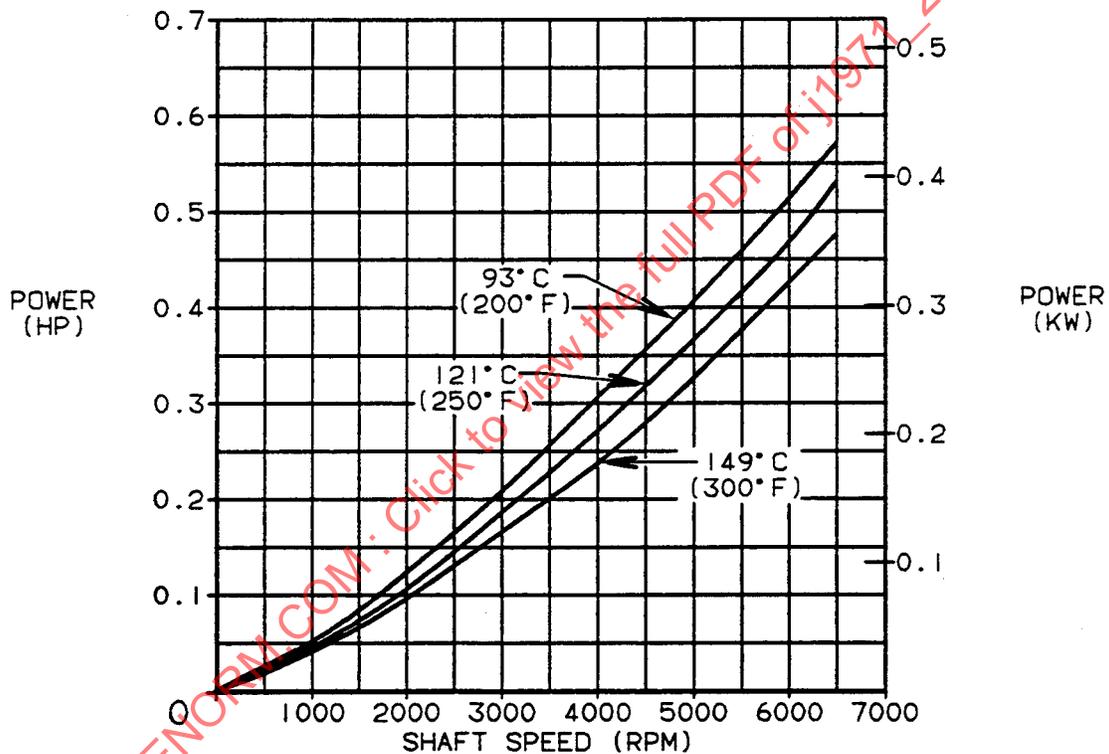


FIGURE 8—EFFECT OF SUMP TEMPERATURE ON SEAL POWER CONSUMPTION

6.3 Seal Torque and Power Consumption versus Sump Fill Level—The sump fill level affects seal torque (Figure 9) and power consumption (Figure 10). At low speeds, seal torque and power consumption are relatively independent of sump fill level. At high speeds, the effect is more dramatic. The torque values and power consumption decrease as fluid level is lowered. Fluid drag on the rotating shaft is also reduced. It is not recommended that oil sump levels be lowered in actual applications to reduce torque and power consumption since low lubricant levels may result in bearing and/or seal failure.

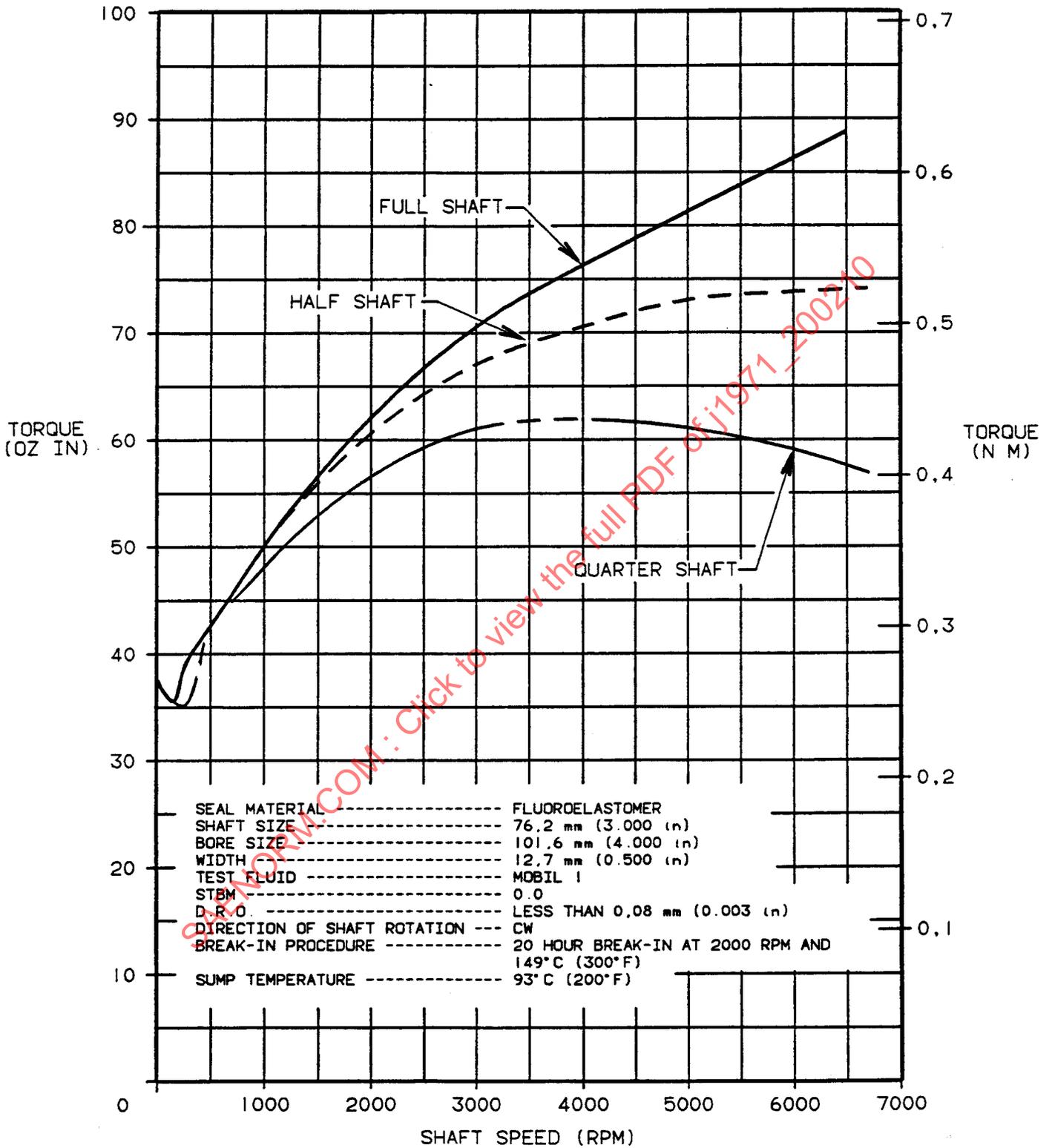


FIGURE 9—EFFECT OF SUMP FILL LEVEL ON SEAL TORQUE

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| SEAL MATERIAL ----- | FLUOROELASTOMER |
| SHAFT SIZE ----- | 76.2 mm (3.000 in) |
| BORE SIZE ----- | 101.6 mm (4.000 in) |
| WIDTH ----- | 12.7 mm (0.500 in) |
| TEST FLUID ----- | MOBIL 1 |
| STBM ----- | 0.0 |
| D.R.O. ----- | LESS THAN 0.08 mm (0.003 in) |
| DIRECTION OF SHAFT ROTATION --- | CW |
| BREAK-IN PROCEDURE ----- | 20 HOUR BREAK-IN AT 2000 RPM AND 149°C (300°F) |
| SUMP TEMPERATURE ----- | 93°C (200°F) |

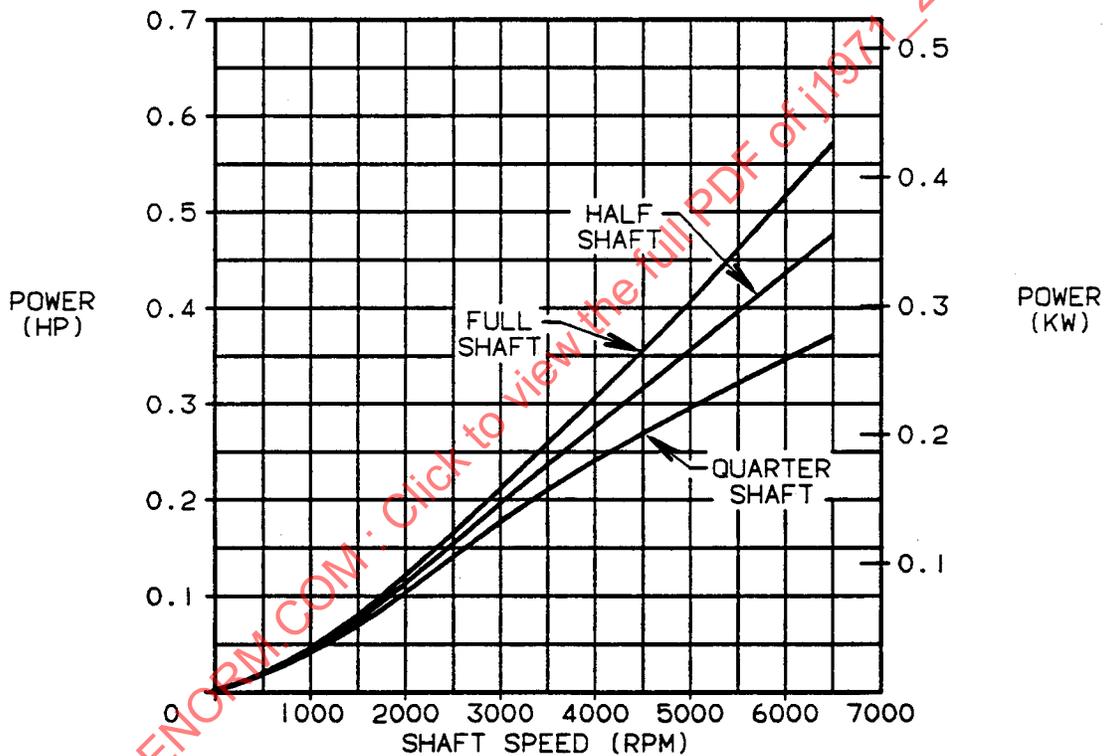


FIGURE 10—EFFECT OF SUMP FILL LEVEL ON SEAL POWER CONSUMPTION

6.4 Seal Torque and Power Consumption versus Fluid Viscosity—Fluids with high viscosities generate higher torque and greater power consumption than fluids with low viscosity. At 5000 rpm, seals run in SAE 50 oil have torque values about 40% higher than the same seals run in SAE 10W oil (Figure 11). The power consumption in SAE 50 oil is also about 40% higher than the power consumption in SAE 10W oil at 5000 rpm (Figure 12). Lubricants with viscosities recommended by the equipment manufacturer should be used in the application. Attempts to reduce torque and power consumption by using low viscosity fluids can result in catastrophic equipment failure.

6.5 Seal Torque and Power Consumption versus Shaft-to-Bore Misalignment (STBM) and Dynamic Run-Out (DRO)—Tests show that varying the STBM and DRO from 0.000 to 0.5 mm (0.000 to 0.020 in) had no effect on seal torque and power consumption.

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SEAL MATERIAL ----- NITRILE
 SHAFT SIZE ----- 76,2 mm (3.000 in)
 BREAK-IN PROCEDURE ----- 20 HOUR BREAK-IN AT 2150 RPM
 SUMP TEMPERATURE ----- 93°C (200°F)
 D.R.O. ----- 0,13 mm (0.005 in) TIR
 STBM ----- 0,13 mm (0.005 in)
 SUMP LEVEL ----- FULL

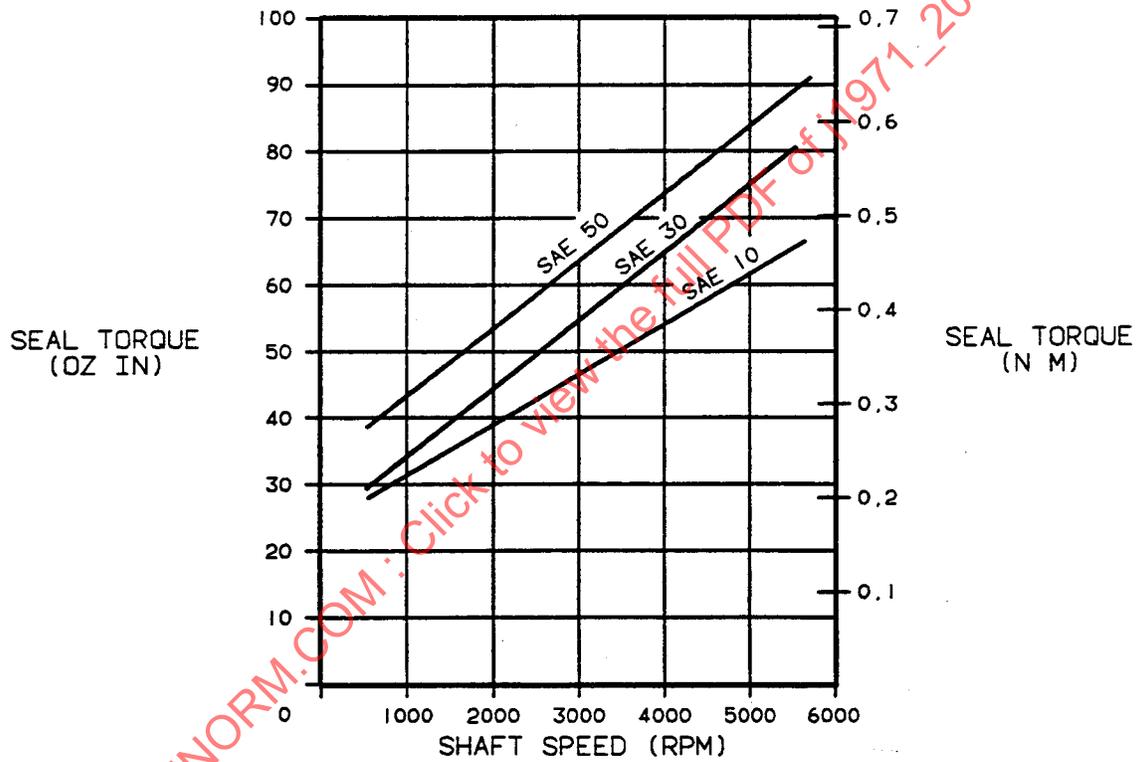


FIGURE 11—SEAL TORQUE VERSUS SHAFT SPEED FOR VARIOUS FLUID VISCOSITIES

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| SEAL MATERIAL ----- | NITRILE |
| SHAFT SIZE ----- | 76,2 mm (3 000 in) |
| BREAK-IN PROCEDURE ----- | 20 HOUR BREAK-IN AT 2150 RPM |
| SUMP TEMPERATURE ----- | 93°C (200°F) |
| D.R.O. ----- | 0,13 mm (0.005 in) TIR |
| STBM ----- | 0,13 mm (0.005 in) |
| SUMP LEVEL ----- | FULL |

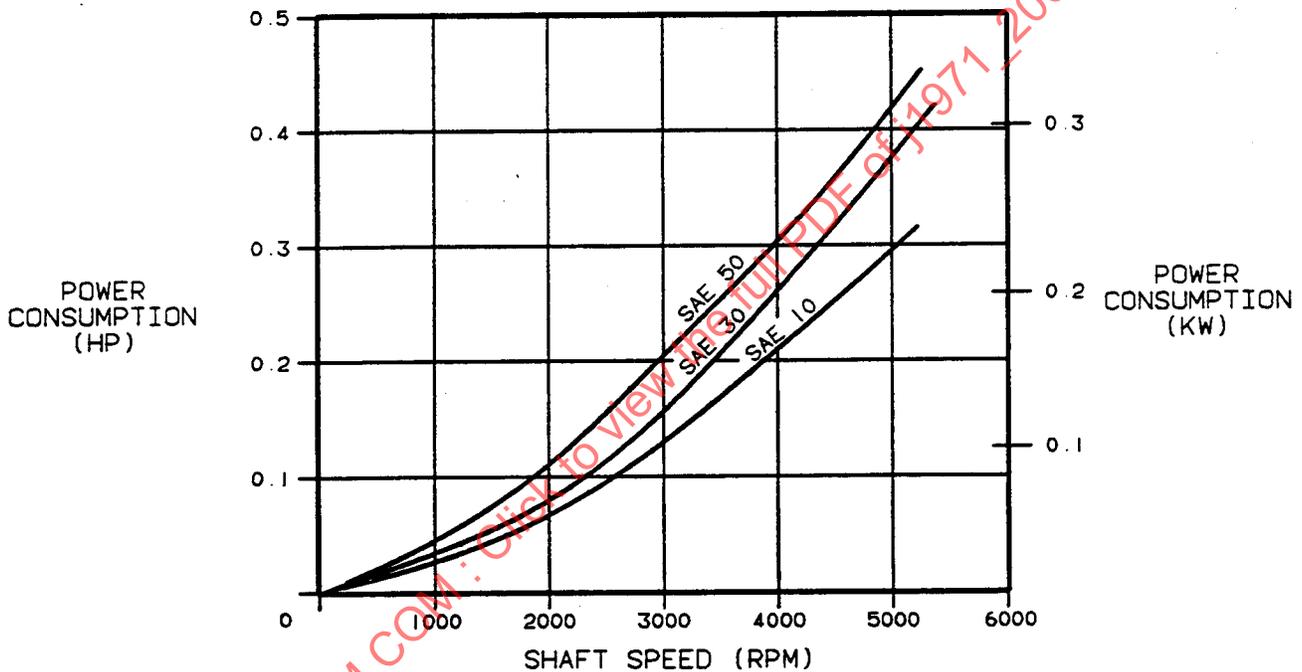


FIGURE 12—POWER CONSUMPTION VERSUS SHAFT SPEED FOR VARIOUS FLUID VISCOSITIES

6.6 Effect of Angular Misalignment Upon Seal Performance—Seals are sometimes installed without the back face being perpendicular to the centerline axis of the shaft. This condition is known as angular misalignment or seal cock. Seal friction torque and power consumption increase as seal cocking increases. At 5000 rpm, torque changes from 0.42 N·m (60 oz-in) to 0.56 N·m (80 oz-in) as cocking increases from zero to 0.5 mm (0.020 in) (Figure 13). The power consumption increases by approximately 0.075 kW (0.1 hp) (Figure 14). The increase in frictional torque will increase underlip temperature. Since seals with high underlip temperatures have shorter lives than seals with low underlip temperatures, it is essential to develop installation procedures that minimize cocking.

6.7 Seal Torque and Power Consumption as a Function of Shaft Diameter—Seal torque and power consumption increase as shaft size increases (Figures 15 and 16). At constant speed, the power consumption and frictional torque are approximately in direct proportion to the square of the shaft diameter. At 3000 rpm, the torque is approximately 0.21 N·m (30 oz-in) and the power consumption is about 0.075 kW (0.1 hp) for a 50 mm (1.968 in) shaft size. Doubling the shaft size to 100 mm (3.937 in) increases the torque to 0.85 N·m (120 oz-in) and quadruples the power consumption to 0.30 kW (0.4 hp).

SEAL MATERIAL ----- NITRILE
 SHAFT SIZE ----- 76.2 mm (3.000 in)
 BREAK-IN PROCEDURE ----- 20 HOUR BREAK-IN AT 2150 RPM
 SUMP TEMPERATURE ----- (93°C) (200°F)
 LUBE ----- SAE 30 AT & FILL
 D.R.O. ----- 0.13 mm (0.005 in) TIR
 STBM ----- 0.13 mm (0.005 in)

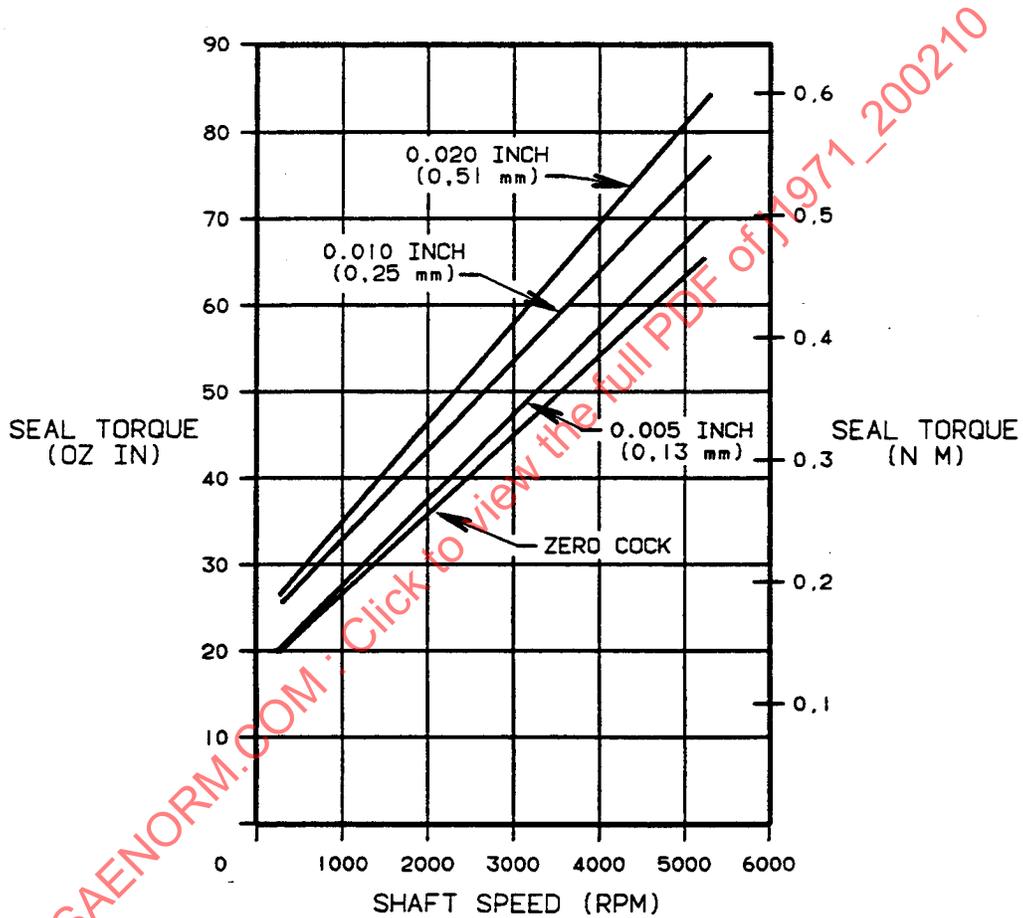


FIGURE 13—SEAL TORQUE VERSUS SHAFT SPEED FOR VARIOUS VALUES OF SEAL ANGULAR MISALIGNMENT