IEC Technical data
Standards, utilization categories

Standards

• IEC standards 158-1: “Contactors” and series IEC 292 :

“Motor-starters” have been revised and replaced by the new IEC 947-4-1 (1990-05): “Contactors and Motor-starters” referring to IEC 947-1 (1988): “General rules”

The new standards will constitute the basis of the future European and National standards, not yet revised.

Therefore the ratings indicated in this catalog are established according to the former and the future standards.

• Main changes and additions in the new standards are:

• Revision and extension of the utilization categories (see hereafter)

• Replacement of the coordination classes types a, b, c by new types: “1” (approximately equivalent to former class “a”) and “2” (approximately equivalent to former class “c”) with additional requirements.

• Classification of the thermal overload relays in tripping classes: 10 A; 10; 20 and 30 depending on their tripping times, at 1.5 and 7.2 times their setting current, in order to cover motor applications depending on their starting times. Class 10 A is adapted for motors according to IEC 34-1.

• Introduction of tests to verify the connecting capability and the mechanical strength of terminals.

Utilization categories

A contactor duty is characterized by the utilization category plus indication of the rated operating voltage and the rated operating current (see at Rated …), or the motor characteristics.

Utilization categories for contactors according to IEC 947-4-1

Alternating current:	AC-1	Non-inductive or slightly inductive loads, resistance furnaces. Power factor 0.7 - 0.8 (slightly inductive).
	AC-2	Slip-ring motors: starting, switching-off.
	AC-3	Squirrel-cage motors: starting, switching-off motors during running. Power factor 0.4 - 0.5 (AC-3).
	AC-4	Squirrel-cage motors: starting, plugging, inching.
	AC-5a	Switching of electric discharge lamp controls.
	AC-5b	Switching of incandescent lamps.
	AC-6a	Switching of transformers.
	AC-6b	Switching of capacitor banks
	AC-8a	Hermetic refrigerant compressor motor control with manual resetting of overload releases
	AC-8b	Hermetic refrigerant compressor motor control with automatic resetting of overload releases.
Direct current:	DC-1	Non-inductive or slightly inductive loads, resistance furnaces.
	DC-3	Shunt motors: starting, plugging, inching. Dynamic breaking of d.c. motors.
	DC-5	Series motors: starting, plugging, inching. Dynamic breaking of d.c. motors.
	DC-6	Switching of incandescent lamps

Utilization categories for contactor relays according to IEC 947-5-1

Alternating current:	AC-12	Control of resistive loads and solid state loads with isolation by opto couplers.
	AC-13	Control of solid state loads with transformer isolation.
	AC-14	Control of small electromagnetic loads (≤ 72 VA).
	AC-15	Control of electromagnetic loads (> 72 VA).
Direct current:	DC-12	Control of resistive loads and solid state loads with isolation by opto couplers.
	DC-13	Control of electromagnets.
	DC-14	Control of electromagnetic loads having economy resistors in circuit.

Utilization categories AC-1, AC-2, AC-3, AC-4 and DC-1, DC-3, DC-5 are maintained with slightly more severe tests.

Other categories have been added in order to standardize specific applications. In fact some contactor applications and the specific criteria characterizing the types of load controlled can modify the recommended utilization characteristics. These major applications are, for example :

Switching of capacitor banks

This application is characterized by high current peaks when switching-on the contactor and presence of harmonic currents on uninterrupted duty. For this application, IEC 947-4-1 has defined an utilization category AC-6b. Practical ratings have to be defined according to tests or, in absence of tests, by a calculation indicated in IEC 947-4-1.

Switching of transformers

This application is characterized by high current peaks on contactor closing due to magnetization phenomena. The corresponding utilization category according to IEC 947-4-1 is AC-6a. Ratings are derived from test-values for AC-3 or AC-4 according to formula given in IEC 947-4-1.

Switching of lighting circuits

The current peaks on contactor closing and power factor vary depending on the type of lamps, the switching method used and if compensation systems are fitted or not.

IEC 947-4-1 contains two standard utilization categories

AC-5a for switching of the electric discharge lamps.
AC-5b for switching of incandescent lamp.