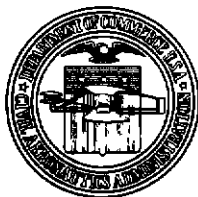


# Effect of Element-Wall Thickness on Operation of Continuous Fire-Detector Systems

By  
Charles A. Hughes  
Aircraft Division

TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT NO. 280



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## EFFECT OF ELEMENT-WALL THICKNESS ON OPERATION OF CONTINUOUS FIRE-DETECTOR SYSTEMS\*

### SUMMARY

Tests were conducted to study the effect of element-wall thickness on the operation of continuous fire-detector systems. The elements tested were furnished by Walter Kidde & Company, Inc., and by Thomas A. Edison, Inc. They included the standard, thin-wall, and the heavy-wall types from both companies, and a double-wall Edison element with the same diameter as the thin-wall element. This double-wall element was claimed to be more rugged than the thin-wall element.

The elements first were placed in an electric furnace and subjected to a slow rate of temperature increase to check the similarity of the temperature-resistance characteristics of the core materials between the heavy- and thin-wall elements, because differences would influence the test results. The elements then were tested by placing them over a standard burner at 1500° and 2000° F., to obtain response and clearing times.

A second series of tests was conducted on an installation of the heavy- and thin-walled elements placed side by side in an engine bay of a test-cell-mounted F-89 airplane, using controlled test fires during simulated operation of the airplane. The results of the tests indicated that response and clearing times were increased appreciably by use of the heavy-wall elements and that these elements did not meet the requirements of SAE Specification AS-401A, Section 7.1 (Response Time). For the Edison double-wall element, response and clearing times at 1500° F. flame temperature were not appreciably different from those of the thin-wall elements. At 2000° F., however, the response and clearing times of the double-wall element were somewhat longer than for the thin-wall elements. The double-wall element met the specification requirements for response times only when calibrated for ambient temperatures below 450° F.

### INTRODUCTION

Handling of the sensing elements of continuous fire-detection systems during engine change and other maintenance functions often has resulted in breakage of these elements. In order to minimize this breakage, sensing elements with thicker walls have been developed. The purpose of this evaluation was to study the effect of the increased wall thickness on response and clearing times. This evaluation was initiated at the request of the Bureau of Aeronautics, Department of the Navy.

### DETECTOR ELEMENTS TESTED

The following elements were submitted for testing by Walter Kidde & Company, Inc.

- 1 Two lengths, 12 feet each, Part No. 809144, 0.088-inch outside diameter (OD).
- 2 Two lengths, 12 feet each, no part number, 0.064-inch OD

These elements were described as having approximately the same core material, Type 1400-34, as that used in the 809 part-number series. They were produced for these tests in order that test results could be obtained to show the effect of the wall thickness without being influenced by differences in core material. After some differences were noted in the temperature-resistance characteristics of the core material used in the first elements submitted by Walter Kidde & Company, Inc., a second set of elements was submitted, as follows:

- 1 Two lengths, 10 feet each, Part No. 809120, 0.088-inch OD
- 2 Two lengths, 10 feet each, no part number, 0.064-inch OD, with the same core material as that used in the first length

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\*Manuscript received for publication December 1955

A Walter Kidde d-c control unit, Serial No 138, was used with the 809-series elements, and a control unit, Serial No 182, was used with the thin-wall elements in the tests

Thomas A Edison, Inc, submitted sensing elements of three different types. Each type was 25 feet in length and was comprised of three sections. Two of these sections were 10 feet in length and one section was 5 feet. Three control units, Part Nos 227-28-2, also were supplied. The three types of elements were

- 1 Heavy-wall detector, 0 090-inch OD, Part No. 239-54I
- 2 Double-wall detector, 0 070-inch OD, Part No. 239-54G.
- 3 Thin-wall detector, 0 070-inch OD, Part No 234-54G.

## TEST PROCEDURE

The elements supplied by Walter Kidde & Company, Inc, and Thomas A. Edison, Inc, were subjected to similar tests at different times. These consisted of (1) furnace tests to note the degree of similarity in the core material of the heavy- and thin-walled specimens, (2) burner tests at 1500° and 2000° F to observe differences in response and clearing times under standard carefully controlled conditions, and (3) full-scale tests in the engine bay of an F-89 aircraft to observe the differences in response and clearing times under simulated flight-fire conditions between the heavy- and thin-walled elements. The latter two tests also permitted a comparison of results obtained from bench- and full-scale-type tests

### Bench Testing

The sensing elements first were placed in an electric furnace and subjected to a slow rate of temperature increase until a response was obtained. The furnace then was allowed to cool until the response signal cleared. The temperature at which the response and clearing occurred was noted for a series of calibration-resistor settings at the control box between 100 and 5000 ohms.

Following these tests, the elements were subjected to testing on the detector-test bench<sup>1</sup> in accordance with Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) Specification AS-401A (Fire and Heat Detectors). The same calibration-resistor settings were used as in the furnace tests.

### Tests in F-89 Engine Bay

The sensing elements were installed in the left engine bay, with each type of element completing two loops encircling the engine at airplane stations 310 and 345. A view of this installation is shown in Fig 1.

Test conditions simulating aircraft taxiing, taking off, cruising, and at maximum power were produced by varying the engine rpm, the pressure of ram air at the engine inlet, and the quantity of air to the cooling-air scoop for the engine bay. The afterburner also was operated during tests simulating takeoff and maximum power.

Fires were ignited within the left engine bay in regions of definite fire hazard. The test-fire locations are shown in Fig 2. Fire nozzles installed at each of these locations consisted of 1/4-inch-OD copper tubing discharging aviation gasoline at a rate of two pounds per minute (1/3 gpm) and a spark plug and coil to provide ignition. Test-fire temperatures varied between 2000° and 2400° F. Fire size and intensity were greatly influenced by the turbulent airflow through the engine bay and were not consistent for all tests. Cooling airflow through the engine bay measured at the fire locations varied from 17.08 to 73.30 feet per second. Test fires burned until a fire warning was given or for ten seconds, whichever occurred first. The procedure was (1) establish aircraft operational condition for the tests, (2) switch on the test-fire ignitor, and (3) start fuel flowing to the test fire. The time required for fire warning is the interval between the start of the fuel flow for test fire and a fire-warning indication. The fires were intense, but they were linear in form due to the influence of cooling air passing through the engine bay.

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<sup>1</sup>J. J. Gassmann, "A Burner and Test Bench for Evaluating Aircraft Fire and Heat Detectors," CAA Technical Development Report No. 217, September 1953.

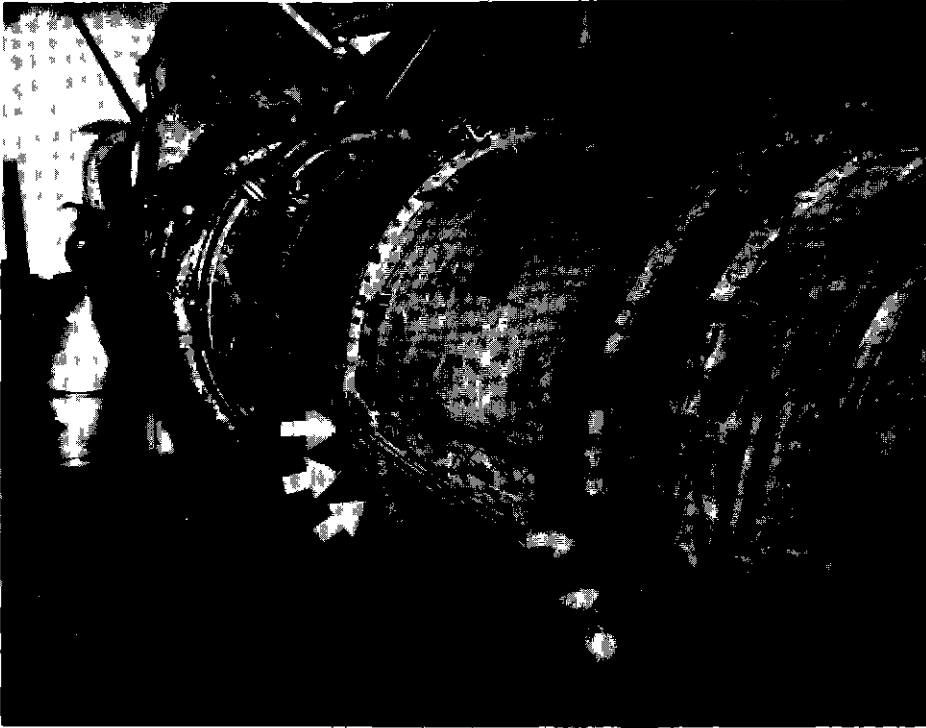


Fig 1 Location of Sensing Elements for Tests in F-89 Aircraft

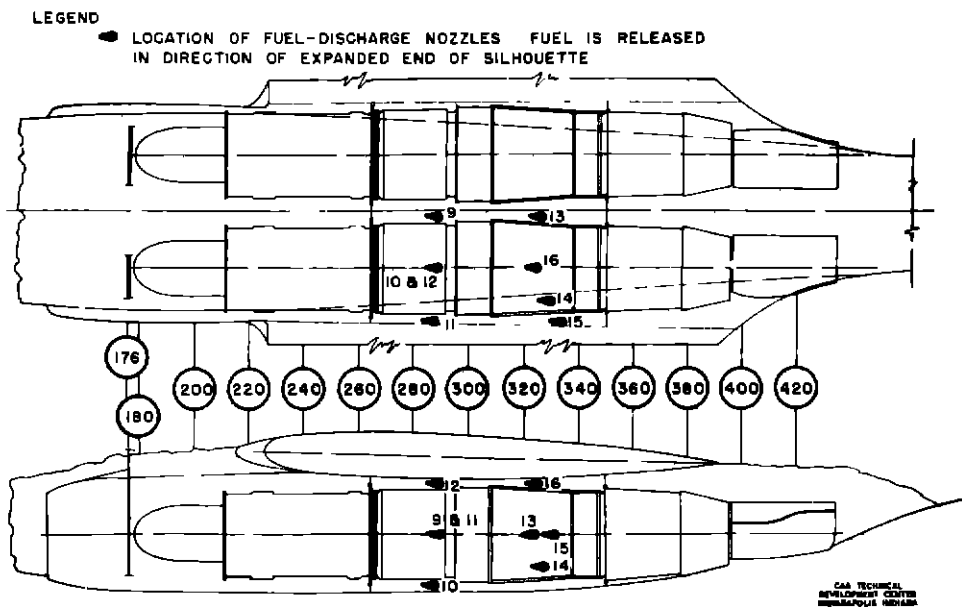


Fig 2 Test Fire Locations in Left Engine Bay, F-89 Aircraft

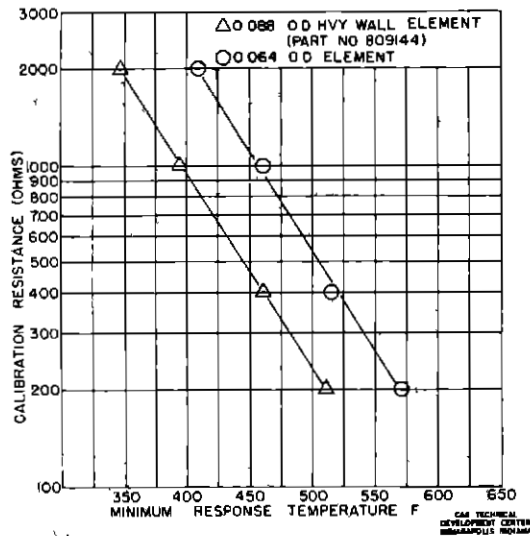


Fig 3 Furnace Tests, First Set of Kidde Detector Elements

### TEST RESULTS

#### Bench Testing

The data obtained from the electric-furnace tests of the first elements submitted by Walter Kidde & Company, Inc., are shown in Fig. 3. The temperature-resistance characteristics of the core material for the two elements are quite different

The response- and clearing-temperature data obtained from the electric-furnace tests of the second set of elements submitted by Walter Kidde & Company, Inc., are shown in Fig. 4. These data indicate that the temperature-resistance characteristics of the core material are similar

The data obtained during tests on the detector-test bench, when the second set of elements submitted by Walter Kidde & Company, Inc., was tested, are shown in Figs 5 and 6

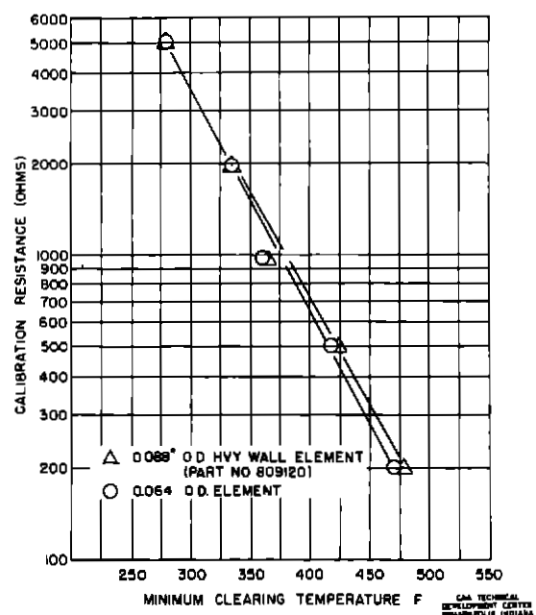
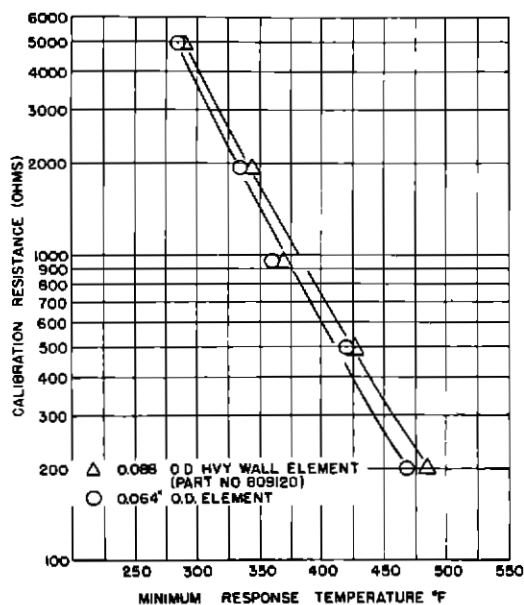


Fig 4 Furnace Tests, Second Set of Kidde Detector Elements

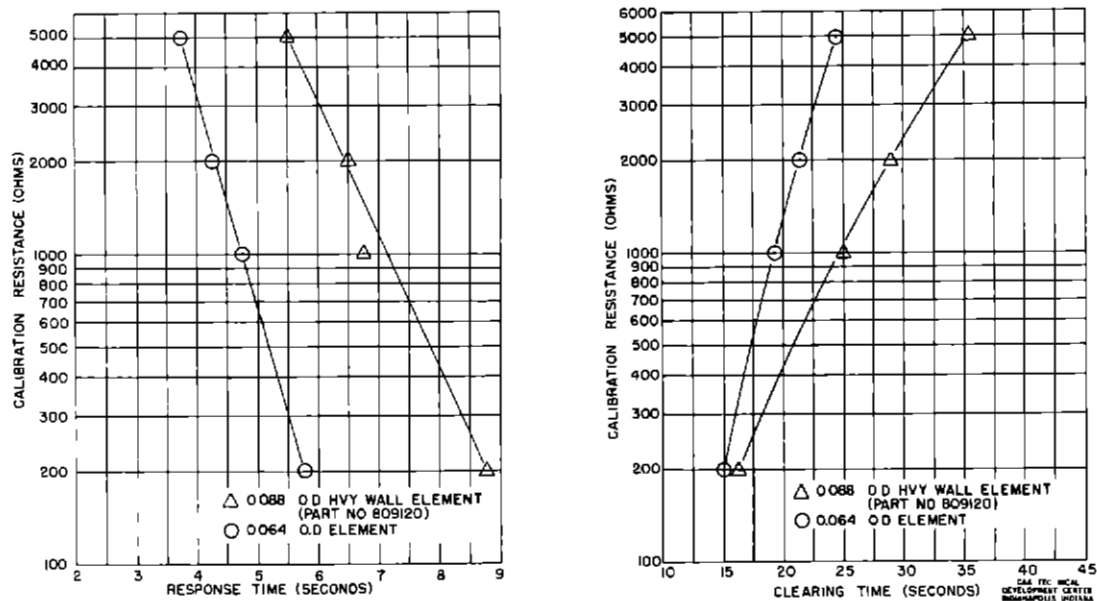


Fig 5 Bench Tests, 1500° Flame, Second Set of Kidde Detector Elements

Figures 7 and 8 show the response and clearing times obtained during the detector bench tests when plotted against the minimum response-temperature settings as determined in the electric furnace

The data obtained from the electric-furnace tests of the sensing elements first submitted by Thomas A Edison, Inc., are shown in Fig 9. These data indicate that the temperature-resistance characteristics of the core materials of the three types of elements are similar

The data obtained during tests on the detector bench, when the three elements submitted by Thomas A Edison, Inc., were tested, are shown in Figs 10 and 11

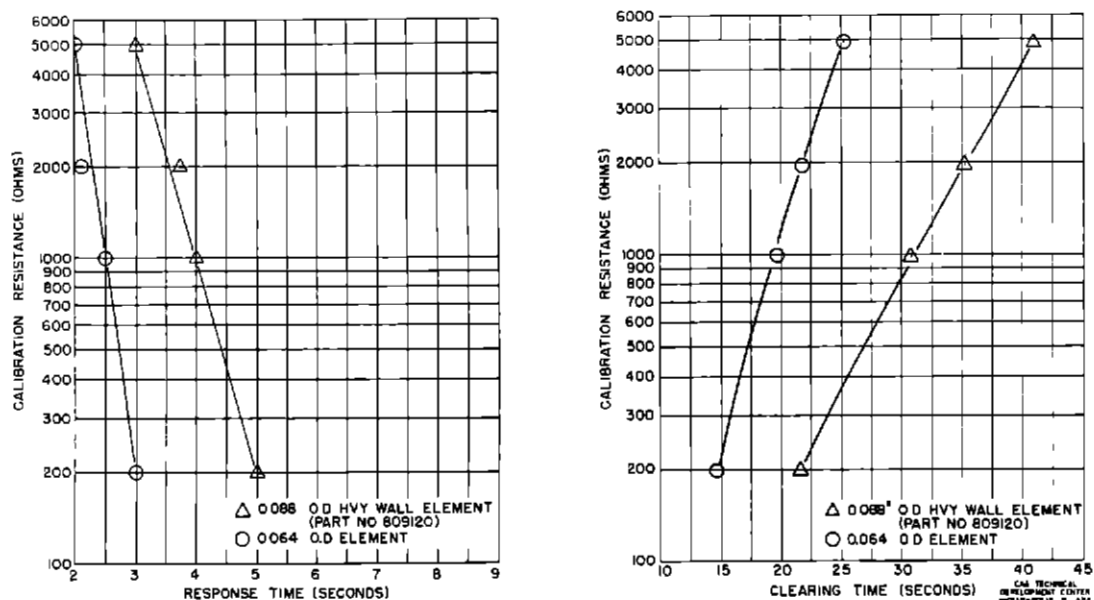


Fig 6 Bench Tests, 2000° Flame, Second Set of Kidde Detector Elements

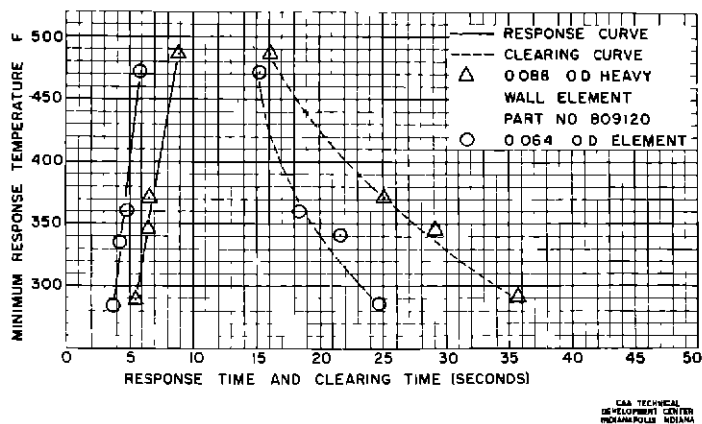


Fig 7 Bench Tests, 1500° Flame, Second Set of Kidde Detector Elements

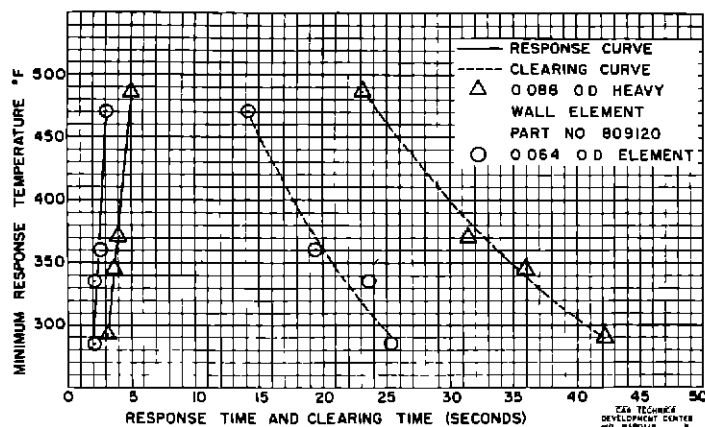


Fig 8 Bench Tests, 2000° Flame, Second Set of Kidde Detector Elements

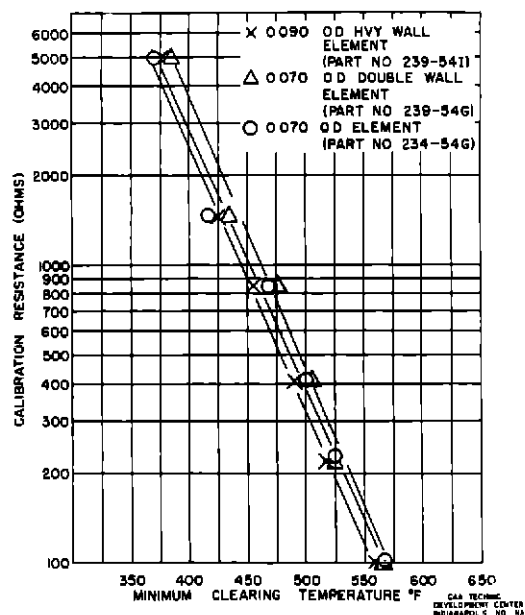
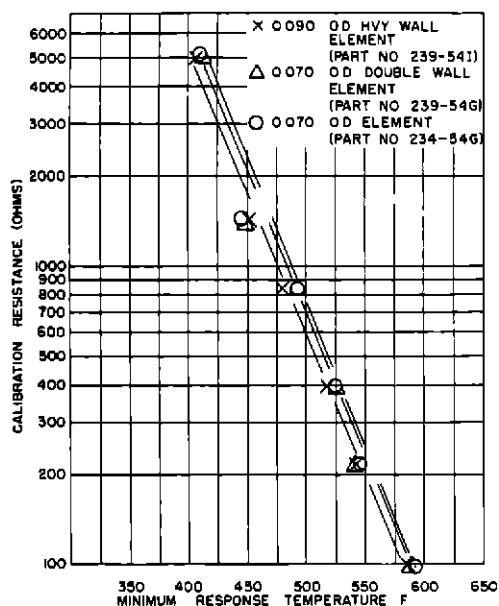


Fig 9 Furnace Tests, Edison Detector Elements



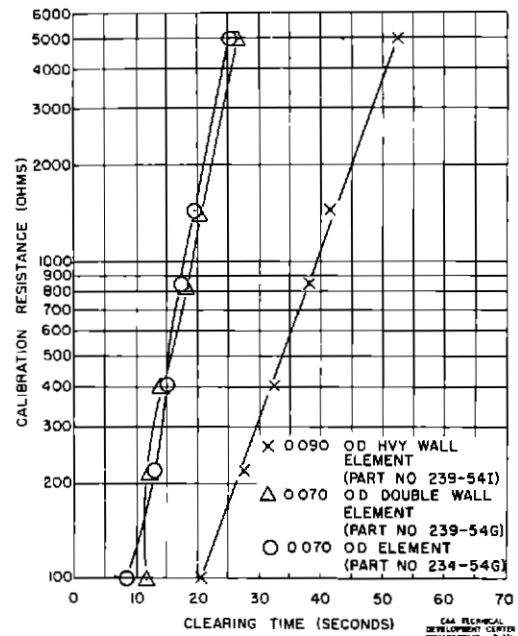
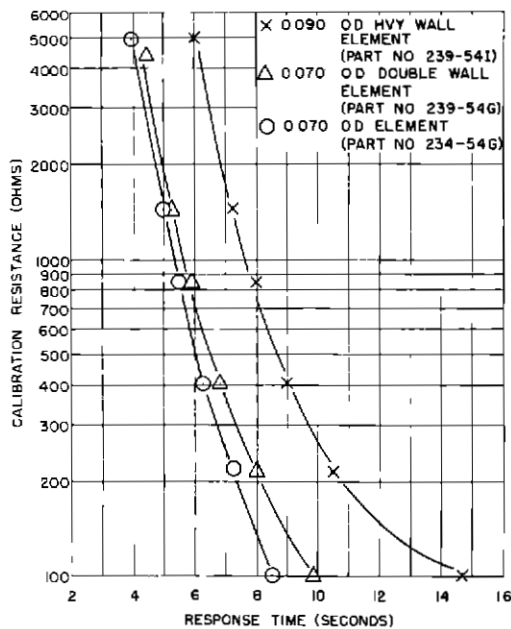


Fig 10 Bench Tests, 1500° Flame, Edison Detector Elements

Figures 12 and 13 show the response and clearing times obtained during the detector bench tests when plotted against the minimum response-temperature settings as determined in the electric furnace

#### Tests in the F-89 Engine Bay

The first elements installed for testing in the F-89 airplane were the 12-foot lengths submitted initially by Walter Kidde & Company, Inc. Because the temperature-resistance characteristics were quite different, as indicated by the electric-furnace tests, Fig 3, the

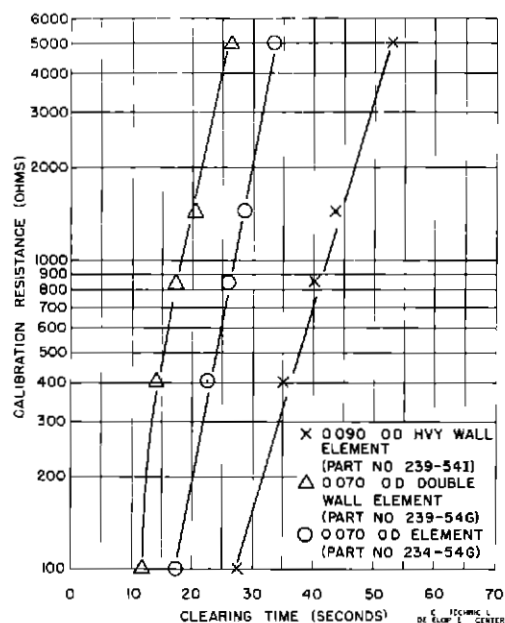
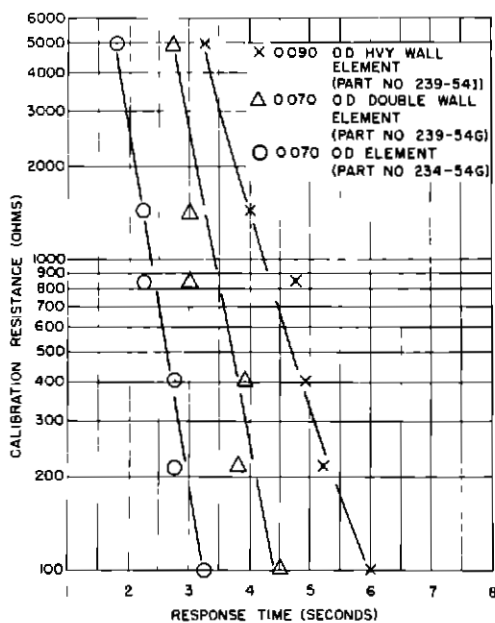


Fig. 11 Bench Tests, 2000° Flame, Edison Detector Elements

TABLE I

FIRE-DETECTION TESTS OF THE WALTER KIDDE  
CONTINUOUS-TYPE FIRE-DETECTOR SYSTEMS INSTALLED  
IN AN F-89 AIRPLANE POWER PLANT

First Set of Detector Elements Submitted

Test No	Condition	Fire* Location (No )	0 064-Inch-OD Element		0 088-Inch-OD Element No 809144	
			Alarm Time (seconds)	Clearing Time (seconds)	Alarm Time (seconds)	Clearing Time (seconds)
1	Taxing	11	5 5	11 0	7 0	12 5
2	Taking Off	11	6.0	3 5	No	
3	Cruising	11	5 5	3 5	No	
4	Maximum Power	11	4.0	4 0	6 0	4 0
5	Taxing	15	8 7	7.0	10 0	6 0
6	Taking Off	15	No		No	
7	Cruising	15	No		No	
8	Maximum Power	15	No		No	
9	Taxing	10	3 0	10 0	4 0	12 0
10	Taking Off	10	3 0	7 5	3 6	10 0
11	Cruising	10	3 0	7 0	4.0	10 0
12	Maximum Power	10	5 5	4 0	7 5	5 5
13	Taxing	14	3 0	12 0	4 0	14 0
14	Taking Off	14	3.5	9 0	4 0	11 0
15	Cruising	14	3 0	9 0	4 5	10 0
16	Maximum Power	14	3 7	10 0	4 2	12 0
17	Taxing	12	3 0	No Record	4 0	No Record
18	Taking Off	12	No Test			
19	Cruising	12	2 5	22 0	4 0	25 0
20	Maximum Power	12	2 0	17 0	3 0	19 0
21	Taxing	13	6 3	12 0	10 0	10 0
22	Taking Off	13	2 3	9 0	3 4	11 7
23	Cruising	13	3 5	11 3	5 5	11 5
24	Maximum Power	13	3 0	8 0	3 5	9 0
25	Taxing	9	9 2	4.0	No	
26	Taking Off	9	6.5	5.5	7 5	5.5
27	Cruising	9	9.0	2 5	No	
28	Maximum Power	9	9 5	2.5	No	

\*Refer to Fig 2.

resistance settings of the control circuits were altered in order that both systems would have a minimum response temperature of approximately 550° F. The data obtained during the tests are presented in Table I.

Although the two types of elements were approximately in the same location, the system with the thin-wall elements reported 24 fires, whereas the system with the No 809144 heavy-wall elements reported 19 fires. The average response time on fires reported by systems with both elements (average of 19 tests) was 3.9 seconds for the one with the thin-wall element and 5.3 seconds for the one with the No 809144 heavy-wall element. The average clearing time (average of 18 tests) was 9.7 seconds for the thin-wall element system and 11.0 seconds for the system with the heavy-wall elements. Complete coverage of the fire zone with those sensing elements was not effected in this installation. It was intended only to determine the difference

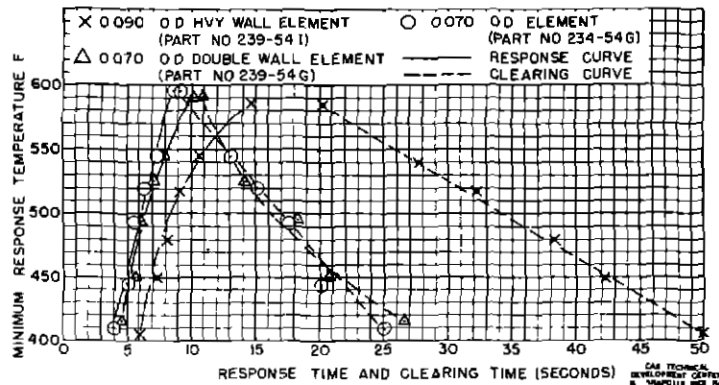


Fig. 12 Bench Tests, 1500° Flame, Edison Detector Elements

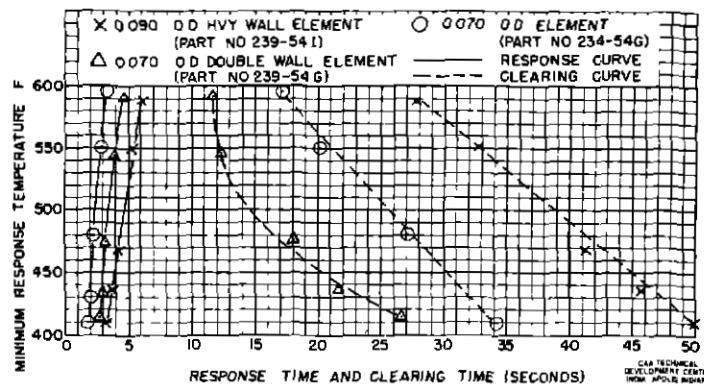


Fig. 13 Bench Tests, 2000° Flame, Edison Detector Elements

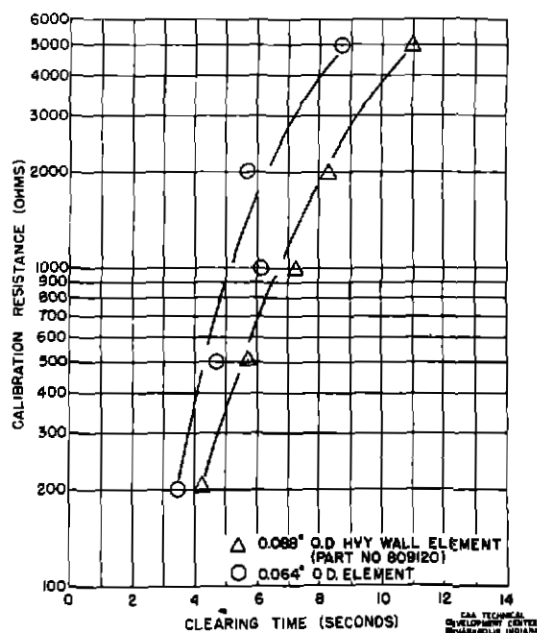
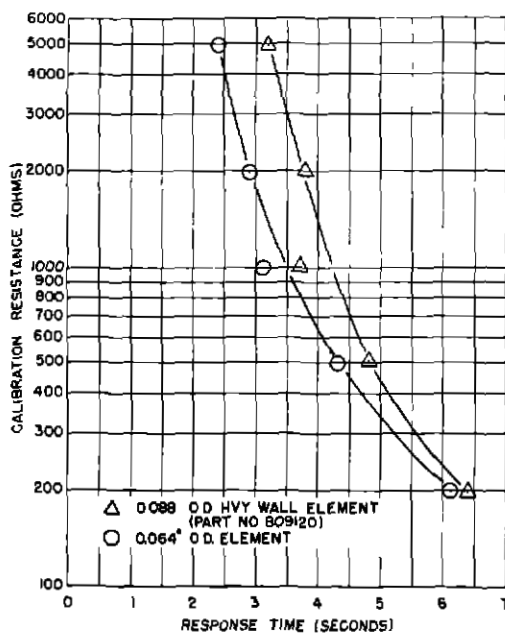


Fig. 14 Fire Tests in F-89 Aircraft, No. 11 Fire Location, Second Set of Kidde Detector Elements

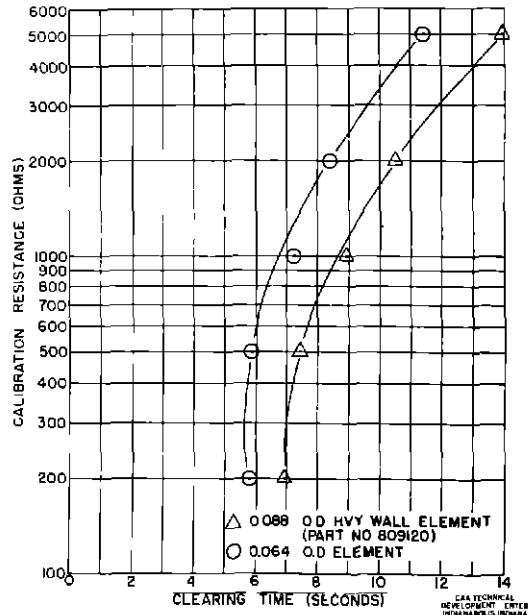
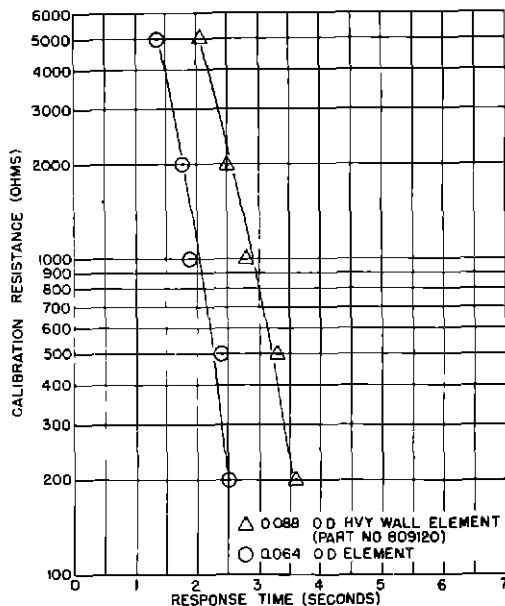


Fig 15 Fire Tests in F-89 Aircraft, No 14 Fire Location,  
Second Set of Kidde Detector Elements

in response of the two elements. Therefore, the fact that some fires were not detected is not significant.

Tests in the F-89 airplane on the 10-foot lengths of elements manufactured by Walter Kidde & Company, Inc., (second set submitted) were conducted with fires at locations Nos 11 and 14 only. Calibration-resistor settings in the control box were varied through a range of 200 to 5000 ohms. Figures 14 and 15 contain curves drawn from the data obtained during these tests. The curves show the average response and clearing times for test fires at each of the two locations in the engine bay versus the calibration-resistor setting. Each point represents the average time of four tests conducted under simulated conditions of taxiing, taking off, cruising, and maximum power. Figures 16 and 17 show the response and clearing times obtained during these tests when plotted against the minimum response-temperature settings as determined in the electric furnace.

The same series of tests was conducted on the three continuous systems submitted by Thomas A. Edison, Inc. The data obtained in these tests are shown in Table II and Figs 18 through 21. The average response times were:

1 Element No 234-54G (thin-wall), 0.070-inch OD	2.54 seconds
2 Element No 239-54G (double-wall), 0.070-inch OD	2.94 seconds
3 Element No 239-54I (heavy-wall), 0.090-inch OD	3.8 seconds

The average clearing times were:

1 Element No 234-54G (thin-wall), 0.070-inch OD	9.05 seconds
2 Element No 239-54G (double-wall), 0.070-inch OD	8.5 seconds
3 Element No 239-54I (heavy-wall), 0.090-inch OD	9.0 seconds

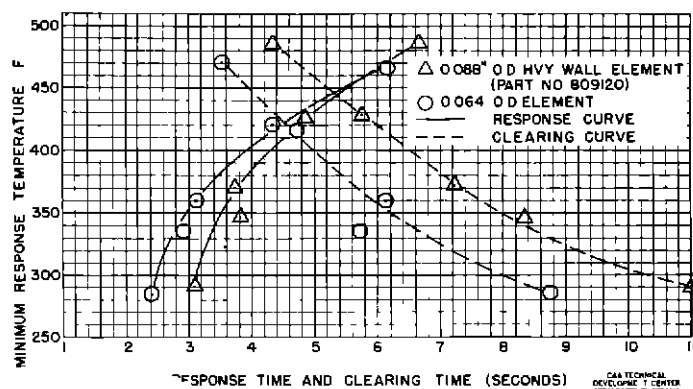


Fig 16 Fire Tests in F-89 Aircraft, No. 11 Fire Location, Second Set of Kidde Detector Elements

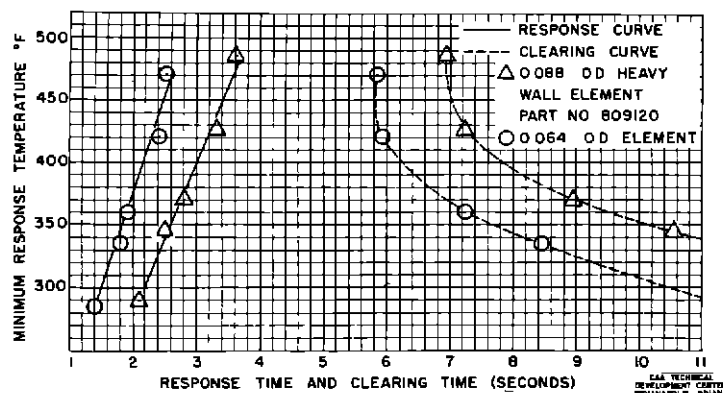


Fig 17 Fire Tests in F-89 Aircraft, No. 14 Fire Location, Second Set of Kidde Detector Elements

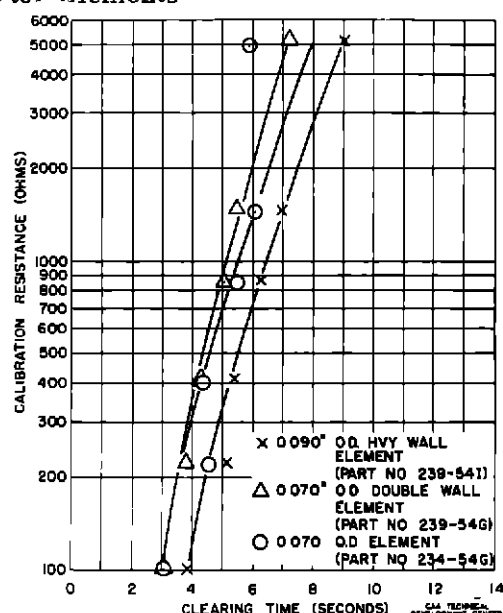
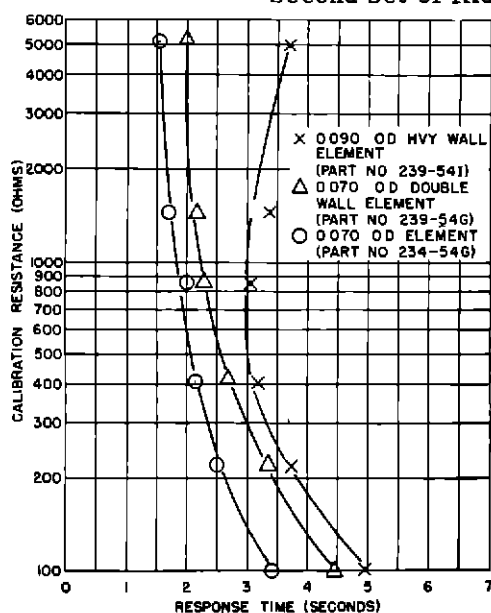


Fig 18 Fire Tests in F-89 Aircraft, No. 11 Fire Location, Edison Detector Elements

TABLE II

**FIRE-DETECTION TESTS OF THE EDISON CONTINUOUS-TYPE  
FIRE-DETECTOR SYSTEMS INSTALLED IN AN F-89 AIRPLANE POWER PLANT**

Test No.	Condition	Fire* Location (No )	0 070-Inch-OD Element No. 234-54G		0.070-Inch-OD Element No. 239-54G		0 090-Inch-OD Element No 239-54I	
			Alarm Time (seconds)	Clearing Time (seconds)	Alarm Time (seconds)	Clearing Time (seconds)	Alarm Time (seconds)	Clearing Time (seconds)
1	Taxing	9	2 7	14 8	4 0	10.2	4 5	11.8
2	Taking Off	9	1 8	Abort	2 3	6.3	2.5	7.2
3	Cruising	9	No	Abort	2 5	7.7	3 3	9 5
4	Maximum Power	9	No	Abort	2.8	6 2	3 1	11 6
5	Taxing	10	4 3	5.7	4 7	4.0	5.5	3 4
6	Taking Off	10	4.8	3 8	5 5	3.2	6.7	2 2
7	Cruising	10	5.3	3.5	6 0	2 5	6 8	2 0
8	Maximum Power	10	5.7	3 4	6 8	2 8	8.0	2.0
9	Taxing	11	1.7	9 8	2 2	8 5	2.5	8 8
10	Taking Off	11	2 3	3 5	2 8	2 5	3 3	2 3
11	Cruising	11	2.2	4.7	2 8	3 5	3.2	3 7
12	Maximum Power	11	2 5	3 6	3 0	2.8	3.7	2 6
13	Taxing	12	2.3	14 6	3 2	10.3	4.2	9 9
14	Taking Off	12	1.3	9 6	1 8	7 8	2.4	8 0
15	Cruising	12	1.6	11 3	2.3	9 0	2 8	9 0
16	Maximum Power	12	1.3	9.0	1 8	7 8	2 2	7 4
17	Taxing	13	2.7	19 2	3 0	19 5	4.3	26 4
18	Taking Off	13	2.7	9 1	3 0	9 4	3 0	13 5
19	Cruising	13	2.3	12 2	2.8	12 2	2.8	16 1
20	Maximum Power	13	2.6	8.0	2 0	8 0	3 3	12.1
21	Taxing	14	2 3	6 5	2.5	6 5	2 9	7 9
22	Taking Off	14	1 7	8 0	1.8	8.3	2 8	0 8
23	Cruising	14	1 7	5 8	2 2	5 3	2.7	5 6
24	Maximum Power	14	1 4	5 4	1 7	5 2	2 2	4 0
25	Taxing	15	3 0	5 3	3.0	5 8	3 6	5 0
26	Taking Off	15	2 2	7 1	2.2	9 5	8 8	12 6
27	Cruising	15	2.0	5 7	2 1	6 3	2 6	6 0
28	Maximum Power	15	1 8	3 3	1 8	4 1	2 4	3 6
29	Taxing	16	3 6	22 2	3 8	20 8	5 4	20 0
30	Taking Off	16	2 0	13 7	2 3	14 0	2 9	5 8
31	Cruising	16	2 3	19.8	2.7	26 9	3 5	30 9
32	Maximum Power	16	2 1	13 7	2 7	14.2	3 3	14.7

\*Refer to Fig 2

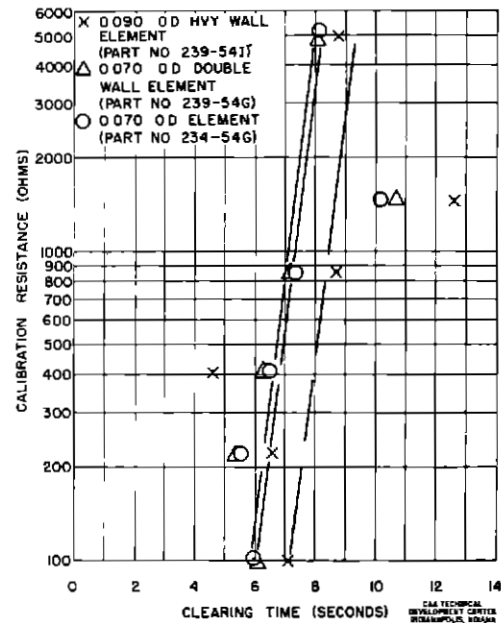
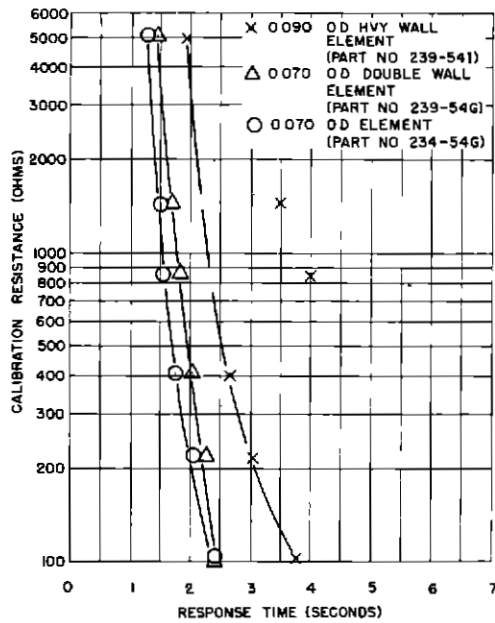


Fig 19 Fire Tests in F-89 Aircraft, No 14 Fire Location, Edison Detector Elements

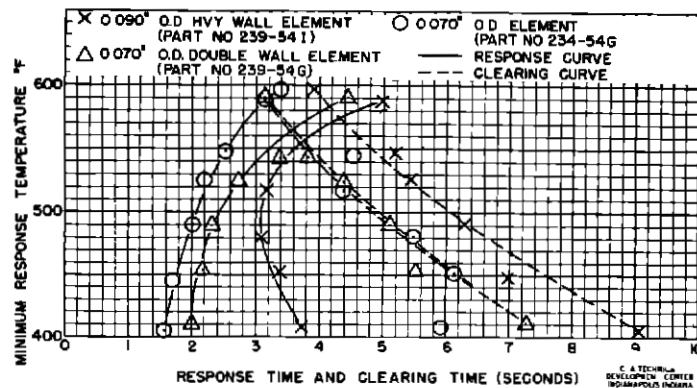


Fig 20 Fire Tests in F-89 Aircraft, No. 11 Fire Location, Edison Detector Elements

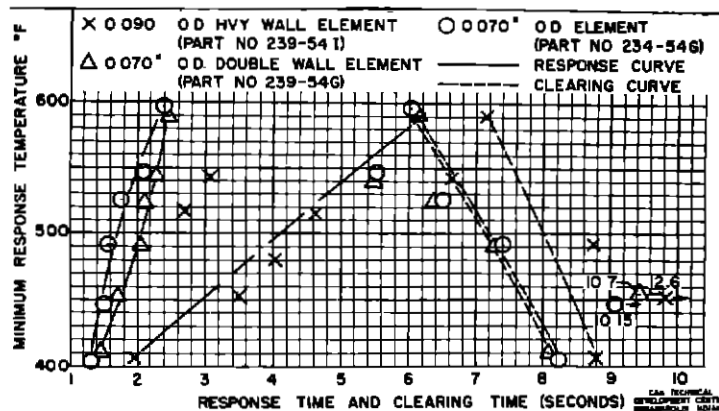


Fig 21 Fire Tests in F-89 Aircraft, No. 14 Fire Location, Edison Detector Elements

## CONCLUSIONS

1 The continuous fire-detection systems with heavy-wall elements required more time to respond and clear than did the systems with the lighter walls

2 The heavy-wall systems submitted by both manufacturers did not meet the requirements of SAE Specification AS-401A, Section 7.1 (Response Time) at any of the calibrations used during the tests. The double-wall elements submitted by Thomas A. Edison, Inc., responded in five seconds or less only with ambient-temperature calibrations below 450° F.

3. Response and clearing times of all the systems tested were less during the tests with the F-89 airplane than during the tests conducted on the fire-detector-test bench in accordance with SAE Specification AS-401A. This difference in response time was caused by the higher flame temperatures of the test fires in the F-89 airplane, and the difference in clearing time was caused by the rapid cooling effect of air flowing through the engine bay. Test-fire temperatures varied from 2000° to 2400° F., and velocity of the air through the engine bay varied from 17.08 to 73.30 feet per second.

4 In addition to the effect of thickness of the material in the element wall, response and clearing times also are influenced by the following factors:

- A. Ambient-temperature calibration of the control box.
- B. Length of element in the circuit
- C. Composition of the core material

5 Because differences existed in element length and ambient-temperature settings between the products of the two manufacturers, and because variations of flame size and intensity occurred between one test and another in the F-89 airplane, the data contained in this report do not provide a reasonable basis for a comparison of the products of the one manufacturer against those of the other.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wishes to acknowledge the excellent co-operation of Walter Kidde & Company, Inc., and Thomas A. Edison, Inc., during this evaluation.