REGENERATIVE ELECTRIC BRAKING

By J. J. Linebaugh

Railway and Traction Engineering Department, General Electric Company

After first noting some of the previous uses of regenerative control in railway work, the author passes on to show the difficulties which have been encountered in designing regenerative control apparatus for the standard direct-current series railway motor. The advent of the commutating pole motor has removed many of these difficulties. The operation of regenerative control on the 3000-volt direct-current locomotives of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway is then dealt with. A table showing the amount of energy returned to the line for various train weights, grades and speeds is given and the article is concluded by a summary of the advantages derived by the use of regenerative control.

The successful regeneration of power by electric locomotives when descending grades has been the dream of inventors and engineers ever since the initial trip of the first electric car at Richmond, Va., in 1887.

A great many different combinations of fields, armatures, motors and control have been proposed to accomplish this purpose, and several schemes have been tried out with such indifferent success that, until recently, very little has been heard of this method of operation. It has been the common opinion that a commercial system of regeneration of motor, owing to the series characteristics of electric power could not be produced with the advantages derived by the use of regenerative control. It has been the common opinion that a commercial system of regeneration of electric power could not be produced with the advantages derived by the use of regenerative control as it is only necessary to operate the motor slightly above the synchronous speed to cause it to work as a generator; but it has the serious inherent disadvantage that electric braking cannot be obtained at any other speed.

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The Great Northern Railroad has used regenerative electric braking in connection with its 116-ton, three-phase locomotives through the Cascade Tunnel on a 1.7 per cent grade ever since this electrification was completed in 1909, with very gratifying results from an operating stand-point, as regards brake shoe wear, wheel troubles and ease of control, etc. Passenger and freight trains up to 2500 tons are taken through the tunnel safely and easily without the use of the air brakes and the railroad officials have been greatly impressed with the desirability of this method of braking that they would not consider any other method of operation.

Fig. 1 shows the general characteristics of these locomotives when motoring and regenerating.

The Norfolk & Western Railroad also reports very satisfactory results with electric braking with their split-phase system; full descriptions of this electrification have been given in the technical press. Very few attempts have been made to develop electric braking control for the commutator a-c. railway motor, such as is used on some of the first single-phase electrifications, so that electric braking is only used commercially at the present time with the direct-current and three-phase or split-phase systems.

* For a complete description of this electrification see paper before the A.I.E.E. by Dr. Cary T. Hutchinson, Vol. 28, 1909.
General interest was greatly revived in regenerative electric braking by the announcement that the officials of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad had adopted the 3000-volt direct-current system with the regenerative braking feature for their extensive electrification across the Rocky Mountains through Montana and Idaho, a distance of 440 miles. This decision was made after a careful study of the merits of the different systems, one of the requirements being that electric braking must be provided without doubt marks one of the greatest advances in steam railroad electrification work in the last few years.

At first glance it would not seem very difficult to devise a system of control, motor connections, etc., such that series wound direct-current motors could be made to act as generators; but until recently the additional cost and complication of motors and control were so great and operation so difficult and unreliable that regeneration had never come into commercial use, although a great number of systems have been proposed. Most of the schemes suggested involved special motor with special combinations of shunt and series field windings and a complicated control equipment.

One of the fundamental causes of failure was due to neglect to take into account the great and rapid changes in trolley voltage encountered in regular railroad work, with the result that the motors could not take care of the extreme overloads caused by a sudden decrease in trolley voltage. It is evident that if the motors acting as generators are generating a certain voltage and held at constant speed by the train, which cannot quickly change its speed, a rapid decrease in the

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Fig. 2. Three-phase Locomotive Used for Electric Braking

as part of the locomotive equipment. This interest increased as the electrification approached completion and the tests on the locomotive indicated that the equipment more than met the expectations of the designers. Operation in actual service for a period of ten months over the very irregular profile shown on page 957, on 226 miles of line has proved that the complete system is an unqualified success, electric braking with passenger and freight trains at all speeds being successful in every way.

This is the first time that electric braking has been used on large locomotives equipped with standard direct-current series motors operating over heavy mountain grades, and
The greatest vibration is very slight, consisting simply of a small generator, electric braking controller and a small amount of control apparatus to make the few connections required. The small generator is used to excite the motor fields and forms part of the motor-generator control set which furnishes power for operation of the control, headlights and blower. (Fig. 5).

The control is so designed that the motors can be connected in series or parallel, giving two high efficient running points, and the same flexibility is obtained when operating as generators for electric braking as when running as motors. The controllers are interlocked so that electric braking can only be applied when the motors are connected in series or parallel. This scheme of control with the great variation in voltage obtainable as generators gives a very wide range in possible operating speed.

The sequence of operations of the controllers is so self evident in combination with the ammeters in the main locomotive and motor circuits, that the regular steam locomotive engineers have no difficulty in operating the locomotive without special training under all the severe conditions encountered in moving heavy trains over mountain grades. The regular operation of the locomotive as a straight locomotive is not interfered with in any way, but electric braking is immediately available at any time either to slow down the train at curves or stops, or to hold the train on the heavy grades. If
the speed of the train on any grade reaches a higher point than desired before braking is applied, electric braking can be applied very slightly and gradually brought up to the point required to slow down the train and hold it at the desired speed. This is a distinct advantage and is only possible with direct-current electric braking.

The regeneration control is entirely automatic and the braking effort is held constant for any definite setting of the braking controller, being entirely independent of the change in trolley voltage, distance from substations or nearest locomotive, change in grades, etc. The wide latitude in braking speeds is shown in Fig. 7 and 8 which indicate very clearly the great flexibility of this type of braking. Trains can be taken down the grades at practically any speed desired by using the proper series or parallel connection of the motors.

It is evident that the motors acting as generators must generate a gradually increasing or decreasing voltage as the locomotive leaves or approaches a substation if the braking effort is held constant and the train is held at constant speed. The control takes care of this automatically, without attention, while giving practically constant speed braking. A locomotive or locomotives descending a grade with a train act exactly the same as a portable substation on wheels moving between the substations, but electrically and physically connected to the substation busbars. The substation generators fix the voltage and the locomotive must generate this voltage plus the voltage drop due to current returning to the station busbars. If power is fed into another locomotive the generated voltage is dependent upon the drop in voltage due to load taken from the substations by the locomotives not regenerating. It is possible for one train descending the grade to take a lighter train up the other side of the mountain with all the power passing through the substation busbars, but without power being supplied from the substation. In this case the generating apparatus simply floats on the line and determines the trolley voltage.

A locomotive equipped with electric braking can take a heavier train down a grade than it can pull up the same grade, due to the fact that the friction of the train has to be overcome when ascending the grade but assists the locomotive in holding the train on the down grade. It has always been necessary to figure on a larger motor for braking than would ordinarily be used, due to the fact that it would be used continuously, but the internal ventilated type of motor used on high voltage d-c. locomotives has such a high continuous capacity that it can be operated continuously at the normal locomotive rating without over heating.

The advantages of electric braking are so many that it is difficult to pick out the most important, but as the saving in power is self evident it is usually the one given the first consideration, although there are other benefits, which in the end may prove of greater value.

The saving in power is undoubtedly one of the most important benefits obtained from electric braking and reaches a very appreciable figure, if the profile consists of many grades above one per cent. The amount of power returned depends upon the length and the steepness of the grade, and the weight of the train. If the grade is steep and short a large amount of energy would be returned for but a short time, so that the actual value of the returned power would not be very great. If the grade is a long one, power is returned for a much longer period, and may be an appreciable percentage of the total power required to operate the road.

Calculations and actual demonstration indicate that there will be a saving of at least
15 per cent of the total power demand with a profile as usually encountered in mountain divisions, if the power conditions are such that all the returned power can be utilized.

A train descending a two per cent grade will return nearly 60 per cent of the power required to haul it up the same grade besides the attendant advantages as regards operation, safety and decreased wear on wheels, brake shoes and track. The fact that a 250-ton trailing train descending a two per cent grade at seventeen miles per hour will return 3000 kw. or 4000 h.p. to the trolley gives a good idea of the amount of power made available for the operation of other trains on the system which was absolutely thrown away in heating the brakeshoes and wheels with the old method of braking.

Electric braking has many advantages in addition to the saving of power, one of the most important being the great increase in ease and safety of operation in taking a long heavy freight or passenger train down a mountain grade. With regular air brake braking it is necessary to repeatedly recharge the auxiliaries; and all the braking is dependent upon the air pumps upon the locomotive. With electric braking but very little air is required, as it is only necessary to keep the train line charged while the locomotive does the braking. Under these conditions the air brakes on the cars are always in condition.

It is interesting to note the amount of power which would be returned to the overhead conductor by freight and passenger trains usually moved over mountain divisions when descending different grades. The number of kilowatts and kilowatt-hours returned to trolley under certain conditions will be found in the following table. The kilowatts regenerated on any grade are directly proportional to the speed and weight of train and the energy returned for any speed and train weight can be calculated from data in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight Train Including Locomotive Tons</th>
<th>Grade Per Cent</th>
<th>Speed m.p.h.</th>
<th>Kilowatts Returned to Trolley</th>
<th>Power in Kilowatt hours if Grade is 20 miles long</th>
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<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>600</td>
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<tr>
<td>3000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3000</td>
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</tbody>
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Electric Braking Effort Curves

![Electric Braking Effort Curves of 3000-volt D-c. Freight Locomotive Showing Wide Range in Braking Speeds](image1)

![Electric Braking Effort Curves of 3000-volt D-c. Passenger Locomotive Showing Wide Range in Braking Speeds](image2)
and the brake shoes and wheels are cool and not red hot or worn out, due to excessive use on a long grade, with the result that in case of emergency the air brakes are instantly available at maximum efficiency, giving a duplicate braking system.

![Freight Train Using Electric Braking Descending 2 per cent Grade on East Slope of Rocky Mountains. Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway Electricification](image)

With electric braking the entire train is bunched against the locomotives and the braking effort is absolutely uniform and constant as there is not the surging back and forth in speed encountered with air braking, which results in decreased wear and tear on brake equipment and greatly increases the comfort of passengers. There is also an entire absence of noise due to grinding of brake shoes and wheels, which is especially disagreeable on heavy passenger trains.

The operation of heavy trains on long steep grades has long been the dread of all railroad operators on account of trouble with brake rigging, hot and worn out brake shoes, broken wheels, trouble with air compressors, etc., which are entirely eliminated by electric braking. The saving in maintenance due to the elimination of these troubles can only be obtained by actual demonstration over a period of time, but it should amount to an appreciable item in addition to the increased safety to passengers and train crews.

It is a well established fact that track rails wear very fast on steep grades with standard air braking if the traffic is very heavy, and it has been proved that this wear is greatly reduced and is practically the same as on the up-grades if regenerative electric braking is used. The experience of the Italian State Railways in this respect indicates that this saving may be one of the most important advantages of this type of braking; but operation in this country has not yet been extensive enough to show the actual saving.

It is evident that if regeneration is used, all of the apparatus on the locomotives and in the substations, etc., must be capable of operating inverted. Not only must the motors on the locomotives act as generators, but the generating equipment in the sub-stations must invert, and if motor-generator sets are used, the direct-current generators must operate as motors and the synchronous motors as generators. They must be capable of doing this instantly and as often as required without affecting reliability or successful operation in any way.

All of the apparatus in the locomotives and substations for the Milwaukee electrification have been designed to meet these severe conditions and successful operation for over almost a year has demonstrated that they have more than met the requirements of actual service and the railroad company.

**SUMMARY**

The advantages of regenerative electric braking may be stated as follows:

- Saving of approximately 15 per cent of total power required.
- Elimination of brake shoe and wheel wear and brake rigging troubles with material reduction in maintenance charges.
- Removal of difficulties encountered in operation of long heavy freight and passenger trains on long grades due to inherent operating characteristics of air brakes.
- Reduction in wear of track on grades and severe curves.
- Increased safety to passenger and train crews due to duplicate braking systems.
- Increased comfort to passengers and reduced wear on equipment due to constant speed on grades and uniform braking when slowing down for curves and stops.
- Elimination of grinding and noise of brake shoes and wheels on heavy grades.