



THE STANDARDS OF THE BRAZED ALUMINIUM PLATE-FIN HEAT EXCHANGER MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION

Addendum to 4th Edition

March 2024

This document is updated periodically as an Addendum to the 4th Edition of the ALPEMA Standards. It contains a Clarification to the 4th Edition and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) which were developed by the ALPEMA members. This Addendum is published at the following web address.

<http://alpema.org/addendum.html>

Clarification to Section 4.10.2 of the 4th Edition

The ALPEMA members withdraw the italicized comment in the following sentence:

“Relief settings and relief capacities shall comply with the relevant governing Code and there is no need to account for interstream leakage due to the nature of the construction of brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchangers.”

This sentence is replaced by the following:

“Relief settings and relief capacities shall comply with the relevant governing Code.”

List of FAQs

1. What is the minimum temperature approach (pinch point) for a brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchanger? 2
2. Can a brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchanger simply replace a conventional shell-and-tube heat exchanger? 2
3. Are the ALPEMA Standards and API 668 the same? 2
4. Can specifications for heat exchanger types such as shell-and-tubes or plate-and-frames be used for procurement of brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchangers? 2
5. Are generic pressure vessel specifications applicable to brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchangers or aluminium drums? 2
6. Do generic welding specifications apply to brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchangers? 2
7. What are the ALPEMA recommendations for brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchanger-related relief valve sizing for fire conditions? More specifically, what can be assumed to be the “wetted surface” area of the heat exchanger exposed to fire, thus allowing estimation of the rate of vaporization of the fluids and the relief valve sizing? 2
8. What is ALPEMA’s opinion on the value of a hydrostatic test hold time of 1 hour? 2
9. The 4th Edition updates the temperature rate of change for startup and shutdown from 2°C/min to 5°C/min. What is the basis for this change? 3



1. What is the minimum temperature approach (pinch point) for a brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchanger?

A good guideline is 1 to 3 K depending upon the application. Minimum temperature approaches even lower than 1 K are possible in a few applications.

2. Can a brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchanger simply replace a conventional shell-and-tube heat exchanger?

Such replacement typically requires a deep look into the technical details. Materials, fouling, ability to clean, fluid compatibility, temperature differences, installation space, nozzle locations, support structures, etc., need to be checked. Adjustment of certain process parameters could become necessary. Typically shell-and-tube heat exchangers are operated with larger temperature differences, which could impact the mechanical integrity of the brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchanger.

3. Are the ALPEMA Standards and API 668 the same?

No, there are differences. See [ALPEMA responses to Requirements in API 668 Feb2022.pdf](#) based on the 3rd Edition of the ALPEMA Standards.

4. Can specifications for heat exchanger types such as shell-and-tubes or plate-and-frames be used for procurement of brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchangers?

No. Additional information that may not be necessary for the procurement of other heat exchanger types is essential for brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchangers, and must be provided. These include detailed material and process information. A typical specification sheet that illustrates the information necessary for brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchangers is available for [download here](#).

5. Are generic pressure vessel specifications applicable to brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchangers or aluminium drums?

Not usually. Such specifications must be clearly restricted to carbon steel or stainless steel heat exchangers or drums if the requested supply contains such items.

6. Do generic welding specifications apply to brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchangers?

No. Such specifications do not usually contain any reference to aluminium welding. Generic welding specifications must be restricted to carbon steel or stainless steel parts if the requested supply contains such items, and not used for aluminium welding.

7. What are the ALPEMA recommendations for brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchanger-related relief valve sizing for fire conditions? More specifically, what can be assumed to be the “wetted surface” area of the heat exchanger exposed to fire, thus allowing estimation of the rate of vaporization of the fluids and the relief valve sizing?

As a simplified approach for the “wetted surface” of a brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchanger, it is recommended to take into account, for each of the heat exchanger passes, the full outer surface of the heat exchanger (i.e. the 6 surfaces of the heat exchanger) and to ignore all heat exchanger internals. A fire protection layer, if any, is taken into account as well. These parameters can then be used to estimate the fire induced heat input and the rates of vaporization of the fluids, which are required to escape the brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchanger through the relief valves.

8. What is ALPEMA’s opinion on the value of a hydrostatic test hold time of 1 hour?

Once a stream attains a hydrostatic test pressure, the length of time the test pressure is held does not affect the test result. Any test pressure that holds for 1 minute will hold for 1 hour. Rarely, during hydrostatic testing the stream test pressure is not reached due to leakage.

A 1-hour hold is performed on standard pressure vessels (shell-and-tube) where the hydrostatic test is both a structural test and a leak test. For liquid only applications, a hydrostatic leak test is appropriate. For brazed aluminium plate-fin heat exchangers a pneumatic leak test is performed after a hydrostatic structural test. A



pneumatic leak test is more sensitive to detect leaks than a hydrostatic leak test. A pneumatic leak test will reveal leaks not indicated by a hydrostatic leak test.

Therefore, a 1-hour hold hydrostatic test costs time and money and does not improve leak detection nor improve structural integrity testing.

9. The 4th Edition updates the temperature rate of change for startup and shutdown from 2°C/min to 5°C/min. What is the basis for this change?

The maximum allowable temperature rate of change for infrequent events like startup and shutdown is increased from 2°C/min to 5°C/min based on plant data of existing units, subject to Sections 4.10 and 8.1 of the 4th Edition.