

Chapter 05.00G

Physical Problem of Interpolation Mechanical Engineering

Problem Statement

To make the fulcrum (Figure 1) of a bascule bridge, a long hollow steel shaft called the trunnion is shrink fit into a steel hub.

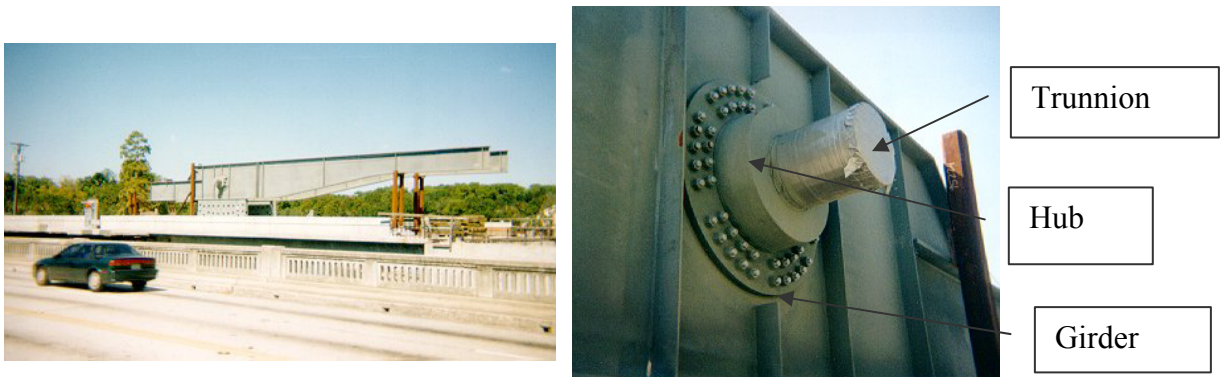


Figure 1 Trunnion-Hub-Girder (THG) assembly.

This is done by first immersing the trunnion in a cold medium such as dry-ice/alcohol mixture. After the trunnion reaches a steady state temperature of the cold medium, the trunnion outer diameter contracts, is taken out and slid through the hole of the hub (Figure 2).

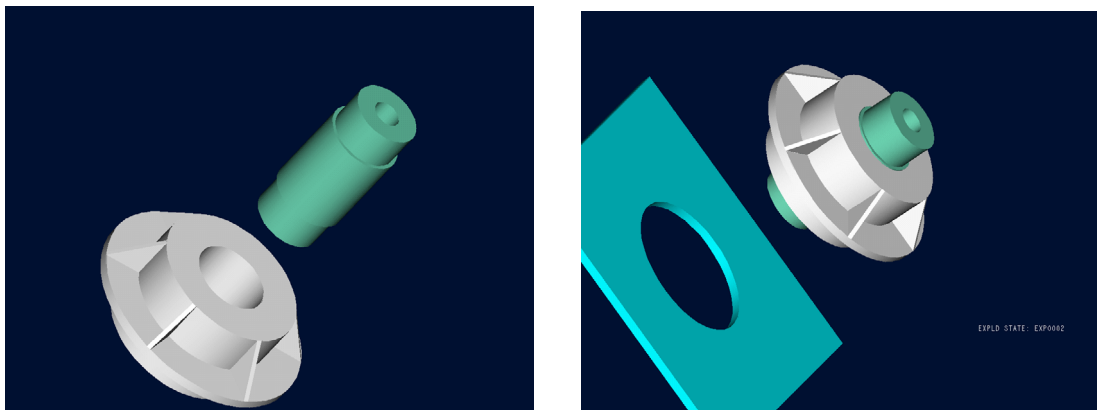


Figure 2 Trunnion slid through the hub after contracting

When the trunnion heats up, it expands and creates an interference fit with the hub. In 1995, on one of the bridges in Florida, this assembly procedure did not work as designed. Before

the trunnion could be inserted fully into the hub, the trunnion got stuck. So a new trunnion and hub had to be ordered worth \$50,000. Coupled with construction delays, the total loss ran into more than hundred thousand dollars.

Why did the trunnion get stuck? This was because the trunnion had not contracted enough to slide through the hole.

Now the same designer is working on making the fulcrum for another bascule bridge. Can you help him so that he does not make the same mistake?

For this new bridge, he needs to fit a hollow trunnion of outside diameter 12.363" in a hub of inner diameter 12.358". His plan is to put the trunnion in dry ice/alcohol mixture (temperature of dry ice/alcohol mixture is -108°F) to contract the trunnion so that it can be slid through the hole of the hub. To slide the trunnion without sticking, he has also specified a diametral clearance of at least 0.01". Assume the room temperature is 80°F , is immersing it in dry-ice/alcohol mixture a correct decision?

Solution

Looking at the records of the designer for the previous bridge where the trunnion got stuck in the hub, it was found that he used the thermal expansion coefficient at room temperature to calculate the contraction in the trunnion diameter. In that case the reduction, ΔD in the outer diameter of the trunnion is

$$\Delta D = D\alpha\Delta T \quad (1)$$

where

D = outer diameter of the trunnion,

α = coefficient of thermal expansion coefficient at room temperature,

ΔT = change in temperature.

Given

$$D = 12.363''$$

$$\alpha = 6.817 \times 10^{-6} \text{ in/in/}^{\circ}\text{F at } 80^{\circ}\text{F}$$

$$\Delta T = T_{\text{fluid}} - T_{\text{room}}$$

$$= -108 - 80$$

$$= -188^{\circ}\text{F}$$

where

T_{fluid} = temperature of dry-ice/alcohol mixture

T_{room} = room temperature

the reduction in the trunnion outer diameter is given by

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta D &= 12.363 \times (6.47 \times 10^{-6})(-188) \\ &= -0.01504'' \end{aligned}$$

So the trunnion is predicted to reduce in diameter by 0.01504". But, is this enough reduction in diameter? As per the specifications, he needs the trunnion to contract by

$$= \text{trunnion outside diameter} - \text{hub inner diameter} + \text{diametric clearance}$$

$$= 12.363'' - 12.358'' + 0.01''$$

$$= 0.015''$$

So according to his calculations, it is enough to put the steel trunnion in dry-ice/alcohol mixture to get the desired contraction of 0.015" as he is predicting a contraction of 0.01504".

But as shown in the graph below, the thermal expansion coefficient of steel decreases with temperature and is not constant over the range of temperature the trunnion goes through. Hence the above formula (Equation 1) would overestimate the thermal contraction. This is the mistake he made in the calculations for the earlier bridge.

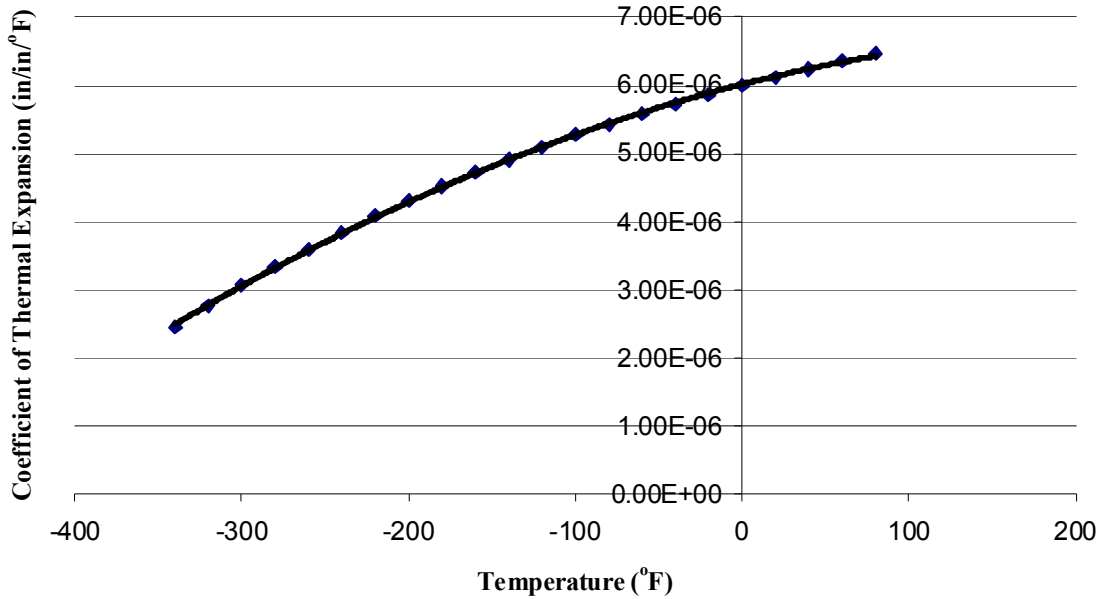


Figure 3 Varying thermal expansion coefficient as a function of temperature for cast steel.

To get a better estimate of the contraction in the diameter, we can use the thermal expansion coefficient at the average temperature. The average temperature of the steel would be

$$T_{avg} = \frac{-108 + 80}{2} = -14^{\circ} F \quad (2)$$

Now given the table of thermal expansion coefficient as a function of temperature as given below, we can use polynomial interpolation to find the thermal expansion coefficient at the average temperature of $-14^{\circ} F$ and find the contraction using equation (1).

Table 1 Temperature vs thermal expansion coefficient

Temperature (°F)	Thermal Expansion Coefficient ($\mu\text{in/in}^{\circ}\text{F}$)
80	6.47
60	6.36
40	6.24
20	6.12
0	6.00
-20	5.86
-40	5.72
-60	5.58

-80	5.43
-100	5.28
-120	5.09
-140	4.91
-160	4.72
-180	4.52
-200	4.30
-220	4.08
-240	3.83
-260	3.58
-280	3.33
-300	3.07
-320	2.76
-340	2.45

Is cooling in dry-ice/alcohol mixture still your recommendation?

Topic	INTERPOLATION
Sub Topic	Physical Problem
Summary	Find the thermal expansion coefficient of steel at a specific temperature to find out whether a steel shaft will cool down enough to shrink fit into a hollow hub. The thermal expansion coefficient is to be found by using interpolation from a given table of thermal expansion coefficient of steel as a function of temperature.
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Web Site	http://numericalmethods.eng.usf.edu