Structural Health Monitoring Analysis for the Orbiter Wing Leading Edge


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Introduction

• **Wing Leading Edge Impact Detection System (WLE IDS)**
  – Columbia re-entry breakup (STS-107) was caused by External Tank (ET) foam release and subsequent impact on the WLE
  – Structural health monitoring (SHM) system was developed under Return-to-Flight (RTF) to monitor WLE debris threat
  – System development led by NASA-JSC, supported by LaRC & ARC, Invocon, USA, Boeing, LM, ESCG
  – Goal is to detect foam/ice & micrometeoroid/orbital debris (MM/OD) impacts, and help make critical mission decisions

• **Impact Analysis Process**
  – Starts with searching for potential impacts in summary data
  – $G$-time history data are then downloaded for detail analysis
  – Impact criteria were established based on extensive impact testing conducted after the accident
  – Seek for typical shock response with localized high-frequency transient and damped oscillation
  – Primary impact criteria were extended to improve MM/OD monitoring
    • Orbiter funded Boeing to explore new impact criteria (damping, multi-sensor, and nonlinear characteristics)
    • The development had greatly enhanced the ability to discern MM/OD impacts from false positives
  – Analysis capability was extended to provide severity assessment
    • Helped establish reporting threshold and determine the level of concern
    • Supported by elaborate Orbiter Vehicle testing and NASTRAN modeling efforts
Risk Management via SHM

- **Risk Management**
  - Possible to prevent or reduce the occurrence of structural fault or hazard event
  - It may not be feasible or cost-effective to completely prevent fault or eliminate hazard
  - SHM can reduce the catastrophic failure risk after a fault condition or hazard event has occurred

- **Risk Mitigation**
  - Goal is to mitigate risk between the time of detection and the time of potential catastrophe
  - “... the reason for time is so everything doesn’t happen at once”

- **Cost-benefit Study**
  - How much can you benefit from SHM? (trade study, design requirements, system goals)
  - How much useable lead-time will you get? (application specific, instrumentation, analysis capability)
  - What can you do within this limited amount of time? (repair options, operation changes)
Hardware Overview

Wing Leading Edge with 22 Reinforced Carbon-Carbon Panels

Accelerometer

Wireless Data Acquisition Sensor Unit

Reinforced Carbon-Carbon Panel

Thermal Sensor
Instrumentation

Sensors
- 132 accelerometers (66/wing)
- 44 temperature sensors (22/wing)
  - Behind spar (RCC #1-19 & chine)

Wing Cavity Sensor Unit Farm
- 14 sensor units
- 1 wing relay unit (WRU-B)

Wing Glove Sensor Unit Farm
- 8 sensor units
- 1 wing relay unit (WRU-A)

Crew Cabin Equipment
- Cabin relay unit (CRU)
- Laptop receiver unit (LRU)
- WLES laptop

Wing Spar
- Sensors

Wing Cavity/Glove
- Data Acquisition Units
- RF
- Wing Relay Units

Crew Cabin
- Cabin Relay Units
- RF
- Laptop Receiver Unit
- Laptop
Sensor Configuration

- **Accelerometer Locations**
  - 3 channels per data acquisition (sensor) unit, typically distributed 2 panels apart
  - Sensor units are mounted at two separate “farm” areas (wing glove and cavity)

- **Ascent Summary Download Priority**
  - 3 groups of data are downloaded according to a prioritized order
  - Download priority is based on the criticality of re-entry aeroheating of the panels monitored
Ascent Monitoring

- Debris (foam & ice)
  - Foam insulates ET, protects it from ascent aeroheating, and reduces ice formation
  - Study conducted after STS-107 prompted bipod redesign and NDE closeout
  - Foam shedding from multiple locations reduced but continued to occur
- Ascent Operation
  - WLEIDS continued to operate with 10-min data take through ascent flight monitoring
  - Main challenge is to determine when and where an impact occurred and its severity

On-orbit Monitoring

- Micrometeoroid & Orbital Debris (MM/OD)
  - Micrometeoroids are interplanetary particles broken off from larger debris
  - Man-made orbital debris (e.g., fragments from satellites/rockets) also pose serious risk
  - Small MM/OD damage craters are commonly found (e.g., RCCs, thermal tiles, radiator)
- On-orbit Operation
  - After ascent analysis is completed, sensor units cycle through idle and trigger modes intermittently for the remaining flight
  - Main challenge is impact discernment
**Ascent Response Summary**

- **Summary Data**
  - Data summarized to optimize storage & downlink time
  - 312.5 Hz high-pass periodic $G_{rms}$ summary
  - 10-min 20 kHz data down to 1200 points
  - ME & SRB ignition are most pronounced
  - SRB and ET separations are distinctly seen
  - Chine shows higher response sensitivity
  - Higher noise at certain panel interfaces (foil-wrapped spar insulation batting)

- **Summary Analysis**
  - Screened data for potential impacts
  - Process can be slow & labor intensive
  - Auto-detection
    - Tried using data mining methods
    - Adopted expert systems† approach
    - Incorporated test, simulation, and flight experiences
    - Resulted in significant savings in time and resource
    - Safeguards against possible visual prevalence

† An artificial intelligence (AI) approach that captures the expert's knowledge base via representation formalism, so that the engineered system can serve as an aid to human in the same problem solving setting as the expert
Response Signal

**G-time History**

- **G**
- **Noise G**
- **Peak G**
- **Noise Band**

**G_{rms}-time History**

- **G**
- **Noise G**
- **Peak G**
- **Noise Band**

**Power Spectral Density**

- **PSDs**
- **Noise PSD**
- **Peak PSD**
- **Noise Band**

**Spectrogram**

- **PSD (dB)**
- **Frequency (Hz)**
- **Frequency (Hz)**
- **MET (s)**

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Distribution of Flight Indications

**Data Trend**
- System detects as many as 100 indications (low energy, non-damaging, small “popcorn” foam)
- Distribution shows high correlation with ET aero-heating (second hump is less pronounced)
- ET aero-heating causes internal pressure build-up and burst of small pores in foam insulation

**Significance**
- Provided the first strong evidence of the system registering real impacts
- Helped establish confidence in the system’s sensitivity to detect more severe foam impacts
- The discovery confirmed the well-known ascent flight phenomenon of popcorn foam release
**Probabilistic Risk Analysis (PRA)**

### Ascent PRA
- **Analysis Goals**
  - Discern impacts from aero-acoustic loads
  - Address situational risk due to an indication
  - Determine the level of concern
- **Analysis Process**
  - Characterize impact indications by time, location, and severity
  - Use PRA to determine severity and produces “decisionable” information
  - Account for varying response sensitivity across the wing, and uncertainty (location, angle, velocity, debris type)
  - Elaborate effort involving vehicle thumper testing, model simulation, and risk analysis

### On-orbit PRA
- **Analysis Goals**
  - Discern impacts from spurious triggers
  - Address situational risk due to an indication
  - Determine the level of concern
- **Analysis Process**
  - Estimate impact and damage probability
  - Relate flight response to damage from test
  - Scale flight response to account for higher test article response sensitivity
  - Model the statistics of these scaling factors

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**Risk Analysis Model Runs**
- Maximum $G_{rms}$
- Damage Threshold Model Runs
- PRA
- Maximum Stress
- Damage Probability

**G\textsubscript{max} from Flight Indication**
- Sensor Configuration Scaling
- Panel-to-Panel Scaling
- Test Article Scaling
- Measurement Scaling
- Damage-$G_{max}$ Correlation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Test Article</th>
<th>Operating Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ballistic Impact Test</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Correlate test article model at high loads</td>
<td>• Correlate hi-fi model at high loads</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Realistic test conditions</td>
<td>• Most realistic test conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Full-scale test article used</td>
<td>• Potential damage to the structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No damage risk to operating structure</td>
<td>• Prohibitive cost &amp; damage risk</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thumper Test</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Correlate test article model at low loads</td>
<td>• Correlate hi-fi model at low loads</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thumper simulated impact conditions</td>
<td>• Thumper simulated impact conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Full-scale test article used</td>
<td>• Minimal risk of damaging the structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No damage risk to operating structure</td>
<td>• Manageable cost &amp; damage risk</td>
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Impact Tests

Thumper Test on OV-105 at KSC

Click on Image to Play

Ballistic Impact Test

Test Article Thumping

Hypervelocity Impact Test
Wing Leading Edge Modeling

WLE IDS Vehicle Hi-fi Port Wing Model w/ Spar, Fittings, RCC #4-18

Enlarged View of WLE IDS Vehicle RCC/Fitting/Spar Model

Foam Impact

Click Image to Play

Ice Impact

Click Image to Play
Ascent Debris PRA Results

Foam Impact on Apex, \( P=1/100 \)

- Nominal

- 95th Percentile

Foam Impact on Apex, \( P=1/200 \)

Foam Impact on Apex, \( P=1/500 \)

Foam Impact on Apex, \( P=1/1000 \)

Response Threshold, \( G_{rms}^* \)

Impact Location (Panel)
MM/OD PRA Results

Critical Damage Probability vs. Flight Response, $G_{\text{max}}$

4-sensor

Critical Damage Probability vs. Flight Response, $G_{\text{max}}$

3-sensor

Critical Damage Probability vs. Flight Response, $G_{\text{max}}$

2-sensor

Critical Damage Probability vs. Flight Response, $G_{\text{max}}$

1-sensor

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## Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Success Drivers</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common Analysis Tool</td>
<td>Provided a unified analysis software for the mission support team</td>
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<td>Auto-detection</td>
<td>Saved valuable analysis time &amp; resources while improving the quality of results</td>
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<td>Impact Criteria</td>
<td>Allowed rigorous quantitative &amp; qualitative evaluation of impact indications</td>
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<td>Analysis Procedure</td>
<td>Guaranteed consistent results by formalizing the analysis steps</td>
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<td>Knowledge Integration</td>
<td>Developed strong knowledge base from testing, modeling, &amp; flight experience</td>
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<td>Aeroheating Correlation</td>
<td>Demonstrated high sensitivity, built confidence in detecting damaging impacts</td>
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<td>Reporting Threshold</td>
<td>Enhanced operational feasibility &amp; sustainability by setting a minimum threshold</td>
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<td>Computational PRA</td>
<td>Extended the analysis capability to severity determination</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Elements</th>
<th>Lessons Learned</th>
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<tr>
<td>System Development</td>
<td>SHM helps manage risk of operating structures under a hazardous environment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A deployed system can continue to evolve through on-going operation &amp; analysis</td>
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<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>Wireless instrumentation provides a practical solution for a retrofit design</td>
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<td>Power source affects utilization of wireless transmission and monitoring duration</td>
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<td>Testing &amp; Modeling</td>
<td>Extensive testing provides valuable data for model development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Test &amp; model development is most meaningful when driven by analysis goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHM Analysis</td>
<td>Complete SHM analysis involves identification, localization, &amp; severity assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Probabilistic analysis is useful for handling many issues involving uncertainty</td>
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Conclusions

• **System Role**
  - Debris Risk Management
    - Debris hazard environment experienced by the Orbiter presented a challenging risk management problem
    - SHM reconditioned this problem, as hazard monitoring made the pertinent flight risk more manageable
  - Mission Highlight
    - During STS-132 early inspection, OBSS could not properly position the LDRI due to a snagged cable
    - EVA was planned to fix the snag, but RCC could not be cleared for re-entry per flight rule
    - WLEIDS analysis helped determine that RCC was unlikely to have sustained unacceptable damage

• **Future Development**
  - Wireless Instrumentation
    - Overcame many difficulties associated with incorporating the system into an entrenched structure
    - Provided a practical platform for an integrated impact sensing, signal processing, and analysis operation
  - Future SHM
    - Enhance the safety of human space transportation, exploration, and habitation
    - Focus on MM/OD monitoring instead of ascent due to in-line design of future launch vehicles
    - Medium size particles large enough to cause damage despite shielding and yet too small to be tracked
    - Advanced impact criteria developed for MM/OD monitoring will contribute to a more reliable SHM system
    - Build on previous technology concept (instrumentation, interface firmware, impact analysis tools)
    - Perform cost-benefit study by assessing risk mitigation options within a certain lead-time
    - Pursue severity assessment to help realize the risk buy-down from SHM
    - Simultaneously monitor for multiple hazards and conditions to get the most bang for your buck
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