

SIZING STEAM LINES

SIMPLE SIZING CRITERIA

Proper detailed design of a steam system should be done using detailed calculations for frictional losses in steam piping. The following examples and rules are meant to provide simple guidelines to see if steam pipe sizes are possibly undersized. They do not imply any design liability by Nicholson. Undersizing of steam lines can lead to reduced pressure to process equipment and impaired performance of valves, heat exchangers and steam traps. Steam line sizing along with condensate return line sizing should always be checked when a system is not performing up to expectations.

EXAMPLE: The system shown in Figure 3.1 will be used as our example. The Supply "S" at the right is 120 psig steam which is branching off to steam users A, B, C, D & E. The equipment usage is indicated in lbs/hr. The segments of piping will be addressed going backwards from the furthest end user A. The steam flow going through the pipe segment from the intersection X to equipment A is 1000 lb/hr (the usage of A). **A simple rule of thumb** for smaller steam piping (6" and below) is to keep steam velocities below 10,000 feet/minute (165 feet/second) for **short lengths of pipe only**.

The length of the steam line between X and A is 1000 feet, so the simple rule of thumb can not be applied here because the pressure drop will be too high. The pressure drop should be kept to a minimum, or supply pressure to the equipment will droop.

SOLUTION BY CHART: The chart is a graphic solution to help select pipe sizes. The pressure values used for this chart are in psia (absolute). For values given in gage pressure (psig), you must add 15 psi (14.7 psi actual). The example we will use is for saturated steam flow, but this chart does have corrections for superheat. There will be an overall system pressure drop, so that the pressure is assumed to be 5 to 10 psig below the supply pressure of 120 psig (135 psia). Enter the chart at the

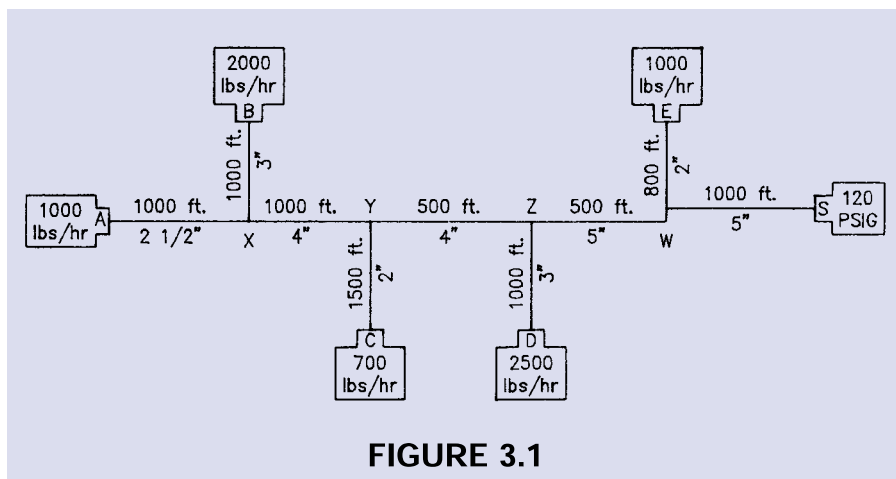


FIGURE 3.1

top at a point representing 130 psia and proceed vertically downward. Enter the chart at the right at the value of the steam flow in Lb/minute (1000 lb/hr = 16.7 lb/min) and move horizontally across until the horizontal line intersects the vertical line. You will proceed along the diagonal, downward and to the right, parallel with the other diagonal lines.

This chart can be used two ways: either to determine the pressure drop of an existing pipe or to determine the correct pipe size for a specific pressure drop.

TO SIZE LINES: On the bottom of the chart is a pressure drop per 100 feet of pipe, select a value of 0.25 psi per 100 feet. This indicates 2.5 psi as the total loss for 1000 feet. Enter the chart at the bottom at .25 and move upward until you intersect the diagonal line. Proceed from the intersection horizontally left until you reach the actual pipe inside diameter to determine the pipe size. In this example, the pipe size for section X to A should be 2 1/2" pipe.

TO FIGURE PRESSURE DROP: Enter the chart on the left side at your pipe size and proceed horizontally until you intersect with the diagonal line. Proceed vertically downward to determine the pressure drop per 100 feet of pipe.

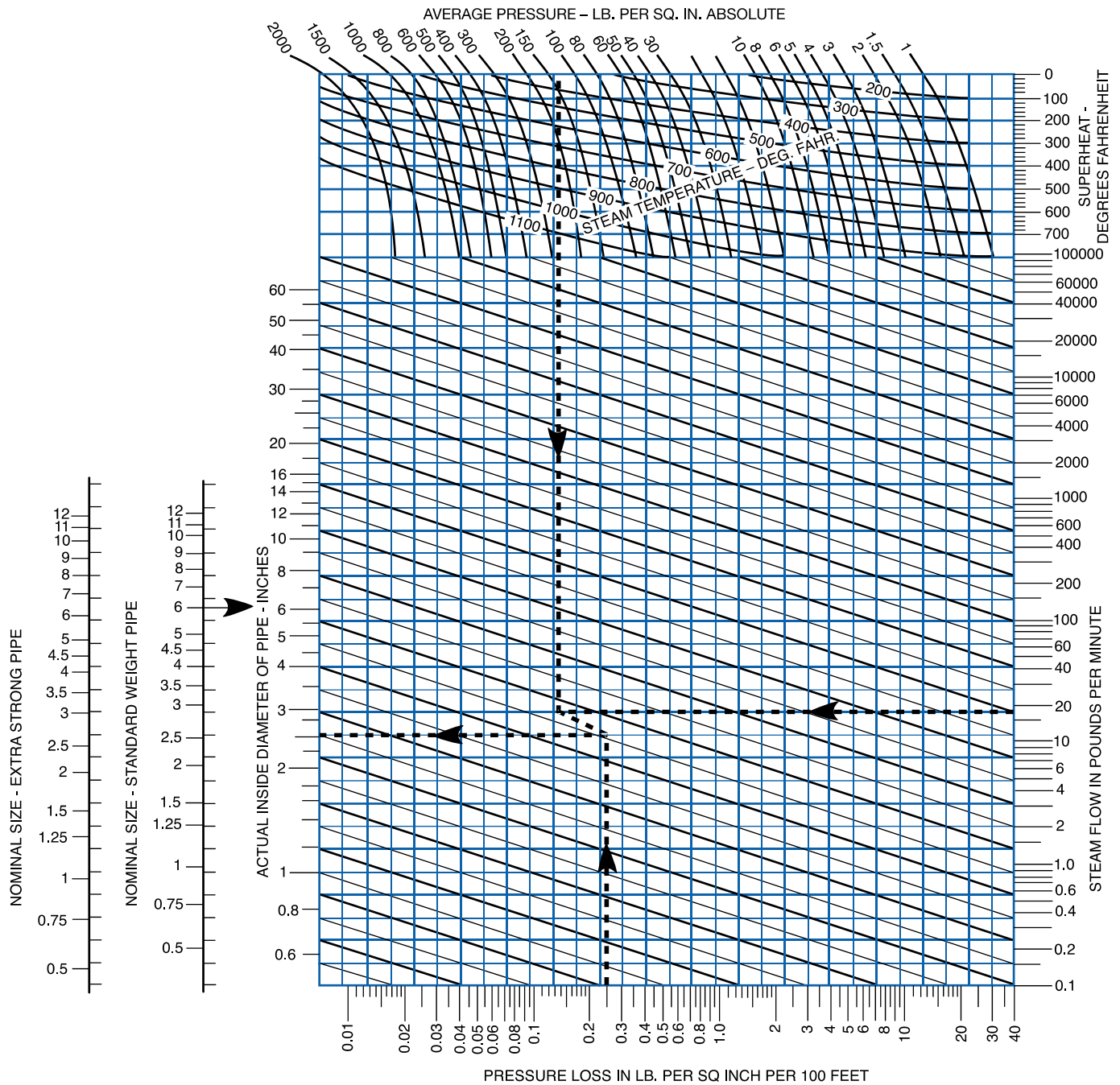
The next section of pipe to determine would be X to B. This would have the same pressure, but the intersection of

the vertical line would be at the horizontal steam flow of 33 lb/min (2000 lb/hr) for user B. The choice of pipe sizes can be argued, a 4" will yield 0.1 psi/100 feet pressure drop (1.0 psi per 1000 feet), but the more economical solution of a 3" pipe yields a 0.4psi/100 feet pressure drop. **Note:** when selecting the smaller more economical pipe size, there is less room for expansion and pressure drops will increase should additional process capacity arise.

For common sections of header such as Y to X, the steam flow for both steam users A and B must be combined. The vertical line will now intersect with the horizontal steam flow line coming across at 50 lb/min (3000 lb/hr). Using a 4" line will bring the pressure drop to a value of 0.22 psi/100 feet, or 2.2 psi for the 1000 foot section.

Remember that pressure drop figures from the bottom of the chart are per 100 feet, so segments such as Y to C have a larger total pressure drop because the distance is longer. Similarly, the total pressure drop from Z to Y is less because the distance is only 500 feet. The values for steam flow continue to be additive for each steam user; Z to Y is 3700 lb/hr (61.7 lb/min), W to Z is 6200 lb/hr (103.3 lb/min) and S to W is 7200 lb/hr (120 lb/min). Pipe sizes in Figure 3.1 are given for your reference and provide the user with reasonable pressure drops in the steam lines.

SIZING STEAM LINES CONT'D.



SIZING CONDENSATE RETURN LINES

SIZING CONDENSATE RETURN LINES

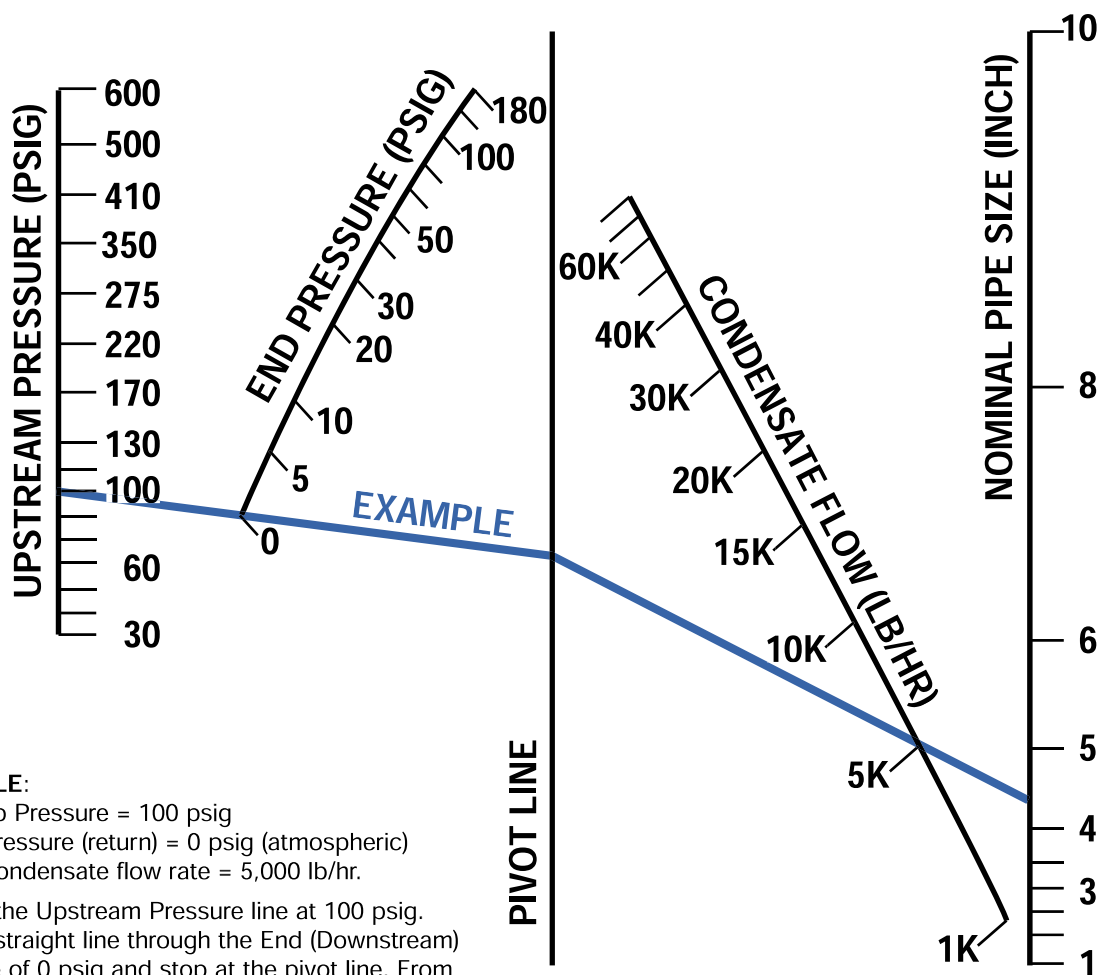
When condensate passes through a steam trap orifice, it drops from the upstream pressure in the heat exchanger to the downstream pressure in the condensate return line. The energy in the upstream condensate is greater than the energy in the downstream condensate. As the condensate passes through the steam trap, the additional energy from the upstream condensate forms a percentage of flash steam that changes based upon the upstream

and downstream pressures (this percentage can be seen in Table 5 in the Condensate Commander section).

When sizing condensate return lines after the steam trap, it is important to take into account the amount of flash steam created when hot, saturated condensate undergoes a pressure drop. The flash steam has very large volume and can cause very high velocities if the return line is not sized properly. These high velocities can create high backpressure in the return line that often

leads to poor steam trap performance.

We will size the condensate return line based upon flash steam velocities. The percentage of flash steam versus condensate (water) is usually on the order of 20 to 1, so the effect of the water in the system sizing is usually small. Choosing a velocity of flash steam is often subjective and different manufacturers will suggest different values. The nomograph below sizes return lines based upon 50 feet/second.



EXAMPLE:

Inlet Trap Pressure = 100 psig
Outlet Pressure (return) = 0 psig (atmospheric)
Actual condensate flow rate = 5,000 lb/hr.

Start at the Upstream Pressure line at 100 psig. Make a straight line through the End (Downstream) Pressure of 0 psig and stop at the pivot line. From that point, make a straight line through the Condensate Flow Rate of 5,000 and stop at the Nominal Pipe size line. It intersects slightly higher than 4". You may select the 4" line size without concern for undersizing the line because a low velocity of 50 ft/sec was used.

Note: If design requirements dictate using a velocity other than the 50 ft/sec value in the Nomograph, a ratio can be made of the pipe size because the velocity is proportional to the Pipe Diameter

squared. For example, if you require a Pipe Diameter for 80 ft/sec, use the following equation:

$$\text{Nomograph Diameter} \times \sqrt{\frac{50 \text{ FT/SEC}}{\text{New Velocity (FT/SEC)}}}$$

Example: The Nomograph Diameter determined in the previous example is 4.2". Using the above formula, the Pipe Diameter for 80 ft/sec is 3.3".

STEAM TRACING DESIGN GUIDELINES

V.1.1 INTRODUCTION

Steam tracing is one of many ways to preheat, add heat and prevent heat loss from piping systems and their components. Some other ways are:

- ☛ Jacketed piping
- ☛ Hot water and oil tracing
- ☛ Dowtherm tracing

Jacketed piping systems are used primarily to maintain a constant high temperature. Due to its high cost of construction, jacketed systems are seldom used except where temperature control is critical. Hot water and oil must be pumped at a high velocity to maintain a desired temperature, and must have a separate return header as does Dowtherm. Hot water, oil or dowtherm are also an additional system which add to the cost of a plant.

Steam tracing is most often selected because:

- ☛ There is generally available a surplus of low and/or medium pressure steam.
- ☛ Steam has a high latent heat and heat-transfer-coefficient.
- ☛ Steam condenses at a constant temperature.
- ☛ Steam flows to end-point without the aid of pumps (when designed correctly).
- ☛ A small amount of return piping is needed due to existing condensate headers.

V.1.2 USES

Freeze Protection (winterizing)

- ☛ Adding sufficient heat to above-grade piping systems and equipment which are exposed to ambient temperatures below the freezing point of their media prevents freezing.

Maintaining A Desired Temperature

- ☛ The viscosity of some liquids becomes higher as their temperatures become lower causing more difficult and costly pumping and leading to down-time for cleaning.
- ☛ Condensation may occur in some gases if the ambient temperature falls below the dewpoint which is harmful and expensive in such systems as:
 - Natural Gas where control valves freeze up and burners malfunction.
 - Compressor Suction Lines where compressors can be damaged.

V.1.3 MATERIAL

Steam tracing material is normally as follows:

- Use the material specified for steam piping from the steam header (through the distribution manifold, if applicable) to and including the tracer block valve.
- Use 1/4" through 7/8" O.D. copper or stainless steel tubing (depending on the design conditions) from the block valve to the steam trap. Though sizes may vary with different applications, 3/8" and 1/2" O.D. are the most often used. Tube fittings and adapters are normally flareless compression type or 37 degree flared type.
- Use the material specified for condensate piping from the steam trap (through the collection manifold, if applicable) to the condensate header or end-point (drain or grade).

V.1.4 DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Steam piping should be run within 12" of the line or equipment being traced to minimize exposed tubing.
2. Spiral tracing should be limited to vertical piping using multiple tracers on horizontal lines which require more heat.

3. Tracers should be designed so that the flow is always down.
Avoid pockets! Where vertical flow is unavoidable, steam pressure should be a minimum of 25 PSIG for every 10' of rise.
4. Tracers should be a maximum of 100' long and continuous from the supply to the collection manifold or endpoint. For lines over 100' long, provide another tracer and overlap the two 3 inches to avoid cold spots.
5. Tracers should have no branch tees except as indicated in *Section V.3*.
6. Provide each tracer with a separate strainer and steam trap.
7. Manifolds can be horizontal or vertical depending upon the design conditions.
8. Tracers should be attached to the pipe at 8" to 10" maximum intervals with stainless steel wire. Wire tension should be sufficient to hold the tracer secure and flush against the pipe.
9. Some piping materials, such as lined pipe, might require spacer blocks to avoid "hot spots".
10. Tracer loops with unions are necessary:
 - ☛ when joining tubing lengths.
 - ☛ at all break flanges and unions.
 - ☛ at all flanged valves.
11. Tracer discharge lines should be as short as possible since long discharge lines can freeze even with a fully functioning steam trap.

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.
This page will not be added after purchasing Win2PDF.