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petersons stress concentration factors

Published: September 3, 2026 | Index ID: #-

Petersons Stress Concentration Factors: A Comprehensive Guide

When designing mechanical components, one of the most critical considerations is ensuring that the structure can withstand the loads it will experience without failure. Even if a part is made from a high strength material and is engineered to handle a specific load, geometric irregularities such as holes, notches, fillets, or sudden changes in cross section can create local stress spikes that compromise the component's integrity. These localized increases in stress are known as **stress concentration factors (SCFs)**and they play a pivotal role in predicting failure modes and guiding design decisions.

For decades, engineers and researchers have relied on the authoritative reference book *Peterson"s Stress Concentration Factors*, which compiles an extensive collection of SCF values for a wide range of geometries, loading conditions, and material properties. This article delves deep into Peterson's tables, explains how to use them, discusses their underlying principles, and highlights practical applications across industries.

Understanding Stress Concentration Factors

What Are Stress Concentration Factors?

A stress concentration factor is a dimensionless multiplier that quantifies how much the actual stress at a particular point in a component exceeds the nominal or average stress predicted by simple engineering formulas. Mathematically:

SCF (k_t) = <3Ç7V#æÖ ƒÂ÷7V#â ò Ã_{nominal}

where **<3Ç7V#æÖ ƒÂ÷7V#à** the maximum stress at the discontinuity, and **<3Ç7V#æææöÖ–æ ÃÂ÷7V#à** stress that would be present if the component were perfectly smooth and uniform.

Why Do Stress Concentrations Matter?

- Failure Prediction: High SCFs can lead to fatigue cracking, brittle fracture, or yielding in regions that would otherwise be safe.
- Material Efficiency: By accounting for SCFs, designers can avoid over engineering components, leading to weight and cost savings.
- Safety: Accurate SCF values are essential in safety critical industries such as aerospace, automotive, and civil engineering.
- Performance Optimization: Understanding SCFs helps in optimizing shapes for better load distribution.

Peterson"s Stress Concentration Factors: The Reference Work

History and Significance

The original edition of *Peterson"s Stress Concentration Factors*was published in 1970 by D. Peterson and has since become a cornerstone in mechanical design textbooks and industry standards. The book systematically presents SCF values for a vast array of geometries under various loading scenarios, including axial, torsional, bending, and combined loads. Its tables are widely cited in engineering codes, design guidelines, and academic curricula.

Structure of the Book

Peterson’s tables are organized by:

1. Geometry: Holes, slots, notches, fillets, steps, and other discontinuities.
2. Load Type: Axial tension/compression, bending, torsion, or combined loading.
3. Aspect Ratio: Ratios such as radius-to-thickness (r/t), hole diameter-to-thickness (d/t), or notch depth-to-thickness (a/t).
4. Boundary Conditions: Fixed, free, or partially constrained edges.

Each table entry typically lists the SCF value along with the range of aspect ratios over which the value is valid. For more complex geometries, Peterson also provides correction factors or empirical formulas.

How to Read a Peterson Table

Let’s walk through a typical example: determining the SCF for a circular hole in a plate under axial tension.

1. Identify the geometry: Circular hole in a plate.
2. Determine the loading: Axial tension.
3. Measure aspect ratios: For a plate of thickness t and a hole diameter d, calculate d/t.
4. Locate the table: Find the section for circular holes under axial tension.
5. Find the appropriate SCF: Look up the row that corresponds to your calculated d/t value. The table will provide a kt value and a range of d/t over which it applies.
6. Apply the SCF: Multiply the nominal stress (<6æöÖ–æ Â Ò bô ’ y kt to obtain the maximum stress.

Common Geometries Covered in Peterson''s Tables

Holes

- Circular holes in plates, bars, and shafts.
- Elliptical holes with varying major/minor axis ratios.
- Multiple holes and hole clusters.

Notches and Slots

- Rectangular notches with different depths and widths.
- V shaped notches and their influence on bending and torsion.
- Slots in plates and their effect on shear stress.

Fillets and Rounding

- Sharp corners vs. filleted corners in plates and bars.
- Effect of fillet radius (r) on reducing SCF.

Steps and Tapered Sections

- Sudden changes in cross sectional area.
- Tapered transitions in shafts and beams.

Complex Discontinuities

- Composite structures with varying material properties.
- Multiple discontinuities in close proximity.

Calculating Stress Concentration Factors Using Peterson’s Tables

Step by Step Example: Circular Hole in a Plate Under Bending

Consider a steel plate of thickness 20 mm with a circular hole of diameter 10 mm. The plate is subjected to a

bending moment of 500 /N·m. We want to find the maximum stress at the hole edge.

1. Nominal Stress: For bending, the nominal stress is <6æöÒ Ò Ûv2 ò ’Â v†W&R Ò —2 F†R ÖöÖVçBÂ 2 —2 F†R F—7F æ from the neutral axis to the outer fiber, and I is the second moment of area. For a rectangular plate of width b and thickness t, I = b·t³/12. Assume the plate width is 200 /mm.
2. Compute nominal stress: c = t/2 = 10 /mm; I = 200 /mm × (20 /mm)³ / 12 = 200 × 8000 / 12 = 133,333 /mm t. Then <6æöÒ Ò S ôëvÒ r öÖÒ ò 32Ã332 öÖÒ B Ò ã 3sR ôâöÖÛ" ,$ƒ3rãR ôÕ a).
3. Aspect Ratio: d/t = 10 /mm / 20 /mm = 0.5.
4. Locate the table: Find the section for circular holes under bending.
5. Find SCF: For d/t = 0.5, Peterson lists kt "H 2.0.
6. Maximum Stress: <6Ö , Ò ·B r Ãnom = 2.0 × 37.5 /MPa = 75 /MPa.

Thus, the presence of the hole doubles the local stress compared to a smooth plate.

Using Correction Factors for Complex Cases

When the geometry does not exactly match a table entry, Peterson’s book often provides correction factors (C) or empirical formulas to adjust the SCF:

k_{t,corrected} = k_{t,table} × C

For instance, if a notch depth is slightly larger than the table’s range, C might be 1.05, indicating a 5% increase in SCF.

Practical Applications Across Industries

Aerospace

Aircraft components frequently incorporate holes for fasteners, rivets, and instrumentation. Peterson’s SCFs help designers evaluate the risk of fatigue cracking around these holes, especially in high cycle environments.

Automotive

In vehicle chassis and engine blocks, notches and fillets are common. Engineers use SCFs to optimize the shape of mounting brackets and to ensure that vibration loads do not induce premature failure.

Civil Engineering

Steel beams with welded connections or drilled holes for cable anchorage must be analyzed for stress concentrations. SCFs guide the design of fillets and gussets to distribute loads more evenly.

Manufacturing and Tooling

Machining tools often have complex geometries that can create high local stresses during operation. By applying Peterson’s SCFs, manufacturers can predict tool life and reduce the likelihood of catastrophic failure.

Limitations and Considerations

Material Nonlinearity

Peterson’s tables assume linear elastic behavior. For materials that exhibit plasticity or strain rate sensitivity, the SCFs may not fully capture the actual stress distribution.

Three Dimensional Effects

Many tables are derived from two dimensional analyses. In real structures, out of plane stresses can alter the SCF, especially in thick plates or complex geometries.

Load Combinations

When multiple load types act simultaneously (e.g., bending plus torsion), the SCFs from individual tables may not simply add. Advanced methods, such as finite element analysis (FEA), are often required to capture combined effects accurately.

Surface Treatments and Residual Stresses

Surface hardening, shot peening, or welding can introduce residual stresses that influence failure initiation. Peterson's SCFs do not account for these effects; supplemental analysis is necessary.

Integrating Peterson's SCFs with Modern Design Tools

Finite Element Analysis (FEA) Validation

While Peterson's tables provide quick estimates, engineers increasingly use FEA to validate SCFs for complex geometries. A typical workflow involves:

1. Using Peterson's SCF as an initial estimate.
2. Building a detailed 3D model in an FEA package.
3. Applying boundary conditions and loads.
4. Running a stress analysis to capture local stress peaks.
5. Comparing FEA results with Peterson's SCF predictions.
6. Adjusting design or applying safety factors accordingly.

Design Standards and Codes

Many engineering codes, such as the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code or the Eurocode 3 for steel structures, reference Peterson's SCFs in their design equations. Designers must ensure compliance with these standards when using SCFs.

Software Libraries

Several commercial and open source design tools include built in libraries of Peterson's SCFs, allowing designers to pull values directly into their calculations. Examples include Autodesk Inventor, SolidWorks Simulation, and ANSYS Mechanical.

Case Study: Optimizing a Fastener Hole in an Aircraft Wing Spar

In this case study, an aerospace company needed to reduce the weight of a wing spar while maintaining fatigue life. The spar had to accommodate multiple fastener holes for attachment to the wing skin.

1. Initial Design: Holes of 12 /mm diameter in a 50 /mm thick spar, resulting in a d/t ratio of 0.24. Peterson's table gave kt = 2.4 for axial loading.

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