

Power Factor Correction



Representing the best in electrical
engineering and building services

Power Factor Correction

1.0 Introduction

Power factor correction is an increasingly important element of an electrical installation. Not only because of the year-on-year increase in energy costs, but also because it can reduce the production of greenhouse gases. Companies anxious to demonstrate their green credentials to customers, shareholders and staff will want to review the power factor of their building. The green element of power factor correction encourages improvement closer to unity than simple return on capital considerations.

Recent changes to Part L of the Building Regulations recognise the importance of power factor correction in reducing the carbon footprint of an enterprise, important in the fight against global warming.

In installations with inductive and/or capacitive loads, power factor correction can:

- i) **reduce the maximum demand (kVA) of an installation: reducing electricity demand and charges for customers on a maximum demand tariff.**
- ii) **reduce currents in cables and equipment: reducing voltage drop and copper losses and so improving performance and reducing energy consumption (kWh).**

The reduction in the demand and the reduction in current can sometimes allow the selection of installation equipment of lower rating.

Operators of electrical installations with inductive loads such as motors (including air conditioning compressors) and on an energy tariff that incorporates a kVAR authorised supply capacity (Asc) charge and reactive penalty charge, would benefit from any improvement in Power Factor.

2.0 The Building Regulations

Part L of the Building Regulations 2010 sets minimum energy performance targets for new buildings. The carbon emission targets are reduced by 25% as compared with those of the 2006 Building Regulations.

The installation of power factor correction that improves the power factor to 0.9 for the whole building allows a 1% reduction in this target, and if the power factor is corrected to 0.95, a 2.5% reduction in the target is allowed.

If automatic monitoring of energy use is installed with alarms, a further 5% reduction in the energy target is allowed.

The result is that if a high level of power factor correction and monitoring is installed, the target reduction is reduced from 28% to 20.5% for buildings with air conditioning and from 23% to 15.5% for naturally ventilated buildings.

Enhanced management and control features

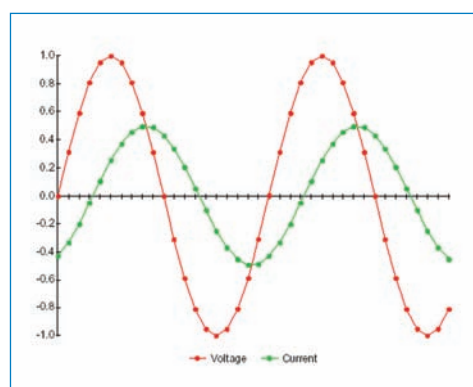
Feature	Adjustment factor
Automatic monitoring and targeting with alarms for out of range values ¹	0.050
Power factor correction to achieve a whole building power factor >0.90 ²	0.010
Power factor correction to achieve a whole building power factor >0.95 ²	0.025

Notes: 1. Automatic monitoring and targeting with alarms for out of range values means a complete installation that measures, records, transmits, analyses, reports and communicates meaningful energy management information to enable the operator to manage the energy it uses. 2. The power factor adjustment can be taken only if the whole building power factor is corrected to the level stated. The two levels of power factor correction are alternative values, not additive.

3.0 The theory

The current taken by most electrical installations, and much electrical equipment, lags the voltage. Figure 1 shows a voltage sine wave, with a lagging or inductive current.

Figure 1 Voltage sine wave with a lagging (inductive) current



The relationship between the voltage and current can also be shown using vectors and this approach allows easy calculation of the rating of power factor correction equipment.

Figure 2a below shows an inductive current lagging the voltage by the power factor angle ϕ . The current vector (I) can be resolved into a resistive vector ($I \cos \phi$) in phase with the voltage and an inductive vector ($I \sin \phi$), lagging the voltage by 90° .

In situations where the operating reactive load is capacitive, it may be necessary to consider special equipment to compensate from a leading Power Factor to unity.

Figure 2a Voltage and lagging current vectors

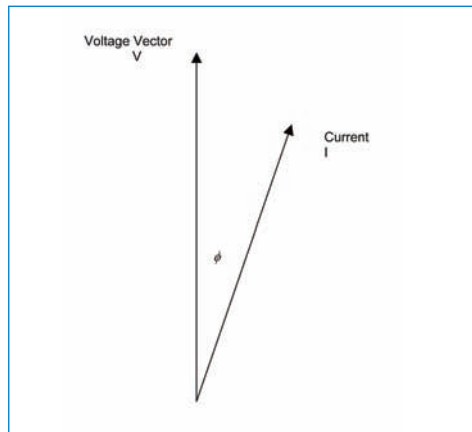
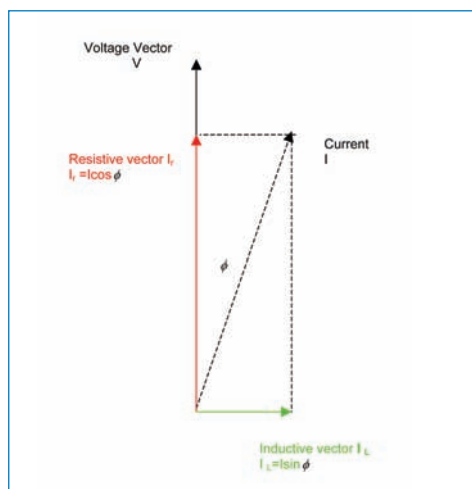


Figure 2b Current vector resolved into a resistive vector and a reactive inductive vector



The cosine of the angle ϕ between the current (I) and the voltage vector (V) is called the power factor.

For example, if the current lags the voltage by 30 degrees, that is $\phi = 30$, then:

$$\text{power factor, } \cos 30 = 0.866 \text{ (or } \frac{\sqrt{3}}{2} \text{)}.$$

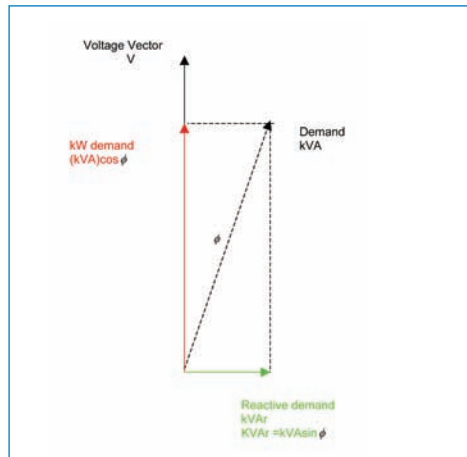
This cosine is very useful for determining the resistive element from the total current and vice versa, or the kW demand from the kVA demand.

Figure 3 is a vector diagram that shows the maximum demand in kVA, the kW demand and the reactive demand in kVAr,

obtained by multiplying the current vectors by the voltage:

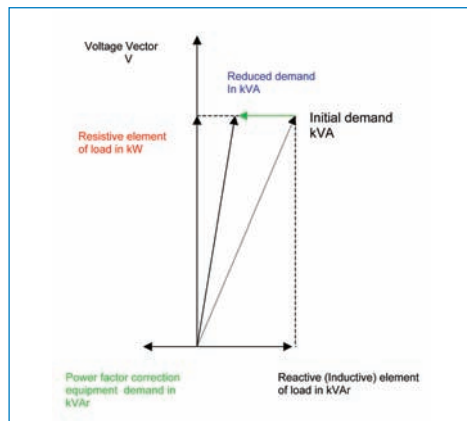
V_{phase} for single-phase installations or equipment, or
 $\sqrt{3} V_{\text{line}}$ (or $3 V_{\text{phase}}$) for three-phase installations.

Figure 3 Vector diagram of demands



By installing a capacitor bank to draw capacitive (leading) current, the inductive or lagging element of current can be reduced and the resultant total current (and kVA demand) can be reduced. See Figure 4.

Figure 4 Reduction in maximum demand by power factor correction



4.0 Electricity tariffs

4.1 Introduction to tariffs

Electricity tariffs for larger users who are metered half-hourly and billed monthly could include the following elements:

- A fixed standing charge.
- A capacity charge, per kVA, for agreed available system capacity (ASC – Authorised Supply Capacity).
- Charges per kWh for day and night usage.

equipment is being utilised, consultation should be made with a recognised Power Factor Correction manufacturer registered with BCMA (BEAMA Capacitor Manufacturers' Association).

5.0 Total installation power factor correction

Power factor correction equipment can be installed adjacent to the meter position or local to the equipment with the lagging power factor. An electrical installation may have both equipment with lagging power factor (motors) and equipment with a leading power factor (e.g. some lighting). It is usual to install the power factor correction equipment at the meter position because this allows advantage to be taken of the equipment with a leading power factor, allowing a reduced installed kVA. It is also simpler to do so; one capacitor bank only is required. The equipment will need to be automatically controlled to avoid overcorrection at low loads.

However, installing the correction at the meter position will not change currents or demands downstream of the meter position, and as a consequence will not reduce copper losses within the installation.

This approach can provide the best percentage return on capital expenditure and, for customers requiring a short payback period, can be most attractive.



Central automatic power factor correction equipment

6.0 Local equipment correction



Power factor correction equipment

Power factor correction equipment located at the main incomer position does provide a cost effective solution to removing kVAh reactive units and the reduction of the kVA maximum demand. However, this system does not reduce currents within the system itself.

Power factor correction equipment installed adjacent to the equipment producing the lagging power factor will contribute to reducing the reactive units used, kVA maximum demand and reduce currents in the cables supplying the equipment and, as a consequence, reduce copper losses and energy consumption.

As mentioned above, in situations where the operating reactive load is capacitive, it may be necessary to consider special equipment to compensate from a leading Power Factor to unity.

Copper losses are the losses arising from the heating effect of current in a conductor. A conductor with resistance r and current I will generate heat equal to I^2r . This is wasted energy paid for in the electricity bill. These are called copper losses, to distinguish them from the iron losses associated with magnetic circuits in transformers and similar equipment (the rise and fall of the magnetic field in an iron choke produces heat. Iron losses are proportional to voltage and frequency).

Local equipment correction can be particularly beneficial for intermittently loaded motors, for the magnetising currents that cause the poor low power factor flow both when the motor is on load and off load (but not when switched off). This means they cause copper losses even when the motor is unloaded.

The capacitive currents of power factor correction equipment can cancel out these inductive magnetising currents.

Locally installed correction equipment need not be sophisticated, as it usually requires no automatic regulation. It will typically be connected via the motor control centre.

Where correction is connected directly onto the motor terminals/motor windings, the output of the capacitor should not exceed 85% of the no-load magnetising kVA of the motor to ensure self excitation does not occur. Where the individual correction of a motor requires a higher corrected power factor to be achieved, such that the 85% no-load magnetising kVA may be exceeded, it is recommended that the correction be switched into circuit via a contactor switched by an auxiliary contact on the motor contactor.

Example

Consider a 30kW 3-phase motor with a full-load power factor of 0.85 and efficiency at full load of 95.4%, supplied by a 50m length of 10mm² copper cored armoured cable (from Table 4D4A of BS 7671, for 10mm² cable rating is 62A, and volt drop is 3.8mV/A/m, {from which conductor resistance is 3.8 mΩ/m}).

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Maximum demand in kW} &= \frac{\text{(motor rating in kW)}}{\text{(efficiency)}} \\
 &= \frac{30}{0.954} \\
 &= 31.45\text{kW} \\
 \text{Maximum demand of the motor in kVA} &= \frac{\text{(motor rating in kW)}}{\text{(power factor)} \times \text{(efficiency)}} \\
 &= \frac{30}{0.85 \times 0.954} \text{ kVA} \\
 &= 37\text{kVA} \\
 \text{Reactive demand kVA} &= \text{kVA demand} \times \sin \phi \\
 &= 370.527 \\
 &= 19.5\text{kVA}
 \end{aligned}$$

(if $\cos \phi = 0.85$ then $\phi = 31.79$ degrees and $\sin \phi = 0.527$)

If 15kVA of capacitive correction is installed then the inductive element of the demand is reduced to:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Reduced inductive demand} &= (19.5 - 15) \\
 &= 4.5\text{kVA} \\
 \text{The improved power factor angle } \phi &= \tan^{-1}(\text{inductive demand} / (\text{kW demand})) \\
 &= \tan^{-1}(4.5 / 31.44) \\
 &= \tan^{-1}(0.143) \\
 &= 8.1 \text{ degrees} \\
 \text{and } \cos &= 0.99 \\
 \text{New maximum demand} &= \frac{\text{(max, demand in kW)}}{\text{(new power factor)}} \\
 &= \frac{31.45}{0.99} \text{kVA} \\
 &= 31.77\text{kVA}
 \end{aligned}$$

At full load, the demand is reduced from 37kVA to 31.77kVA; that is a maximum demand reduction of 5.23kVA.

The demand saving using the tariff in 4.2 is:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Demand saving} &= £5.23 \\
 &\quad (4.5 + 4.5 + 2.5 + 2.5) \\
 &\quad \text{per year} \\
 &= £73.22 \text{ per year.}
 \end{aligned}$$

This reduction in demand could have been realised by correction at the meter position, perhaps at a lower cost. However, local correction reduces the maximum current in the cable supplying the equipment.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Uncorrected current} &= \frac{37 \times 1000}{\sqrt{3} \times 400} = 53.4\text{A} \\
 \text{Corrected current} &= \frac{31.77 \times 1000}{\sqrt{3} \times 400} = 45.9\text{A}
 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Saving at full load} &= (\text{No. of phases}) \times (\text{reduction in current})^2 \times (\text{cable resistance}) \\
 &= 3 \times (53.4 - 45.9)^2 \times (3.8 / 1000 \Omega/\text{m}) \times (50\text{m}) \\
 &= 32 \text{ watts}
 \end{aligned}$$

At no load, the motor current is reduced as follows:

$$\text{Uncorrected reactive current} = \frac{19.5 \times 1000}{\sqrt{3} \times 400} = 28.14\text{A}$$

$$\text{Corrected reactive current} = \frac{4.5 \times 1000}{\sqrt{3} \times 400} = 6.5\text{A}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Saving at no load} &= 3 \times (28.14 - 6.5)^2 \times \\ &\quad (3.8/1000\Omega/\text{m}) \times \\ &\quad (50\text{m}) \\ &= 267 \text{ watts} \end{aligned}$$

If the motor is switched on for 12 hours a day, 5 days a week for 45 weeks (12 x 5 x 45 = 2700 hrs) and is at full load for 50% of the time, the savings are:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{At full load in kWh} &= 32\text{W} \times 2700\text{hrs} \times \\ &\quad (50/100) / (1000) \\ &= 43.2\text{kWh at 13p} \\ &= \text{£6 per year} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{At no load in kWh} &= 267\text{W} \times 2700\text{hrs} \times \\ &\quad (50/100) / (1000) \\ &= 360\text{kWh at 13p} \\ &= \text{£47 per year} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Total saving including demand saving} &= \text{£73} \\ &+ \text{£6} + \text{£47} = \text{£126} \end{aligned}$$

If the motor is at full load for only 10% of the time, as is not uncommon, the savings become:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{At full load} &= 32 \times 2700 \times \\ &\quad (10/100) / (1000) \\ &= 9\text{kWh at 13p} \\ &= \text{£1 per year} \\ \text{At no load} &= 267 \times 2700 \times \\ &\quad (90/100) / (1000) \\ &= 649\text{kWh at 13p} \\ &= \text{£84 per year} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Total saving including demand saving} &= \text{£73} \\ &+ \text{£1} + \text{£84} = \text{£158} \end{aligned}$$

The illustrated kWh unit cost will vary according to the electricity supplier tariff.

7.0 CO₂ Reduction

By increasing the efficiency of the plant, it could be equated to an approximate reduction in CO₂ emissions of 0.105 Tonne CO₂ per KVA_r pa, based on BCMA data, and an average operating time of 6000 working hours per annum. Based on these figures, with 350KVA_r of capacitance in circuit for a period of approx 6000 hours, an approximate reduction of 36.75 tonnes per annum could be realised.

8.0 Summary and action plan

In installations with inductive loads, the installation of power factor correction equipment can save energy and reduce electricity bills. Whilst central automatically controlled equipment is likely to give the best payback, locally installed equipment has the potential to also save copper losses within the installation. However, it should be noted that the individual correction method of correction does have its limitations, such that the overall power factor of 0.95 lag or better may not be achieved necessitating in the installation of automatic correction at the main incomer position.

ACTION PLAN

- Confirm installation maximum demand and power factor
- Identify loads having low power factor
- Determine scope for improvement of power factor
- Decide appropriate means of correction, in consultation with provider of power factor correction equipment
- Implement procurement/installation of equipment
- Monitor demand and/or energy savings, from billing.

This guidance document has been compiled by ECA in conjunction with BEAMA. For further information visit;

 **ECA**
www.eca.co.uk

 **beama**
www.beama.org.uk



Representing the best in electrical
engineering and building services

Electrical Contractors' Association, ESCA House, 34 Palace Court, London, W2 4HY
Tel 020 7313 4800 Fax 020 7221 7344 Email info@eca.co.uk www.eca.co.uk

in conjunction with



Ground Floor, Westminster Tower, 3 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7SL
Tel 020 7793 3000 Fax 020 7793 3003 Email info@beama.org.uk www.beama.org.uk