

# Understanding Terminology

Curtis Industries, a leading manufacturer of superior-quality electronic and electrical components and assemblies for more than 70 years, offers a complete line of RFI power line filters designed to help your equipment meet FCC and CE requirements on conducted EMI.

Radio frequency interference (RFI) is unwanted noise generated by a wide variety of electronic and electrical devices. Governments of most industrial

countries, including the United States, Canada and the European Union have enacted guidelines on emitted RFI.

Curtis designs quality into every product and then tests for quality by specification compliance, including hipot, component value, grounding and leakage, on a 100% production basis. We employ a rigorous component qualification program with thorough incoming and on-line inspection procedures. Our computer-controlled 100% safety and performance testing to demanding customer requirements is your assurance of the highest quality RFI filters available today.

This section provides you with some basic knowledge on terminology and technical information helpful in solving your noise emission in power circuits. For additional information visit our website at [www.curtisind.com](http://www.curtisind.com).



## Definitions

**Attenuation:** The decrease in intensity or absorption of electromagnetic energy. Expressed in dB.

**Conducted Interference:** Electromagnetic signals entering a device through direct connection.

**Emissions:** The level of electromagnetic disturbances equipment causes to its environment.

**Filter:** Remove electrical noise or interference from the power line by cleaning up the sine wave.

**Immunity:** The level to which equipment is immune to electromagnetic disturbances in its environment

**Impedance:** Opposition to the flow of electrical current when a given voltage is applied.

**Inductor:** Passive component that produces a voltage proportional to the change in current. Measured in Henrys.

**Insertion Loss:** The electromagnetic signal loss resulting from the insertion of a filter in a transmission line. Expressed in dB.



## What is RFI?

Radio frequency interference (RFI) is the radiation or conduction of radio frequency energy (or electronic noise) produced by electrical and electronic devices at levels that interfere with the operation of adjacent equipment. Frequency ranges of most concern are 10 kHz to 30 MHz (conducted) and 30 MHz to 1 GHz (radiated).

## What causes RFI?

The most common sources include components such as switching power supplies, relays, motors and triacs. These devices are found in a wide variety of equipment used in industrial, medical, white goods, and building HVAC equipment.

## What are the types of RFI?

An electrical or electronic device emits RFI in two ways:

- **Radiated RFI** is emitted directly into the environment from the equipment itself.
- **Conducted RFI** is released from components and equipment through the power line cord into the AC power line network. This conducted RFI can affect the performance of other devices on the same network.

## How can RFI be controlled?

- **Radiated RFI** is usually controlled by providing proper shielding in the enclosure of the equipment.
- **Conducted RFI** can be attenuated to satisfactory levels by including a power line filter in the system.

The filter suppresses conducted noise leaving the unit, reducing RFI to acceptable levels. It also helps to lower the susceptibility of the equipment to incoming power line noise that can affect its performance.

## What is the government's role in regulating RFI?

Governments and safety agencies of major industrial countries, including the United States, Canada, and the European Union have established noise emission regulations that are focused on digital and other electronic equipment. The most important of these guidelines are FCC CFR 47 (Parts 15 and 18) in the United States and CISPR 11, 14 and 22 in the European Union.

FCC CFR 47 (Part 15) regulates the RF

interference of electronic computing devices, defined as any electronic device or system that generates and uses timing signals or pulses at a rate in excess of 10,000 pulses (cycles) per second and uses digital techniques. This definition includes telephone equipment that utilizes digital techniques and any device or system that generates and uses radio frequency energy for the purpose of performing data-processing functions such as electronic computations, operations, transformations, recording, filing, sorting, storage, retrieval or transfer.

FCC regulations are broken down into **Class A** computing devices marketed for use in commercial, industrial or business environments, and **Class B** devices intended for use in a residential environment.

The European Union has harmonized the various national regulations and has established the international standards CISPR 11, 14 and 22. CISPR 11 covers industrial, scientific and medical equipment. CISPR 14 covers electrical and thermal appliances and tools. CISPR 22 covers information technology equipment.

In addition to governmental regulations, safety agencies worldwide have established guidelines for all electrical/electronic components. These include UL, CSA and TUV. They are designed to protect against shock and fire hazard.

## How do RFI power line filters work?

Consisting of a multiple-port network of passive components arranged as a dual low-pass filter, the RFI filter attenuates radio frequency energy to acceptable levels, while permitting the power frequency current to pass through with little or no attenuation. Their function, essentially, is to trap noise and to prevent it from entering or leaving your equipment.

RFI is conducted through a power line in two modes. Asymmetric or **common mode** noise occurs between the line and ground. Symmetric or **differential mode** is measured from line to line. See the selection guide on page 2 under "Performance."

