

# FUSE CHARACTERISTIC CURVES AND CHARTS

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The performance capabilities of various fuses are graphically represented by two different types of fuse characteristic curves: time-current curves and peak let-through charts. These curves and charts define the operating characteristics of a given fuse, and assist system designers and engineers in selecting the proper fuse to protect equipment and electrical systems.

## Understanding Time-current Curves

Time-current curves provide a graphical representation or plot of a fuse’s average melting (opening) time at any current. Time-current curves for Littelfuse POWR-GARD® fuses can be found online at [littelfuse.com/technicalcenter](http://littelfuse.com/technicalcenter).

In order to make the curves more readable, the performance information is presented on log-log paper. The overcurrent values appear across the bottom and increase in magnitude from left to right. Average melting times appear on the left-hand side of the curve and increase in magnitude from bottom to top. The ampere ratings of the individual fuses for a given series are listed at the top and increase in rating from left to right. *Figure 4* shows the average melting time curves for a typical time-delay fuse series.

As discussed earlier in the Fuseology Fundamentals section, time-delay, fast-acting, and very fast-acting fuses all respond differently based on the overcurrents occurring in the systems each is protecting. To illustrate the basic differences between each type of fuse, *Figure 5* compares the average melting times for 100 and 600 amp ratings

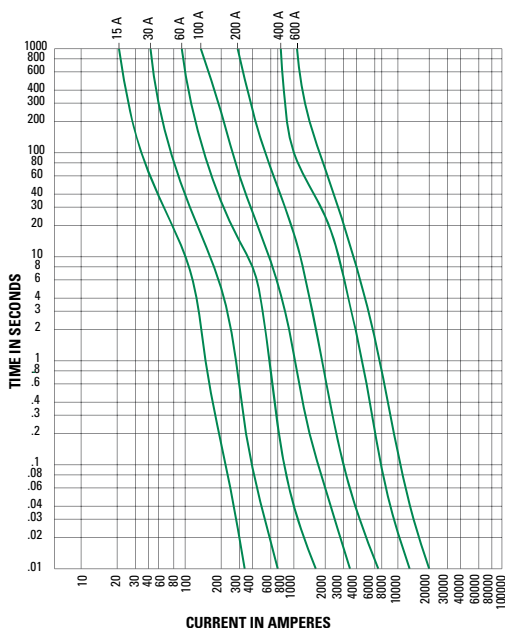


Figure 4 – Average Melting Time Curves for Typical Time-Delay Fuse Series

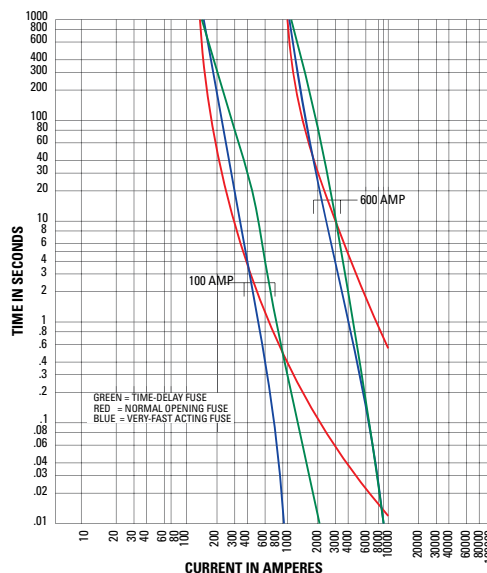


Figure 5 – Comparison of Average Melting Times for Three Fuse Types

of three fuse types: Littelfuse dual-element, time-delay LLSRK series class RK1 fuses (green); Littelfuse normal opening NLS series class K5 fuses (red); and Littelfuse very fast acting L60S series semiconductor fuses (blue).

To better illustrate this point, *Table 3* also compares the opening times for each of these fuses.

AMPERE RATING	FUSE TYPE	OPENING TIME IN SECONDS		
		500% RATING	800% RATING	1200% RATING
100	TIME-DELAY	12 secs.	0.9 secs.	0.14 secs.
	NORMAL OPENING	2 secs.	0.7 secs.	0.3 secs.
	VERY FAST-ACTING	1.3 secs.	0.02 secs.	>0.01 secs.
600	TIME-DELAY	14 secs.	0.7 secs.	0.045 secs.
	NORMAL OPENING	10 secs.	3 secs.	1.1 secs.
	VERY FAST-ACTING	2 secs.	0.05 secs.	>0.01 secs.

Table 3 – Comparative Opening Times for Time-Delay, Fast-Acting, and Very Fast-Acting Fuses

## Peak Let-through Charts

Peak let-through charts illustrate the maximum instantaneous current through the fuse during the total clearing time. This represents the current limiting ability of a fuse.

Fuses that are current-limiting open severe short-circuits within the first half-cycle (180 electrical degrees or 0.00833 seconds) after the fault occurs. Current-limiting fuses also reduce the peak current of the available fault current to a value less than would occur without the fuse. This reduction is shown in *Figure 6*.

A fuse’s current-limiting effects are shown graphically on Peak Let-through charts such as the one shown in *Figure 7*. The values across the chart’s bottom represent the available

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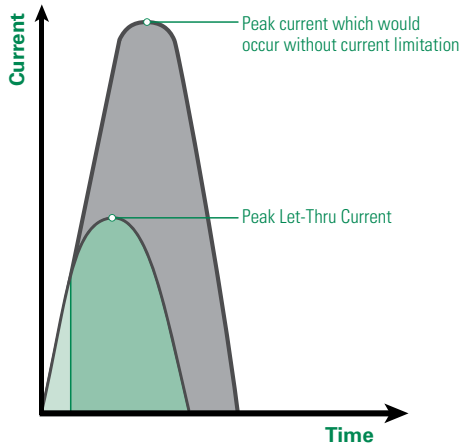


Figure 6 – Current limiting effect of fuses

(also referred to as potential or prospective) rms symmetrical fault current. The values on the chart's left side represent the instantaneous available peak current and the peak let-through current for various fuse ratings.

To better explain the function of these charts, let's run through an example. Start by entering the chart on the bottom at 100,000 rms symmetrical amperes and read upwards to the A-B line. From this point, read horizontally to the left and read the instantaneous peak let-thru current of 230,000 amperes. In a circuit with a typical 15% short-circuit power factor, the instantaneous peak of the available current is approximately 2.3 times the rms symmetrical value. This occurs since the A-B line on the chart has a 2.3:1 slope.

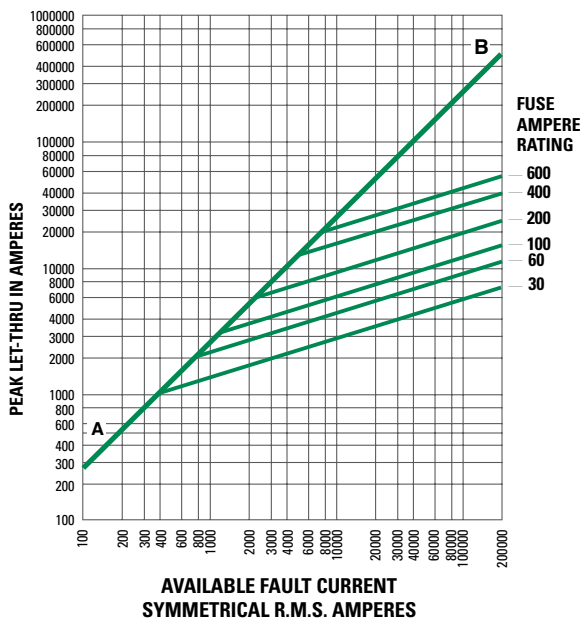


Figure 7 – Peak Let-through Charts

The diagonal curves that branch off the A-B line illustrate the current-limiting effects of different fuse ampere ratings for a given fuse series. To continue the example from above, enter the chart in *Figure 7* on the bottom at 100,000 rms symmetrical amperes and read upwards to the intersection of the 200 ampere fuse curve. Now read from this point horizontally to the left and read a peak let-through current of approximately 20,000 amperes.

What this tells us is that the 200 ampere fuse has reduced the peak current during the fault from 230,000 amperes to 20,000 amperes. In other words, this is the current-limiting effect of the 200 ampere fuse. 20,000 amperes is less than one-tenth of the available current. This is important because the magnetic force created by current flow is a function of the peak current squared. If the peak let-through current of a current-limiting fuse is one-tenth of the available peak, the magnetic force is reduced to less than 1/100 of what would occur without the fuse.

## Using the Peak Let-through Charts (“Up-Over-and-Down”)

Peak Let-through Charts for Littelfuse POWR-GARD® fuses can be found online at [littelfuse.com/technicalcenter](http://littelfuse.com/technicalcenter). These charts are useful in determining whether a given fuse can properly protect a specific piece of equipment.

For example, given an available fault-current of 100,000 rms symmetrical amperes, determine whether 600 amp 250 volt time-delay Class RK1 fuses can sufficiently protect equipment that has a 22,000 amp short-circuit rating. Refer to *Figure 8*.

Start by locating the 100,000 A available fault-current on the bottom of the chart (Point A) and follow this value upwards to the intersection with the 600 amp fuse curve (Point B). Next, follow this point horizontally to the left to intersect with the A-B line (Point C). Finally, read down to the bottom of the chart (Point D) to read a value of approximately 18,000 amps.

Can the fuse selected properly protect the equipment for this application? Yes, the POWR-PRO® LLNRK 600 ampere RK1 current-limiting fuses have reduced the 100,000 amperes available current to an apparent or equivalent 18,000 amps. When protected by 600 amp LLNRK RK1 fuses, equipment with short-circuit ratings of 22,000 amps may be safely connected to a system having 100,000 available rms symmetrical amperes.

This method, sometimes referred to as the “Up-Over-and-Down” method, may be used to:

1. Provide back-up short-circuit protection to large air power circuit breakers.
2. Enable non-interrupting equipment such as bus duct to be

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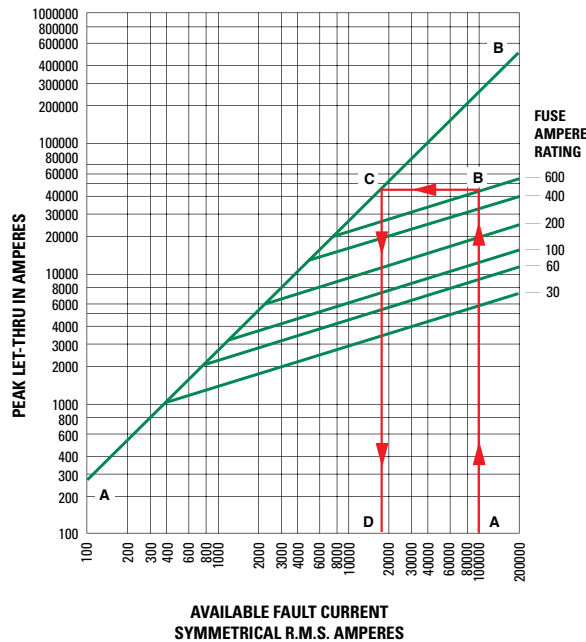


Figure 8 – Peak Let-through Chart for POWR-PRO® LLNRK Class RK1 Dual-Element Fuses Using the Up-Over-and-Down Method

installed in systems with available short-circuit currents greater than their short circuit (withstand) ratings.

However, this method may not be used to select fuses for backup protection of molded case or intermediate frame circuit breakers. National Electrical Code® (NEC®) Article 240.86 requires Series Ratings. Refer to the NEC® for more information.

UL Listed fuse-to-circuit breaker series ratings are now available from most national load center and panelboard manufacturers. Listings are shown in their product digests, catalogs, and online. Many local builders have also obtained fuse-to-circuit breaker series ratings. For additional information contact the Littelfuse Technical Support Group at 1-800-TEC-FUSE (1-800-832-3873).

## Short-Circuit Current Rating (SCCR)

Since 2005, the NEC® has required Industrial Control Panels to be labeled with their SCCR. These labels allow users and inspectors to compare the SCCR of the equipment to the available fault current in order to avoid potential hazards in facilities.

## Selective Coordination

A “coordinated” or “selective” system is a system whose overcurrent protective devices have been carefully chosen and their time-current characteristics coordinated.

Only the overcurrent device immediately on the line side of an overcurrent will open for any overload or short-circuit condition.

To further clarify, refer to the Terms and Definitions section for the definition of Selective Coordination and *Figure 15* for a graphical example.

Since the advent of electrical and electronic equipment, businesses have become entirely dependent on the continuous availability of electric energy. Loss of power halts all production and order processing, yet expenses continue to increase. Even many UPS systems become unintentionally non-selective causing power loss to computers and other critical equipment. Non-selectivity may defeat otherwise well-engineered UPS systems.

In a selective system, none of this occurs. Overloads and faults are disconnected by the overcurrent protective device immediately on the line side of the problem. The amount of equipment removed from service is minimized, the faulted or overloaded circuit is easier to locate, and a minimum amount of time is required to restore full service.

For these and many other reasons, selectivity is the standard by which many systems are judged and designed.

## Fuse Selectivity

To get a better sense of how to ensure that fuses are selectively coordinated within an electrical system, refer to *Figure 4* shown earlier in this Technical Application Guide. This figure shows typical average melting time-current curves for one class of fuses. Note that the curves are roughly parallel to each other and that for a given overcurrent, the smaller fuse ratings respond quicker than the larger ratings. The heat energy required to open a fuse is separated into melting  $I^2t$  and arcing  $I^2t$  (see definition of Ampere-Squared-Seconds). The sum of these is the total clearing  $I^2t$ .

For a system to be considered coordinated, the smaller fuse total clearing  $I^2t$  must be less than the larger fuse melting  $I^2t$ . In other words, if the downstream (branch) fuse opens the circuit before the overcurrent affects the upstream (feeder) fuse element, the system will be considered selective. This can be determined by analyzing curves displaying melting and total clearing  $I^2t$ , or from minimum melting and maximum clearing time-current curves.

But the simplest method of coordinating low voltage power fuses is by using a Fuse Coordination Table such as the one shown in *Table 4*. This table is only applicable for the Littelfuse POWR-PRO® and POWR-GARD® fuse series listed. Tables such as this greatly reduce design time. For example, the coordination table shows that POWR-PRO KLPC Class L fuses coordinate at a two-to-one ratio with other Class L fuses, with POWR-PRO LLNRK / LLSRK / LLSRK\_ID series