



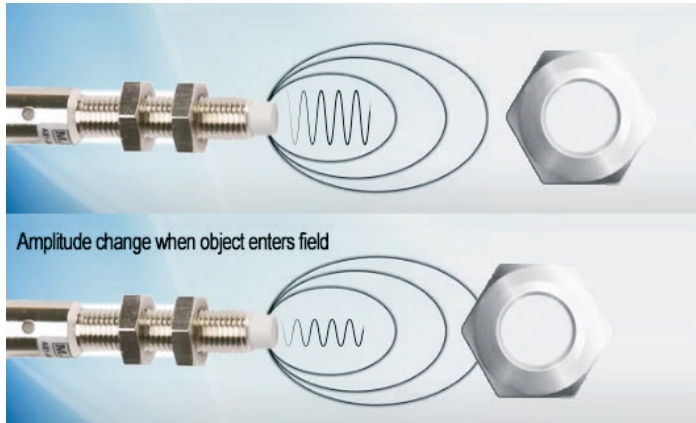
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Product Focus: Discrete Sensors

How they work?

Inductive proximity sensors are one of the most commonly used discrete sensors in industrial automation. They provide reliable, non-contact detection of metallic objects in applications such as material handling, robotics, and packaging. When a metal target enters the electromagnetic field generated around the sensing surface, it induces eddy currents that reduce the field's amplitude. The sensor detects this change and sends a signal to a connected control device, such as a PLC or relay.



Additionally, analog inductive proximity sensors offer distance measurement by providing a voltage or current output proportional to the distance between the target and the sensor.

The type of metal in the target affects sensor performance. Ferrous metals contain iron and have high magnetic permeability, which amplifies the sensor's electromagnetic field disturbance, allowing detection at greater distances. Non-ferrous metals lack this property, so detection depends solely on induced eddy currents, resulting in a shorter sensing range.

Ferrous Metal Examples

Carbon Steel

Stainless Steel

Cast iron

Wrought Iron

Non-Ferrous Metal Examples

Aluminum

Copper

Lead

Zinc

Factor 1 sensors provide consistent sensing distances for both ferrous and non-ferrous metals by incorporating additional sensing technologies to compensate for differences in metal properties. This eliminates the need to select different sensors based on metal type, simplifying installation and ensuring reliable detection across various materials.

Pros & cons

Advantages:

- Non-contact object detection
- Common industrial environmental factors, such as dust and dirt, have little to no effect on performance
- Ideal for applications requiring sensing of metal objects
- High switching frequency
- No moving parts that can wear out over time

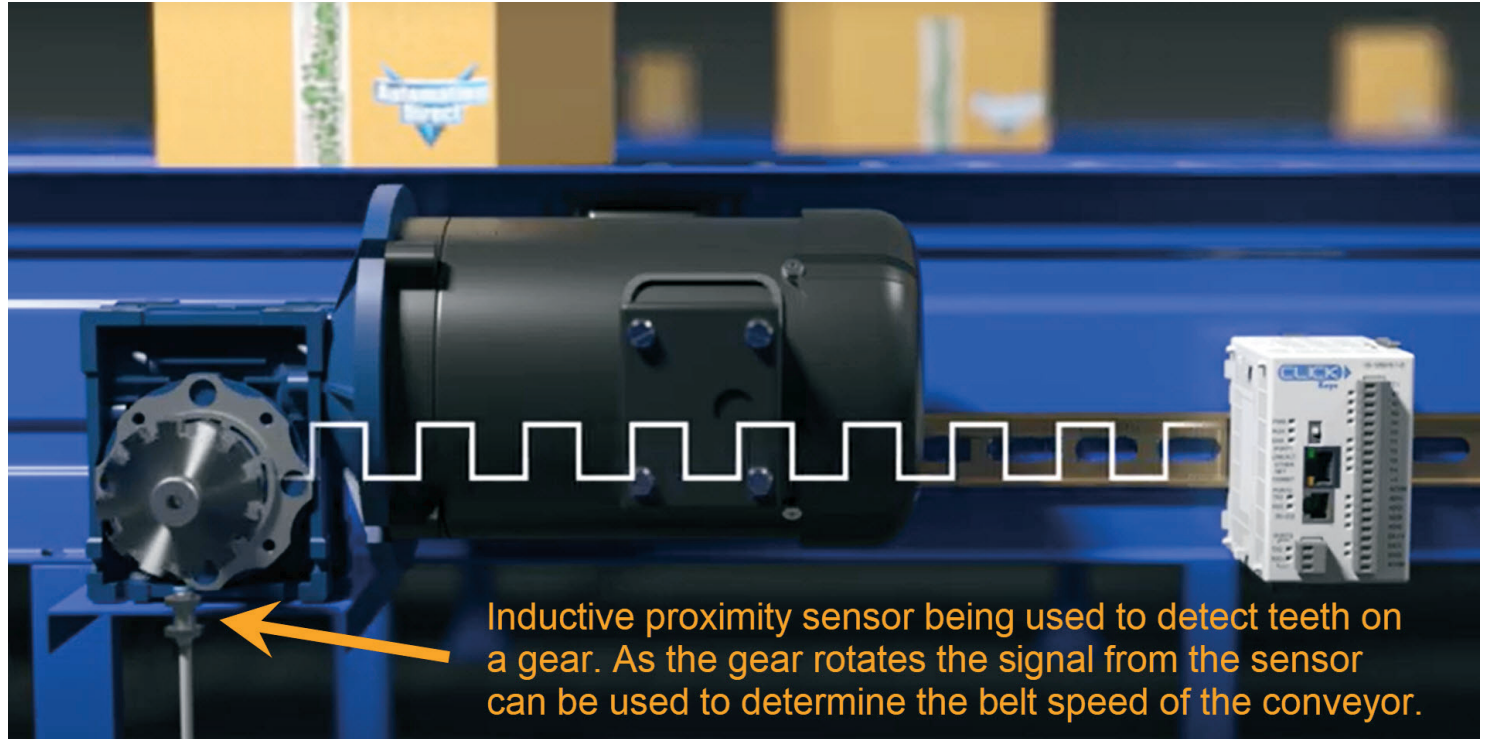
Disadvantages:

- Typical maximum detection range of up to 60 mm
- Reduced sensing distance with non-ferrous metals (mitigated by Factor 1 sensors)
- Limited to detecting metal objects only
- Performance may be affected by extreme temperatures, metal shavings, slag, or certain chemicals (specialty sensors are available for these conditions)

Applications

Typical applications for inductive proximity sensors in automated systems include:

- Sensing pneumatic or hydraulic cylinder positions, extended or retracted
- Monitoring gear teeth to measure rotational speed or track conveyor movement
- Verifying valve positions, fully open or fully closed
- Checking for foil seals on food and beverage products
- Positioning cans in filling systems
- Confirming placement of lifting arms, diverter arms, levers, and other mechanical components
- Ensuring precise part alignment during machining operations
- Detecting the metal fin on the starting tray of a tilt-tray sorting system
- Monitoring blade position and alignment in a sawmill



How to choose?

What do you need to know to choose the right inductive proximity sensor for your application?

1. Shape and size

Inductive proximity sensors come in a wide range of sizes and shapes, from compact 3 or 4 mm barrels for tight spaces or small target detection to larger 50 mm barrels, along with a variety of rectangular housings.

Tip: generally the bigger the sensor the greater the sensing distance but the size of the target to be detected should drive the sensor sizing.

2. Sensing distance

Sensing distance can vary significantly depending on the sensor. Sensor size, target material, and mounting style all affect range. For a given sensor size, models are offered with sensing distances ranging from 0.6 mm to 50 mm to suit a variety of applications. When using non-ferrous metals, be sure to check the derating specification in the technical specs. Factor 1 sensors provide consistent sensing distances for both ferrous and non-ferrous targets, eliminating the need to account for material differences.

Tip: In high temperature applications choosing a triple or quadruple sensing sensor and mounting further away from the heat source may eliminate the need for more expensive high-temp proximity sensors.

3. Housing material

Choosing the right housing material is important because it impacts durability, environmental resistance, and suitability for specific operating conditions. Sensor housings come in a variety of materials, such as stainless steel for food and beverage applications, nickel-plated brass, lightweight polycarbonate, and coated versions designed to resist weld slag in welding environments.



4. Mounting types

Non-flush sensors provide the longest sensing distance but lack electromagnetic shielding, requiring the largest metal-free area around the sensing face.

Semi-flush sensors include partial EM shielding, allowing for a smaller metal-free zone and closer mounting to other sensors, though with somewhat reduced sensing distance.

Flush sensors are fully shielded except at the sensing face, offering the shortest sensing range but the greatest immunity to interference and the most flexible mounting options.

5. Operating voltage

Inductive proximity sensors are available in AC and DC versions, with operating voltage ranges of 10–120 VDC/VAC or 20–140 VDC/VAC. Selecting the appropriate voltage ensures compatibility with the power supply and control equipment for reliable sensor performance.

6. Connection

Axial cables are molded into the sensor body, usually cost less, and can be cut to length. Sensors with quick disconnects (M8, M12, or micro-AC) use detachable cables, often with pigtailed or quick connectors on the other end. Quick disconnects allow easy sensor replacement without rewiring, and cables come in various lengths with axial or 90-degree sensor ends.

7. Output type and operation mode

Proximity sensors have a switching frequency that determines how often they check for objects. Higher frequencies are necessary for detecting very fast targets, though most sensors handle typical speeds easily.

It is important to ensure that the sensor's output type—NPN, PNP, or analog—matches the control device input. Most PLCs accept all three types, while solid-state relays require PNP outputs. Additionally, the required output configuration should be verified, whether normally open (NO) or normally closed (NC).

8. IP ratings

When selecting an inductive proximity sensor, its ingress protection rating indicates how well it will resist moisture, dust, and contaminants. Proper selection ensures reliable operation in demanding industrial environments. For example, IP69K is often required in food and beverage applications where sensors must endure intense washdown with strong chemicals.

9. IO-Link compatibility

For applications that require greater control and access to device data, IO-Link compatible proximity sensors offer key advantages. This point-to-point communication protocol enables real-time data exchange with the control system, allowing for simplified setup, remote configuration, and access to diagnostics. IO-Link can improve efficiency, support predictive maintenance, and reduce unplanned downtime.

10. Specialty applications

In addition to standard models, certain applications require specialty inductive proximity sensors designed to withstand specific environmental or operational challenges. Selecting the right sensor for these conditions ensures reliable performance and reduces the risk of failure or false readings.

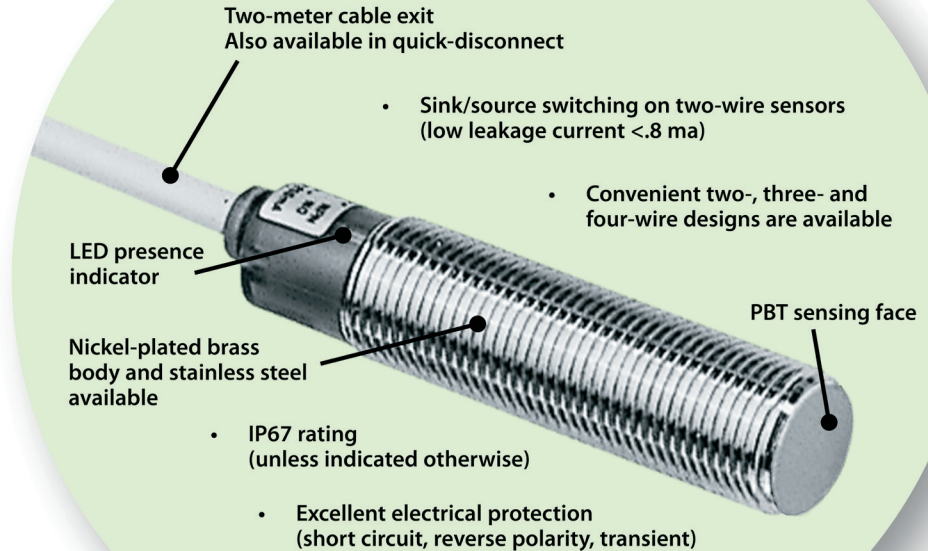
- Analog Output – Provides continuous position feedback rather than a simple on/off signal, useful for precise distance monitoring.
- Full Metal – Features a metal housing and sensing face for maximum durability in high-wear environments.
- Harsh Duty – Built for extreme conditions involving shock, vibration, or aggressive cleaning agents.
- High Pressure Hydraulic – Designed to operate reliably when mounted directly into pressurized hydraulic systems.
- High Temperature – Tolerates elevated ambient or process temperatures that exceed standard sensor limits.
- Machining – Offers metal chip immunity to prevent false switching caused by metal debris in cutting or grinding environments.
- Maritime – DNV-GL certified for reliable operation in marine environments with exposure to saltwater and vibration.
- Safety – Fail-safe designs ensure predictable behavior in safety-critical systems, even under fault conditions.
- Welding – Resistant to strong magnetic fields and weld slag buildup, ideal for robotic welding and assembly stations.

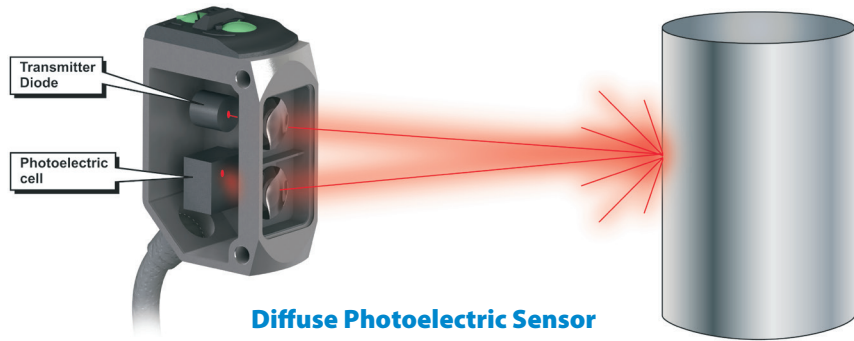
Make these selections using the facets on our store to pinpoint the sensor you need.

Features/Benefits

- Proximity sensors with a 2-wire design simply terminations, reduce wiring time, and lower system costs by eliminating one wire and minimizing connection points. Because they are compatible with both sinking and sourcing devices, a single sensor can support both configurations, eliminating the need to stock multiple types.
- Quick-disconnect sensors make replacing and troubleshooting quick and easy. Simply unscrew the connector and swap out the sensor without having to disconnect wires or cut cable ties. This significantly speeds up the process, reduces wiring errors, and minimizes downtime.
- IP69K-rated food and beverage sensors feature a stainless steel construction and easily withstand rigorous washdowns, including direct blasts from 1,500 psi and 80°C water jets from a distance of four to six inches.
- Sensors are available in flush, semi-flush, or non-flush options to accommodate a range of mounting requirements.
- All sensors feature built-in protection against short circuits, reverse polarity, and electrical noise, ensuring reliable operation even in electrically noisy environments or after being temporarily miswired.
- Inductive proximity sensors are available in tubular sizes from 3mm to 50mm for tight spaces or long-range detection, small rectangular models with wider sensing faces for compact areas, and large rectangular sensors designed for extended range and heavy-duty industrial use. These shapes and sizes offer versatile mounting options to suit a wide range of industrial applications.
- We offer exceptionally low prices compared to our competitors, enabling OEM-like pricing on single-item purchases. In some cases, our sensors are even more affordable than competitors' cables.

See the quality for yourself





Diffuse Photoelectric Sensor

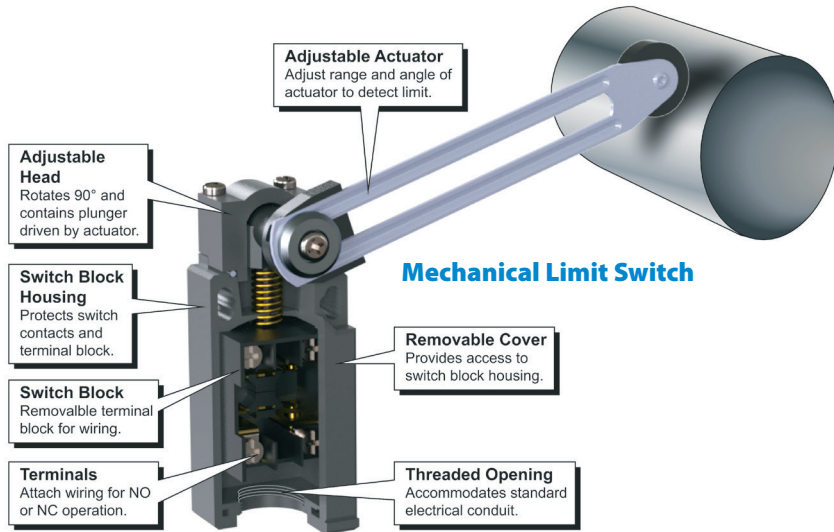
Beyond Proximity Sensors: Use Light, Touch, or Laser for Reliable and Accurate Position Sensing

Limit switches, photoelectric switches, and laser sensors are suited for a broad range of position sensing applications. However, selecting the right sensor demands careful evaluation of various technologies and options. While their functionalities often overlap, each sensor type offers specific advantages and limitations that must be considered during specification.

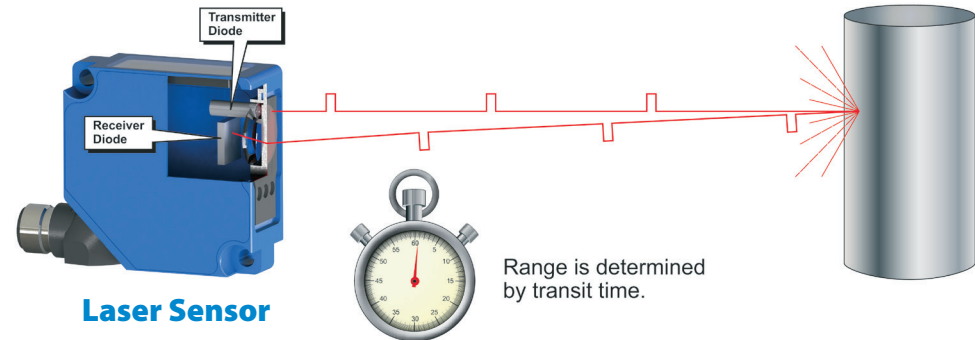
Limit switches are electromechanical devices used in industrial automation to detect the presence or position of objects. They are typically adjustable and actuated by direct physical contact.

Photoelectric sensors use light and optics to detect the presence or distance of an object. They consist of an emitter and a receiver and provide an output when a target reflects or interrupts the light beam. These sensors can detect a wide range of materials and operate at distances from a few millimeters to several meters, depending on the sensing mode and technology.

Laser sensors function similarly to photoelectric sensors but use a highly focused light beam for detection. Depending on their configuration, laser sensors either detect the presence of an object or precisely measure its distance. Specifically, laser photoelectric sensors detect object presence, while laser distance sensors provide accurate distance measurements.



Mechanical Limit Switch



Laser Sensor

The Tried and True Limit Switch

Limit switches use actuators that physically contact the object to trigger an internal electrical switch. These actuators come in various designs to suit different applications.

Common actuator types include:

- Plunger
- Lever
- Plunger or lever with roller
- Side rotary lever
- 360 degree rod and spring
- Belt alignment roller
- Pull action



Precision limit switches deliver highly accurate, repeatable position detection.

Unlike other presence sensors, limit switches require direct contact, which limits their sensing range to the actuator's travel distance. However, this ensures reliable detection regardless of the object's color, shape, or size. To prevent damage, the actuator's roller or plunger must be protected from excessive force.

Limit switches often feature heavy-duty contacts capable of switching higher currents than many other presence or position sensors.

For applications demanding precise repeatability, specialized precision touch limit switches offer accuracy within 5 microns.



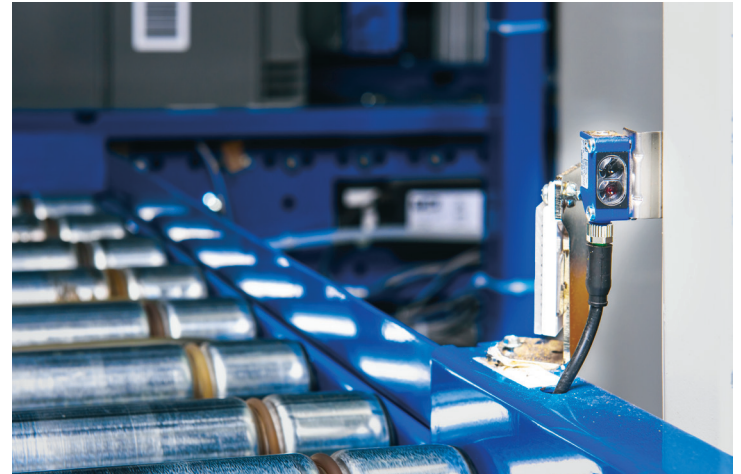
A very common application for a limit switch is detecting the closed position of a conveyor lift gate.

Diffuse, Retroreflective and Through-Beam Photoelectric Sensors

Photoelectric sensors use visible red or infrared light sources in their emitters. This light is either reflected off an object or interrupted by it, and then detected by a receiver that measures the light's intensity. Depending on the sensor type, the emitter and receiver may be housed together or separately.

The emitter and receiver are typically housed together in diffuse and retroreflective configurations. Diffuse sensors detect light reflected directly from the target, while retroreflective sensors rely on a fixed reflector, sensing targets when they interrupt the reflected beam.

Through-beam photoelectric sensors consist of an emitter and a receiver in separate housings. The emitter sends a beam of light to the receiver, which determines a target is present when the beam is interrupted. These sensors offer the longest sensing distances but require precise alignment.



Photoelectric sensors detect object presence or distance in a wide range of industrial applications, and typically contain all required optics and electronics in a single unit.



Both short-range CMOS, and this long-range, time-of-flight Wenglor photoelectric laser sensor, are often used in material handling applications.

Laser Sensor Operating Principles

Laser sensors use a tightly focused beam to detect objects or measure distance, providing reliable performance regardless of ambient light or the target's material, color, or brightness. Object detection models include diffuse, retroreflective, and background suppression types, while distance-measuring sensors use CMOS or time-of-flight technology.

For distance measurement, laser sensors use either triangulation or time-of-flight technology. Triangulation sensors, typically paired with a CMOS receiver, offer exceptionally high precision at short to medium ranges by calculating distance based on the angle of reflected light. These are ideal for fine positioning, thickness measurement, and quality control. Time-of-flight sensors, by contrast, measure the time it takes for a laser pulse to reflect back from the target, making them well-suited for longer ranges or dynamic environments where ultra-fine accuracy is not required.

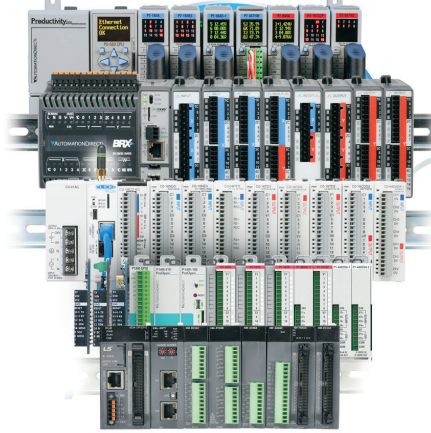
Choosing the Right Sensor for the Application

Limit switches, proximity sensors, photoelectric sensors, and laser sensors are commonly used in automated systems to detect position, presence, or distance. Although their functions often overlap, each technology offers specific advantages depending on the application. Selecting the right sensor requires a clear understanding of its operating principles, strengths, and limitations, as well as how these align with application demands such as sensing range, response speed, precision, and environmental conditions. Careful selection helps ensure reliable operation, reduces the risk of false triggers, and improves overall system performance in challenging industrial settings.

Each sensor type has unique advantages and caveats to consider. Limit switches are durable but require physical contact, making them slower and prone to mechanical wear. Proximity sensors provide fast, short-range, contactless detection with no moving parts. Photoelectric sensors use light beams for versatile mid- to long-range detection across a wide variety of applications. Laser sensors accurately detect small targets at long distances, even in challenging environments.



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Programmable Controllers

- LS Electric PLCs
- Productivity1000 micro-modular PLCs
- Productivity2000 micro-modular PLCs
- Productivity3000 modular PLCs
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- ProductivityCODESYS
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- I/O expansion modules available include discrete, analog, temperature and high-speed (depending on model)
- DirectLOGIC® components still available for maintaining legacy systems



Universal Field I/O

- IO-Link master modules, hubs, and a variety of IO-Link enabled devices
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Communications

- Industrial lean managed, layer 2 managed, and unmanaged Ethernet switches
- StrideLinx VPN routers and cloud services for secure remote access
- Pocket Portal IIoT remote I/O
- MQTT gateways
- Modbus gateways
- Network adapters/ converters
- PoE injectors
- Copper and fiber optic Ethernet cables



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- IronHorse variable frequency drives up to 30hp featuring ACN and ACG series
- WEG CFW100, CFW320 and CFW500 AC drives up to 150hp, depending on series
- WEG CFW500 drives up to 20hp, IronHorse® AC drives up to 30hp and DURAPulse GS20X drives up to 10hp available in a NEMA 4X enclosure
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- Drive accessories
- Soft starters up to 480A



Motors and Motor Controls

- IronHorse general purpose AC motors up to 300hp
- Stainless steel and white epoxy washdown AC motors
- Stainless steel AC motors
- IronHorse Farm Duty up to 10hp
- IronHorse three-phase ODP motors up to 50hp
- U.S. Motors inverter duty AC motors up to 10hp
- Marathon inverter duty AC motors up to 100hp
- Marathon permanent magnet AC motors up to 10hp
- Marathon single-phase AC motors up to 5hp
- DC motors up to 2hp
- DC gearmotors up to 1/4hp
- Motor controls and contactors up to 300hp
- WEG general purpose AC motors and AC brake motors up to 20 hp
- Toshiba Severe Duty AC Motors up to 100hp
- MGM IEC and IEC brake motors up to 5 hp

- Temperature and process controllers
- Digital and process panel meters
- Temperature sensors and transmitters
- Infrared pyrometers
- Pressure sensors and gauges
- Level sensors and controllers
- Flow sensors and transmitters
- Load cells and transmitters
- Signal conditioners
- Pipeline valves
- Solenoid /media separated process pipeline valves
- Current to pneumatic (I/P) transducers
- Vibration switches and transmitters
- Trumeter graphical panel meters
- Cloud data logger with I/O
- Hour meters and counters



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- Free PLC programming software (download)
- Configuration software packages for a variety of process instruments
- Free motion control systems' configuration software (download)
- Free HMI programming software (download)
- Free AC drive configuration and programming (built-in PLC) software (download)

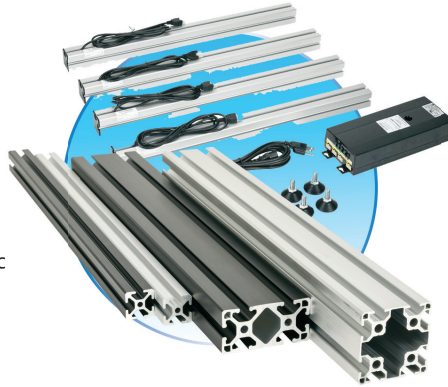


Process



Safety

- Reer MOSAIC safety controllers
- IDEM® and Dold® safety relays
- Speed/Standstill safety relay modules
- WEG safety contactors
- Safety laser scanners
- Magnetic safety switches
- Magnetic coded safety switches
- RFID coded safety switches
- Light curtains from Contrinex, Reer, Datasensing, and Datalogic
- Two-Hand controls
- Trapped key interlocks
- Safety enabling switches
- Safety mats and edges
- Safety bumpers
- Programmable and configurable safety relays
- Intrinsically safe isolators
- Hazardous location devices
- Safety enabling switches
- IDEM Z-Range safety devices
- IDEM Universal Gate Boxes
- Failsafe inductive sensors

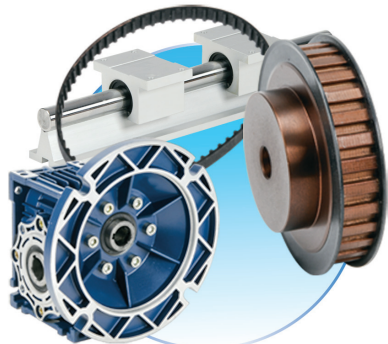


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SureFrame cut-to-length aluminum T-slotted rails make constructing a frame or machine easy and quick.

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- Precision gearboxes
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- Shafting and shaft supports
- igus polymer bearings
- GAM rack and pinions
- Linear bearings and rails
- Carriages and guides
- Guide tracks with slides



Relays & Timers

- Electro-mechanical relays
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- Phase monitoring relays
- Alternating relays
- Optocoupler relays
- Pump seal failure relays
- Voltage monitoring relays
- Slim interface relays
- Power relays
- Solid state relays
- Hazardous location relays
- Timer relays
- Multi-Function Digital Counter / Timer / Tachometers
- Force-guided relays



Tools

- Southwire multimeters and testers
- Southwire, Wiha, and Wera nutdrivers
- Sensor tester
- Wera, Wiha, and MEGAPRO screwdriving tools
- Wera wrenches, ratchets and sockets
- Southwire, Wiha, JOKARI, and AutomationDirect pliers and stripping tools
- SapiSelco cable ties
- RUKO hole cutting tools
- RUKO grinders and burrs
- Crimping tools from AutomationDirect, Southwire, Wiha, and Z+F
- Tool cases and bags
- Master Appliance heat guns
- Wall Lenk soldering irons and guns



Circuit Protection

- Eaton and Gladiator UL 489 miniature circuit breakers
- AutomationDirect, Gladiator, and Fuji UL 489 molded case circuit breakers
- Eaton and Gladiator UL1077 supplementary protectors
- Edison fuses, fuse holders, and fuse blocks
- Socomec, Gladiator®, and Bryant® disconnect switches
- Bryant UL 508 manual motor controllers
- Socomec manual transfer switches
- E-T-A, Gladiator, and WAGO electronic circuit protectors
- Merz rotary cam switches



Identification

- Code brand scanners, including 1D, 2D and DPM images; scanners can read all common barcodes.
- Datalogic rugged handheld barcode scanners
- Contrinex RFID devices use radio frequencies to read and transmit data without the need for line of sight.
- AutomationDirect Standalone RFID R/W units provide fast and long range communication with RFID tags
- Datalogic smart vision sensors make a decision based on a captured image, very useful for applications requiring presence and/or orientation object detection.
- ifm machine mount barcode scanners and cameras
- Swivellink mounting systems
- Wenglor and Lumher vision lighting



Motion Control

- ProductivityMotion controller
- LS Electric® EtherCAT motion PLCs
- SureServo®2 drives and motors, up to 15kW
- LS Electric servo drives and motors up to 7.5kW (including EtherCAT® models)
- Stepper and servo gearboxes
- SureStep® stepper drives and NEMA motors
- Ever Motion Solutions® stepper drives
- Leadshine® stepper drives
- Stepper motor linear actuators
- JTEKT® and Lika® encoders
- CUI Devices® kit encoders
- XYZ gantry components, including linear slides and actuators



Sensors

- Proximity sensors
- Photoelectric sensors
- Limit switches
- Precision limit switches
- Inclination sensors
- Laser sensors
- Color and contrast sensors
- Light grids
- Encoders
- Draw wire encoders
- Current and voltage sensors
- Position indicators
- Ground fault sensors
- Pressure sensors and gauges
- Temperature sensors, transmitters, and thermometers
- Liquid level sensors
- Flow sensors
- Ultrasonic sensors
- Fork sensors
- Linear position sensors
- Linear potentiometers
- Vibration sensors



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- KILLARK® hazardous location control stations
- Comepi start/stop and emergency stop control stations
- IDEM emergency stops
- Fuji 16mm plastic pilot devices
- Fuji®, Schmersal, and Eaton metal/plastic 22 and 30mm pilot devices
- IP69K-rated pilot devices from Schmersal
- Captron IP69K capacitive pilot devices
- Patlite, Pfannenberg, and WERMA audible, visual, and audible-visual signaling devices
- WERMA and Patlite stacklights
- Molex pendant switches
- Foot switches
- Alarms, horns and buzzers



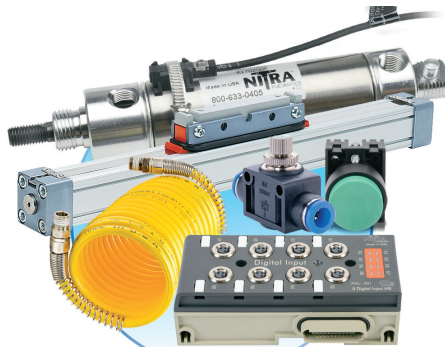
Valves

- General-purpose process valves
- Modular process valves
- Manifold process valves
- Stacking process valves
- NSF Cert water valves
- Potable water valves
- Pipeline/process valves
- Solenoid valves



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- NFPA style hydraulic cylinders with many mounting options
- Hydraulic solenoid valves
- Hydraulic hoses
- Hydraulic adapters



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- Pushbutton valves
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- SureStep and International Power linear power supplies
- Roxburgh and Eaton line filters and surge protectors
- Roxburgh power outlets
- Hammond drive isolation transformers
- Edison®, FTG, Gladiator, and Penn-Union power distribution blocks
- Bryant® electrical plugs, connectors and receptacles, and other wiring devices
- AcuAMP® AC current transformers
- Socomec multifunction power meters
- Trumeter graphical panel meters
- Surge protection devices



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- Regulators
- Solenoid valves
- Pressure sensors
- Hand valves
- Check valves
- Push-to-connect water fittings
- Tubing
- Hose
- Hose clamps

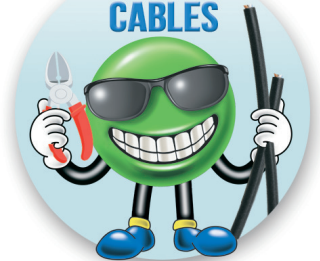


Wiring Solutions

- Konnect-It® and DINnectors® terminal block systems
- Bryant power wiring devices
- Wire duct and tubing
- Standard and sanitary cable entry systems for enclosures
- Wire end connectors, cable glands, sanitary cable glands, connectors and fittings
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- Data & Communication cables
- Process & instrumentation cables
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Minimum lengths of 10ft unless otherwise indicated

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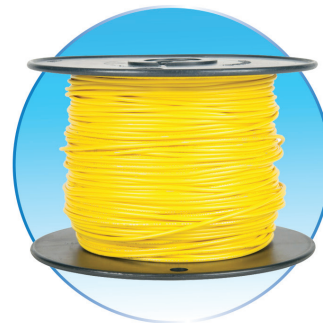
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Our campus is located about 45 minutes north of Atlanta, GA, USA. *We're all here* - our sales and technical support teams, purchasing, accounting, and of course our multiple huge warehouses and speedy logistics team.

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