# ENERGY DETECTORS



## ENERGY DETECTORS AT GENTEC-EO

Gentec Electro Optics provides a full range of products to meet your pulse energy measurement needs. They range from the lean and portable QE12 and QE25 series, the large aperture QE50, QE65 and QE95 series to our large world class custom calorimeters. Having introduced the first pyroelectric joulemeter over 45 years ago, Gentec-EO is well established as an experienced source of energy measurement expertise. Be it in the laboratory or an OEM application Gentec-EO will have a solution.

## HOW THEY WORK

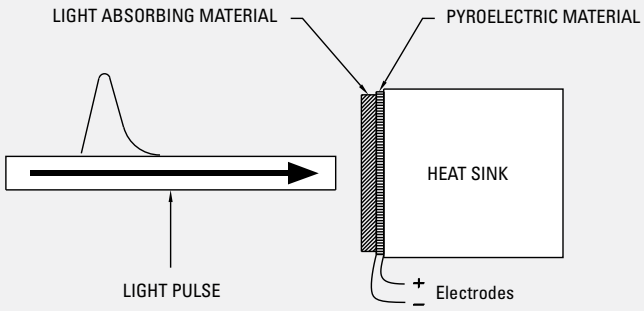


Figure 1. Joulemeter Construction

In the simplest terms, a pulse of light is absorbed by the surface of the detector and heats it up. That in turn, changes the temperature in a pyroelectric material underneath. This separates electrical charges in the pyroelectric which creates a voltage as the pulse of heat energy passes through it to a heat sink. The heat sink removes the heat energy to allow the pyroelectric to be ready for another pulse and to prevent it from over heating. The electrical voltage read by the measuring instrument is proportional to the energy. Figure 1 sketches out the basic structure of a pyroelectric joulemeter.

## THE ABSORBER

The business end of the detector is the absorber that coats the side of the pyroelectric that is exposed to the laser. That material absorbs most of the light energy from the laser and converts it to heat. A small fraction is reflected. How much is shown by the spectral response curve for the material. The thermal mass of the absorber and its thickness determine how quickly the heat can flow to the pyroelectric detector and hence its response time. Lowering the thermal impedance by using an absorber with a lower thermal mass or reducing the thickness of the absorber will increase its speed. The metallic MT coating is a good example. It allows for a measurement of each pulse up to 4000-6000 Hz.

## THE PYROELECTRIC

The heart of every Gentec-EO energy detector is a fast response pyroelectric material. It acts as a source of electrical current when subjected to changes in temperature provided by the absorber. Essentially it contains permanent electrical dipoles that are oriented in a specific direction. A rapid temperature change in the material will alter the orientation of these dipoles. That changes the internal electric field and causes an imbalance in electrical charge between the 2 large sides of the device. There are thin metal electrodes on these surfaces. They allow the charge to flow from one electrode into a circuit with a load resistor and then back to the crystal via the other electrode to eliminate the imbalance. The electrical current is converted into a voltage signal by the load resistor.

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## THE VOLTAGE RESPONSE

The result is a voltage pulse that rises quickly with the response time of the device to a level proportional to the laser energy (Figure 2). It then decays exponentially over a longer period of time that is a function of the pyroelectric device and load impedance. Figure 2 also shows that there is a longer recovery time to return to the initial state of the detector. This is a function of thermal phenomena and is not affected by the load impedance as are the rise and decay times. The integrated pulse energy over this period is proportional to the peak voltage.

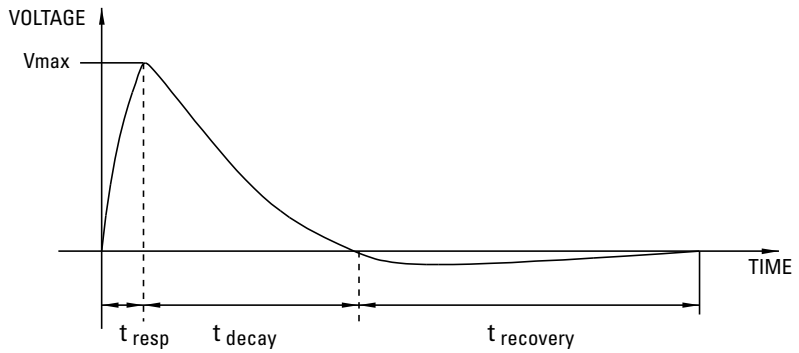


Figure 2.
Typical voltage response
of a Gentec-EO energy detector

## THE MEASUREMENT

The laser energy is given by the change in voltage divided by the sensitivity (in Volts/Joule) of the detector. The measured voltage is the change from the initial reference voltage to the maximum voltage of the pulse. The sensitivity is provided by Gentec-EO on our NIST-traceable calibration certificate. We measure this with extreme care with a well known laser energy provided by an NIST standard. This sensitivity is for the specific load impedance that is requested. The user can measure the voltage on an oscilloscope or computer data acquisition system and use the sensitivity value to make the energy measurement. An easier option is to read it directly in Joules from a Gentec-EO MAESTRO or S-LINK monitor, or when using our new integra series.

## THERMALLY ROBUST

The energy detector will make accurate measurements in spite of changing temperature in the environment or heating of the detector as long as the maximum voltage does not saturate. This is because it is the difference between the initial and peak voltages that measures the pulse energy. This relative measurement is good until the peak voltage is prevented from reaching its natural value by the maximum voltage available in the electronics.

## DAMAGE THRESHOLDS

Excessive pulse energy that is concentrated into to a small area can damage energy detectors. For the most demanding laser beams we offer the broadband MB coating which has pulse energy density thresholds that are among the best in the world. Slight discoloration from short pulses is due to a modification of the organic material in the absorber that does not affect the detector calibration. If enough of the coating is removed by ablation to expose the metal electrode underneath, then the output voltage may be affected too much for the application. Too much average power, (that is above the manufacturer's specification) can cause the detector to overheat. Contamination on the absorber surface can also interfere with the measurement or damage the detector by concentrating too much energy in one spot. Grease, dust, and fingerprints are some of the common contaminants to avoid.

View our complete line of pyroelectric Energy Detectors on page **40**