CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO CATHODIC PROTECTION

1-1. Purpose.

This manual presents design guidance for cathodic protection systems.

1-2. References.

a. Government publications.

Department of Transportation

Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402

Transportation of Natural and Other Gas by Pipeline: Minimum Federal Safety Standards, Subpart 1 - Requirements *Register,* Vol 36, No. 126 (June 30, 1971).

b. Nongovernment publications.

National Association of Corrosion Engineers (NACE), P.O. Box 218340, Houston, TX 77084

Standard RP-01-69 (1972 revision	Control of External Corrosion on Underground or Submerged Metallic Piping Systems
Standard RP-02-72	Direct Calculation of Economic Appraisals of Corrosion Control Measures

1-3. Corrosion.

Corrosion is an electrochemical process in which a current leaves a structure at the anode site, passes through an electrolyte, and reenters the structure at the cathode site as figure 1-1 shows. For example, one small section of a pipeline may be anodic because it is in a soil with low resistivity compared to the rest of the line. Current would leave the pipeline at that anode site, pass through the soil, and reenter the pipeline at a cathode site. Current flows because of a potential difference between the anode and cathode. That is, the anode potential is more negative than the cathode potential, and this difference is the driving force for the corrosion current. The total system—anode, cathode, electrolyte, and metallic connection between anode and cathode (the pipeline in fig 1-1)—is termed a *corrosion cell.*

1-4. Cathodic protection.

Cathodic protection is a method to reduce corrosion by minimizing the difference in potential between anode and cathode. This is achieved by applying a current to the structure to be protected (such as a pipeline) from some outside source. When enough current is applied, the whole structure will be at one potential; thus, anode and cathode sites will not exist. Cathodic protection is commonly used on many types of structures, such as pipelines, underground storage tanks, locks, and ship hulls.

1-5. Types of cathodic protection systems.

There are two main types of cathodic protection systems: galvanic and impressed current. Figure 1-2 shows these two types. Note that both types have anodes (from which current flows into the

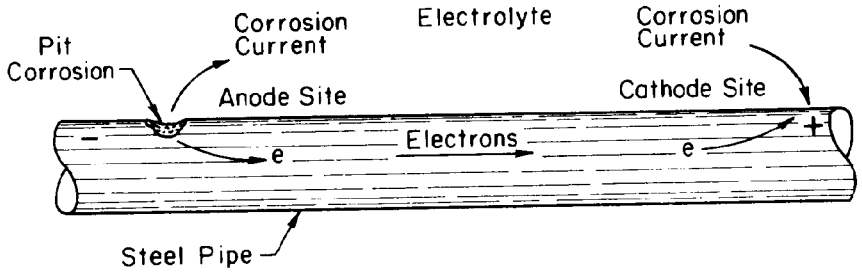

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Figure 1-1. Corrosion of a pipeline due to localized anode and cathode sites.

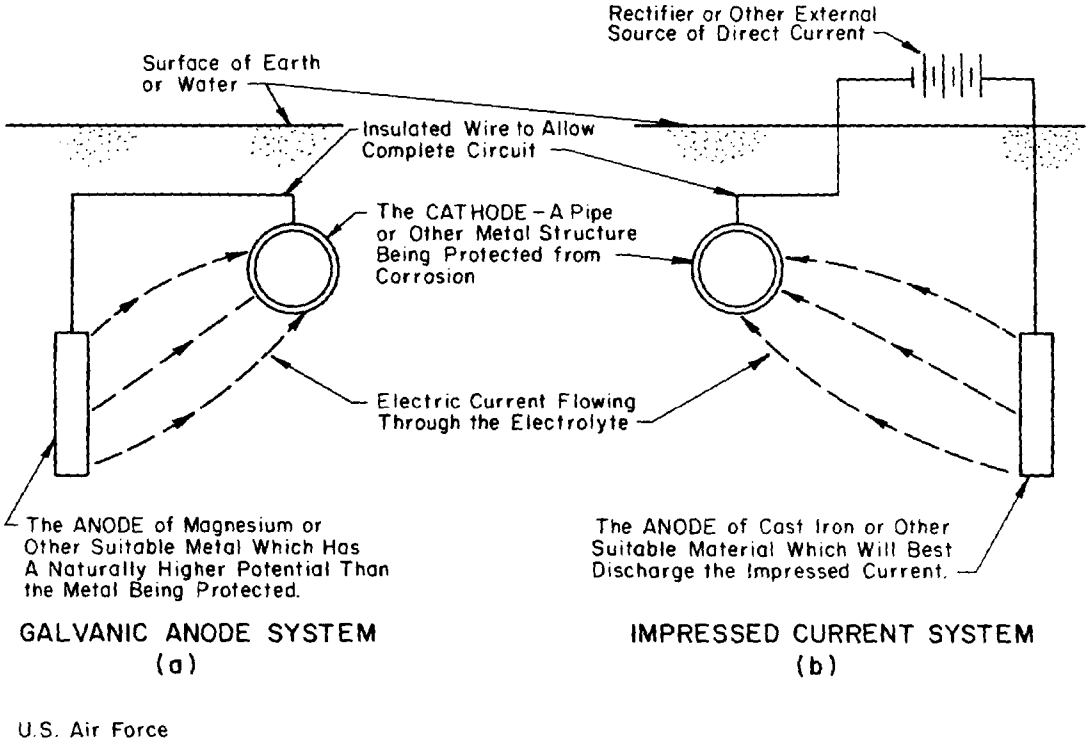

Figure 1-2. (a) Galvanic and (b) impressed current systems for cathodic protection.

electrolyte), a continuous electrolyte from the anode to the protected structure, and an external metallic connection (wire). These items are essential for all cathodic protection systems.

a. Galvanic system. A galvanic cathodic protection system makes use of the corrosive potentials for different metals. Without cathodic protection, one area of the structure exists at a more negative potential than another, and corrosion results. If, however, a much less inert object (that is, with much more negative potential, such as a magnesium anode) is placed adjacent to the structure to be protected, such as a pipeline, and a metallic connection (insulated wire) is installed between the object and the structure, the object will become the anode and the entire structure will become the cathode. That is, the new object corrodes sacrificially to protect the structure as shown in figure 1-2. Thus, the galvanic cathodic protection system is called a *sacrificial anode cathodic protection system* because the anode corrodes sacrificially to protect the structure. Galvanic anodes are usually made of either magnesium or zinc because of these metals' higher potential compared to steel structures.

b. Impressed current systems. Impressed current cathodic protection systems use the same elements as the galvanic protection system, only the structure is protected by applying a current to it from an anode. The anode and the structure are connected by an insulated wire, as for the galvanic system. Current flows from the anode through the electrolyte onto the structure, just as in the galvanic system. The main difference between galvanic and impressed current systems is that the galvanic system relies on the difference in potential between the anode and structure, whereas the impressed current system uses an external power source to drive the current, as figure 1-2b shows. The external power source is usually a rectifier that changes input a.c. power to the proper d.c. power level. The rectifier can be adjusted, so that proper output can be maintained during the system's life. Impressed current cathodic protection system anodes typically are high-silicon cast iron or graphite.