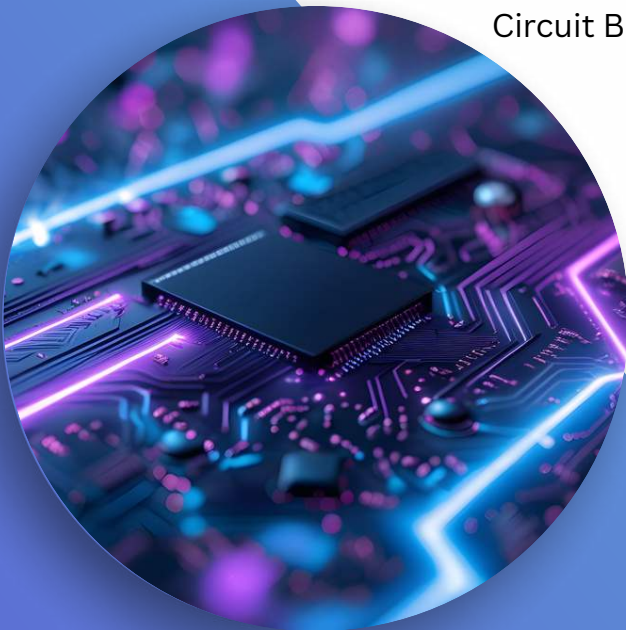


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WHITE PAPER

Mechanical Relays vs. Power Rider Tech

Circuit Breakers for Telecom -48V Applications



www.redlertechnologies.com

WRITTEN BY:

Shaya Redler

PART 1

CRITICAL PROBLEMS WITH MECHANICAL RELAYS IN TELECOM APPLICATIONS

Sparks and Arcing - The Fundamental Flaw

Mechanical relays suffer from an inherent design weakness that makes them problematic for sensitive telecom applications: electrical arcing. Every time relay contacts open or close under load, they generate electrical arcs that can reach temperatures exceeding 5,000 Kelvin. This arcing occurs because mechanical contacts cannot instantaneously separate - during the brief moment when contacts are close but not touching, the voltage across the small gap breaks down the air, creating a conductive plasma channel.

In telecom -48V DC applications, this problem is particularly severe. Unlike AC systems where the voltage naturally crosses zero twice per cycle (providing natural arc extinction), DC systems maintain constant voltage. This means once an arc forms, it continues until the contacts separate far enough to extinguish it naturally. For this reason, relay manufacturers typically rate the same relay for much lower DC voltage (28-30V DC) compared to AC voltage (120V AC).

The sparking generates broadband electromagnetic interference (EMI) and radio frequency interference (RFI) that can disrupt sensitive telecom equipment. Early radio transmitters actually used controlled spark gaps as their transmission method, demonstrating just how much RF energy arcing can produce. In modern telecom facilities, this interference can cause data errors, signal degradation, and equipment malfunctions.

Ionization and Electromagnetic Interference

The arcing process creates ionized air between contacts, forming a conductive pathway with several ohms of resistance. This ionization contributes to power dissipation and heat generation, while simultaneously creating a broadband source of electromagnetic interference. The high-frequency components of this interference can couple into nearby circuits through radiation, conduction, and electromagnetic induction.





For telecom equipment operating at increasingly higher frequencies and lower signal levels, even small amounts of EMI can cause significant problems. The random, impulse-like nature of relay arcing creates interference across a wide frequency spectrum, making it particularly difficult to filter out without affecting legitimate signals.

Heat Dissipation Challenges

Mechanical relays face significant thermal management challenges. Contact resistance, typically several tens of milliohms, generates substantial heat under load. A relay with 10mΩ contact resistance carrying 16A dissipates 2.5W just in the contacts themselves. This heat must be dissipated through the relay housing, but traditional relay designs enclose contacts in plastic housings that provide poor thermal conduction paths.

Rapid relay cycling compounds the heating problem. High-frequency switching operations can cause thermal buildup that exceeds the relay's ability to dissipate heat, leading to accelerated degradation of contact materials and insulation. In telecom applications where switching frequencies are increasing, this thermal limitation becomes a significant reliability concern.

Temperature rise also affects the relay coil, potentially causing coil burning, insulation degradation, and changes in operating characteristics. When multiple relays are mounted in close proximity (common in telecom equipment), mutual heating can push ambient temperatures beyond design limits, causing premature failures.

Contact Resistance Degradation Over Time

One of the most insidious problems with mechanical relays is the gradual increase in contact resistance over their operational lifetime. This degradation occurs through several mechanisms:

Oxidation and Corrosion: Relay contacts are typically made of materials like silver, copper, or specialty alloys that can oxidize when exposed to air and moisture. Even in sealed relays, minute amounts of moisture and oxygen can cause gradual oxidation of contact surfaces. This is particularly problematic in humid environments or when temperature cycling causes condensation inside the relay.





Fretting Corrosion: In tin-plated contacts commonly used in telecommunications equipment, micro-movements between contacts create tin oxide debris. This debris accumulates at contact interfaces, gradually increasing contact resistance. The process is progressive - each switching operation creates more debris, eventually leading to unacceptable resistance levels.

Material Transfer and Erosion: Every arcing event causes material transfer between contacts and erosion of contact surfaces. Material may melt, evaporate, or spatter during arcing, creating uneven contact surfaces that reduce effective contact area. Over time, this leads to increased resistance and potential contact welding.

Contamination: Industrial and telecom environments contain various contaminants that can deposit on contact surfaces. Dust, sulfur compounds (SO₂, H₂S), organic vapors, and other airborne contaminants can form insulating films on contacts, dramatically increasing resistance.

Contact Welding and Sticking

Contact welding represents a catastrophic failure mode where relay contacts fuse together and cannot separate. This occurs when the heat generated during contact closure or arcing melts the contact materials, causing them to solidify while still in contact. The weld strength may be weak initially but can strengthen over time.

Several factors contribute to contact welding:

- **Inrush Current:** Capacitive loads common in telecom equipment (power supplies, electronic equipment) can draw inrush currents 10 times higher than normal operating current. This surge occurs when discharged capacitors suddenly connect to the power source.
- **Motor Starting:** Inductive loads like motor-driven cooling fans or mechanical positioners can generate high starting currents and back-EMF voltages that promote welding.
- **High Current Density:** When contacts first touch, current flows through microscopic contact points, creating extremely high current density that instantly melts the metal.

Once contacts weld, the relay becomes permanently closed, eliminating its switching function and potentially creating safety hazards in critical telecom systems.



PART 2

POWER RIDER ELECTRONIC CIRCUIT BREAKER ADVANTAGES

Complete Elimination of Mechanical Contact Problems

Power Rider electronic circuit breakers fundamentally solve the mechanical relay problem by eliminating physical contacts entirely. Instead of mechanical contact separation, Power Rider uses semiconductor switching technology that operates without any physical contact interruption. This design breakthrough eliminates:

- All sparking and arcing phenomena
- Contact resistance degradation over time
- Material transfer and contact erosion
- Contact welding and sticking
- Environmental sensitivity of mechanical contacts

Without mechanical contacts, Power Rider operates virtually silently from an electromagnetic perspective, eliminating the broadband EMI/RFI generation that plagues mechanical relays.

Ultra-Fast Protection Response

Power Rider delivers 300 nanosecond response time for short circuit protection, compared to millisecond response times in mechanical relays - over 10,000 times faster. This dramatic speed improvement provides several critical advantages:

Power Source Protection: Traditional relays allow destructive current levels (>2000A) to flow for milliseconds during their slow response time. With low-impedance power sources or batteries, this can cause voltage drops approaching zero and potential damage to the power source. Power Rider's 300ns response protects the power source by interrupting faults before significant energy transfer occurs.

Load Protection: The ultra-fast response prevents overcurrent conditions from damaging sensitive telecom equipment. In semiconductor devices, even brief overcurrent exposure can cause permanent degradation or failure.

Arc Energy Elimination: Since Power Rider switches before significant current can flow, there is no stored magnetic energy to create arcing during interruption.

For more information and technical support:

E-mail: contact@redlertechnologies.com
Visit: www.redlertechnologies.com

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Advanced Current Handling Architecture

Power Rider implements a sophisticated dual-transistor design that provides bidirectional current blocking capability. This architecture prevents reverse current flow through internal diodes that can damage power sources - especially critical with motor loads. Single-transistor designs used in some electronic switches cannot provide this reverse current protection. The dual-transistor configuration also enables Power Rider to handle both DC and AC applications equally well, unlike mechanical relays that have significantly different ratings for AC versus DC operation.

Superior Thermal Management

Power Rider conducts heat directly from MOSFET transistors to metal plates via thermal interface materials (TIM), providing superior heat dissipation compared to mechanical relays where contacts are enclosed in plastic housings with poor thermal paths. This advanced thermal design prevents the thermal buildup that degrades mechanical relay performance and contact resistance. The efficient heat removal allows Power Rider to operate at higher current densities while maintaining reliable operation and long component life.

Exceptional Reliability and Longevity

Power Rider achieves Mean Time Between Failure (MTBF) greater than 1×10^6 hours (114 years) using high-grade components and ceramic capacitors designed for demanding applications. Individual power transistors have MTBF ratings of 3.57×10^8 hours (40,000 years). This reliability improvement represents orders of magnitude enhancement over mechanical relays that typically fail due to contact degradation after 10,000-100,000 operations. Power Rider's solid-state design supports millions of switching operations without degradation.

- No Mechanical Wear: Eliminates the primary failure mode of mechanical relays
- High-Grade Components: Carefully selected components designed for long-term reliability
- Ceramic Capacitors: Superior stability and longevity compared to electrolytic types
- Thermal Management: Prevents heat-related degradation

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INTELLIGENT POWER MANAGEMENT AND NETWORKING

Each Power Rider unit integrates sophisticated control and communication capabilities:

Smart Node Functionality: Built-in processing capability enables intelligent power management decisions at the individual circuit breaker level.

Variable Time Delay: Programmable delay settings allow coordination with upstream and downstream protection devices.

Network Communication: Standard CAN Bus communication with optional RS485/RS422 and Ethernet connectivity enables system-wide coordination.

Power Prioritization: The network carries power prioritization information to each circuit breaker, enabling intelligent load shedding and power management during emergency conditions.

Autonomous Operation: Each unit has programmable default parameters that ensure continued operation even if communication fails.

FLEXIBLE NETWORK TOPOLOGY

Power Rider's networking capability enables flexible deployment options:

Centralized Distribution Units: 12-16 circuit breakers can be configured in power distribution panels for centralized control.

Distributed Individual Units: Single circuit breakers can be mounted throughout facilities while sharing the same network infrastructure.

Building-Wide Power Management: All units communicate on the same network, enabling coordinated power management as a building system rather than individual components. This flexibility is particularly valuable in telecom applications where equipment may be distributed across large facilities or multiple buildings.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMMUNITY

Solid-state design eliminates mechanical relay sensitivities:

Humidity and Corrosion Immunity: No contact surfaces to corrode or oxidize.

Vibration and Shock Resistance: No mechanical components to be affected by physical disturbance.

Temperature Stability: Semiconductor characteristics are predictable and stable across wide temperature ranges.

Atmospheric Contamination Immunity: Sealed semiconductor devices are unaffected by airborne contaminants.

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EMI/RFI ELIMINATION

By eliminating sparks and arcs, Power Rider removes the broadband electromagnetic interference that mechanical relays generate. This is crucial for:

Sensitive Equipment Protection: Prevents interference with high-frequency digital circuits and communication equipment.

Regulatory Compliance: Eliminates EMI emissions that could violate electromagnetic compatibility (EMC) regulations.

System Performance: Prevents interference-induced errors in data transmission and processing.

COST-EFFECTIVE MAINTENANCE

Power Rider's solid-state design dramatically reduces maintenance requirements:

No Contact Replacement: Eliminates the need for periodic contact cleaning, adjustment, or replacement.

Predictable Performance: Performance remains consistent throughout the operational life.

Remote Monitoring: Network connectivity enables remote monitoring and diagnostics.

Reduced Downtime: Higher reliability reduces unexpected failures and associated downtime costs.

PART 3

COMPARISON TABLE

Traditional Electromechanical vs Power Rider Electronic Circuit Breakers

Parameter	Panasonic EP Relay 20A (Electromechanical)	Power Rider Electronic Circuit Breaker
Number of operations - Under Load	3,000 operations (20A 400V DC, 6 switches/min)	>1,000,000 operations (no contact degradation)
Number of operations - No Load	200,000 operations (mechanical life)	>1,000,000 operations (same as loaded)
AC or DC Current	Both: 1000V DC max switching, 400V DC rated	Both AC and DC: Equal performance
Contact Bouncing (ARCs)	Severe: Arcing on make/break, contact bounce	None: Solid-state switching eliminates arcing
Quiescent Power	3.9W coil power (continuous)	<1W (smart node + communication)
Switching Technology	Electromechanical copper alloy contacts	Dual-transistor semiconductor switching

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Parameter	Panasonic EP Relay 20A (Electromechanical)	Power Rider Electronic Circuit Breaker
Technology Maturation	100+ years, mature but fundamentally limited	Modern semiconductor technology, continuously improving
Rated Current	20A (400V DC resistive)	5A - 100A+ (same range, better thermal management)
Over Current Protection	Overload cut-off: 60A 400V DC (min 50 cycles)	Electronic sensing, 300 nanosecond response
Short Circuit Detection	50ms operate time + mechanical interruption	300 nanosecond detection and interruption
dv/dt Limitation	Limited by 50ms operate + 30ms release time	Controlled by semiconductor switching characteristics
Over Voltage Protection	Max 1000V DC switching capability	Integrated semiconductor protection
Off State Leakage	Zero (open contacts)	Microamp-level semiconductor leakage
Operating Temperature	-40°C to +80°C (storage to +85°C)	-40°C to +85°C (semiconductor rated)
Minimum Load	1A 12V DC (reference value)	No minimum load requirement
Turn On/Turn Off Time	50ms operate / 30ms release	<1 microsecond
Reliability (MTBF)	Limited by contact degradation (~10,000 hours)	>1,000,000 hours (114 years)
Patents	Expired (mature technology)	Active patent portfolio for Power Rider innovations

KEY PERFORMANCE ADVANTAGES SUMMARY:

Speed: Power Rider is 50,000+ times faster in operation (μ s vs 50ms)

Fault Protection: Power Rider is 167,000+ times faster in fault protection (300ns vs 50ms)

Reliability: 333+ times longer operational life (1M+ vs 3K operations under load)

EMI: Complete elimination vs. significant broadband interference

Thermal: Superior heat dissipation and thermal management

Intelligence: Built-in smart features vs. basic on/off operation

Maintenance: Minimal vs. regular contact maintenance required

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