MICROWAVE WAVEGUIDES and COAXIAL CABLE

In general, a waveguide consists of a hollow metallic tube of arbitrary cross section uniform in extent in the direction of propagation. Common waveguide shapes are rectangular, circular, and ridged. The rectangular waveguide has a width a and height b as shown in figure 1. Commonly used rectangular waveguides have an aspect ratio b/a of approximately 0.5. Such an aspect ratio is used to preclude generation of field variations with height and their attendant unwanted modes. Waveguides are used principally at frequencies in the microwave range; inconveniently large guides would be required to transmit radio-frequency power at longer wavelengths. In the X-Band frequency range of 8.2 to 12.4 GHz, for example, the U.S. standard rectangular waveguide, WR-90, has an inner width of 2.286 cm (0.9 in.) and an inner height of 1.016 cm (0.4 in.).

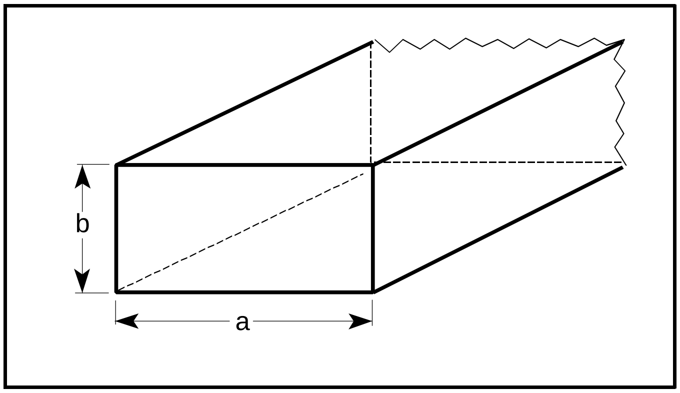

Figure 1. The Rectangular Waveguide

In waveguides the electric and magnetic fields are confined to the space within the guides. Thus no power is lost to radiation. Since the guides are normally filled with air, dielectric losses are negligible. However, there is some I^2R power lost to heat in the walls of the guides, but this loss is usually very small.

It is possible to propagate several modes of electromagnetic waves within a waveguide. The physical dimensions of a waveguide determine the cutoff frequency for each mode. If the frequency of the impressed signal is above the cutoff frequency for a given mode, the electromagnetic energy can be transmitted through the guide for that particular mode with minimal attenuation. Otherwise the electromagnetic energy with a frequency below cutoff for that particular mode will be attenuated to a negligible value in a relatively short distance. This grammatical use of cutoff frequency is opposite that used for coaxial cable, where cutoff frequency is for the highest useable frequency. The dominant mode in a particular waveguide is the mode having the lowest cutoff frequency. For rectangular waveguide this is the TE_{10} mode. The TE (transverse electric) signifies that all electric fields are transverse to the direction of propagation and that no longitudinal electric field is present. There is a longitudinal component of magnetic field and for this reason the TE_{mn} waves are also called H_{mn} waves. The TE designation is usually preferred. Figure 2 shows a graphical depiction of the E field variation in a waveguide for the $TE_{10,}$ TE_{20}, and TE_{30} modes. As can be seen, the first index indicates the number of half wave loops across the width of the guide and the second index, the number of loops across the height of the guide - which in this case is zero. It is advisable to choose the dimensions of a guide in such a way that, for a given input signal, only the energy of the dominant mode can be transmitted through the guide. For example, if for a particular frequency, the width of a rectangular guide is too large, then the TE_{20} mode can propagate causing a myriad of problems. For rectangular guides of low aspect ratio the TE_{20} mode is the next higher order mode and is harmonically related to the cutoff frequency of the TE_{10} mode. It is this relationship together with attenuation and propagation considerations that determine the normal operating range of rectangular waveguide.

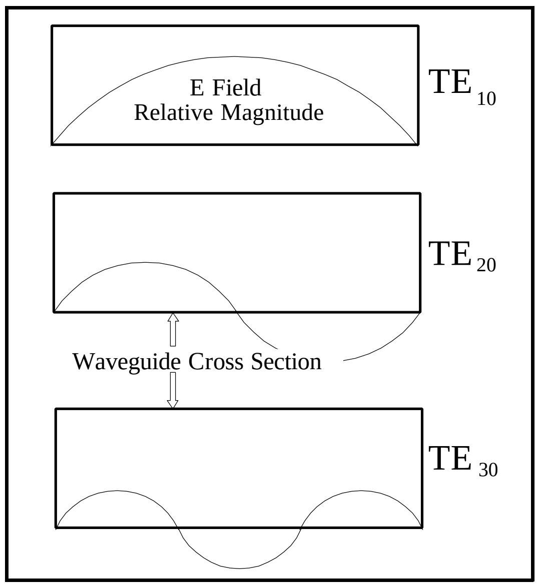

Figure 2. TE modes

The discussion on circular waveguides will not be included because they are rarely used in the EW area. Information regarding circular waveguides can be found in numerous textbooks on microwaves.

CHARACTERISTICS OF STANDARD RECTANGULAR WAVEGUIDES

Rectangular waveguides are commonly used for power transmission at microwave frequencies. Their physical dimensions are regulated by the frequency of the signal being transmitted. Table 1 tabulates the characteristics of the standard rectangular waveguides. It may be noted that the number following the EIA prefix "WR" is in inside dimension of the widest part of the waveguide, i.e. WR90 has an inner dimension of 0.90".

DOUBLE RIDGE RECTANGULAR WAVEGUIDE

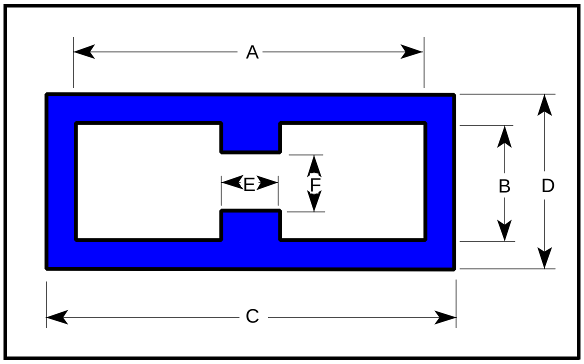

Figure 3. Double Ridge Waveguide
(Table 2 Lists Dimensions A, B, C, D, E, & F)

Another type of waveguide commonly used in EW systems is the double ridge rectangular waveguide. The ridges in this waveguide increase the bandwidth of the guide at the expense of higher attenuation and lower power-handling capability. The bandwidth can easily exceed that of two contiguous standard waveguides. Introduction of the ridges mainly lowers the cutoff frequency of the TE_{10} mode from that of the unloaded guide, which is predicated on width alone. The reason for this can easily be explained when the field configuration in the guide at cutoff is investigated. At cutoff there is no longitudinal propagation down the guide. The waves simply travel back and forth between the side walls of the guide. In fact the guide can be viewed as a composite parallel plate waveguide of infinite width where the width corresponds to the direction of propagation of the normal guide. The TE_{10} mode cutoff occurs where this composite guide has its lowest-order resonant frequency. This occurs when there is only one E field maximum across the guide which occurs at the center for a symmetrical ridge. Because of the reduced height of the guide under the ridge, the effective TE_{10} mode resonator is heavily loaded as though a shunt capacitor were placed across it. The cutoff frequency is thus lowered considerably. For the TE_{20} mode the fields in the center of the guide will be at a minimum. Therefore the loading will have a negligible effect. For guides of proper aspect ratio, ridge height, and ridge width, an exact analysis shows that the TE_{10} mode cutoff can be lowered substantially at the same time the TE_{20} and TE_{30} mode cutoffs are raised slightly. Figure 3 shows a typical double ridged waveguide shape and Table 2 shows double ridged waveguide specifications. In the case of ridged waveguides, in the EIA designation, (WRD350 D36) the first "D" stands for double ridged ("S" for single ridged), the 350 is the starting frequency (3.5 GHz), and the "D36" indicates a bandwidth of 3.6:1. The physical dimensions and characteristics of a WRD350 D24 and WRD350 D36 are radically different. A waveguide with a MIL-W-23351 dash number beginning in 2 (i.e. 2-025) is a double ridge 3.6:1 bandwidth waveguide. Likewise a 1- is a single ridge 3.6:1, a 3- is a single ridge 2.4:1, and a 4- is a double ridge 2.4:1 waveguide.

Figure 4 shows a comparison of the frequency /attenuation characteristics of various waveguides. The attenuation is based on real waveguides which is higher than the theoretical values listed in Tables 1 and 2. Figure 5 shows attenuation characteristics of various RF coaxial cables.

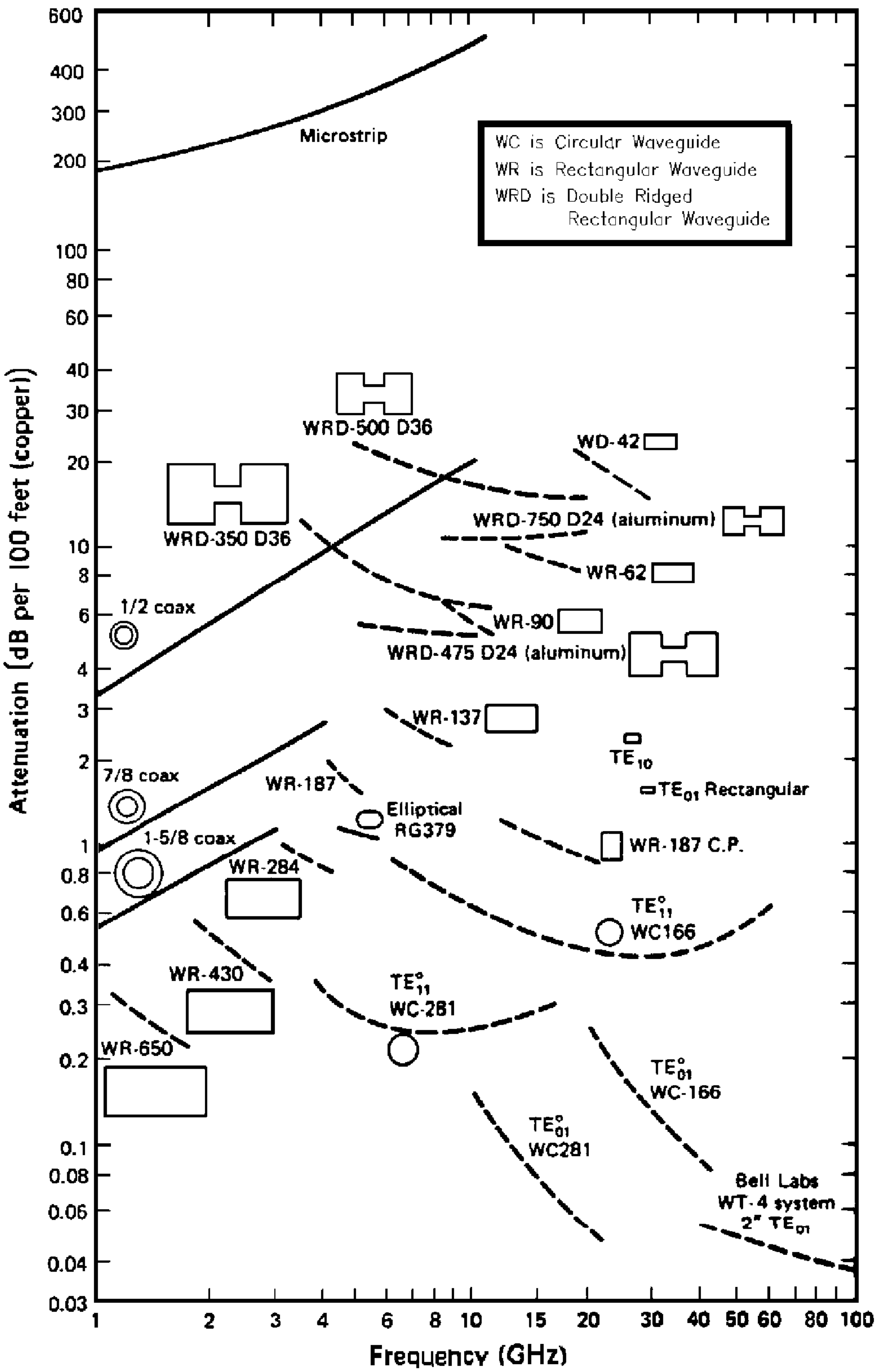

Figure 4. Attenuation vs Frequency for a Variety of Waveguides and Cables

Table 1. Rectangular Waveguide Specifications

Waveguide Size	JAN WG Desig	MIL-W-85 Dash #	Material	Freq Range (GHz)	Freq Cutoff (GHz)	Power (at 1 Atm)		Insertion Loss (dB/100ft)	Dimensions (Inches)	
						CW	Peak		Outside	Wall Thickness
WR284	RG48/U RG75/U	1-039 1-042	Copper Aluminum	2.60 - 3.95	2.08	45 36	7650	.742-.508 1.116-.764	3.000x1.500	0.08
WR229	RG340/U RG341/U	1-045 1-048	Copper Aluminum	3.30 - 4.90	2.577	30 24	5480	.946-.671 1.422-1.009	2.418x1.273	0.064
WR187	RG49/U RG95/U	1-051 1-054	Copper Aluminum	3.95 - 5.85	3.156	18 14.5	3300	1.395-.967 2.097-1.454	1.000x1.000	0.064
WR159	RG343/U RG344/U	1-057 1-060	Copper Aluminum	4.90 - 7.05	3.705	15 12	2790	1.533-1.160 2.334-1.744	1.718x0.923	0.064
WR137	RG50/U RG106/U	1-063 1-066	Copper Aluminum	5.85 - 8.20	4.285	10 8	1980	1.987-1.562 2.955-2.348	1.500x0.750	0.064
WR112	RG51/U RG68/U	1-069 1-072	Copper Aluminum	7.05 - 10.0	5.26	6 4.8	1280	2.776-2.154 4.173-3.238	1.250x0.625	0.064
WR90	RG52/U RG67/U	1-075 1-078	Copper Aluminum	8.2 - 12.4	6.56	3 2.4	760	4.238-2.995 6.506-4.502	1.000x0.500	0.05
WR75	RG346/U RG347/U	1-081 1-084	Copper Aluminum	10.0 - 15.0	7.847	2.8 2.2	620	5.121-3.577 7.698-5.377	0.850x0.475	0.05
WR62	RG91/U RG349/U	1-087 1-091	Copper Aluminum	12.4 - 18.0	9.49	1.8 1.4	460	6.451-4.743 9.700-7.131	0.702x0.391	0.04
WR51	RG352/U RG351/U	1-094 1-098	Copper Aluminum	15.0 - 22.0	11.54	1.2 1	310	8.812-6.384 13.250-9.598	0.590x0.335	0.04
WR42	RG53/U	1-100	Copper	18.0 - 26.5	14.08	0.8	170	13.80-10.13	0.500x0.250	0.04
WR34	RG354/U	1-107	Copper	2.0 - 33.0	17.28	0.6	140	16.86-11.73	0.420x0.250	0.04
WR28	RG271/U	3-007	Copper	26.5 - 40.0	21.1	0.5	100	23.02-15.77	0.360x0.220	0.04

Table 2. Double Ridge Rectangular Waveguide Specifications

Waveguide Size	MIL-W-23351 Dash #	Material	Freq Range (GHz)	Freq Cutoff (GHz)	Power (at 1 Atm)		Insertion Loss (dB/ft)	Dimensions (Inches)					
					CW	Peak		A	B	C	D	E	F
WRD250		Alum Brass Copper Silver Al	2.60 - 7.80	2.093	24	120	0.025 0.025 0.018 0.019	1.655	0.715	2	1	0.44	0.15
WRD350 D24	4-029 4-303 4-031	Alum Brass Copper	3.50 - 8.20	2.915	18	150	0.0307 0.0303 0.0204	1.48	0.688	1.608	0.816	0.37	0.292
WRD475 D24	4-033 4-034 4-035	Alum Brass Copper	4.75 - 11.00	3.961	8	85	0.0487 0.0481 0.0324	1.09	0.506	1.19	0.606	0.272	0.215
WRD500 D36	2-025 2-026 2-027	Alum Brass Copper	5.00 - 18.00	4.222	4	15	0.146 0.141 0.095	0.752	0.323	0.852	0.423	0.188	0.063
WRD650		Alum Brass Copper	6.50 - 18.00	5.348	4	25	0.106 0.105 0.07	0.720	0.321	0.820	0.421	0.173	0.101
WRD750 D24	4-037 4-038 4-039	Alum Brass Copper	7.50 - 18.00	6.239	4.8	35	0.0964 0.0951 0.0641	0.691	0.321	0.791	0.421	0.173	0.136
WRD110 D24	4-041 4-042 4-043	Alum Brass Copper	11.00 - 26.50	9.363	1.4	15	0.171 0.169 0.144	0.471	0.219	0.551	0.299	0.118	0.093
WRD180 D24	4-045 4-046 4-047	Alum Brass Copper	18.00 - 40.00	14.995	0.8	5	0.358 0.353 0.238	0.288	0.134	0.368	0.214	0.072	0.057

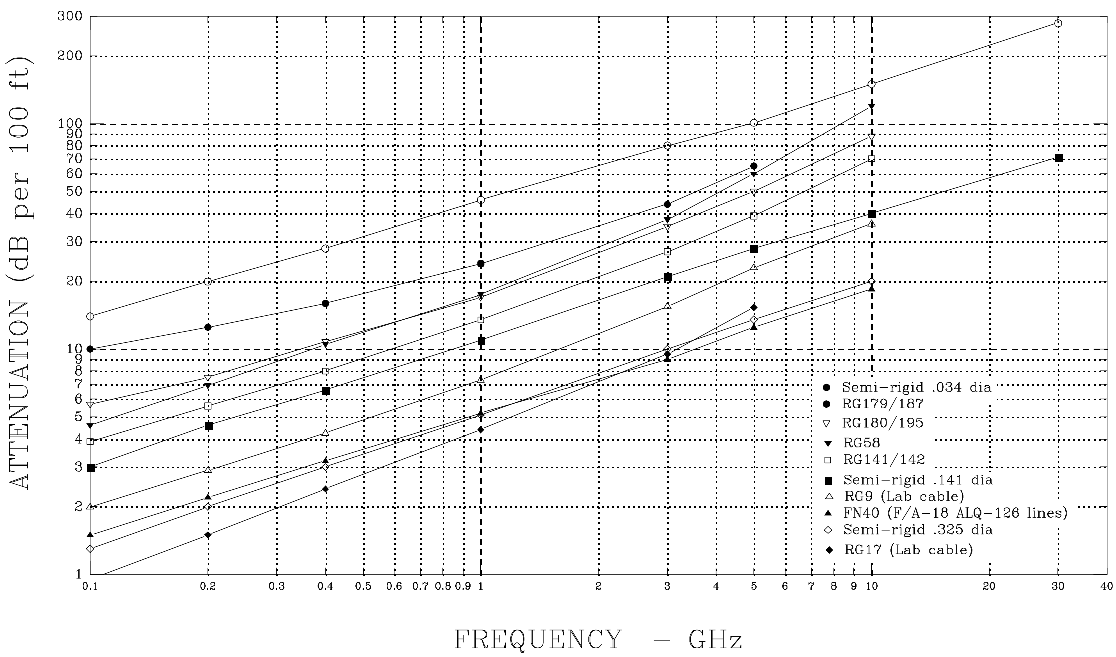

Figure 5. Attenuation vs Frequency for a Variety of Coaxial Cables