

NDI: Health Monitoring for Enhanced In-Service Life & Accurate QA to Aid Wind Blade Production

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Dennis Roach, Ray Ely, Tom Rice, Josh Paquette
Wind Blade Reliability Center
Sandia National Labs



Rising Need for Wind Blade Inspections

- Rapid and steady increase in wind power installation
- Critical enablers to improve market competition with other electricity sources
 - *Dept. of Energy Wind Vision Roadmap* identifies need for continuing declines in wind power costs (blade availability) and improved reliability
- Increase wind farm availability and lower production costs by reducing unplanned maintenance - requires broader adoption of condition monitoring systems
- Better understanding of harsh environments combined with uncertainties in aging phenomena and Damage Tolerance of blades
- Blade maintenance is now a major issue because: 1) the number and age of wind blades in operation continues to grow, 2) larger blades have increased demand/need for more invasive repairs (vs. replacement), 3) operational loads/environment combined with seeded flaws creates the need for in-service inspections
- Navigant Research estimates the cumulative global revenue for wind turbine inspection services will reach nearly \$6 billion annually by 2024.

Blade Reliability Collaborative - Objectives

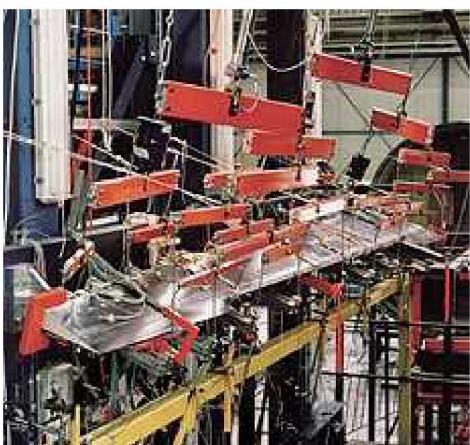
Create the ability for manufacturers to determine the quality of their product before it leaves the factory & to enhance the in-service inspection of wind blades

- Develop, evaluate and validate the array of potential nondestructive inspection methods for the detection of flaws in composite wind turbine blades
- Plan and implement a national capability – including a physical presence and methodology - to comprehensively evaluate blade inspection techniques
- Produce optimum deployment of automated or semi-automated NDI to detect undesirable flaws in blades (time, cost, sensitivity)
- Transfer technology to industry through hardware and technology evaluation, inspector training, and procedure development



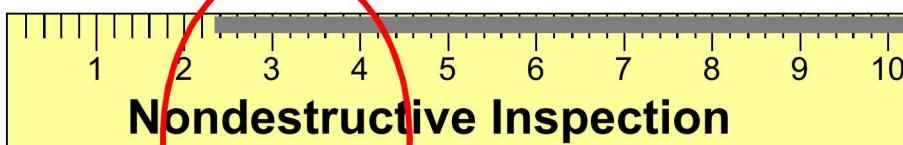
Blade Reliability Collaborative – NDI Objective

Create the ability for manufacturers to determine the quality of their product before it leaves the factory & to enhance the in-service inspection of wind blades



Required Relationship Between Structural Integrity and Inspection Sensitivity

← **II Detectable Flaw Size**



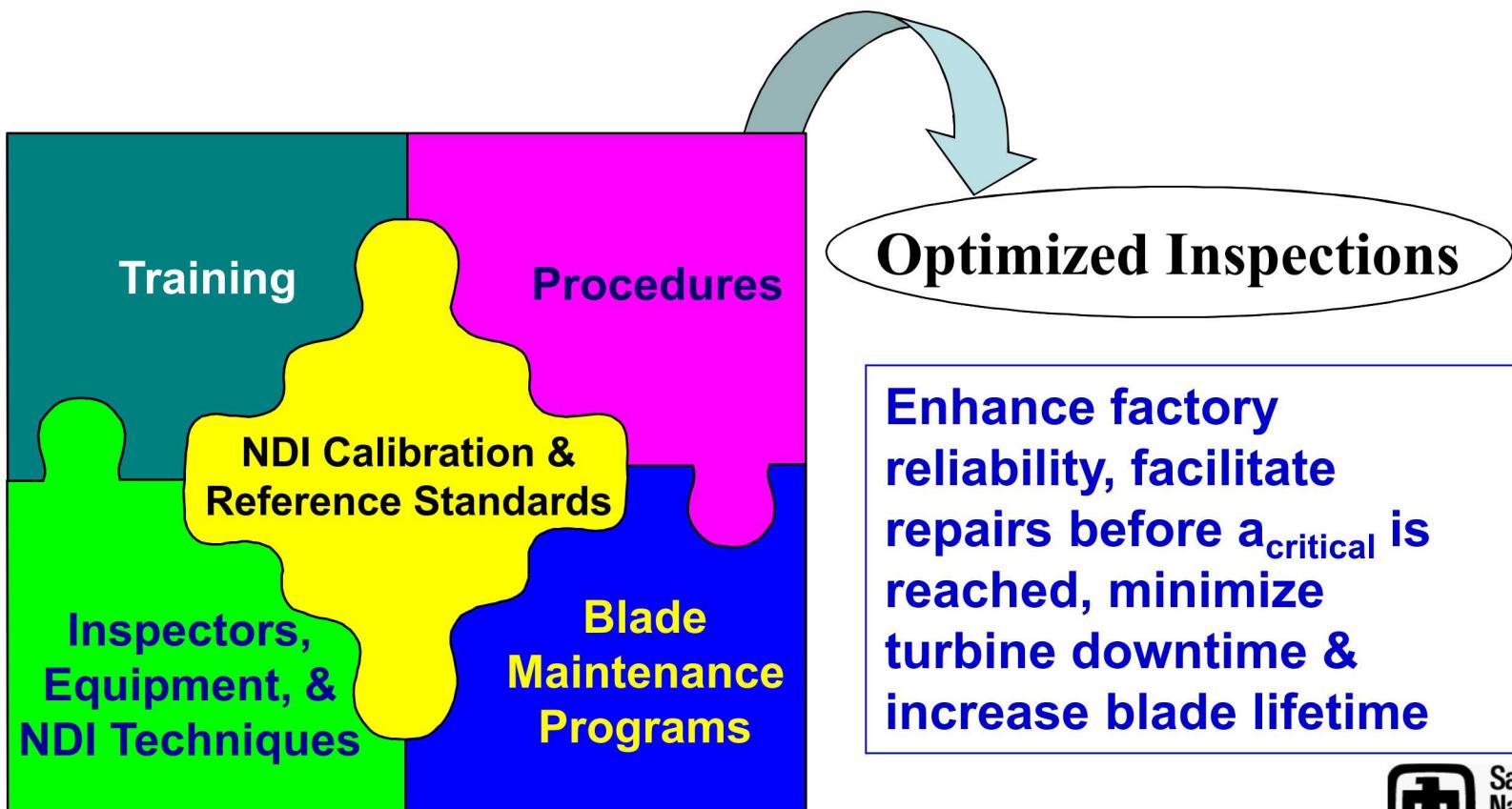
Need this overlap



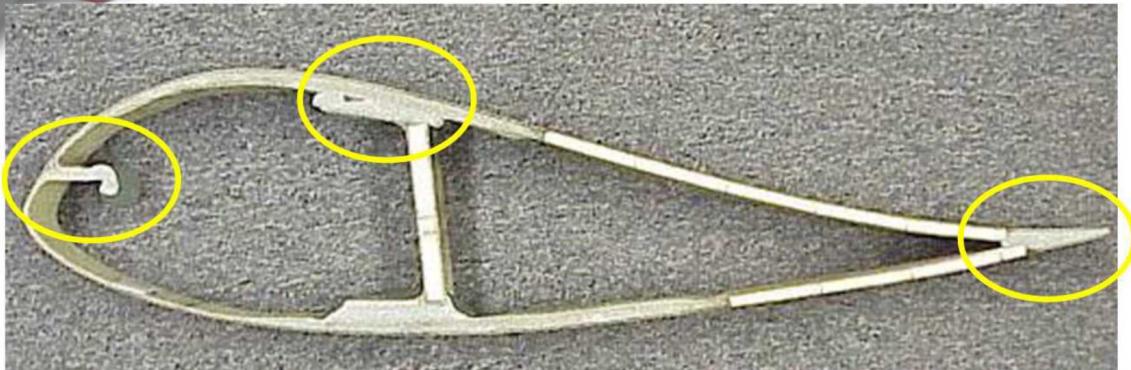
Allowable Flaw Size II →

Program Thrusts to Improve Wind NDI

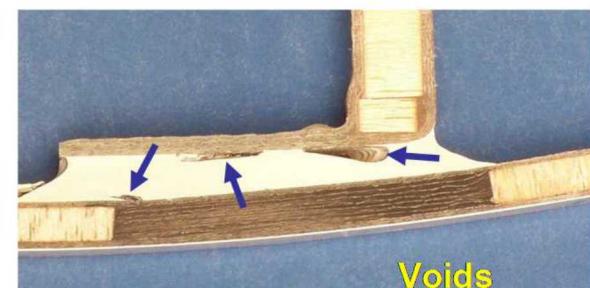
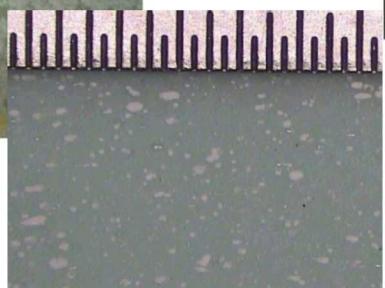
- Use of NDI reference standards to form sound basis of comparison & ensure proper equipment set-up
- Use of material property & calibration curves (attenuation, velocity)
- Human factors – adjust procedures
- Improved flaw detection: Hybrid inspection approach - stack multiple methods which address array of flaw types (data fusion)



Inspection Areas and Flaw Types of Interest



Flaws include: Ply Waves
Delaminations, Adhesive
Voids, Joint Disbonds,
Snowflaking and Porosity



Voids

In-Service Inspection of Blades Including Wind Blade Repairs



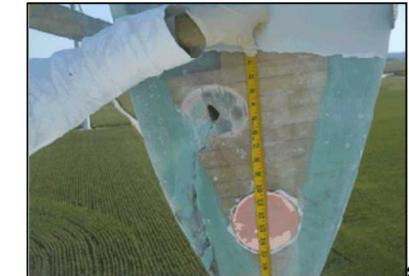
Damage Sources -
Installation, Lightning Strike,
Impact, Erosion, Overstress,
Fatigue, Fabrication-Seeded,
Environmental



**Skin Laminate
Fracture**



- In-service NDI can improve blade reliability, minimize blade downtime & extend blade life
- Additional access & deployment challenges
- Post-repair inspections



Demand for More Extensive Wind Blade Repairs Requires Pre- and Post- Repair Inspection

- Requires the means to conduct **in-service inspections up-tower**
- NDI must go beyond visual surface indications and produce **deep, subsurface damage assessments**
- NDI must be rapid to **minimize blade downtime**



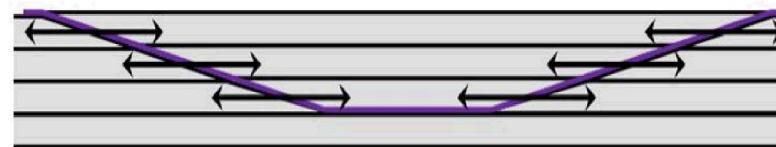
Severe Growth of Fiber Fracture



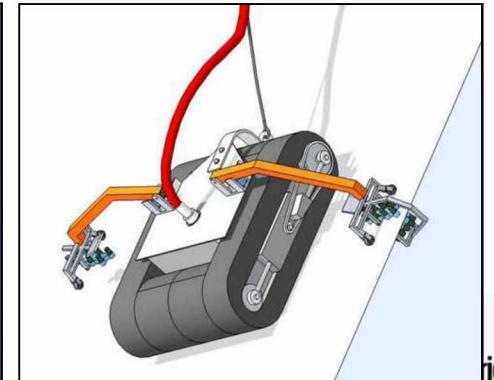
Scarf
Blade Repair
Process



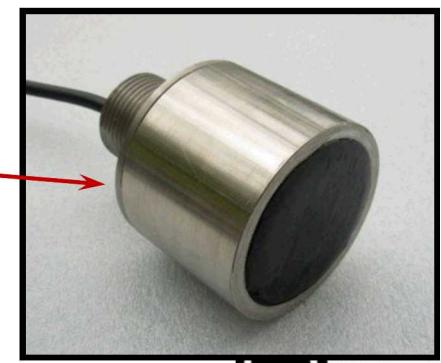
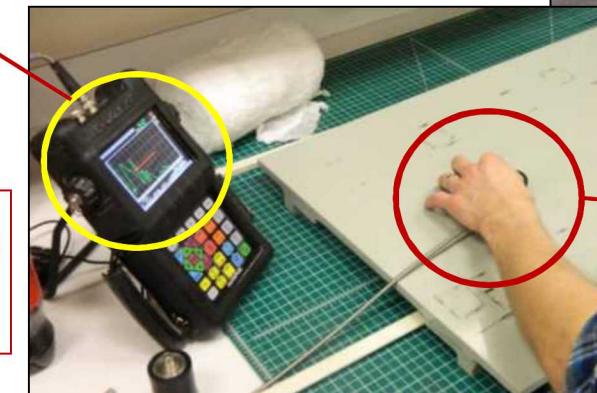
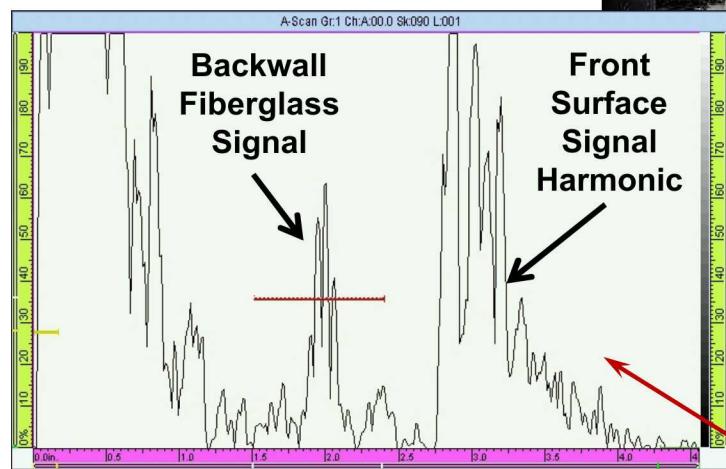
Lightning Strike Damage



Drone- and
Robot-
Deployed
NDI Systems



Overcome Inspection Challenges



Want to make NDI easier, quicker, more reliable and more sensitive



Different Flaw Types Engineered into NDI Performance Assessment Specimens



Glass Beads



Grease



Mold Release



Pillow Insert

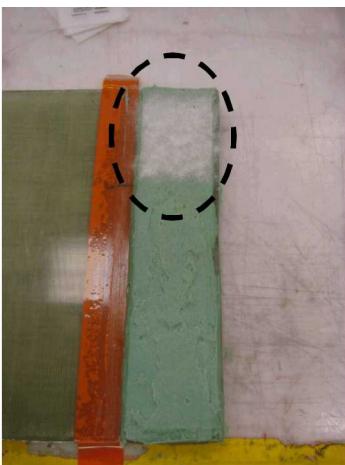
Materials inserted into multiple layers



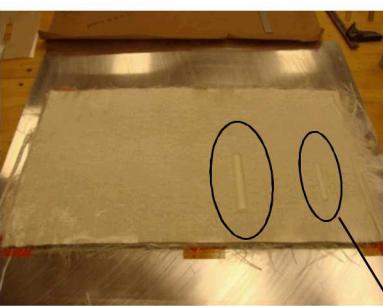
Voids in bond joint



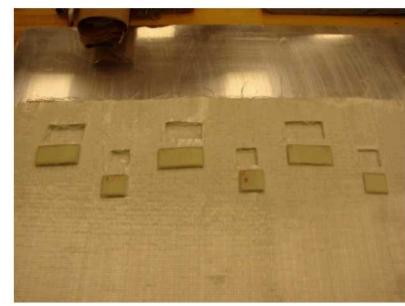
Pull tabs in bond joint



Glass beads in bond joint



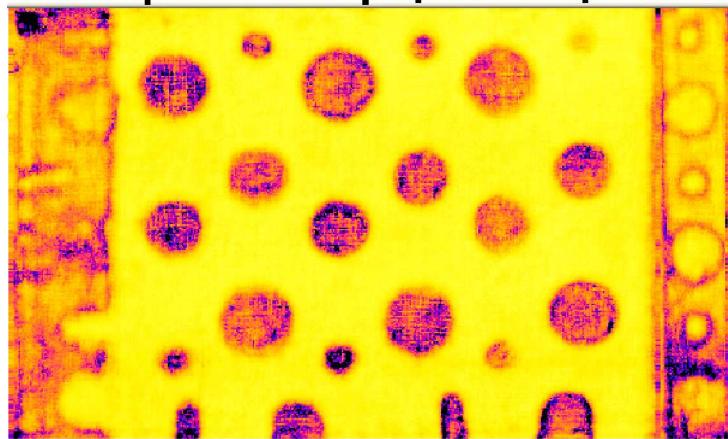
Waviness produced by pre-cured resin rods



Dry fabric areas

MAUS P-E UT with Focused Probe (1 MHz/2") and Adjustable Water Path

Flat Bottom HolesPillow Inserts

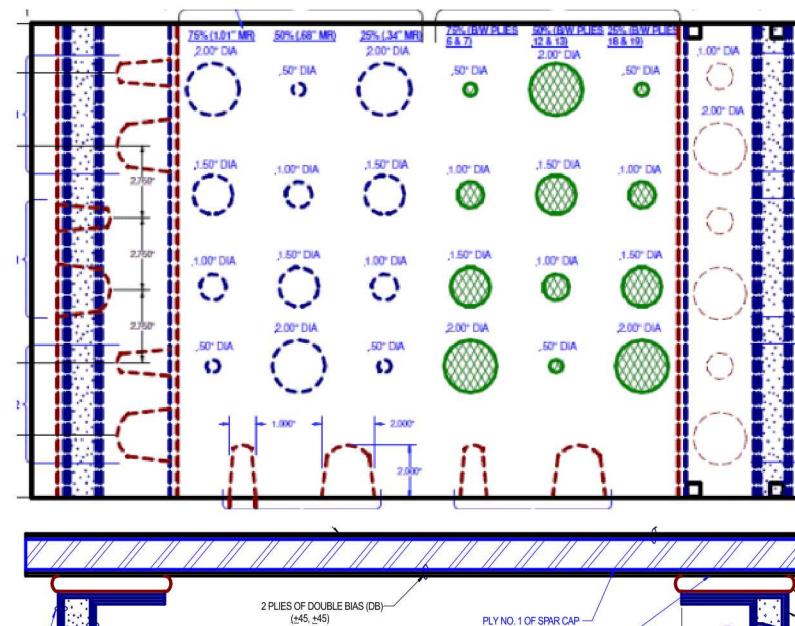
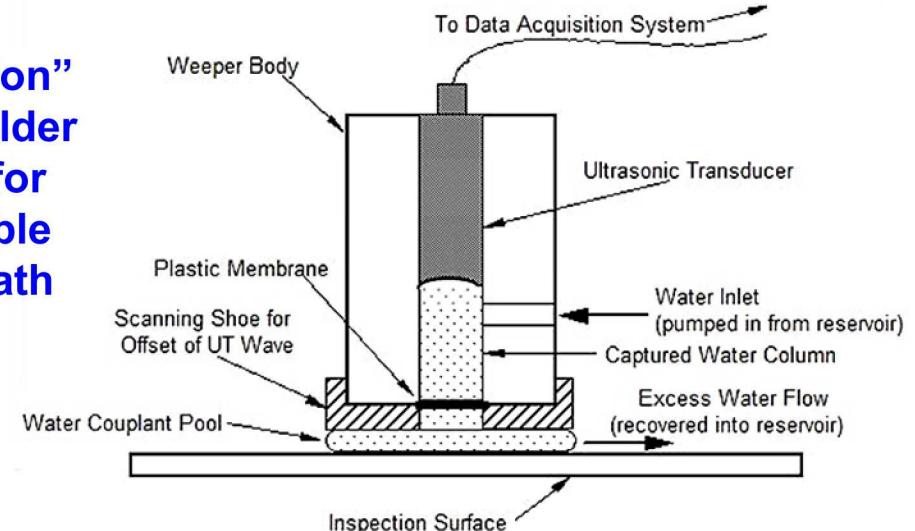


Pull Tabs

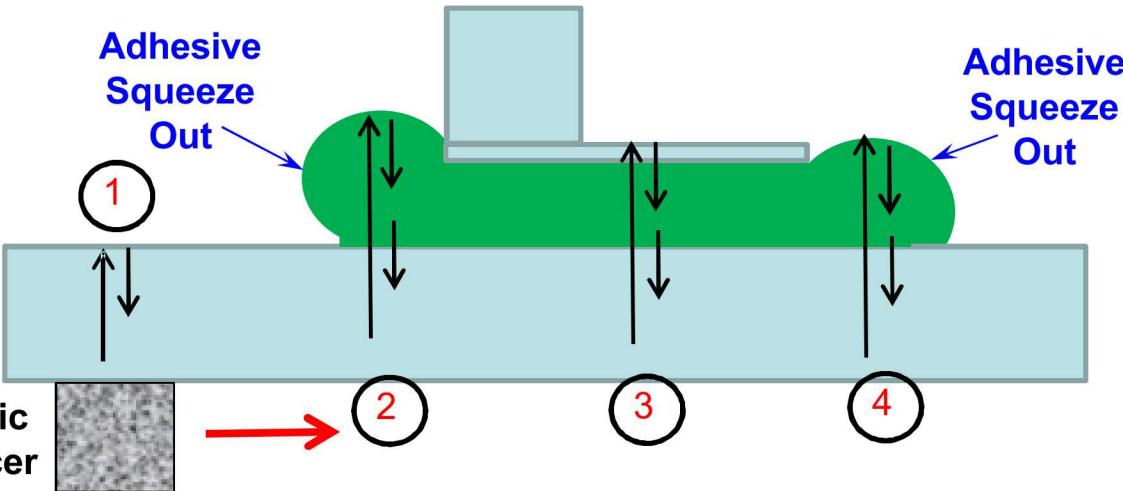
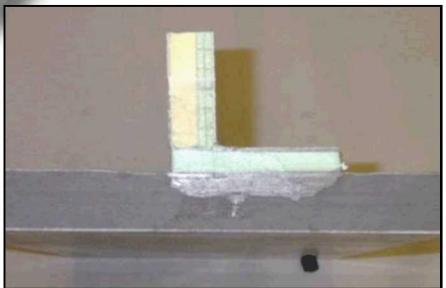
REF-STD-6-202-250-SNL-1



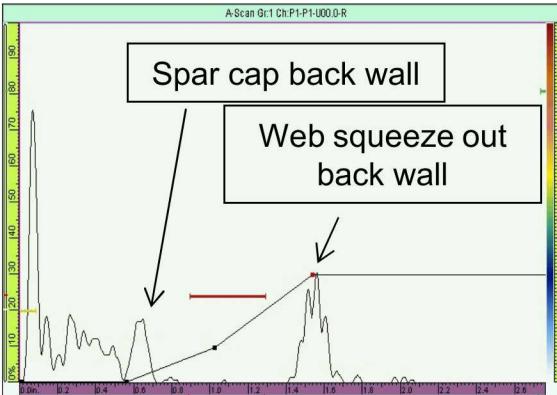
New
“Immersion”
Probe Holder
Allows for
Adjustable
Water Path



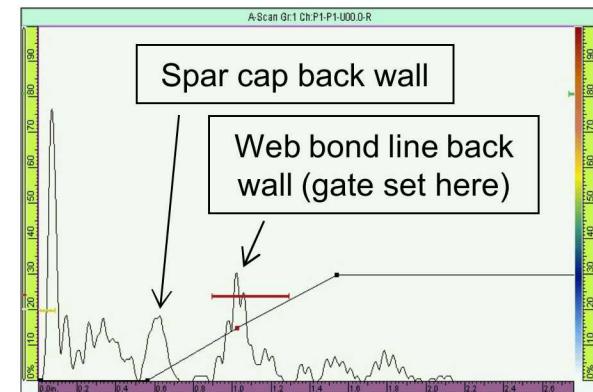
Pulse-Echo Inspection of Bond Joint



Spar Cap - 1



Web Squeeze Out- & 2 4



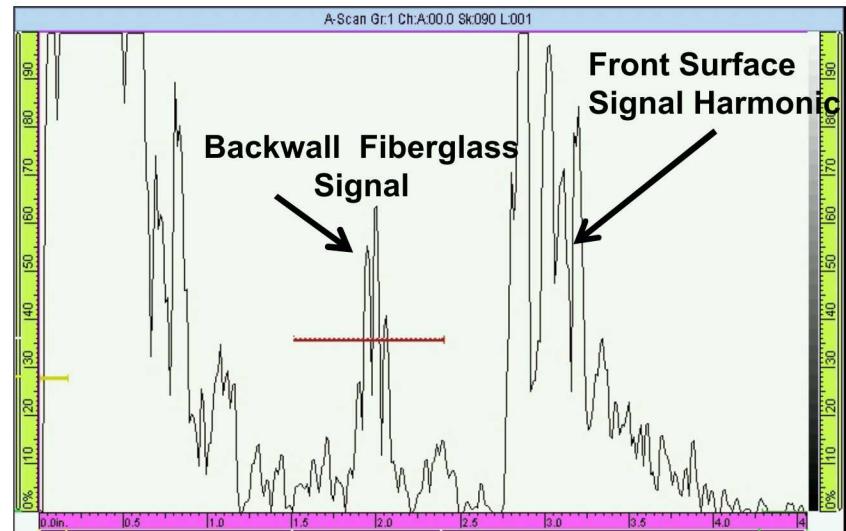
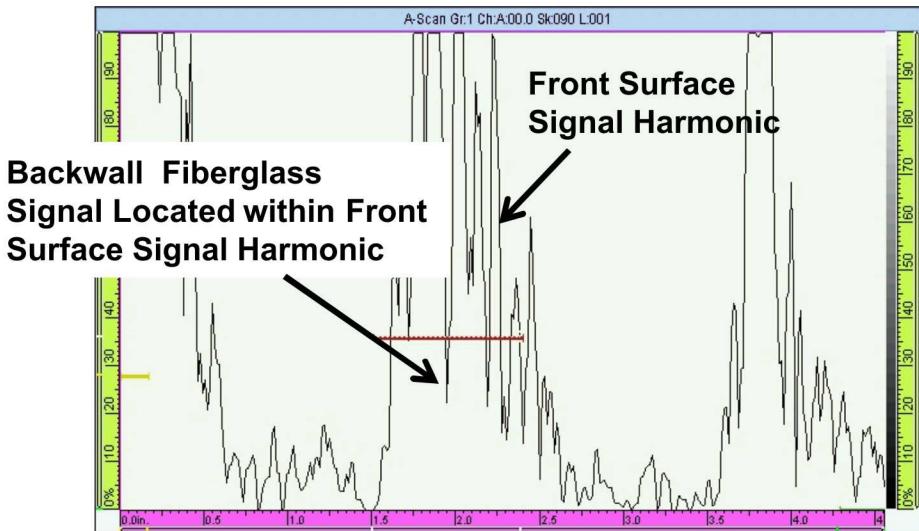
Web Bond Line- 3

A-Scan Signals



Design of Delay Lines to Avoid Signal Interference

Water Box Signal Analysis - 25mm compared to 40mm;
Moves harmonic return signal outside area of interest.



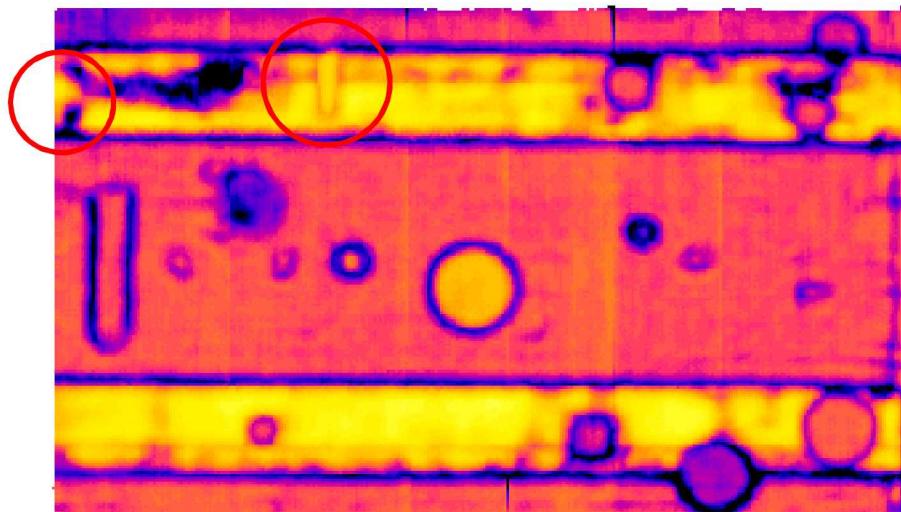
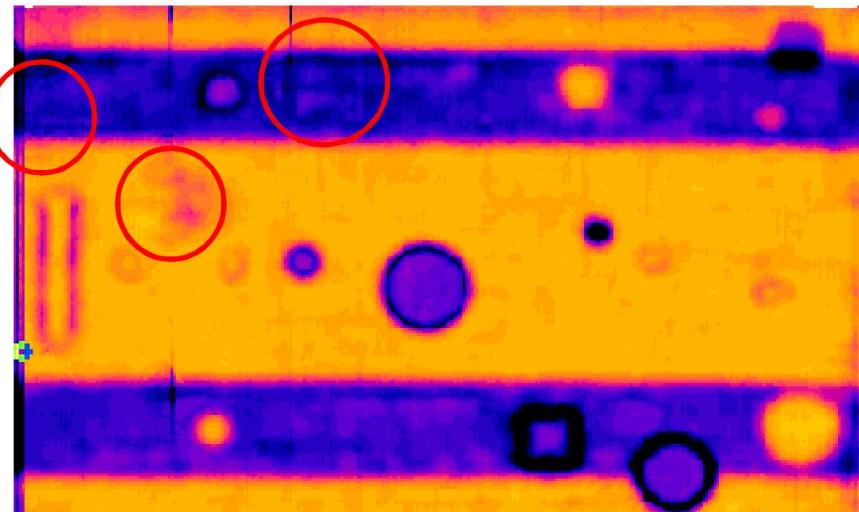
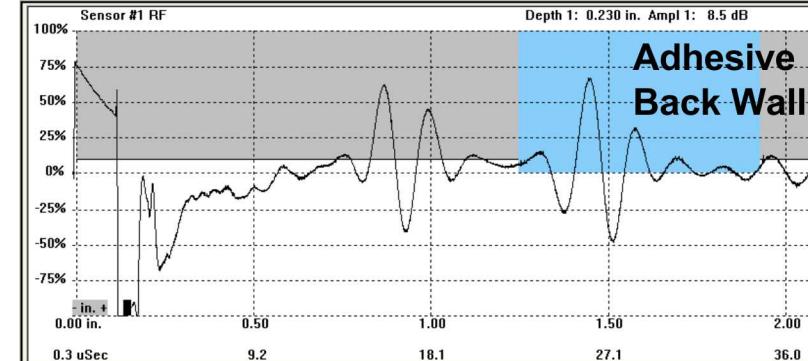
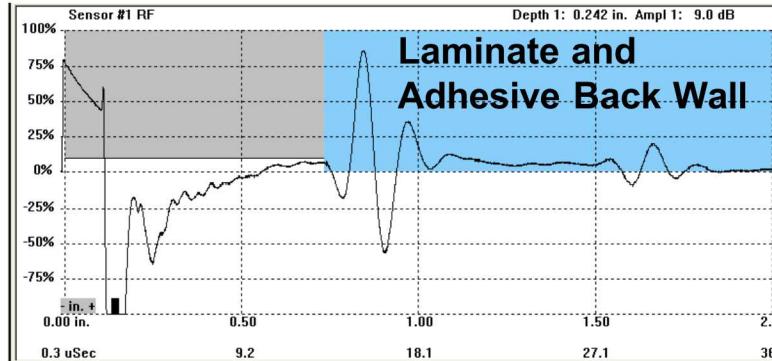
Sandia has focused on a sealed couplant box that:

- **Adjusts to slight curvature in surfaces**
- **Eliminates water flow to open box**
- **Maximizes signal strength**
- **Accommodates necessary standoffs for signal clarity**
- **Easily saves scanned images for reference using a wheel encoder**



Gate Setting Analysis

MAUS V 500 KHZ Contact Test C-Scan Results



Defects at the shear web flange and adhesive layer may, or may not, be detected depending on gate settings and part thickness.

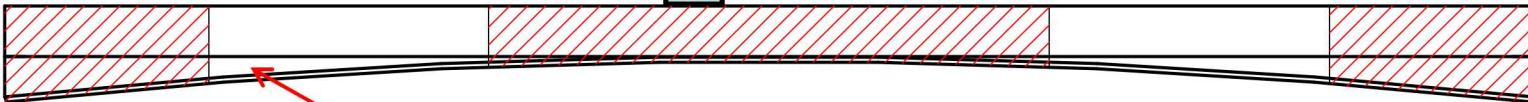
Adhesive Thickness Measurements with Phased Array UT

Develop and assess methods to inspect bond line thickness

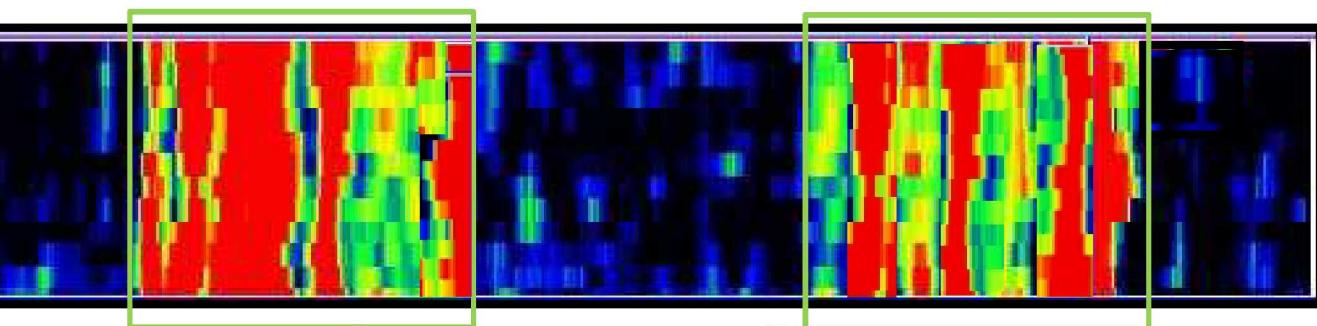
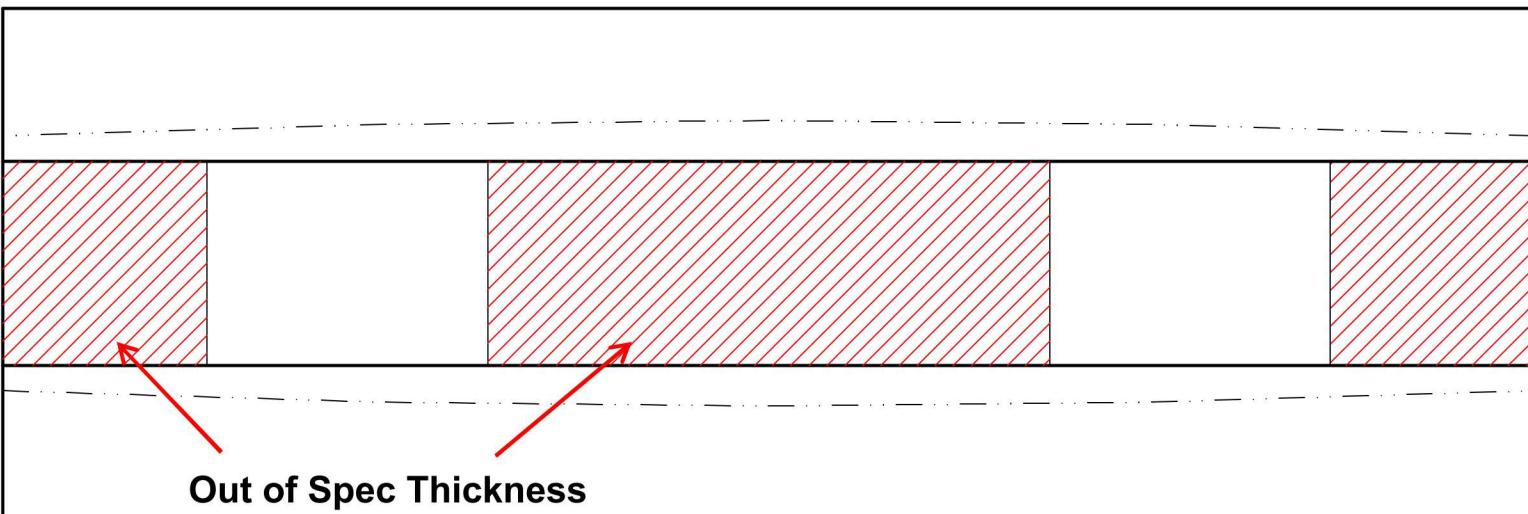
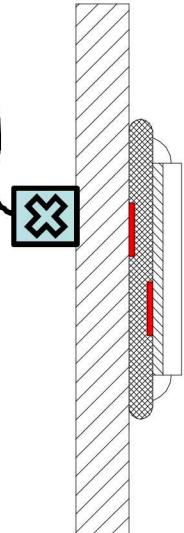
Tapered Adhesive Wedge



Fiberglass Inspection Surface



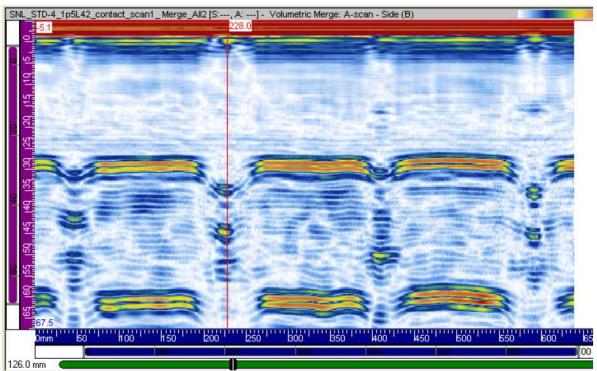
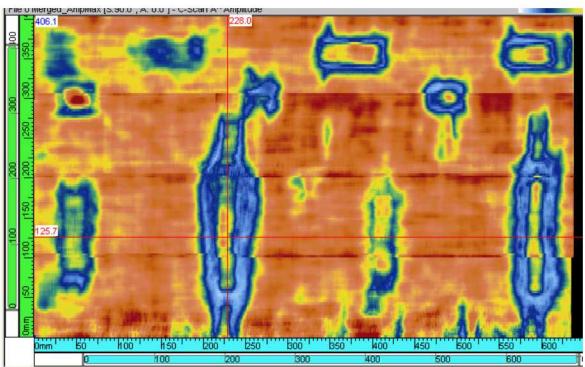
Adhesive Bond Line



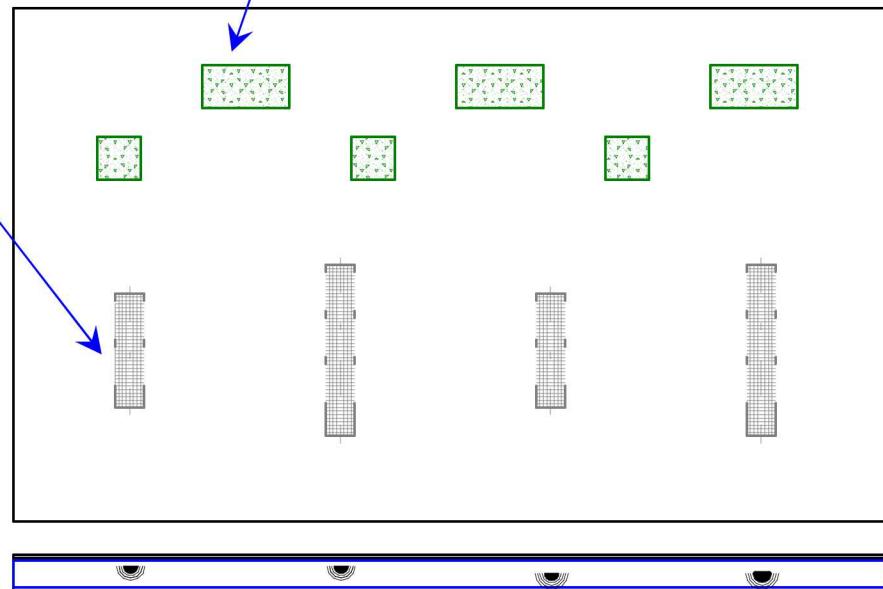
Phased Array
UT Results

Good Bond
Line Thickness

Phased Array UT – Display and Deployment



REF-STD-4-135-SNL-1
(wrinkles & dry areas)





An Experiment to Assess Flaw Detection Performance in Wind Turbine Blades (POD)

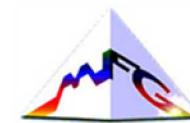
Purpose

- Generate industry-wide performance curves to quantify:
 - how well current inspection techniques are able to **reliably** find flaws in wind turbine blades (industry baseline)
 - the degree of improvements possible through integrating more advanced NDI techniques and procedures.

Expected Results - evaluate performance attributes

- 1) accuracy & sensitivity (hits, misses, false calls, sizing)
- 2) versatility, portability, complexity, inspection time (human factors)
- 3) produce guideline documents to improve inspections
- 4) introduce advanced NDI where needed

Ensure representative blade construction and materials



GE Global Research

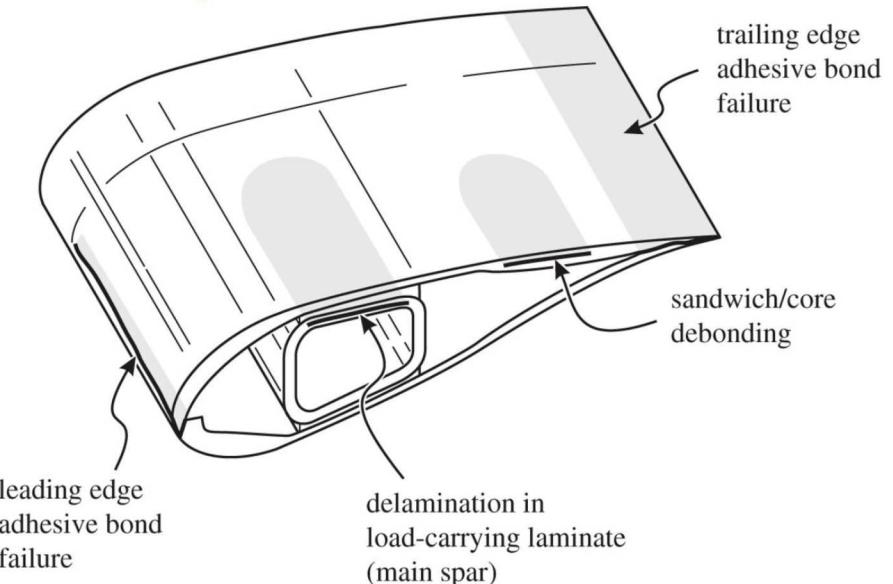


Wind Blade NDI Probability of Detection Experiment

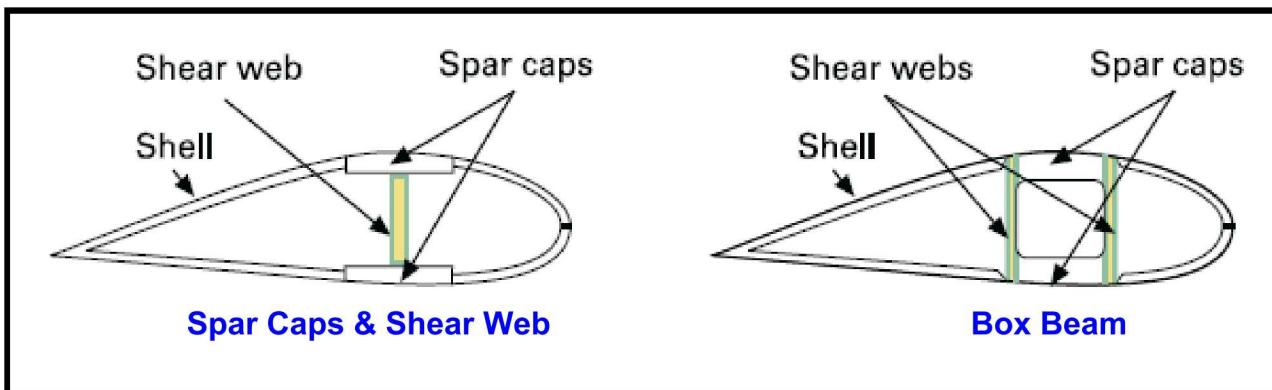
- **Blind experiment:** type, location and size of flaws are not known by inspector
- **Statistically relevant flaw distribution – Probability of Detection (POD)**
- **Used to analytically determine the performance of NDI techniques – hits, misses, false-calls, flaw sizing, human factors, procedures**

Experimental Design Parameters

- Representative design and manufacturing
- Various parts of blade such as spar cap, bonded joints, leading and trailing edge
- Statistically valid POD (number, size of flaws and inspection area)
- Random flaw location
- Maximum of two days to perform experiment
- Deployment



Specimens designs applicable to various blade construction



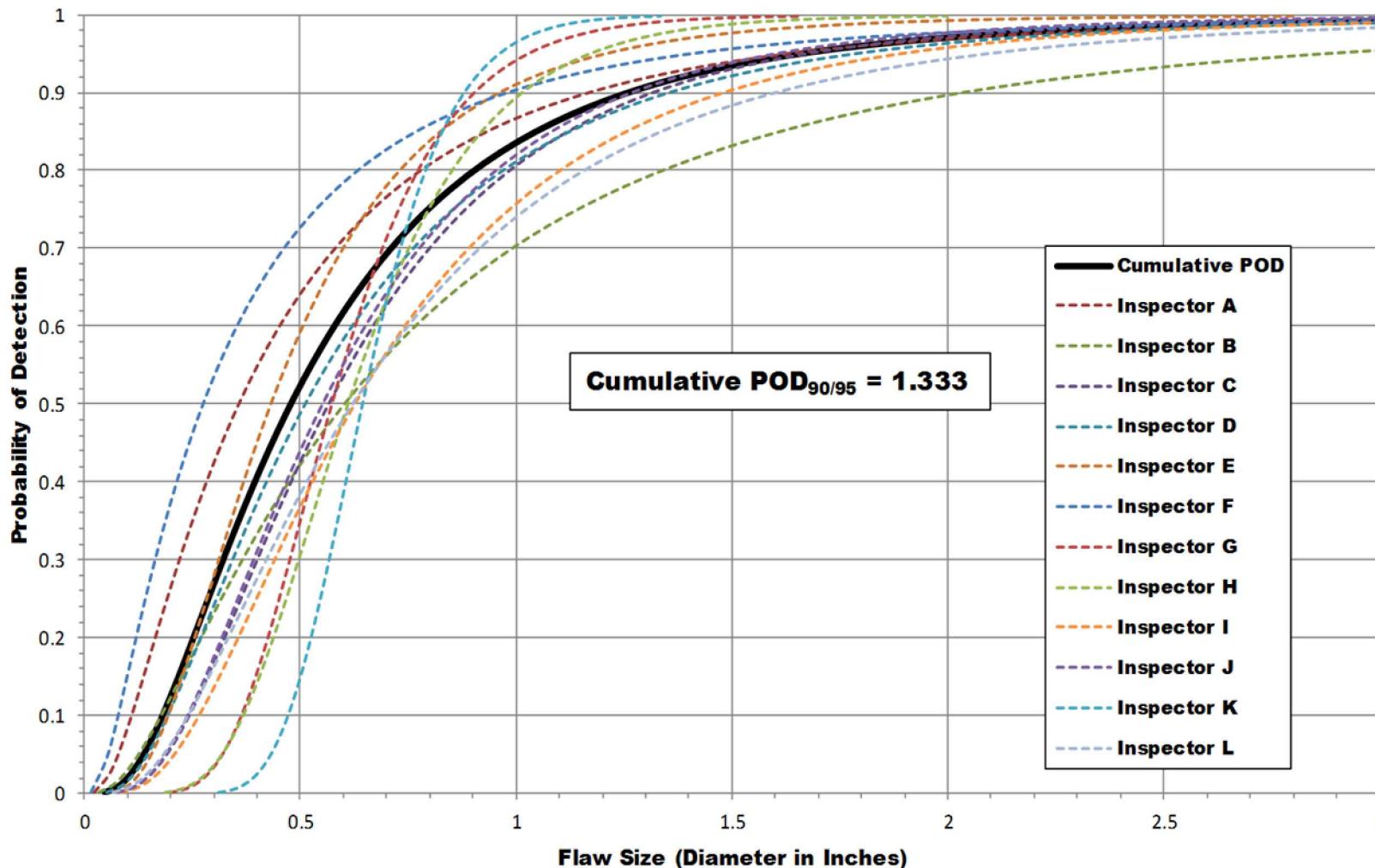
Implementation of Wind POD Experiment

- 11 POD specimens with spar cap and shear web geometry
- Thickness ranges from 8 Plies (0.45" thick laminate, 0.85" thick with adhesive bond line) to 32 Plies (1.80" thick laminate, 2.20" thick with adhesive bond line)
- All panels painted with wind turbine blade paint (match inspection surface)



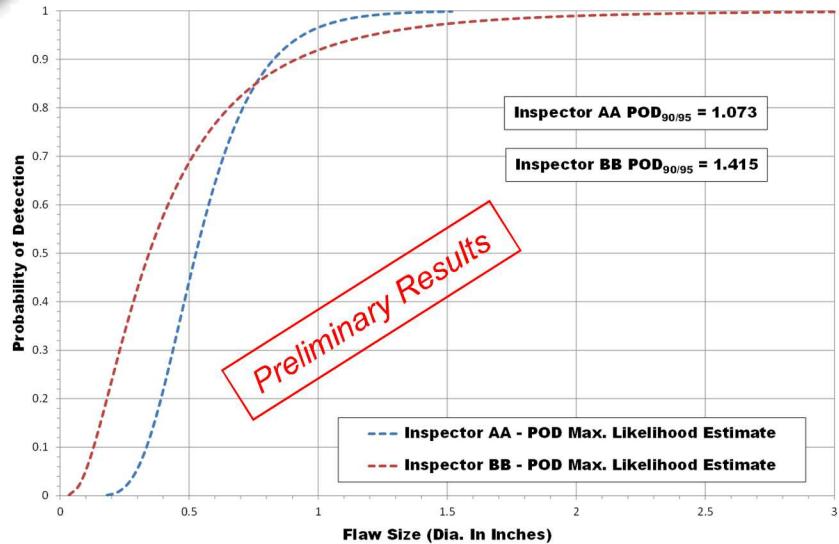
Wind Blade Flaw Detection Experiment – Individual Inspector and Cumulative POD Comparison

All Panels - Spar Cap with Shear Web and Box Spar Construction Types



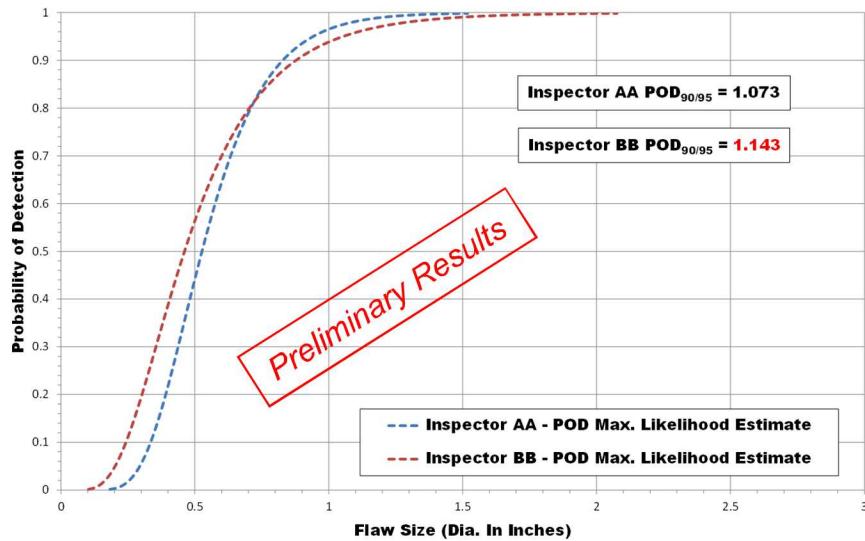
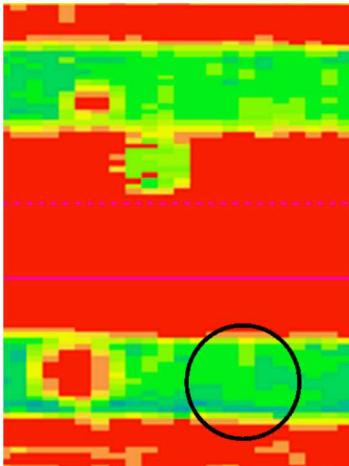
Wind Blade Flaw Detection Experiment – Optimizing Results with Proper Analysis

Results from Single-Element UT Scanner System



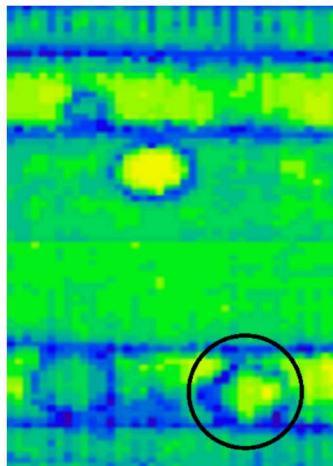
Non-optimal use of gate settings can allow damage to go undetected

Initial Results - flaw under bondline is not imaged



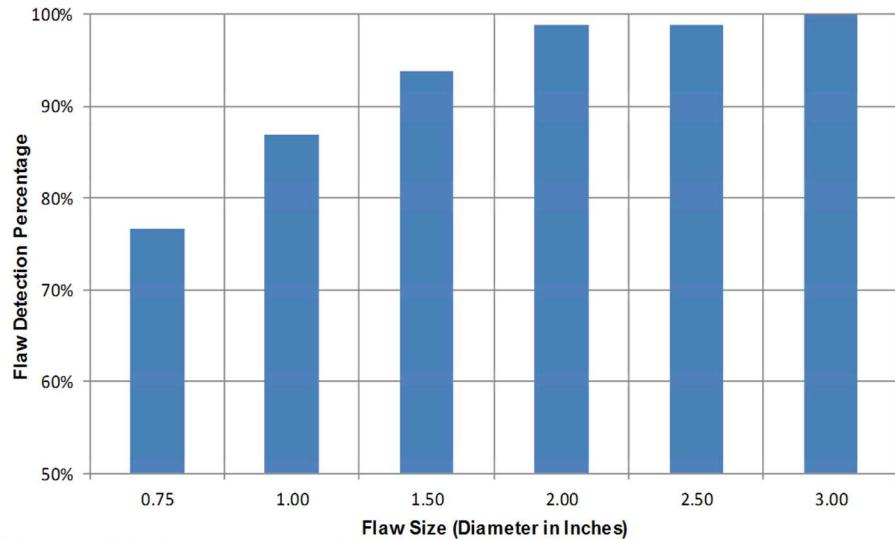
Inspector BB – 2" Flaw “Miss” is changed to a “Hit” (additional data gates used to detect deeper flaws)

Second Analysis – data reviewed using additional gate settings; damage detected

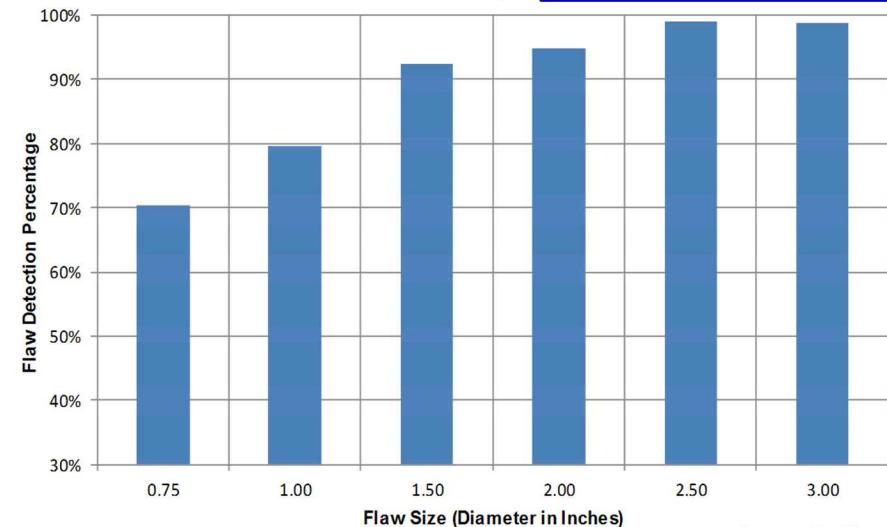


Wind Blade Flaw Detection Experiment – Various NDI Performance Attributes Evaluated

Overall Flaw Detection Percentage & Accuracy in Determining Flaw Size All Panels - 12 Inspectors - All Flaws (CT & CG)						Flaw Detection Percentage (1704 Total Flaws)	
Accuracy in Sizing the Flaws That Were Detected (1546 Total Flaws Detected)						Flaw Detection Percentage (1704 Total Flaws)	
Flaw Size	5 (100%)	4 (76%-99%)	3 (51%-75%)	2 (25%-50%)	1 (< 25%)	Flaw Size	Percent Detected
0.75	42%	18%	16%	10%	15%	0.75	74%
1.00	35%	32%	19%	9%	6%	1.00	83%
1.50	24%	40%	19%	10%	7%	1.50	93%
2.00	22%	47%	16%	10%	4%	2.00	97%
2.50	20%	46%	22%	9%	4%	2.50	99%
3.00	16%	52%	13%	8%	12%	3.00	99%
Overall Sizing Performance	26%	40%	18%	10%	7%	Overall Flaw Detection	91%



All Panels - Constant Thickness Flaws



All Panels - Complex Geometry Flaws

Spar Cap with Shear Web and Box Spar Construction Types

$POD_{90/95} = 1.334$

Spar Cap with Shear Web Construction Types

$POD_{90/95} = 1.208$

Wind Blade Flaw Detection Experiment – Improvements Produced by Use of Advanced NDI

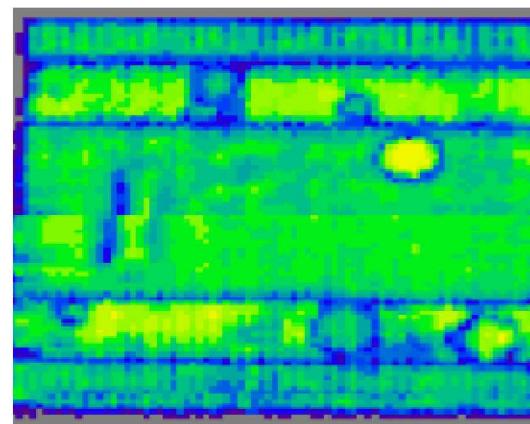
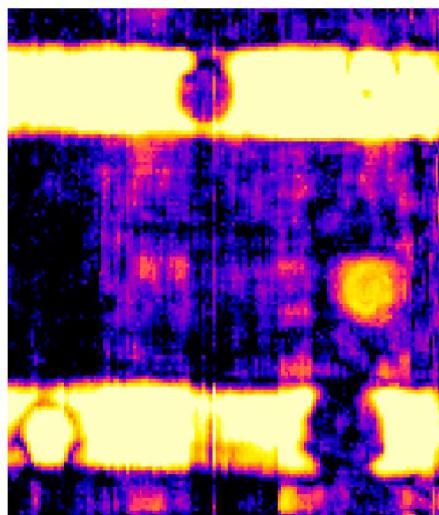
All Panels,
All Flaw Types –
Conventional NDI

POD_{90/95} = 1.333

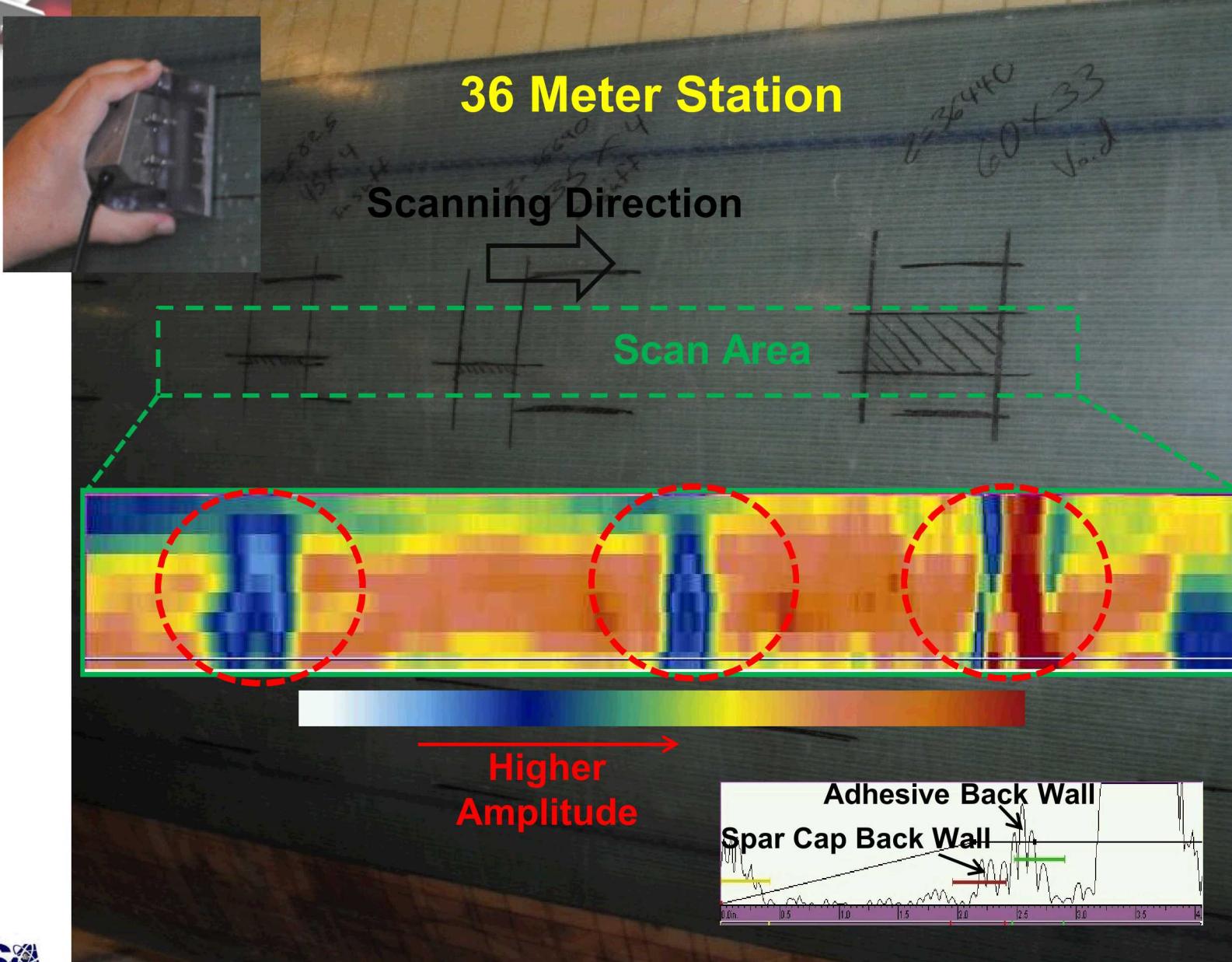
All Panels,
All Flaw Types –
Advanced NDI
(sample)

POD_{90/95} = 1.105

C-scan images
produced by single-
element ultrasonic
scanner systems –
easier to interpret data



On-Blade Testing in Manufacturing Facility



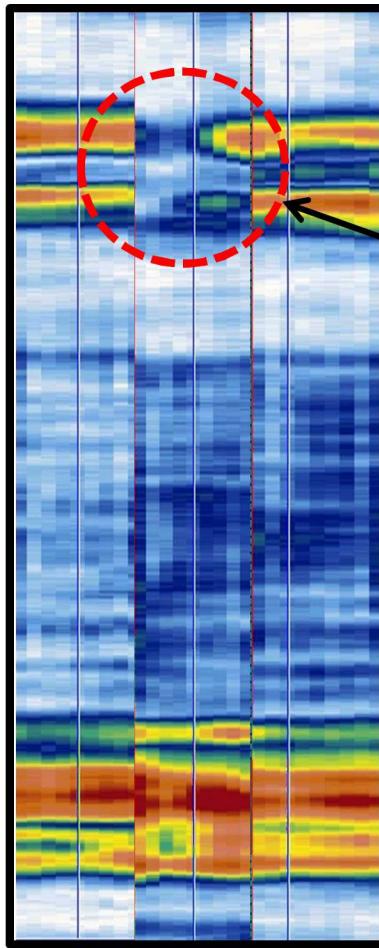
On-Blade Phased Array UT Inspections



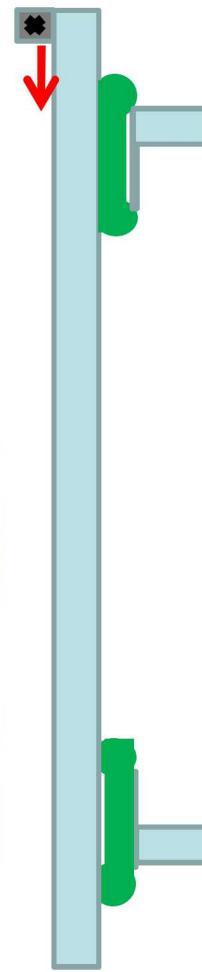
Scanning Direction



16 Meter Station on
Fiberglass Spar Cap Blade



Vertical Strip C-Scan Image
Showing Adhesive Void in
Upper Bond Line



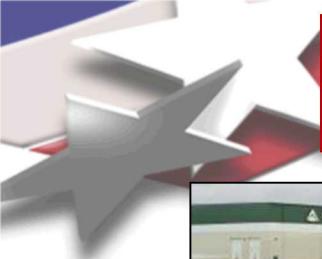
Spar Cap Cross Section Schematic
Showing the Spar Cap, Adhesive
Bond Line and Shear Webs

Sealed water box and 1.5L16 Phased Array probe was used to
detect missing adhesive in bond lines



In-Service Inspection of Blades Including Wind Blade Repairs

- **Deployment** - Determine how advanced NDI methods can be gracefully integrated into wind farm operations.
- **Inspection of Repairs:**
 - As wind blades become larger and more expensive, there is a corresponding desire to install more extensive and invasive repairs.
 - Criticality of these repairs will require the use of through-thickness depth inspection methods to ensure the quality of the repair.
 - Accurate repair assessments can open up new opportunities for spar cap and root repairs.
 - Give engineers added confidence that the blade can be recertified for use, which would lead to significant cost savings.
- **Implementation** - deployment may involve the use of wind service companies to provide skilled inspectors with proven equipment and procedures



Goal: conduct inspections before minor damage grows to blade failure; improve blade reliability & minimize down time



Damage from Shipping, Installation



Impact Damage



Severe Growth of Fiber Fracture



Skin Laminate Fracture



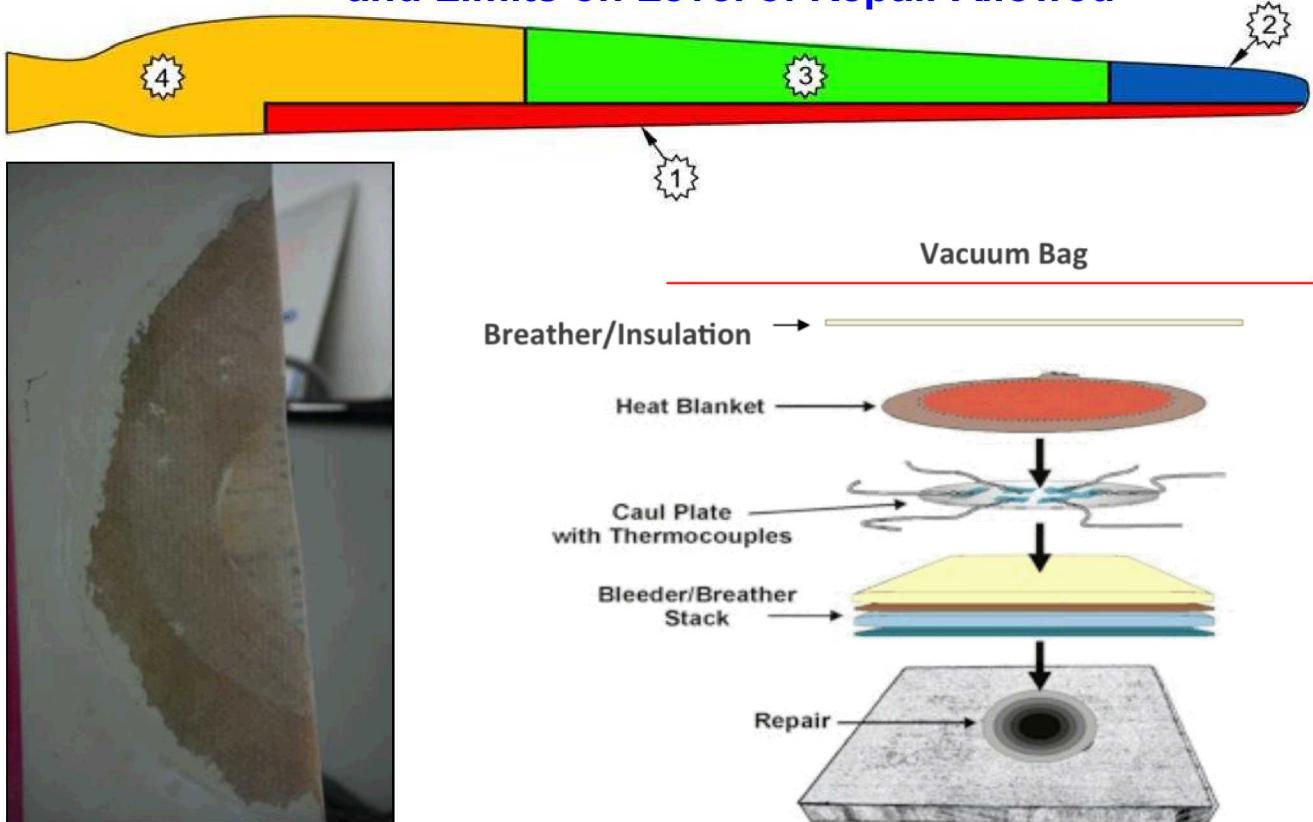
Erosion and Impact Damage



Trailing Edge Disbond and Fracture Damage

In-Service Inspection of Wind Blade Repairs

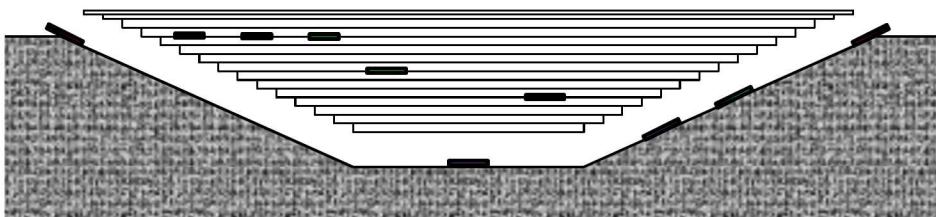
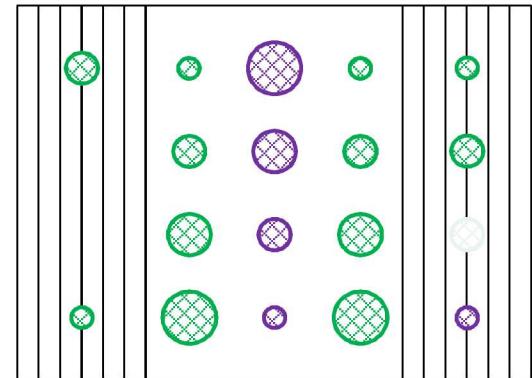
Repair Zones on Wind Blades that Identify Criticality and Limits on Level of Repair Allowed



In-Service Inspection of Wind Blade Repairs



Installation of “Damaged”
Repair on Large Scale NDI Test
Specimen at Sandia





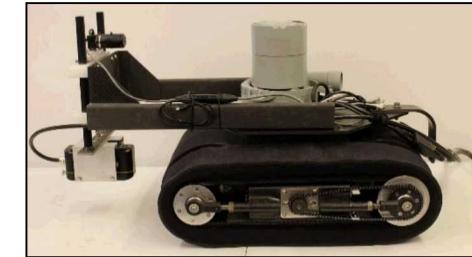
Inspecting for Lightning Damage in Carbon Blades

- Lightning is the largest operating-environment cause of blade failure.
- Activities - diagnosing the amount of damage to blade structures and its effect on the structure.
- Testing will include NDI on lightning strike specimens to determine damage response using both conventional and advanced NDI methods.



Lightning Strike Damage

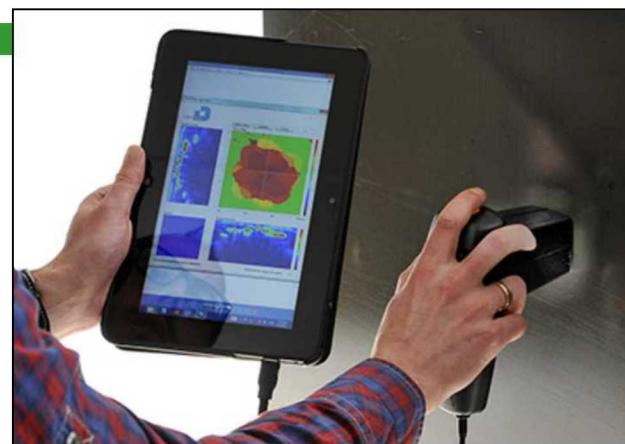
Wind Blade In-Service Inspection – Robot-Deployed NDI System



- Automated, remotely-controlled with wireless data transfer to ground station
- Includes Phased Array Ultrasonics for full-penetration damage detection
- Combined with high-fidelity visual inspection using deployed camera
- Real-time health assessment – allows for immediate repairs during a single maintenance stop and rapid return-to-service
- Benefits are escalated for off-shore applications
- Avoid more extensive repairs and even catastrophic blade failures (replacement)



Robot with On-Board NDI
System and Camera(s) for
Real-Time Assessments



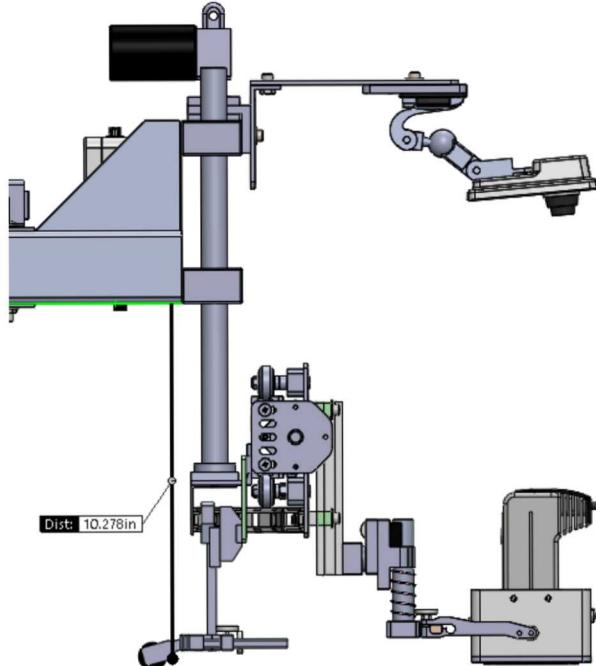
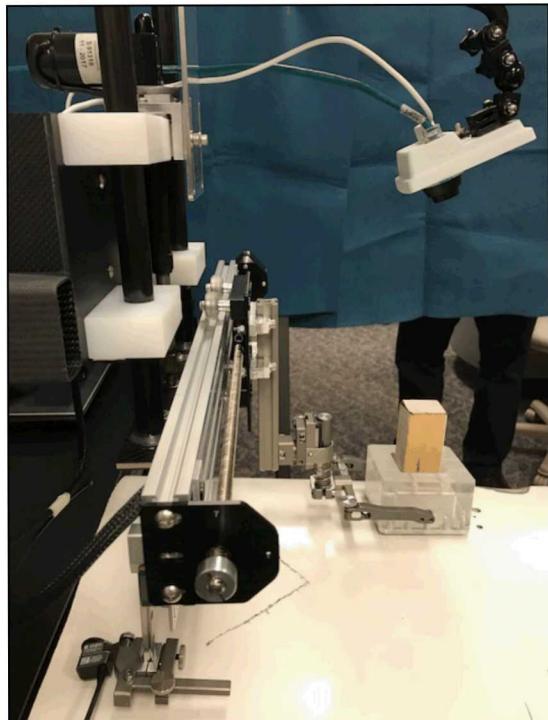
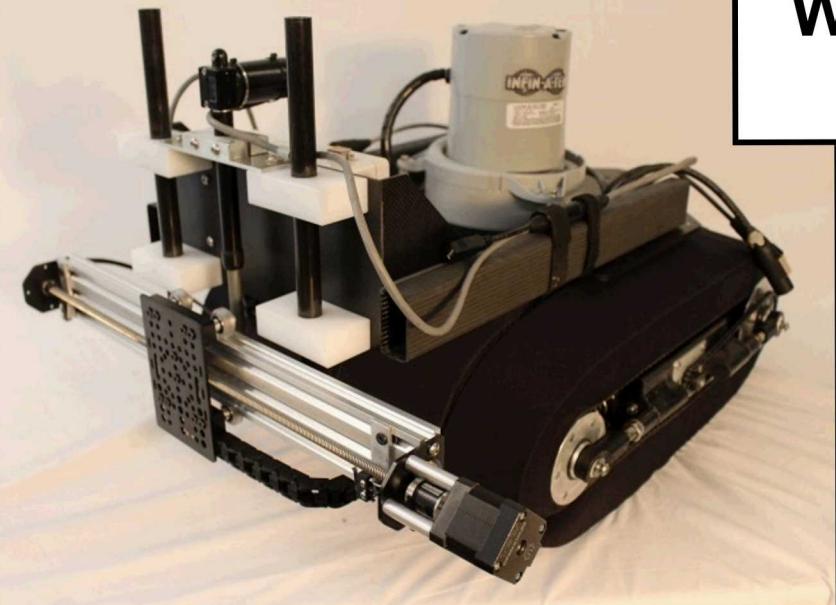


Wind Blade In-Service Inspection – Robot-Deployed NDI System

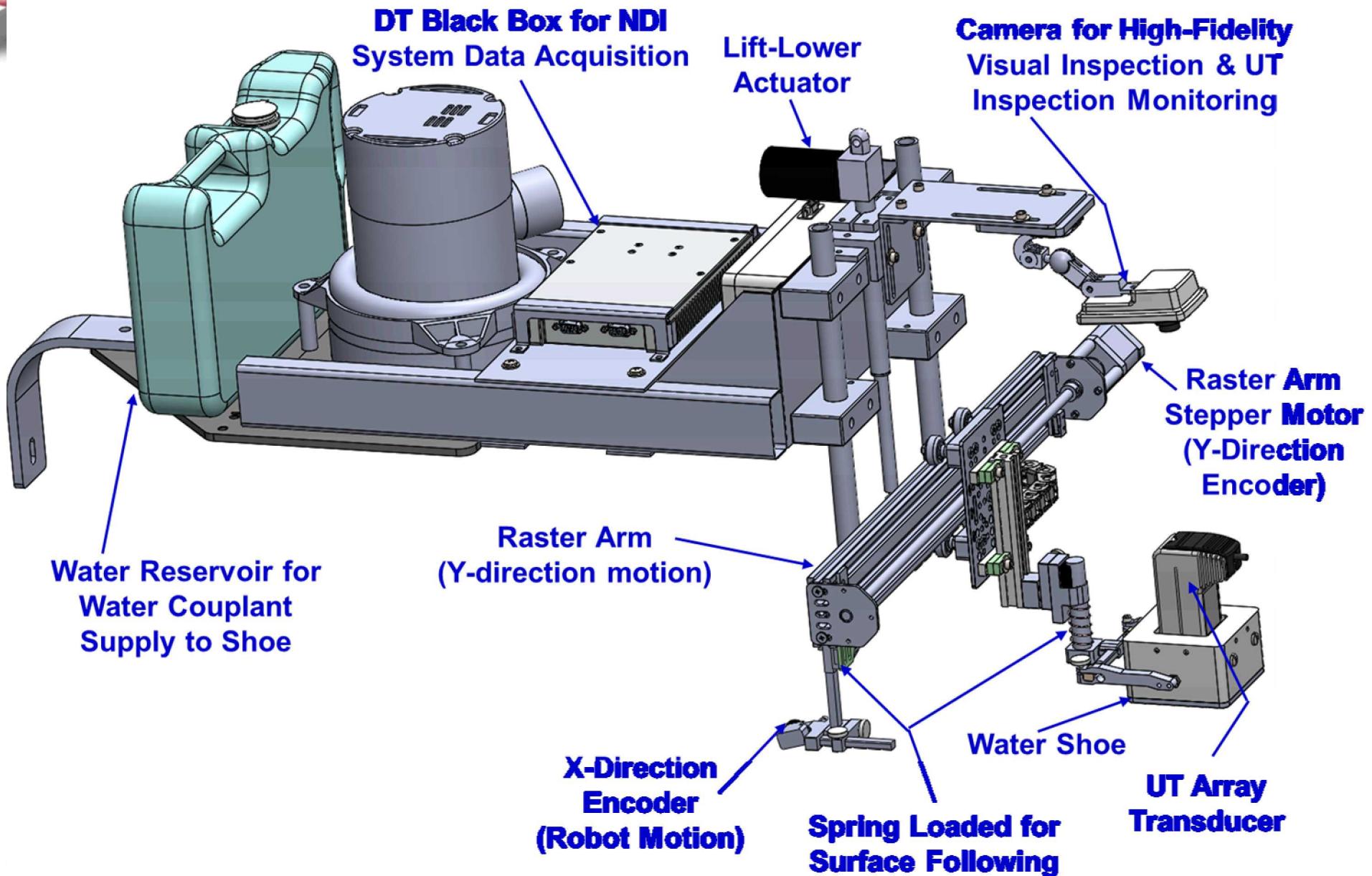


- **Goal:** produce a turnkey, automated, remotely-operated inspection system capable of detecting blade damage at all depths (full-penetration) that can rapidly inspect large regions on land-based and offshore wind blades.
- **Benefits:** System will provide cost-effective, routine, surface and subsurface inspections that previously had not been performed and thus, allow blades to reach their design life; accommodate more invasive repairs (post-repair inspection) which will avoid large replacement costs.
- **Background:** U.S. DoE *Wind Vision* roadmap identifies continuing declines in wind power costs and improved reliability will improve market competition with other electricity sources; increased availability (lower production costs) can be achieved by reducing unplanned maintenance through broader deployment of condition monitoring systems.
- **Motivation:** To minimize the risks of costly downtime and repair periods and ensure successful functioning of a wind farm, it is necessary to conduct in-service inspections. As the length of blades increase and operational environments produce high stress levels in the blades, it has become increasingly important to detect the onset of damage or the propagation of fabrication defects during blade operation. Detailed NDI is also necessary to firmly establish if repairs are needed and to assess the quality of the repair (post-repair inspections). Small defects can propagate to levels of concern during blade use while fatigue loading, bird/hail impact, lightning strike, erosion and other in-service conditions can lead to new damage in the blades.

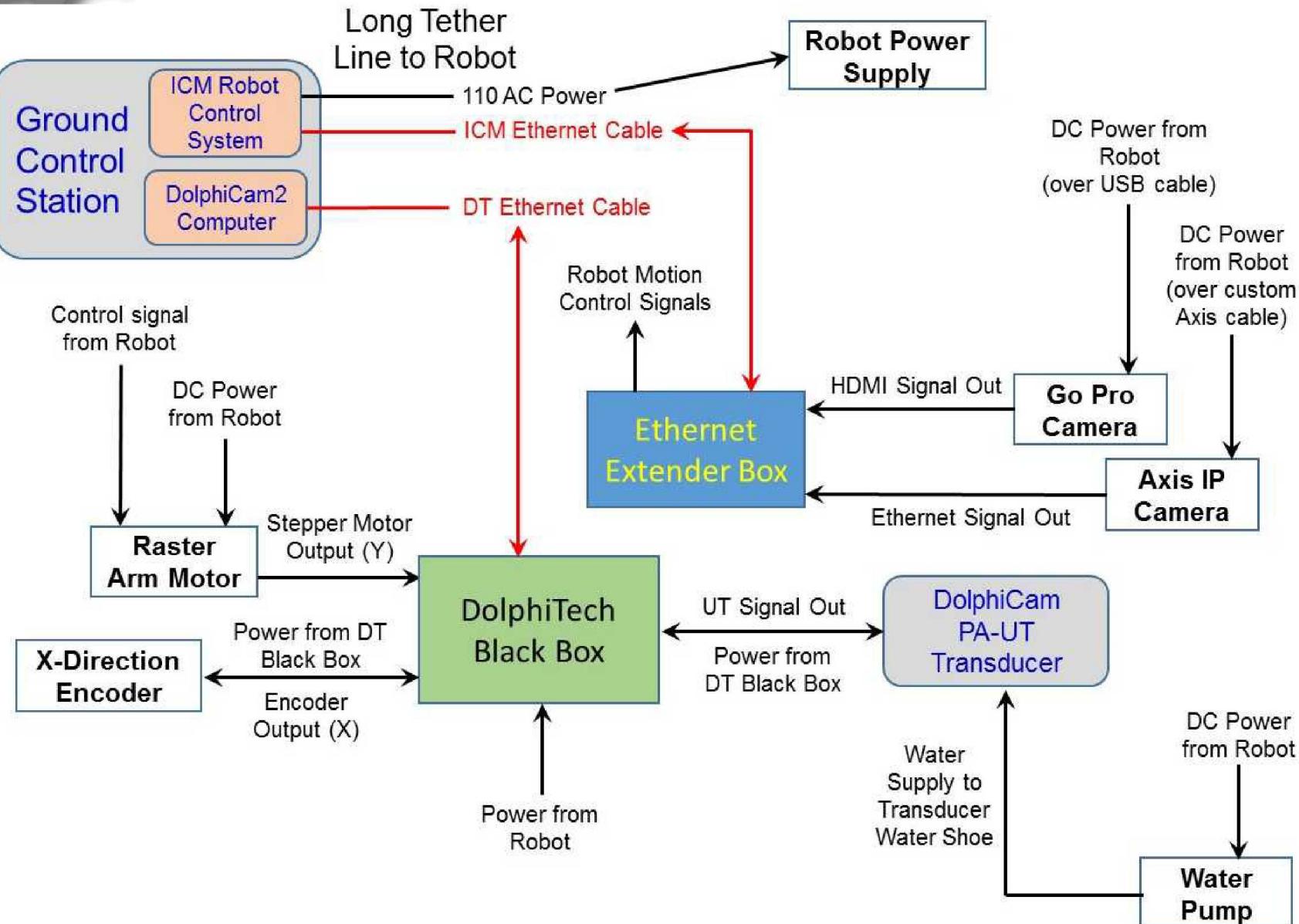
Wind Blade In-Service Inspection – Robot-Deployed NDI System



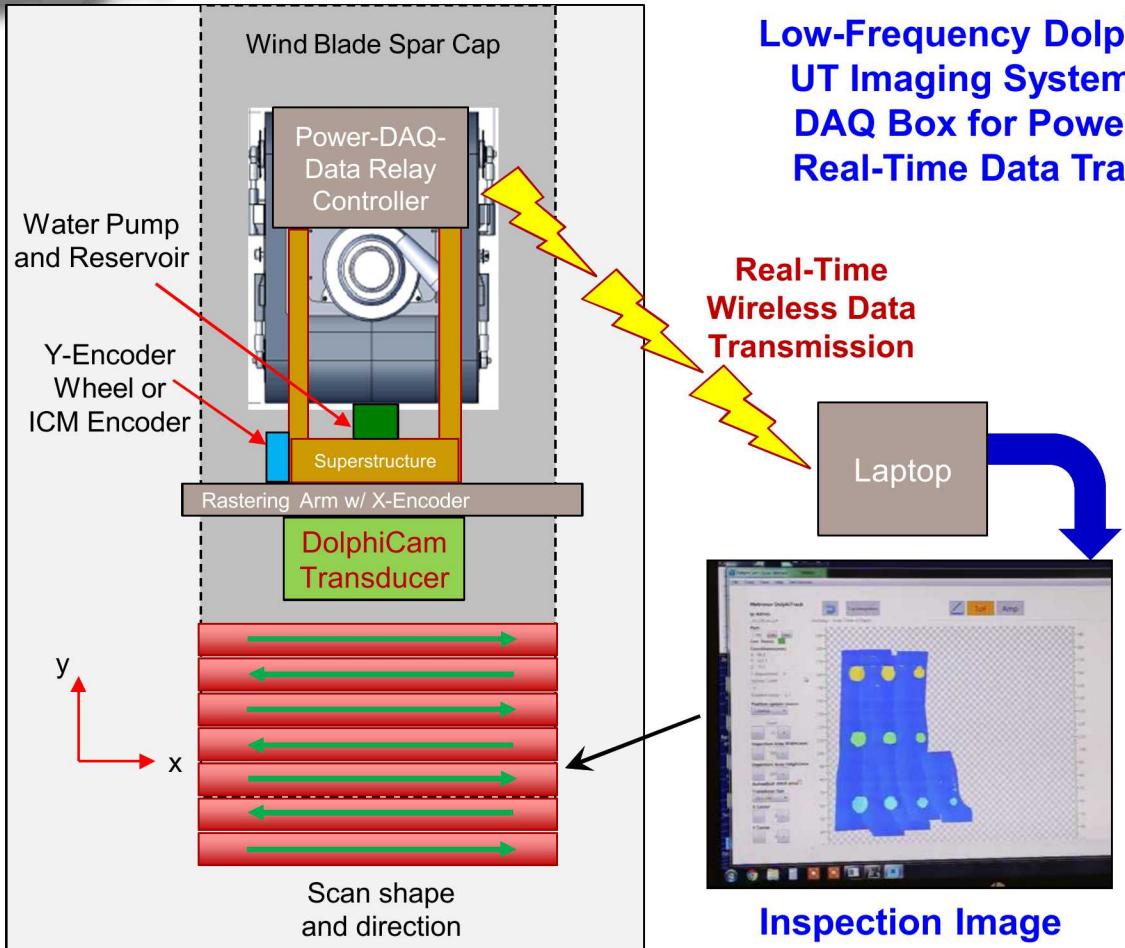
Component Integration on Robot Superstructure



Robot-Deployed NDI System – Schematic of Power, Controls and Data Transfer

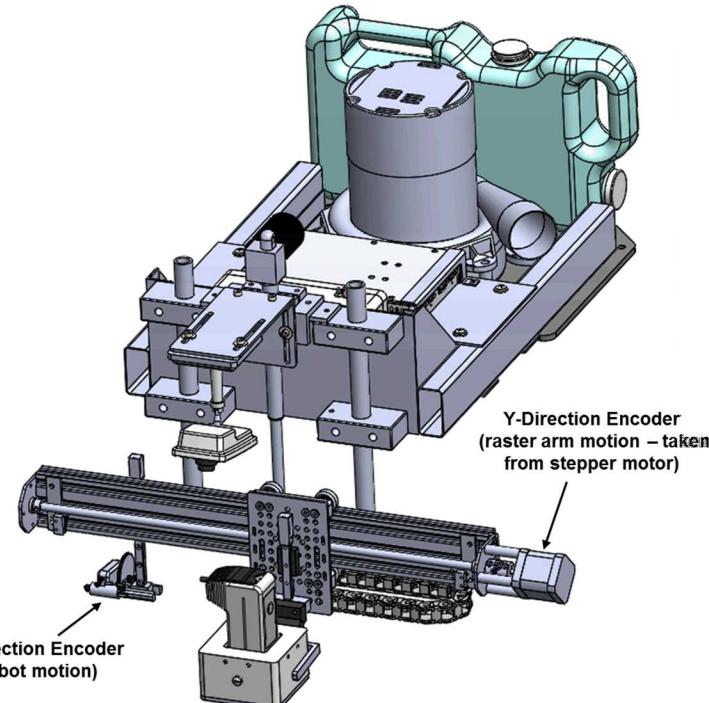


Wind Blade In-Service Inspection – Robot-Deployed NDI System



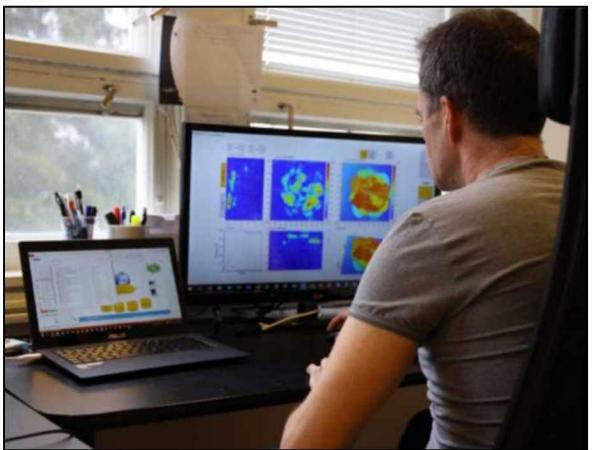
Low-Frequency Dolphi-Cam
UT Imaging System with
DAQ Box for Power and
Real-Time Data Transfer

Real-Time
Wireless Data
Transmission



Robot increments in small X step and then
rastering arm on robot moves DolphiCam
head in the Y-direction. Repeat this
process to produce a 2-D C-scan.

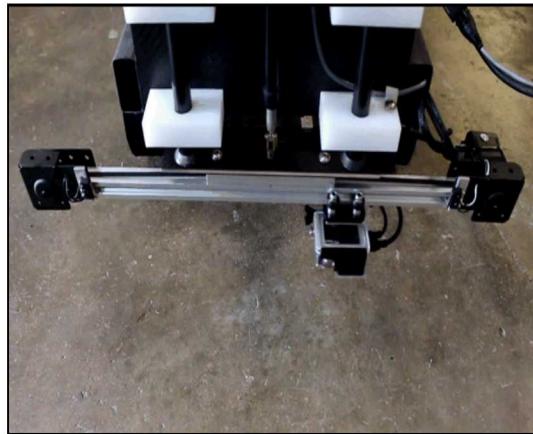
Wind Blade In-Service Inspection – Robot-Deployed NDI System



Ground Workstation – Data Acquisition & Analysis Plus Control of Robot



Robot Crawling on Vertical Surface



Raster Scan of Area

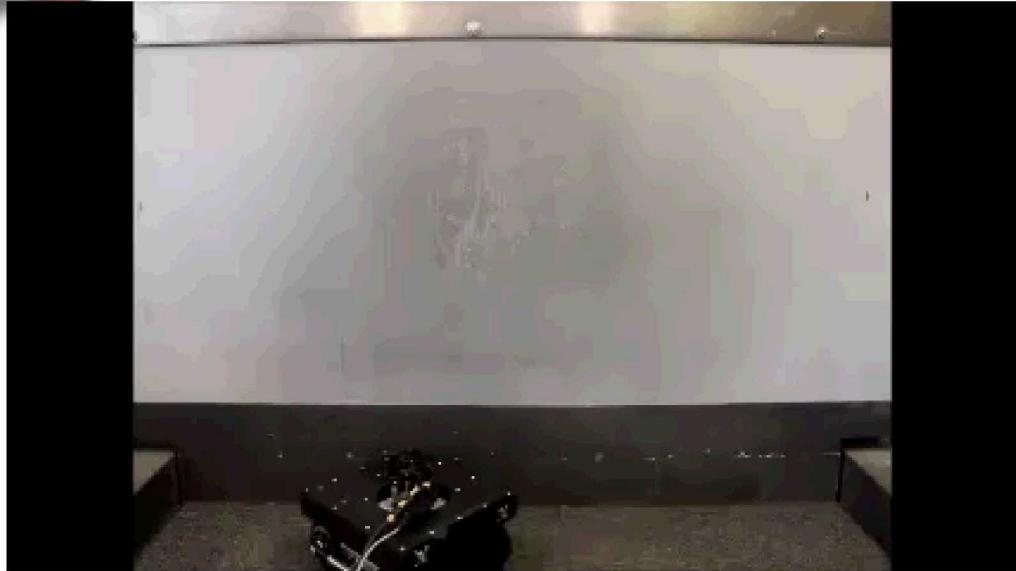


C-Scan Inspection Image

ON-GROUND

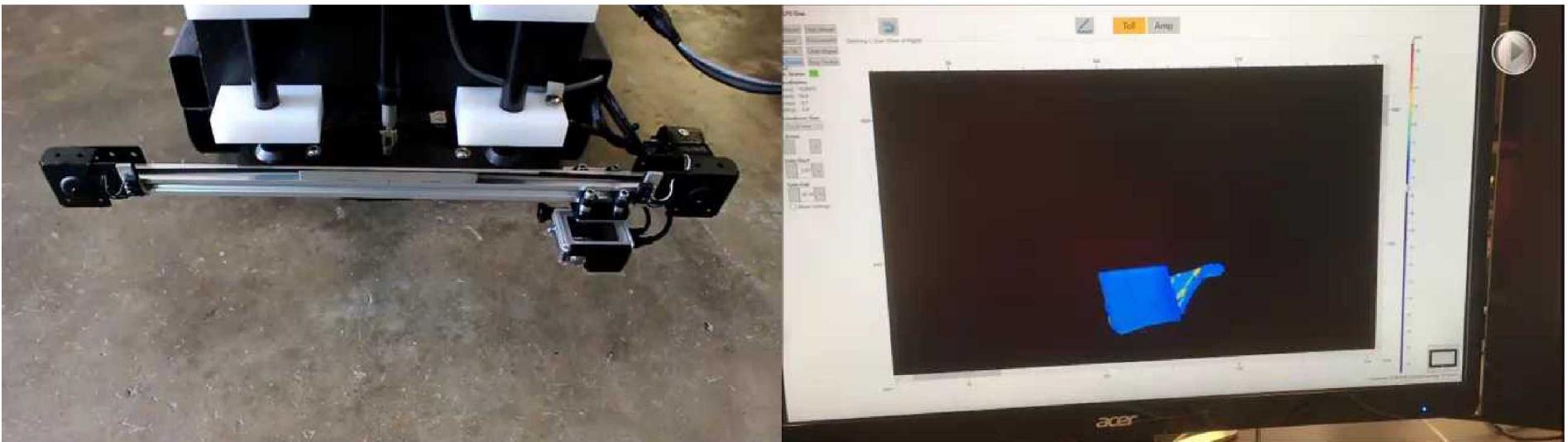
ON-BLADE

Wind Blade In-Service Inspection – Robot-Deployed NDI System



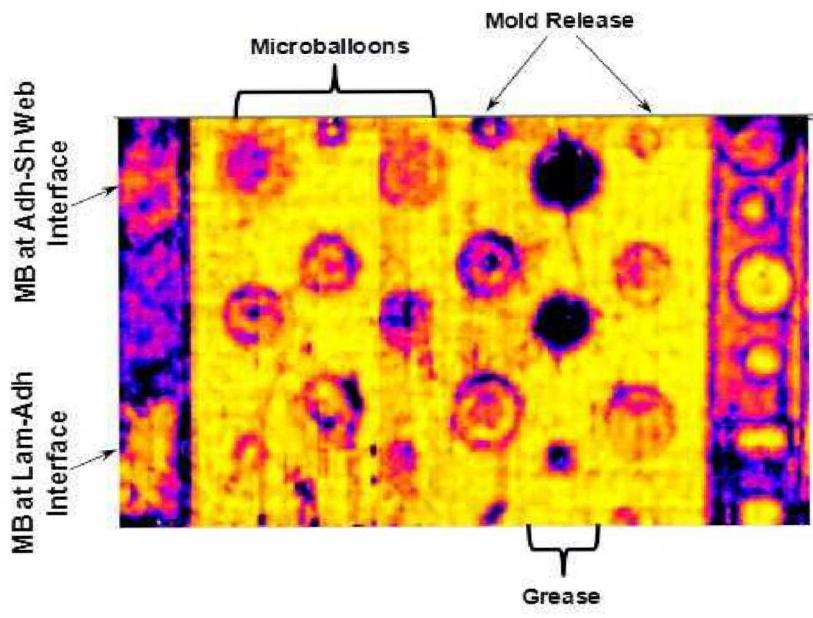
Robot Crawling on
Vertical Surface

Raster Scan of Area to Produce
C-Scan Inspection Image



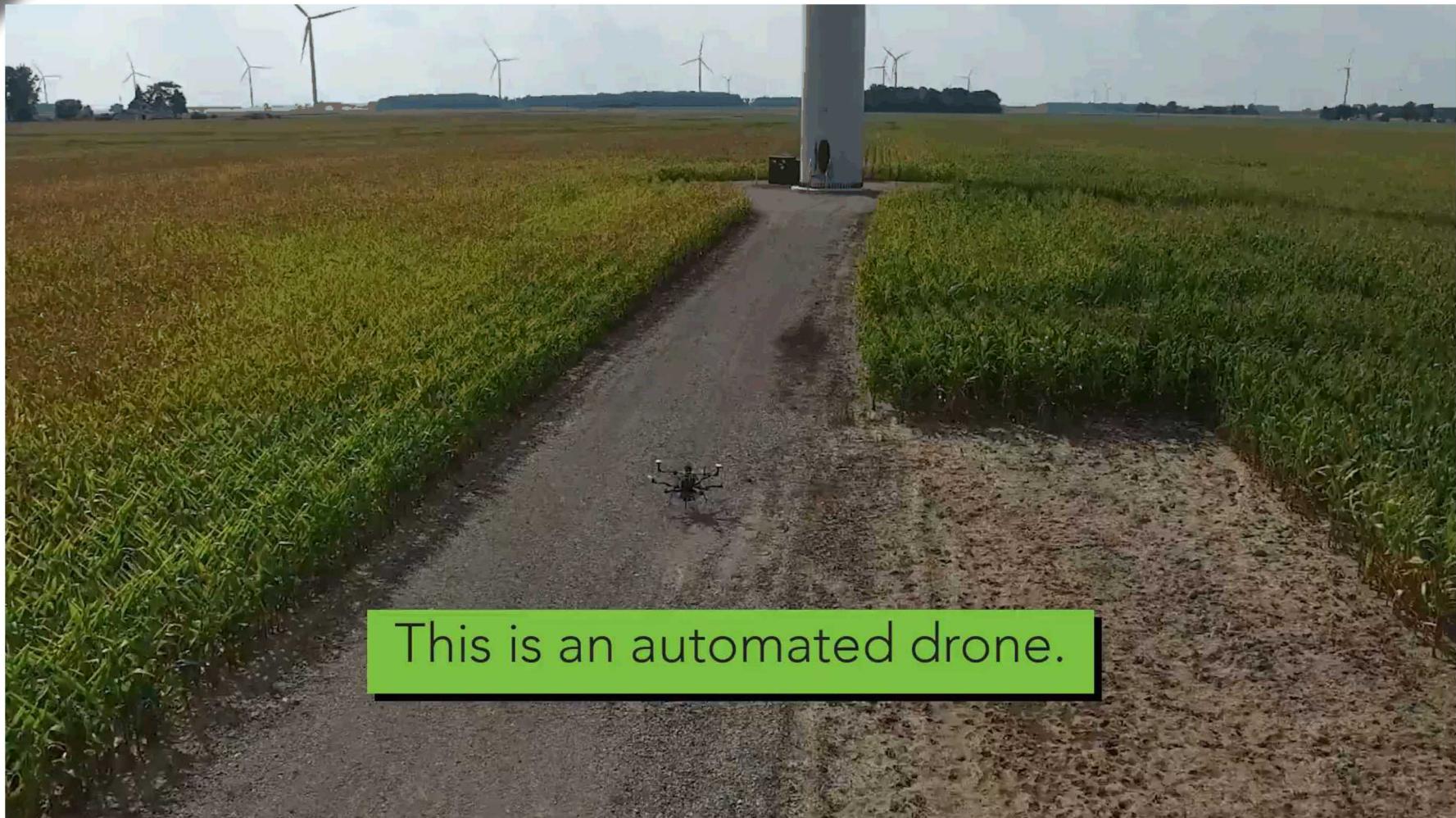


Robot-Deployed NDI System – Initial System Validation Testing





Wind Blade In-Service Inspection – Drone-Deployed NDI System



Wind Blade In-Service Inspection – Drone-Deployed NDI System

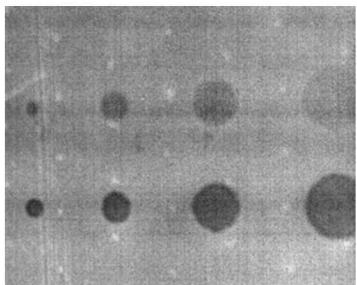
 SKYSPECS

Thermography Inspection of Subsurface Flaws



Flir IR Camera

(320 X 256 pixels)



LiDAR and GPS Sensors &
Computer for Automated
Drone Controls

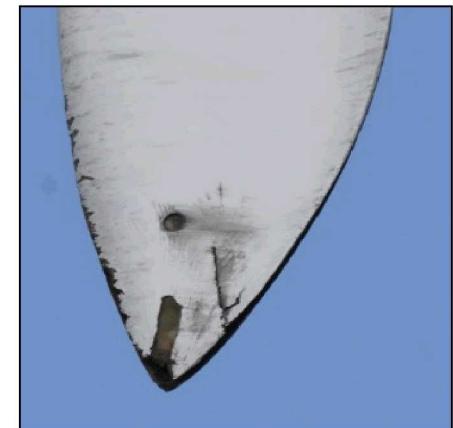


LiPo Batteries

Visual Inspection of Surface Flaws



Digital Camera



Wind Blade In-Service Inspection – Drone-Deployed NDI System

 SKYSPECS
Thermal Wave  Imaging

Solar Radiation Thermography

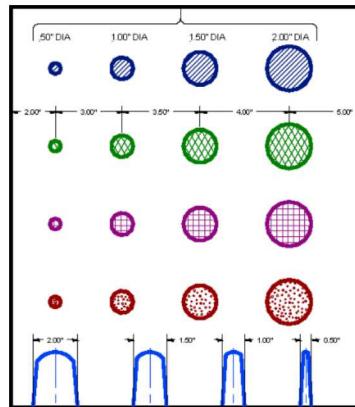


Cooling: Blades Facing Away from Sun

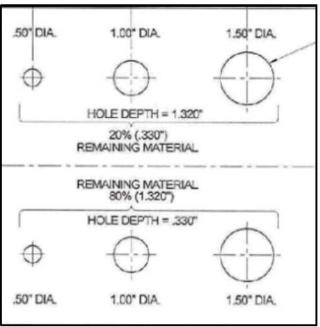


A photograph of a wind turbine blade facing away from the sun. Red arrows point away from the blade, indicating it is being cooled by the sun's rays.

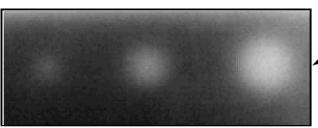
Foam Core with Fiberglass Skin



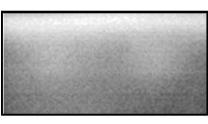
Thick Fiberglass Spar Cap



.330" Deep
Flaws Clearly
Visible

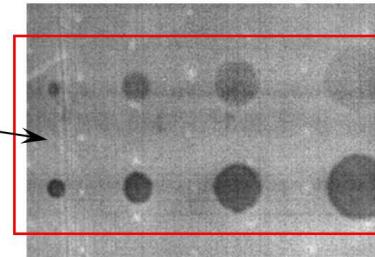


.660" Deep
Flaws Barely
Visible



Heating Duration: 120s

IR Images of Engineered Damage

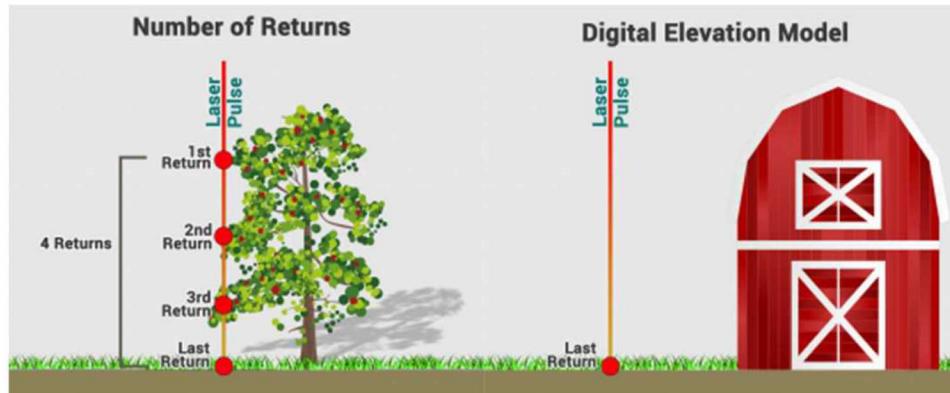


Heating Duration: 60s

Wind Blade In-Service Inspection – Drone-Deployed LiDAR Sensors



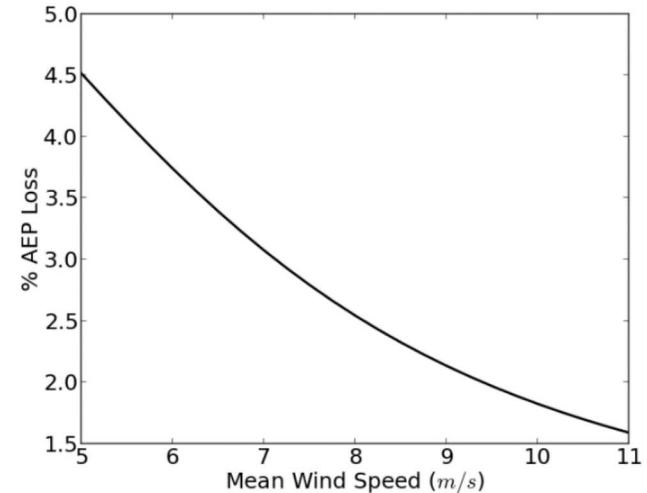
Leddar M16
LiDAR Sensor



Example of Multiple and Single LiDAR Returns
(<http://gisgeography.com/lidar-light-detection-and-ranging>)

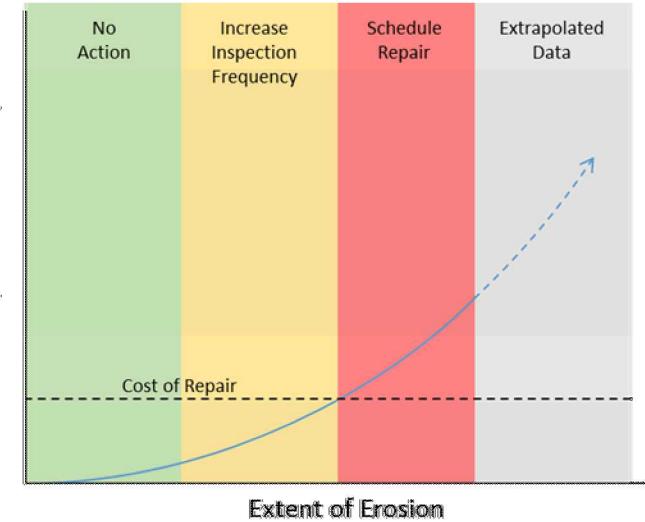


Erosion Example



Decrease in Annual Energy Production
vs. Mean Wind Speed

(Maniaci, D., "Leading Edge Erosion: Measurement and Modeling Campaigns," Sandia Report, SAND2016-8898, August 2016.)



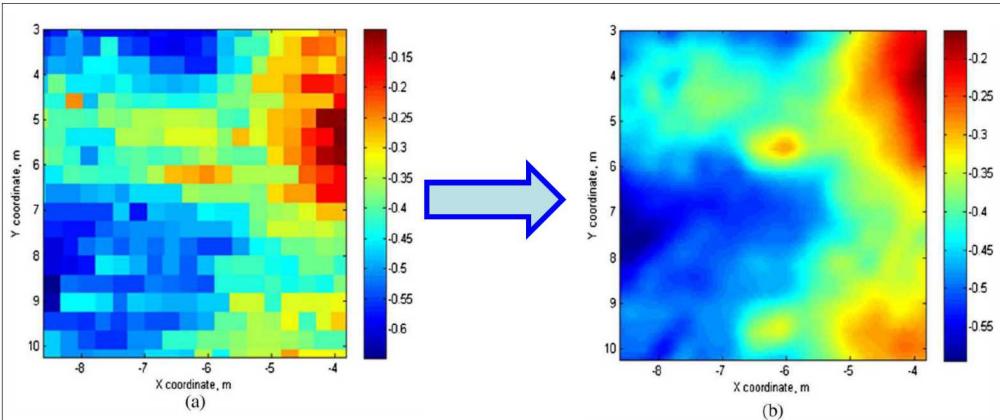
Notional Example of LiDAR-
Based Decision Making

Wind Blade In-Service Inspection – Drone-Deployed LiDAR and IR Camera Integration

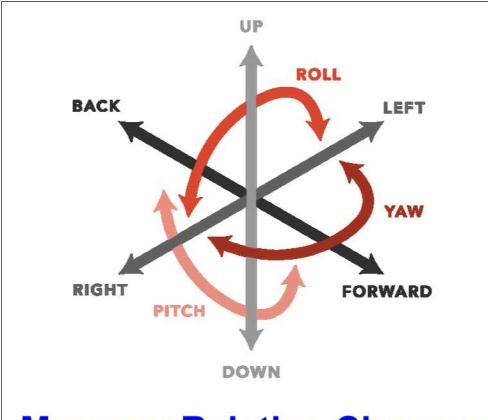


Use NASA's SuperResolution Algorithm to Process Data

Thermal Wave
Imaging

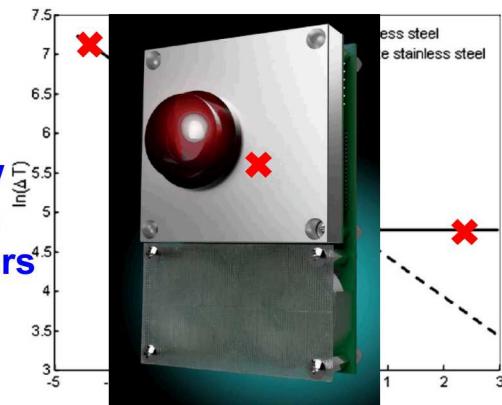


Increase LiDAR Resolution

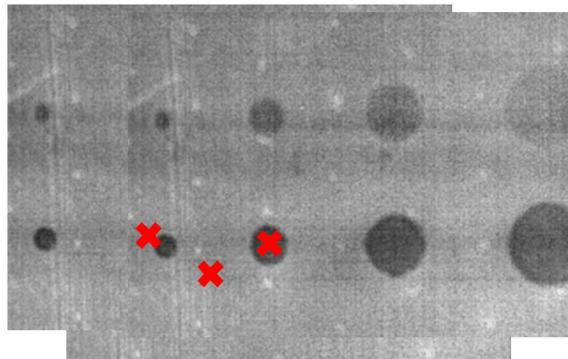


Measure Relative Changes
in 6 DOF state vector

Enables the drone to track
relative position and
orientation changes in order
to measure IR data at a
solid-state LiDAR sensors
of interest over time



Temperature vs. Time history is needed to
use Thermal Wave Imaging's TSR algorithm



Wind Blade In-Service Inspection – Automated Damage Classification



- The goal is to produce an automated Damage Assessment and Maintenance Plan with actionable recommendations for Owner/Operators

Establish Damage Severity Levels



High
LE erosion has penetrated into the blade structure exposing the underlying laminate of the leading edge.



Medium
LE erosion has removed the protective gelcoat and begun to penetrate into the bond and had exposed the underlying laminate of the leading edge.



Low
LE erosion has removed the protective gelcoat and begun to minimally penetrate into the bond.



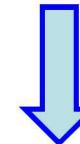
Minimal
LE erosion has begun and appears to be superficially limited to the outermost, superficial layers of protective gelcoat.



Minimal
The leading edge shows beginning signs of LE erosion and is limited to the outermost, superficial layers of protective gelcoat.



Use Image Augmentation Techniques to Increase the Size of the Training Set



Train and Validate Damage Classification Neural Network

Next Phase: Add NDI methods to develop a more advanced damage classification system

Challenge: Acquiring enough images of damage to create a strong training set

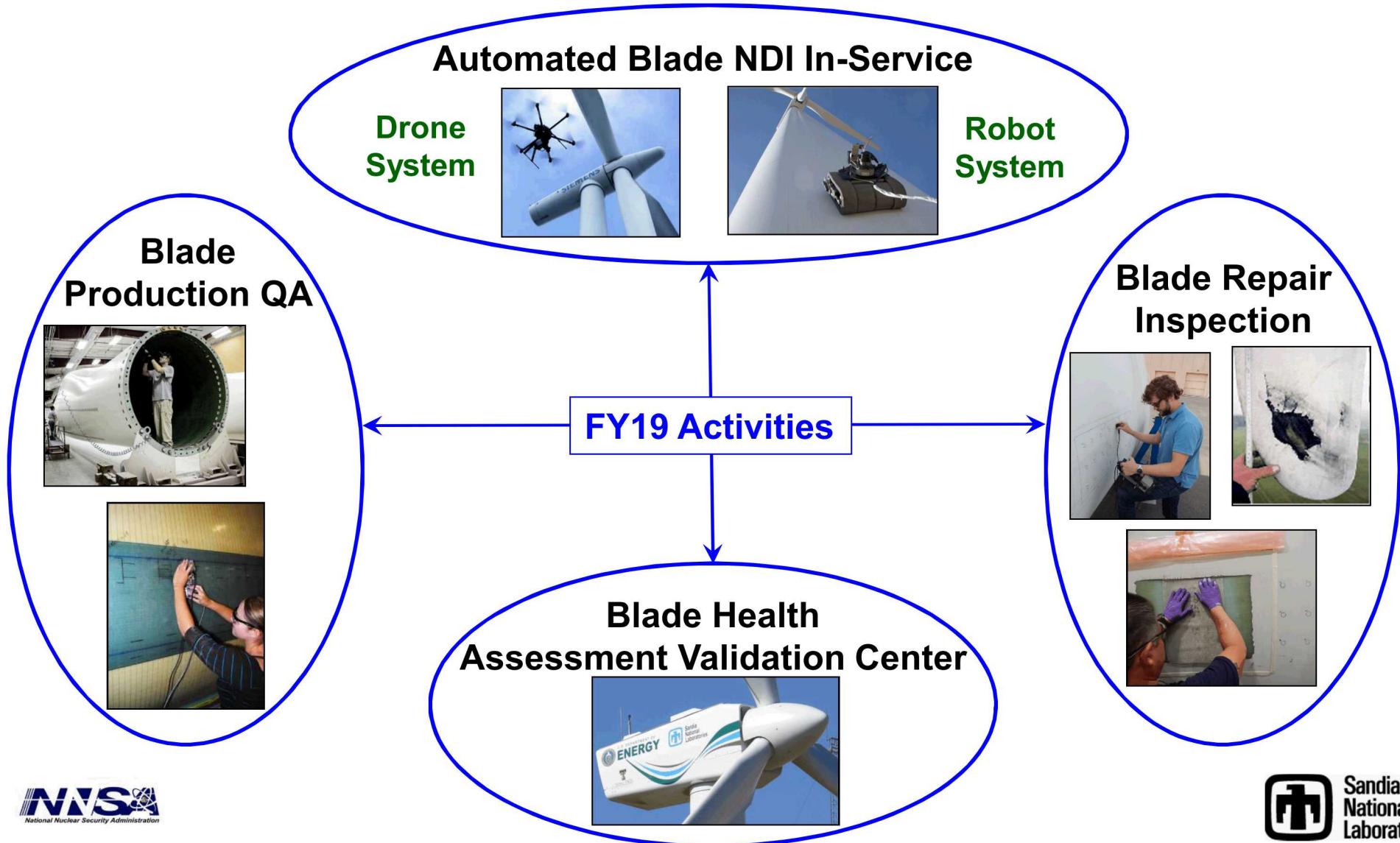


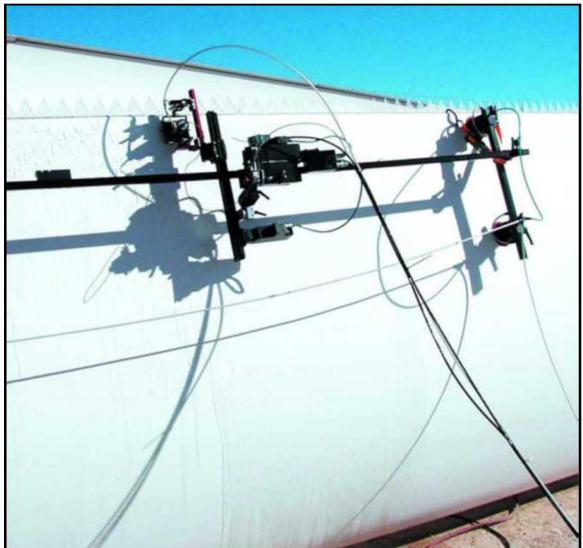
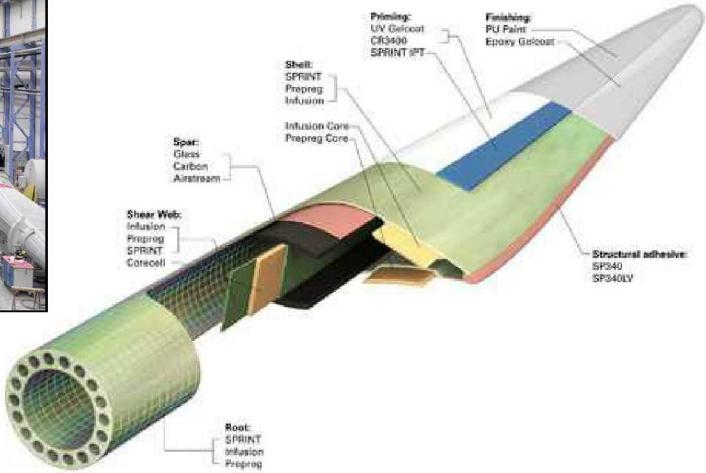
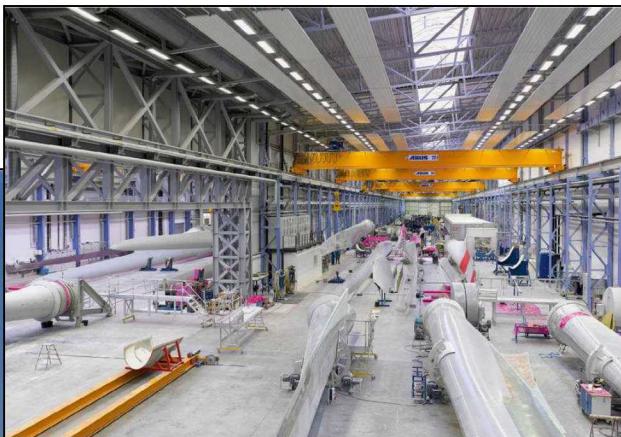
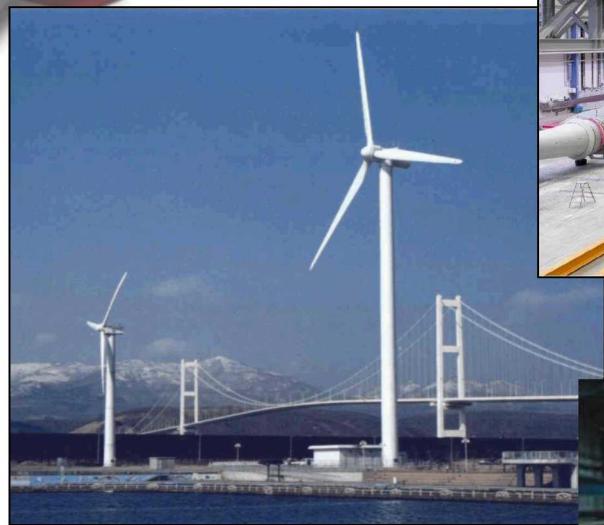
Wind Blade Flaw Detection Needs – Role of Inspection in Production and Operation

- **Need for accurate NDI** becomes more important as the cost per blade, and lost revenue from downtime, grows
- **Many Inspection Challenges** - very thick and attentive spar cap structures, porous bond lines, varying core material & different manuf./in-service defects
- **NDI Practices Vary Widely** – differing levels of rigor & methods used
- **In-Service Inspection Needs** - damage from transportation, installation, stress, erosion, impact, lightning strike, and fluid ingress
- **In-Service Inspection Considerations** - NDI fidelity beyond what can be provided by visual methods is required; time, cost, & sensitivity needs (minimize production, maintenance and operation costs)
- **Sandia Labs NDI Evolution** – WBFDE quantitatively assessed performance of NDI to allow for optimum deployment of more sophisticated inspection methods; there are sensitive & rapid NDI options available
- Results can produce **improvements** in both **quality assurance measures during blade production** and **damage detection during operation** in the field - improve sensitivity, accuracy, repeatability & speed of inspection coverage
- Detection of fabrication defects helps enhance plant reliability while improved inspection of operating blades can result in efficient blade maintenance - **increase blade life; facilitate repairs before critical damage levels are reached and minimize turbine downtime**

Wind Blade Inspection Program – Path Forward

Next set of NDI tasks seek to help wind blades reach their design life and efficiently provide the necessary life management tools to maximize wind farm operations.





Dennis Roach, Ray Ely
Sandia National Labs
(505)844-6078
dproach@sandia.gov
grely@sandia.gov



Wind Blade In-Service Inspection – Drone-Deployed NDI System



- Through Sandia's New Mexico Small Business Assistance (NMSBA) program, we partnered with Emerging Technology Ventures to develop a plan for integrating NDI sensors with aerodynamics modeling and machine learning
- The goal is to produce an automated Damage Assessment and Maintenance Plan with actionable recommendations for Owner/Operators

