

Permanent magnet synchronous generator

A **permanent magnet synchronous generator** is a generator where the excitation field is provided by a permanent magnet instead of a coil.

Synchronous generators are the majority source of commercial electrical energy. They are commonly used to convert the mechanical power output of steam turbines, gas turbines, reciprocating engines, hydro turbines and wind turbines into electrical power for the grid. They are known as synchronous generators because the speed of the rotor must always match the supply frequency.

In a permanent magnet generator, the magnetic field of the rotor is produced by permanent magnets. Other types of generator use electromagnets to produce a magnetic field in a rotor winding. The direct current in the rotor field winding is fed through a slip-ring assembly or provided by a brushless exciter on the same shaft.

Permanent magnet generators do not require a DC supply for the excitation circuit, nor do they have slip rings and contact brushes. However, large permanent magnets are costly which restricts the economic rating of the machine. The flux density of high performance permanent magnets is limited. The air gap flux is not controllable, so the voltage of the machine cannot be easily regulated. A persistent magnetic field imposes safety issues during assembly, field service or repair. High performance permanent magnets, themselves, have structural and thermal issues. Torque current MMF vectorially combines with the persistent flux of permanent magnets, which leads to higher air-gap flux density and eventually, core saturation.