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Effect of ClO₂ sterilization on chemical and functional properties of elastomeric closures

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1. Abstract

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Next to sterilization with steam, ionizing radiation and ethylene oxide, ClO₂ can also be used to sterilize elastomeric closures. To verify whether this is a viable option, the effect of ClO₂ exposure on the chemical and functional properties of different Datwyler 20mm stoppers was investigated. Stoppers in FM30, FM457 and FM457 with Omniflex 3G coating were exposed to the nominal, 5-fold and 20-fold ClO₂ dosage for sterilization and subsequently tested according to the chemical and functional tests as described in the United States Pharmacopoeia <381>.

In general, it is found that sterilization with ClO₂ can be competitive with the classical sterilization techniques. Stoppers in FM30 were somewhat affected by the sterilization procedure, but this is also the case with the classic EtO sterilization. In fact, the stoppers were performing slightly better after nominal ClO₂ exposure than after sterilization with EtO. Both uncoated and Omniflex 3G coated stoppers in FM457 showed no considerable change in properties after exposure to ClO₂, even when a 20-fold overexposure was used.

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3. Introduction

The sterilization of elastomeric closures can be accomplished using several widely accepted methods including steam, ionizing radiation, and ethylene oxide to name a few. All of these methods have risks and benefits associated with them. The biggest risk of the first two methods, especially of ionizing radiation, is damage done to the physical properties of the elastomer causing functional aberrations such as excessive coring and fragmentation, lack of proper reseal and changes to the extractable profile of the elastomer. Ethylene oxide, while more benign to the physical and chemical properties of the elastomer, is a priority pollutant, a known carcinogen, presents flammability risk, and is difficult to remove from some elastomers with high barrier properties like butyl rubber. New and safer methods are always in demand and chlorine dioxide shows promise in this regard.

In order to understand the functional and chemical effects of prolonged exposure to chlorine dioxide, ClorDiSys has sterilized some of our closures via nominal exposure, 5-fold overexposure and 20-fold overexposure. The selected closures are 20 mm stoppers in FM30, uncoated FM457, and Omniflex 3G (O3G) coated FM457. All samples passed the sterility test using biological indicators performed at ClorDiSys. These stoppers are now tested according to the United States Pharmacopoeia <381> to illuminate the effect of chlorine dioxide on elastomeric closures for injection. Both chemical and functional testing is performed to get a complete overview. This work will pave the way to further studies of penetration of the gas into the elastomer to effectively sterilize beneath the surface of the elastomer in order to understand the effectivity of the gas to replace traditional ethylene oxide sterilization of medical devices.

4. Conclusion

The effect of ClO₂ sterilization on FM30, FM457 and FM457 O3G stoppers was investigated. In general, it is found that sterilization with ClO₂ can be competitive with the classical sterilization techniques. The stoppers perform equally well or even slightly better after being subjected to ClO₂ compared to gamma radiation or EtO.

Because of the unsaturated backbone of the styrene-butadiene copolymer in FM30, this compound is quite susceptible to being affected by sterilization. It is indeed observed that its performance in the chemical tests after high dosage ClO₂ sterilization is deteriorating more than what is observed for FM457. However, FM30 is also significantly affected after sterilization with EtO, the typical sterilization technique that is used for this compound. In fact, FM30 still complies with USP <381> after exposure to the nominal dosage of 720 ppm-hrs ClO₂, while it no longer meets these requirements after EtO exposure. Although more data is required for statistical analyses, it does indicate that ClO₂ sterilization is a viable option that could outperform EtO sterilization.

FM457 is generally less affected by sterilization, because the saturated backbone of the elastomer is less prone to react. This observation is confirmed for both sterilization with ClO₂ and gamma radiation. In the tests described in USP <381>, almost no effect on the performance is observed for these two techniques, even when a 20-fold overexposure is used.

5. Materials and Methods

An overview of the stoppers under evaluation is given in Table 1. FM30 is a styrene-butadiene compound, while FM457 is a bromobutyl compound. FM457 Omniflex 3G consists of the same bromobutyl rubber and is covered with a fluorinated polymer coating.

Material	Design	Chlorine dioxide exposure (ppm-hrs)			
		0 (ref)	720 (nominal)	3600 (5x)	14400 (20x)
FM30	V9048	X	X		X
FM457	HPP001	X	X	X	X
FM457 O3G	V9407	X	X	X	X

Table 1: Overview of the stoppers under evaluation

The chemical and functional properties of the selected stoppers will be tested according to the United States Pharmacopoeia <381>.

6. Results

6.1 Functional testing

An overview of the results of the functional tests is given in Table 2. There is no clear effect of ClO₂ sterilization on the functional properties of any of the compounds, even when a 20-fold overexposure is used. Although a minor increase in the amounts of fragments and piercing force is observed for FM30, the difference is too small to be able to assign this as an effect of the sterilization process.

Material	ClO ₂ exposure (ppm-hrs)	# fragments /48 piercings <i>≤5 visible fragments*</i>	# leaking /10 vials <i>No leaks*</i>	Piercing force (N) <i>≤10 N*</i>
FM30	0	1	0	3.2
	720	3	0	3.3
	14400	3	0	3.7
FM457	0	0	0	3.6
	720	1	0	3.4
	3600	2	0	3.4
	14400	1	0	3.6
FM457 O3G	0	2	0	3.0
	720	3	0	3.1
	3600	1	0	3.2
	14400	1	0	3.1

Table 2: results of the functional tests according to USP <381>. *USP <381> Limits

6.2 Chemical testing

The results of the chemical tests can be found in Table 3 (FM30), Table 4 (FM457) and Table 5 (FM457 O3G). For FM457, both coated and uncoated, the exposure to ClO₂ has very little effect on the results. On the other hand, there are some noticeable changes in the data obtained for FM30 before and after exposure. This difference between the two compounds can be linked to the elastomer: while FM457 contains a halobutyl polymer with a saturated aliphatic backbone, the styrene-butadiene copolymer of FM30 has a significant amount of double bonds in the backbone. As a consequence, the latter is more susceptible to reaction with ClO₂.

The chemical testing of the USP <381> is used to compare the effect of ClO₂ with other classic sterilization techniques. For FM30, which is typically used for needle shields and tip caps, it is most relevant to make the comparison with EtO. On the other hand, the results of the chemical tests for FM457, both with and without coating, will be compared to ionizing radiation. Please bear in mind that 720 ppm-hrs is the standard dosage, so the comparison should be made with this sample.

As mentioned, the double bonds in the backbone of the elastomer of FM30 make this compound more susceptible to unwanted reactions during sterilization. The results in Table 3 show that this is the case for sterilization with both ClO₂ and EtO. In both cases, there is an increase for the absorbance, reducing substances and extractable zinc. However, when comparing EtO sterilization with ClO₂ sterilization using the nominal dosage of 720 ppm-hrs, it can be seen that the absorbance and reducing substances are increased to a lesser extent with ClO₂, thereby remaining (further) below the limit set by USP <381>. Furthermore, a strong decrease in turbidity is observed after ClO₂ sterilization, in contrast to the increase in turbidity after sterilization with EtO.

FM30	ClO ₂ (ppm-hrs) /EtO	Turb. ≤ 6*	Color	Alkal. ≤0.3*	Abs. ≤0.2*	Red. Subst. ≤3.0*	Heavy metals ≤2*	Zn ≤5.0*	Amm ≤2*	Res. Evap. ≤2.0*	Vol. Sulph.
ClO ₂	0	2.76	Pass	0.07	0.06	0.58	<2	0.42	<2	0.50	<0.02
	720	0.23	Pass	0.07	0.10	0.99	<2	1.68	<2	0.00	<0.02
	14400	0.04	Pass	0.32	0.34	3.35	<2	1.57	<2	1.00	<0.02
EtO	before	2.70	Pass	0.03	0.04	0.63	<2	0.39	<2	0.00	<0.02
	after	5.20	Pass	0.03	0.29	2.86	<2	0.53	<2	0.00	<0.02

Table 3: FM30 results of the chemical tests according to USP <381> (Turb = Turbidity (NTU); Alkal = Alkalinity (ml 0.01M NaOH); Abs = UV absorbance (max 220-360 nm); Red. Subst. = Reducing Substances (ml 0.01M Na₂S₂O₈); Heavy Metals (< 2ppm Pb²⁺); Zn = extractable zinc (ppm); Amm = Ammonium (<2ppm NH₄⁺); Res. Evap = Residue on Evaporation (mg); Vol. Sulph. = Volatile sulphides. *USP <381> Type I Limits

For FM457 and FM457 O3G, both sterilization with ClO₂ and with gamma radiation have very little effect on the results of the chemical tests of USP <381>.

FM457	ClO ₂ (ppm-hrs) / γ (kGy)	Turb. ≤ 6*	Color	Alkal. ≤0.3*	Abs. ≤0.2*	Red. Subst. ≤3.0*	Heavy metals ≤2*	Zn ≤5.0*	Amm ≤2*	Res. Evap. ≤2.0*	Vol. Sulph.
ClO ₂	0	0.03	Pass	0.07	0.01	0.07	<2	0.02	<2	0.60	<0.02
	720	0.02	Pass	0.07	0.01	0.18	<2	0.02	<2	0.80	<0.02
	3600	0.01	Pass	0.07	0.03	0.20	<2	0.03	<2	0.20	<0.02
	14400	0.01	Pass	0.06	0.03	0.19	<2	0.03	<2	0.00	<0.02
γ-rad.	0	0.02	Pass	0.06	0.01	0.04	<2	0.01	<2	0.31	<0.02
	25	0.02	Pass	0.06	0.01	0.03	<2	0.01	<2	0.38	<0.02
	40	0.02	Pass	0.06	0.01	0.04	<2	0.01	<2	0.51	<0.02

Table 4: FM457 results of the chemical tests according to USP <381> (Turb = Turbidity (NTU); Alkal = Alkalinity (ml 0.01M NaOH); Abs = UV absorbance (max 220-360 nm); Red. Subst. = Reducing Substances (ml 0.01M Na₂S₂O₈); Heavy Metals (< 2ppm Pb²⁺); Zn = extractable zinc (ppm); Amm = Ammonium (<2ppm NH₄⁺); Res. Evap = Residue on Evaporation (mg); Vol. Sulph. = Volatile sulphides. *USP <381> Type I Limits

FM457 O3G	ClO ₂ (ppm-hrs) / γ (kGy)	Turb. ≤ 6*	Color	Alkal. ≤0.3*	Abs. ≤0.2*	Red. Subst. ≤3.0*	Heavy metals ≤2*	Zn ≤5.0*	Amm ≤2*	Res. Evap. ≤2.0*	Vol. Sulph.
FM457 O3G	0	0.02	Pass	0.07	0.02	0.06	<2	0.01	<2	0.00	<0.02
	720	0.02	Pass	0.07	0.01	0.18	<2	0.01	<2	0.80	<0.02
	3600	0.01	Pass	0.07	0.02	0.02	<2	0.01	<2	0.00	<0.02
	14400	0.01	Pass	0.06	0.02	0.20	<2	0.00	<2	0.00	<0.02
γ-rad.	0	0.12	Pass	0.07	0.01	0.04	<2	0.01	<2	0.00	<0.02
	25	0.09	Pass	0.10	0.01	0.07	<2	0.01	<2	0.00	<0.02
	40	0.09	Pass	0.10	0.01	0.03	<2	0.01	<2	0.13	<0.02

Table 5: FM457 Omniflex 3G results of the chemical tests according to USP <381> (Turb = Turbidity (NTU); Alkal = Alkalinity (ml 0.01M NaOH); Abs = UV absorbance (max 220-360 nm); Red. Subst. = Reducing Substances (ml 0.01M Na₂S₂O₈); Heavy Metals (< 2ppm Pb²⁺); Zn = extractable zinc (ppm); Amm = Ammonium (<2ppm NH₄⁺); Res. Evap = Residue on Evaporation (mg); Vol. Sulph. = Volatile sulphides. *USP <381> Type I Limits

7. References

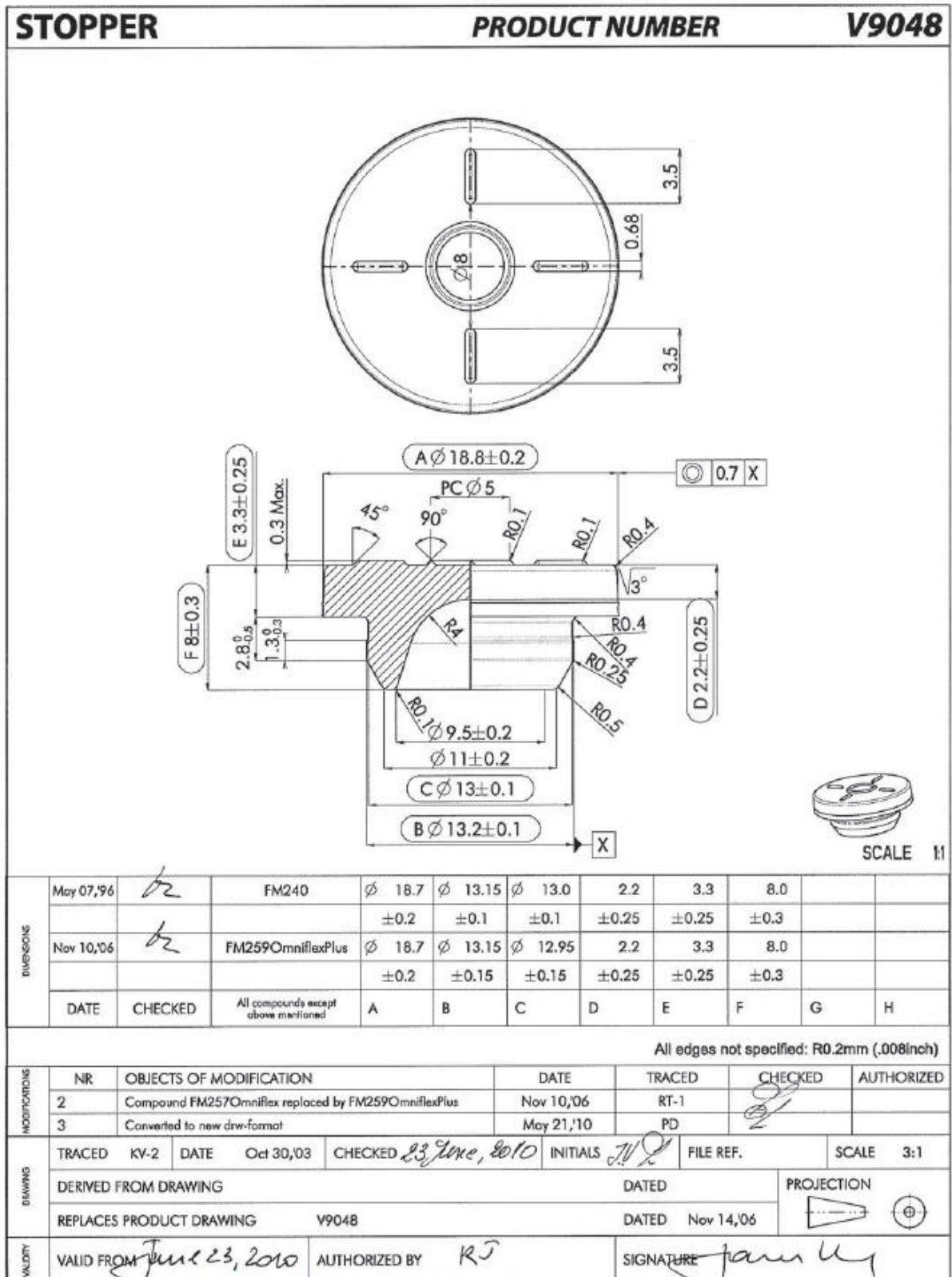
R&D and Technology Project number: BSC2504

8. History

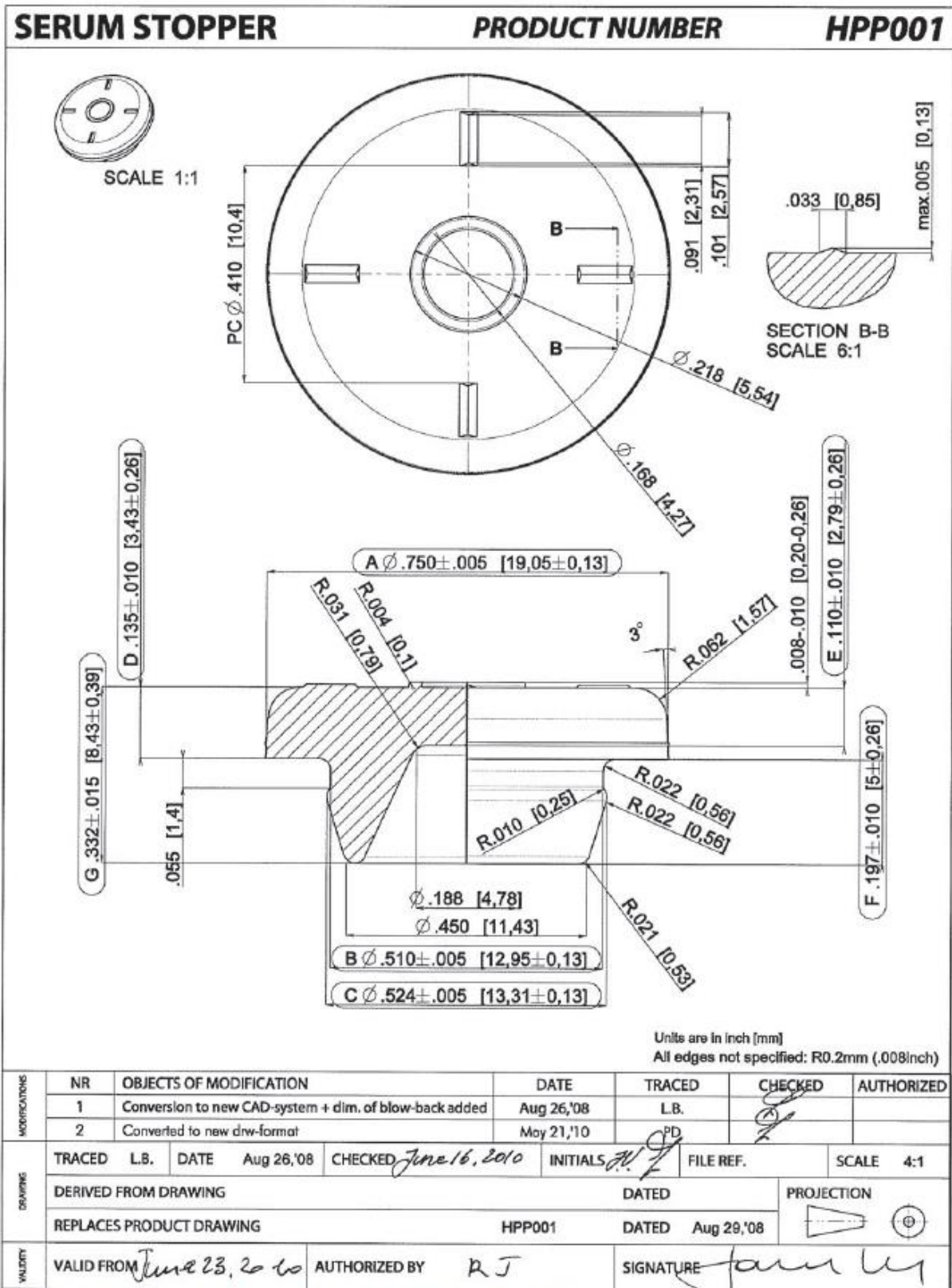
Edition - (Approval date): Comments
1.0 - (10/2/2018) :
2.0 - (10/15/2018) : Addition of USP <381> Type I limits
3.0 - (11/26/2018) : Data on the effects of EtO and gamma radiation was added for comparison
4.0 - (11/28/2018) : Source referencing problem fixed

9. Appendices/Attachments

9.1 Appendix 1 : V9048

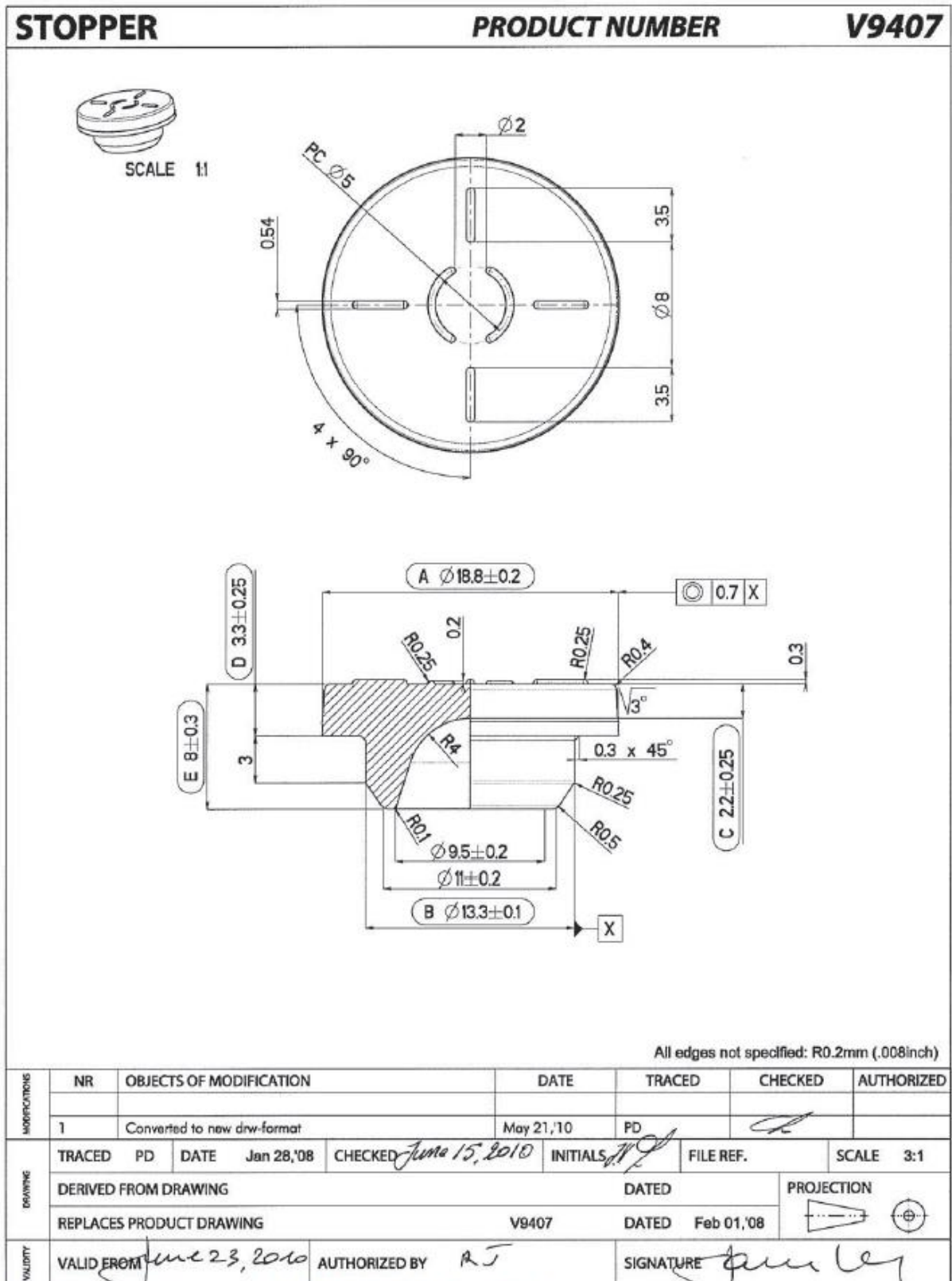


9.2 Appendix 2 : HPP001



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9.3 Appendix 3: V9407



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