

Reliability of wind turbine subassemblies

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We have investigated the reliability of more than 6000 modern onshore wind turbines and their subassemblies in Germany over 11 years and particularly changes in reliability of generators, gearboxes and converters in a sub-region of Schleswig Holstein, Germany. We first start by considering the average failure rate of turbine populations and then the failure rates of wind turbine subassemblies. This analysis yields some surprising results about which subassemblies are unreliable. Then we proceed to consider the failure intensity function variation with time for wind turbines in onshore populations, using the Power Law Process, of three subassemblies; generator, gearbox and converter. This analysis shows that turbine gearboxes seem to be achieving reliabilities similar to gearboxes outside the wind industry. However, wind turbine generators and converters are both achieving reliabilities considerably below that of other industries but the reliability of subassemblies improves with time. The paper also considers different wind turbine concepts. Then we conclude that offshore wind turbines should be subject to more rigorous reliability improvement measures, such as more thorough testing, to eliminate early failures. The early focus should be on converters and generators.



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