



# Precision Electric Boost-Phase Rotary Phase Converters

Precision Electric's **Boost-Phase Rotary Phase Converters** are a line of digital rotary phase converters designed to generate true three-phase power from a single-phase source. These converters stand out by providing a massive **600% motor starting current boost**, using advanced solid-state controls to tackle the hardest-to-start motors <sup>1</sup>. They combine the proven reliability of rotary phase conversion with modern digital enhancements, ensuring heavy-duty equipment can start and run smoothly on single-phase supply. In this article, we delve into how Boost-Phase converters work, their technical specifications, and the benefits they offer for industrial and commercial power needs.

## How Rotary Phase Conversion Works

Rotary phase converters are electro-mechanical devices that bridge the gap between single-phase and three-phase power. At their core is an **idler motor** (sometimes called a generator motor) that spins freely to create a rotating magnetic field. When single-phase AC is applied, the idler generates a balanced three-phase output by producing a third line of voltage that, together with the two single-phase lines, mimics utility three-phase power <sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup>. This means businesses in locations with only single-phase utility service – common in rural areas or older facilities – can still operate three-phase machinery without expensive infrastructure upgrades <sup>4</sup>. In fact, rotary converters often provide **cost-effective three-phase power** anywhere it's needed, allowing shops to run heavy equipment (CNC machines, lathes, mills, pumps, etc.) on existing single-phase lines <sup>4</sup> <sup>5</sup>.

One key advantage of rotary converters is their natural ability to handle **varied loads**. The heavy spinning mass of the idler motor acts as a stabilizing flywheel, smoothing out voltage fluctuations as large machines turn on or off <sup>6</sup>. This gives a more consistent voltage output under changing loads, preventing the dips or surges that could otherwise trip sensitive equipment. Moreover, because the output is a true sine wave generated by an induction motor, the **power quality is very high** – often within about  $\pm 5\text{--}10\%$  voltage balance between phases <sup>7</sup>. (In fact, one industry source notes rotary converters can be “*more precise than utility-supplied three phase power*,” especially in higher-end designs <sup>8</sup>.) By contrast, simpler static phase converters or DIY capacitor setups only supply a phantom phase during motor starting and then let the motor run single-phased, leading to unbalanced voltages and roughly **2/3 of the motor's rated power output** in operation <sup>9</sup>. Such unbalanced single-phasing is hard on motors and can shorten their lifespan <sup>10</sup>. This is why applications that require full torque and continuous duty at rated power (or any sensitive electronics) **require a rotary or digital phase converter** for effective operation <sup>11</sup>.

## Digital Boost Technology for Hard-Starting Motors

The **Boost-Phase** series distinguishes itself with its **Smart Boost** digital controller, which delivers up to **600% extra starting current** to downstream motors <sup>1</sup>. This high surge current is crucial because standard three-phase motors can draw **6–8 times their full-load current on startup** when started across-the-line <sup>12</sup>. For example, a NEMA Design B induction motor might pull **600–800% of its rated amperage**



the instant it starts turning <sup>12</sup>. If the phase converter cannot supply this surge, heavy motors (like air compressors or hydraulic pumps starting under load) may struggle to start, stall, or dim the lights from voltage drop. Boost-Phase converters solve this problem by actively monitoring the startup and injecting a huge current boost right when it's needed.

**How it works:** The digital controller uses **solid-state switching** (SCRs) to **re-engage the start capacitors at the zero voltage cross-point** of the AC waveform <sup>1</sup>. Engaging caps at the zero-crossing prevents sudden transients and adds a calibrated “boost” without introducing harmful harmonics or spikes. This technique floods the motor with up to six times the normal current for a moment, greatly increasing starting torque <sup>1</sup>. Once the motor is up to speed, the extra capacitance is cut out again. The result is that **even “hard-starting” motors** that have high inertial loads or start under heavy mechanical load reach full speed quickly and reliably. In fact, the manufacturer notes that the 600% boost is particularly helpful for tough loads like **air compressors, submersible pumps, large flywheels, and gearhead lathes** that otherwise often have trouble starting <sup>13</sup>.

This digital boost technology essentially gives the phase converter **a built-in soft-start capability for your equipment** – the motor sees a big push of current to overcome static friction and load inertia, then normalizes as it accelerates. It's worth noting that even with this boost, the converter's output **remains a true sinusoidal three-phase** (unlike some solid-state “phase adders” that might produce a chopped waveform). The Boost-Phase maintains utility-quality voltage during the critical startup period, so your machines don't fault out on low voltage or stall.

## Key Features and Components

Boost-Phase rotary converters are engineered with a host of features to maximize performance, safety, and longevity:

- **600% Motor Starting Boost:** Every unit provides a **6x current surge** for starting motors <sup>1</sup>. This is controlled by a **digital Solid-State Controller** that monitors phase voltages and engages capacitors via SCRs at precisely timed intervals. By timing the assist at the AC zero-crossing, the converter avoids adding distortion – an approach that yields “zero harmonic” voltage support during motor start <sup>14</sup>.
- **Integrated Soft-Start for Idler:** Unlike old rotary converters that themselves drew a huge inrush when powered on (sometimes “dimming the neighbor's lights” from the surge <sup>15</sup>), the Boost-Phase idler motor uses an integrated soft-start design. This greatly **reduces the idler's own startup current**, avoiding unnecessary strain on your single-phase supply. Engineering improvements (pioneered in partnership with motor manufacturers like Baldor) have cut idler inrush by over **80%** in modern designs <sup>16</sup>. This means you can power up a large converter without spiking your demand meter or tripping breakers – the idler comes up to speed smoothly, then is ready to generate balanced three-phase power for your loads.
- **Voltage Balancing and Power Quality:** The converters produce three-phase output with typically **5–10% voltage balance** between phases under load <sup>17</sup>. This level of balance is sufficient for most general-purpose motors and equipment. For example, three-phase motors can run efficiently within a  $\pm 10\%$  voltage window. In practice, the Boost-Phase's digital controller and carefully tuned run capacitors hold the balance toward the tighter end (around 5% in many cases). This helps motors



run cooler and last longer. (For very voltage-sensitive equipment like CNC machines requiring extremely tight balance, rotary converters in the “CNC grade” class keep imbalance below  $\pm 5\%$  <sup>18</sup>, and fully digital phase converters can achieve  $\sim \pm 2\%$  <sup>19</sup> – however, those solutions come with higher cost and complexity. The Boost-Phase offers an excellent balance of performance vs. cost for the vast majority of applications.)

- **Complete Phase Protection:** Each Boost-Phase unit includes built-in **phase loss and voltage protection** circuitry <sup>20</sup>. If the incoming single-phase power blinks or one leg of the three-phase output falls out of spec, the controller will detect it in milliseconds and shut the system down safely. This **prevents equipment damage** that could occur from single-phasing a three-phase motor or from sustained under-voltage. A **“Power On” indicator light** on the panel provides at-a-glance status of the converter’s operation <sup>20</sup>.
- **Heavy-Duty Control Panel:** The converter’s control panel is housed in a **NEMA 1 rated enclosure** (ventilated steel cabinet) suitable for indoor installation. Inside is a **built-in motor starter with start/stop pushbutton** for the idler <sup>21</sup>, so no auxiliary starter is required – you can power the converter on and off directly. The panel features a **large wiring compartment** for easy installation, and all components are industrial-grade. For example, heavy **magnetic contactors/coils** handle the idler and capacitor switching, and **protective coils** or resistors are used to discharge capacitors safely. The design is also **power-factor corrected**: run capacitors are sized such that the idler motor draws minimal reactive current once running <sup>22</sup>. This improves efficiency and reduces waste heat. In essence, the panel is not just a box of caps, but a smart, self-monitoring phase conversion system.
- **Premium Idler Motor (Generator):** Every Boost-Phase converter uses a **premium rotary generator motor**, custom-made by **ABB/Baldor Electric (USA)** <sup>23</sup>. These idler motors are specifically designed for phase converter duty: they feature a **low-impedance rotor and custom windings** to better handle the capacitor-augmented currents <sup>23</sup>. The windings are **vacuum-pressure impregnated (VPI)** with insulation resin and fully **shielded** <sup>24</sup>, guarding against moisture, dust, and vibration. High-grade **sealed bearings** and a balanced rotor ensure quiet, reliable operation (and no maintenance greasing needed). The motors are available in **ODP (Open Drip Proof)** configuration for indoor use, with **TEFC (Totally Enclosed Fan Cooled)** options for harsher or dusty environments <sup>25</sup>. Each idler is a standard 1800 RPM design (for 60 Hz) with a 1.15 service factor, meaning it can handle short overload conditions. The robust construction and the partnership with Baldor/ABB speak to the quality – these idlers are not just repurposed surplus motors, but purpose-built phase converter generators.
- **Rugged and Durable Build:** Boost-Phase converters are built for **long service life**. The enclosure and motor are finished with **corrosion-resistant paint** and quality hardware. Internal wiring and connections follow NEC standards, and the layout is neat for serviceability. The design incorporates **voltage differential technology** (proprietary control logic to maintain output during surges) and has been refined to ensure reliability. Precision Electric backs this with an **industry-leading warranty** – typically **10 years on parts and lifetime on labor** for the original owner <sup>26</sup>. In addition, the entire system is **Made in the USA**, using UL-recognized components and assembled/tested to high quality standards <sup>27</sup> <sup>28</sup>.



## Sizes and Technical Specifications

The Boost-Phase series covers a **wide range of power capacities** to suit different needs. Precision Electric offers models to run anything from a small 2 HP machine up to an entire workshop of equipment. Key electrical specifications common to all models include:

- **Input:** 208–240 VAC, 50/60 Hz, single-phase. (These converters are designed for North American split-phase 240 V or similar single-phase sources. They can be used on 208 V utility as well, with slightly reduced output torque due to the lower voltage.) **Input current** will depend on the model and load – for example, the smallest 2.5 HP (output) unit draws about 10 A at idle <sup>29</sup>, whereas the largest 30 HP unit may require a 200 A single-phase circuit to accommodate heavy startup surges <sup>30</sup> <sup>31</sup>. Each converter model's manual specifies a minimum branch circuit ampacity and overcurrent protection size (e.g. fuses or breaker) for safe installation.
- **Output:** 208–240 VAC three-phase, **voltage matches input** (no step-up or step-down) <sup>17</sup>. The output frequency is the same as input (60 Hz nominal). The **output amperage capacity** is determined by the idler size and is roughly equivalent to the amperage of a three-phase motor of that horsepower. For instance, a 15 HP idler (Boost-Phase model ~7.5 HP output) can supply about 40 A of 3 $\phi$  current continuously, while a 60 HP idler (30 HP output model) can supply around 150 A 3 $\phi$  continuously (with higher short-term for starting) <sup>32</sup>. **Voltage balance** is maintained within ~5-10% as discussed, and **frequency stability** is inherent (tied to utility frequency). The output is a three-wire plus ground system (no neutral), identical to utility three-phase power for running motors, drives, or other equipment.
- **Horsepower Range:** Precision Electric's Boost-Phase models are typically designated by the maximum *load* horsepower they can run (for heavy loads). Models are available for approximately **2.5 HP, 5 HP, 7.5 HP, 10 HP, 15 HP, 20 HP, 25 HP, and 30 HP** three-phase load capacities. (This corresponds to idler motor sizes of about 5, 10, 15, 20, 30, 40, 50, and 60 HP respectively, since hard-starting loads generally require a converter about twice the HP of the load <sup>33</sup>.) As a rule of thumb, **easy loads** (fans, drill presses, etc.) can have a total horsepower equal to the idler's rating, **medium loads** (pumps, mills) about 1.5 times smaller, and **hard loads** (compressors, hydraulic pumps) about 2 times smaller than the converter's idler size <sup>33</sup>. For example, a 20 HP idler (Boost-Phase 10 HP model) can run a single 10 HP fan (easy load) or a 7.5 HP saw (medium load), but for a very hard load like a 7.5 HP air compressor, a larger 15 HP idler converter is recommended <sup>34</sup> <sup>35</sup>. Following these sizing guidelines ensures the converter will not be overtaxed and will have enough surge capacity in reserve.
- **Efficiency and Idle Loss:** Rotary converters do consume some power at idle (energizing the idler's windings). Thanks to the Boost-Phase's power-factor-corrected design and high-efficiency idler, **idle losses are quite low** – typically a few hundred watts for mid-sized units. The idler essentially acts like a lightly-loaded motor when no load is connected, drawing some magnetizing current. For instance, a 40 HP idler might draw ~12 A at idle (around 2 kW) according to spec <sup>36</sup>, whereas a fully electronic converter of similar capacity might draw less. However, under load the efficiency of a rotary converter is high (95+% of input power goes to output). Phase converter manufacturer Phase Technologies notes that traditional rotary converters can have slightly higher losses and standby consumption than digital solid-state units, but still deliver robust power conversion with reasonable efficiency <sup>19</sup> <sup>37</sup>. In practical terms, the energy cost of running a Boost-Phase converter is minor –



often offset by not having to pay demand charges or higher tariffs for utility three-phase service. Additionally, the **absence of high-frequency electronics** means no significant harmonic distortion or RF interference is introduced by the converter; the output is clean sinusoidal AC.

- **Installation:** Boost-Phase converters are typically **wall or floor mounted** near the single-phase supply panel. The idler motor can be mounted horizontally on the floor (and can even be fitted with a floor-mount kit or vibration pads). The control panel is usually mounted vertically on a wall. Installation involves wiring the single-phase input (two hot lines and ground) to the panel's input terminals, and wiring the three-phase output (three phase conductors and ground) from the panel to a three-phase distribution panel or directly to the load. Because the system does not create a neutral, any 120 V control circuits in the load equipment will need a neutral derived elsewhere (this is the same as running on utility three-phase delta). **Safety ground** must be connected as per NEC. It's advised to place the converter close to the supply to minimize voltage drop, and use appropriately sized conductors (the manuals provide recommended wire gauges – e.g. a 60 HP idler might require 4/0 AWG input feeders <sup>38</sup>). Starting up is as simple as pressing the start button; the idler will spin up (usually in 1–2 seconds), after which the generated leg is online and the three-phase power is available to feed equipment.

## Real-World Application Benefits

Investing in a Boost-Phase rotary phase converter can yield numerous practical benefits for shops, farms, and industrial facilities:

- **Run Three-Phase Equipment Anywhere:** The obvious benefit is the ability to operate three-phase machinery when only single-phase grid power is available. This opens up opportunities to use more efficient industrial-grade equipment (which is almost exclusively three-phase for 5 HP and above) in locations like rural workshops, agricultural sites, and home garages. Companies avoid the **prohibitive cost of bringing in utility three-phase service**, which can involve new power lines or transformers stretching for miles. A rotary converter lets you tap into standard 240 V split-phase and get **“utility-quality three-phase power anywhere you need it”** <sup>19</sup>. For example, a small manufacturing business in a residential-zoned area can run a 15 HP CNC mill and a 10 HP air compressor off a Boost-Phase converter, saving tens of thousands of dollars compared to installing a three-phase utility drop.
- **High Starting Torque = Fewer Stalled Motors:** Difficult loads like piston air compressors, refrigeration compressors, deep-well pumps, or heavy inertia flywheel machines can have starting torque requirements that a static converter or undersized phase converter simply cannot meet. The Boost-Phase's 600% surge current capability ensures these motors **start reliably** instead of stalling. For instance, if you tried to run a 5 HP air compressor on a basic static converter, the motor might only see ~2/3 of normal torque and potentially never reach full speed, overheating in the process <sup>10</sup>. One user case involved a 10 HP irrigation pump that struggled on a 50 HP (idler) standard converter – upgrading to a Boost-Phase unit with a 75 HP idler allowed the 30 HP pump motor to kick on under load without issues <sup>39</sup> <sup>40</sup>. The high starting current effectively mimics the performance of utility service or even better inrush support, preventing nuisance trips and burnt starters on heavy equipment.



- **No More Light Dimming or High Inrush Draw on Supply:** Traditional rotary converters sometimes had a reputation for drawing very high line current when their idler started, which could cause lights on the same circuit to flicker or **incur utility “demand charges”** for peak usage <sup>15</sup>. The Boost-Phase design, with its soft-start idler and SCR-controlled capacitance, **minimizes the input surge** seen by your single-phase supply. This means a gentler impact on your whole electrical system – no more complaints from the neighbors about lights dimming when you fire up your machinery! It also avoids sudden voltage sags that could affect sensitive electronics elsewhere in your facility. Overall, the phase converter becomes a good citizen on your grid connection, despite its ability to deliver large currents to your motors internally.
- **Ability to Run Multiple and Varying Loads:** Unlike a static phase converter or a single-motor VFD that is tied to one motor, a rotary phase converter creates an **independent three-phase bus** that can power **multiple machines simultaneously**. You could start an air compressor, then a mill, then a saw, all on the same converter (as long as their combined load is within its capacity). The Boost-Phase’s robust idler and balanced output mean it can handle **plug-and-play operation of various equipment** – from motors and pumps to resistive loads like ovens or welders. (Resistive or non-motor loads usually require sizing the converter for the amperage, since they don’t need the 600% boost but do draw continuous current. The Boost-Phase units are also suitable for these loads; e.g., a 20 kW resistance heater bank can be driven by an appropriately sized converter, and the output balancing keeps all elements heating evenly.) The **stability of voltage under fluctuating load** is a major plus here – as different machines cycle on and off, the idler’s rotating inertia helps smooth out the transitions <sup>6</sup>. In practice, rotary converters like this are very **forgiving to load spikes** (such as a momentary 3x surge when a motor is first energized) because the idler supplies some of the surge energy from its rotation. This differs from purely electronic converters that must momentarily supply all surge current through transistors (potentially hitting current limits). Thus, the Boost-Phase handles combinations of hard and soft loads with ease, making it ideal for workshops where many tools are used intermittently.
- **Improved Motor and Equipment Longevity:** Running three-phase equipment on properly balanced power from a Boost-Phase converter can **extend the life of your machines**. Motors running on balanced three-phase draw lower currents per phase and run cooler than if they were single-phasing or on unbalanced power. The Boost-Phase’s output is well within the recommended balance for motor health – typically kept within 5-8% voltage imbalance under load, which corresponds to only a few degrees of temperature rise difference in motor windings. Additionally, the phase loss protection will shut things down if a severe imbalance or loss of phase occurs, saving motors from burning up in fault conditions. Many users report that their motors and even electronic controls (VFDs, contactors, etc.) run just as happily on a high-quality rotary converter as on utility power. In some cases, the converter can act as a sort of buffer: its idler and capacitors can absorb voltage transients, possibly shielding downstream equipment from spikes coming from the utility. The **clean sine wave output** (with no high-frequency switching noise) means sensitive devices like CNC controls or PLCs are not subjected to the harmonic distortion that some solid-state phase converters or cheap inverters might introduce. All of this adds up to **less stress on equipment**. For example, one manufacturer of digital phase converters points out that maintaining tight voltage balance significantly improves motor performance and longevity <sup>41</sup>. By using a rotary converter like Boost-Phase, you are effectively providing your motors a diet of balanced voltage and ample current, exactly what they were designed for.



- **Low Maintenance and Long-Term Reliability:** A Boost-Phase rotary converter has **very few moving parts** – essentially just the idler motor (and its internal fan). There are no complex electronics running continuously under high load, which in fully digital converters can be a point of failure (e.g. power semiconductor devices can overheat or fail from surges). The Boost-Phase idler motors are built for continuous duty and can run 24/7 if needed. With sealed bearings and a TEFC option, the maintenance is practically zero; just keep the unit reasonably clean and dry, and it will hum along for decades. Many rotary phase converters in the field literally run for 20+ years with no issues aside from occasionally tightening a connection or replacing a capacitor if it degrades. Precision Electric's lifetime labor warranty reflects confidence in this reliability. In comparison, solid-state converters or drives might need cooling fans replaced, or could be more vulnerable to lightning surges, etc. The **simple, rugged design** of a rotary converter is inherently durable – it's an **"old school"** solution upgraded with digital control, but still basically a heavy iron motor and a metal box of capacitors/relays. There's not much to go wrong. Even in harsh environments (with dust, vibration, temperature swings), these converters perform well (just use a TEFC idler and maybe a NEMA 3R enclosure if placing outdoors). American Rotary, a leading phase converter maker, highlights that rotary converters are **"highly resilient to variations in load and electrical disturbances,"** especially compared to electronic converters <sup>42</sup>. Users can expect minimal downtime – a critical advantage for production environments. And if something ever does need service, the components (motors, contactors, capacitors) are standard and readily available, unlike proprietary electronics.
- **Versatility Across Industries:** The Boost-Phase converters are *generalists* – they can support equipment in **woodworking, metalworking, agriculture, automotive, food processing, HVAC, and more.** In a wood shop, a single converter could power your table saw, planer, dust collector blower, and air compressor. In an automotive garage, it could run a two-post lift, a tire balancer, and a milling machine. On a farm, one converter might handle a grain auger motor and a water pump. Because the converter creates a distributed three-phase supply, you can wire it into a sub-panel and have multiple three-phase outlets or circuits. This gives you **flexibility to grow** – adding new machines without needing a new converter (as long as you plan capacity accordingly). It's also worth noting that Boost-Phase converters can be used in tandem with **variable frequency drives (VFDs)** on specific machines if you desire speed control; you'd simply feed the VFD with the converter's three-phase output. Many VFD manufacturers (ABB, Yaskawa, Hitachi, Lenze, etc.) support single-phase input to their drives (with derating), but using a rotary converter to feed standard three-phase drives is often a more straightforward solution when multiple motors are involved. Essentially, the Boost-Phase provides a solid three-phase foundation upon which you can deploy any standard three-phase equipment or controls. This universality and ease of integration make it a go-to solution for many engineers and shop owners.

In summary, **Precision Electric's Boost-Phase Rotary Phase Converters** enable you to enjoy the full benefits of three-phase power – strong torque, efficient motor performance, and the ability to run industrial-grade equipment – **without needing utility three-phase service.** By leveraging an intelligent digital controller and high-quality rotary hardware, these converters deliver massive starting power (up to 600% current boost) for your hardest loads <sup>1</sup>, all while maintaining balanced, clean output power. They are built tough with premium ABB/Baldor idler motors and feature comprehensive protections and soft-start capabilities to ensure both the converter and your machines operate safely and reliably. Whether you're running a CNC machine in a rural workshop or powering irrigation pumps on a farm, the Boost-Phase series provides **professional-grade phase conversion** that can truly unleash your productivity –



bringing three-phase capability anywhere you need it, at a fraction of the cost of alternative solutions <sup>43</sup> .

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6. Phoenix Phase Converters – “The Three Main Types Of Phase Converters” (2023) <sup>9</sup> <sup>8</sup> . (Explains static vs rotary vs digital converters, notes rotary converters provide balanced full power output often  $\pm 10\%$  or better, vs static converters’ limitations.)
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8. North America Phase Converter Co. – *Smart-Boost Series Sizing Chart* (via Elite Metal Tools) <sup>32</sup> <sup>33</sup> . (Guidelines showing recommended load sizes for each converter model – e.g. hard motor loads approximately half the idler HP – and general sizing rules: 1.25× for easy, 1.5× for medium, 2× for hard starting motors.)
9. Phase Technologies – *Phase Perfect Digital Phase Converter – Product Page* <sup>19</sup> . (Fully digital phase converters achieve ~2% voltage balance and very high efficiency, with about double the motor-starting capacity of typical rotary converters, highlighting the performance spectrum of phase conversion technologies.)
10. RSP Supply – *North American Smart-Boost Converter Information Sheet (SB-40)* <sup>47</sup> <sup>30</sup> . (Quick specs for a larger Smart-Boost unit, indicating input/output voltages, output amperage, weight, and load capacity examples, as well as reiterating sizing recommendations and the made-in-USA build.)



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