METEC
EXCEEDING EXPECTATION

SELECTION, COST, AND MAINTENANCE IMPLICATIONS OF IE3, IE4 & IE5 ELECTRIC MOTORS

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PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

With increasing focus on Energy Efficiency, Consultants and Clients are specifying IE4 and IE5 motors across projects. However, many installations experience higher failures, high repair cost, and poor maintainability due to improper application.

This report explains:

- The Technical Construction difference between IE3–IE5 Motors
- The True Cost Drivers
- Failure and Maintenance Implications
- Where IE5 is technically justified and where it is not

WHAT IE CLASSES MEAN

IE (International Efficiency) classes as per IEC 60034-30-1: 2014 & IS 12615: 2011 define how efficiently a motor converts electrical input power into mechanical output.

The Efficiency Formula (Watts):

$$\text{Efficiency } (\%) = \left(\frac{\text{Output Power (W)}}{\text{Input Power (W)}} \right) \times 100$$

- Output Power (P_{out}): The mechanical power delivered at the shaft.
- Input Power (P_{in}): The electrical power drawn from the source (measured by a wattmeter).

The Efficiency Formula (when output is in Horsepower):

$$\eta = \left(\frac{\text{Output Power (hp)} \times 746}{\text{Input Power (Watts)}} \right) \times 100$$

- 1 hp = 746 Watts (Standard electrical equivalent).
- 1 hp = 0.7457 kW

Higher IE class means lower electrical loss and lower operating cost but does not mean higher power.

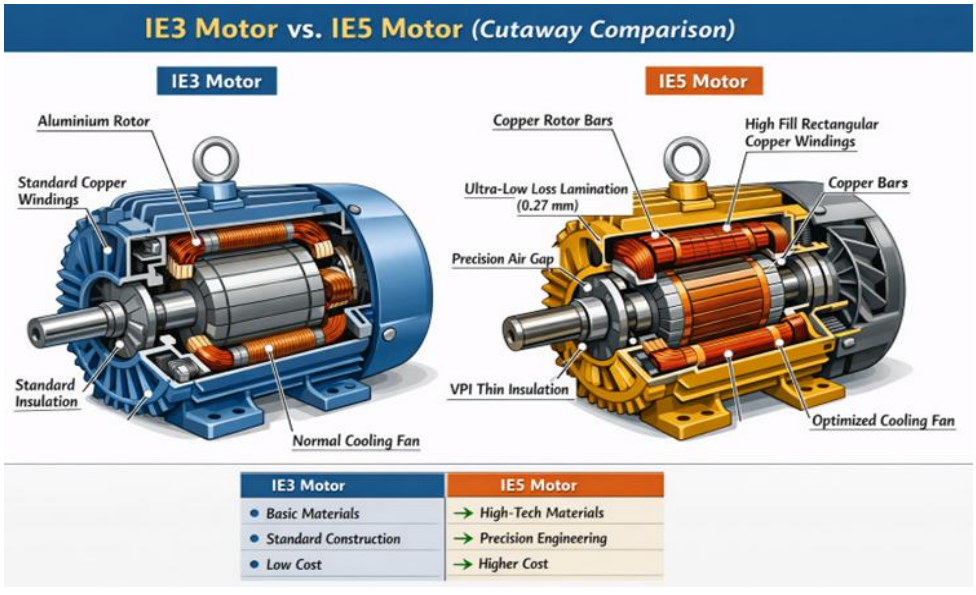
PHYSICAL CONSTRUCTION DIFFERENCES

IE3, IE4 and IE5 motors are not the same machines with minor tuning. They are built using fundamentally different materials and manufacturing processes.

Feature	IE3	IE4	IE5
Stator Copper	Round wire, normal fill	Higher fill, better copper	Rectangular compressed copper, very high fill
Core steel	Standard silicon steel	Low-loss steel	Ultra-low loss silicon steel
Lamination thickness	0.5 mm	0.35 mm	0.27–0.30 mm
Rotor	Aluminium die-cast	Optimized Aluminium / partial copper	Solid copper rotor bars
Air gap	Normal	Smaller	Very small, precision aligned
Insulation	Standard	Improved	Thin VPI vacuum-impregnated
Cooling	Standard fan	Improved	CFD-optimized low-loss fan

IE5 MOTORS ARE PHYSICALLY

- Heavier & More copper-intensive
- More precise in machining
- Much more expensive to manufacture
- They are similar to high-efficiency hydraulic pumps compared to standard cast-iron pumps.



WHY IE5 COSTS SO MUCH MORE

The price difference is not due to brand or marketing. It comes from:

- 30–50% more copper
- Ultra-thin laminations (more punching, more scrap, more labour)
- Copper rotor instead of Aluminium
- Precision machining and balancing
- Lower production volume
- Higher rejection rate

This makes IE5 motors 40–100% more expensive than IE3 motors for the same kW.

ENERGY SAVING VS CAPITAL COST

Example: 75 kW pump motor, 8000 hrs/year, ₹9/kWh

Motor	Typical losses	Energy wasted
IE3	~7 kW	56,000 kWh/year
IE5	~4 kW	32,000 kWh/year

Annual saving ≈ 24,000 kWh = ₹2.16 lakh

Typical price difference:

- IE3 ≈ ₹4.5 lakh
- IE5 ≈ ₹7.5 lakh

Payback ≈ 1.5 years. After that, IE5 continues saving energy for 10–15 years.

FAILURE BEHAVIOR & SENSITIVITY

IE5 motors run cooler and are electrically superior, but they are also less tolerant.

Condition	IE3	IE5
Voltage imbalance	Tolerant	Sensitive
Harmonics from VFD	Tolerant	Needs dv/dt filter
Bearing currents	Rare	Common without shaft grounding
Dust & heat	Survives	Heats faster
Rough alignment	Tolerates	Sensitive

In plants with good power quality and VFD filters, IE5 motors last longer than IE3. In plants with poor electrical discipline, IE5 fails more often.

REPAIR & REWINDING REALITY

Item	IE3	IE5
Typical rewinding cost	₹40,000 – ₹60,000	₹1.2 – 2.5 lakh
Rotor damage	Cheap Aluminium	Very costly copper
Lamination damage	Low impact	Large efficiency loss
Rewinding quality	Easily restored	Cannot be restored

Important engineering fact:

A rewound IE5 motor can never again be an IE5 motor.

After rewinding:

- Copper geometry is lost
- Slot fill factor reduces
- Lamination insulation is damaged

Result: IE5 → IE3 or worse

APPLICATION-BASED MOTOR SELECTION

Application	Correct Motor
Chilled water pumps	IE4 / IE5
Condenser water pumps	IE4 / IE5
Cooling tower fans	IE4 / IE5
Chiller compressors	IE5
Base-load air compressors	IE5
Standby compressors	IE3
Fire pumps	IE3
Smoke exhaust & pressurization fans	**IE3**
Process circulation pumps	IE4 / IE5
Sludge, reject, drain pumps	IE3
Conveyors, mixers, crushers	IE3

ENGINEERING SELECTION RULE

Ask two questions:

1. Does the motor run more than 6000 hours per year?
2. Will failure stop safety or production?

Answer	Motor
Yes to 1, No to 2	IE5
No to 1, Yes to 2	IE3
Yes to both	IE4
No to both	IE3

CONCLUSION

IE5 motors are not general-purpose motors. They are energy machines that must be used only where:

- ☐ Running hours are high
- ☐ Power quality is good
- ☐ Maintenance practices are disciplined

IE3 motors remain the best choice for:

- ☐ Fire systems
- ☐ Emergency equipment
- ☐ Standby and critical reliability loads

CORRECT MOTOR SELECTION SAVES BOTH:

- ☐ Energy Cost
- ☐ Maintenance and Downtime

Thank You!

www.metecdesign.com metec@metecdesign.com