

Electronic Compass Calibration Made Easy with EEPROMs

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Doug Zrebski
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When a compass is first installed in a vehicle, or when new equipment, such as car speakers, are added to a vehicle with a compass, the compass must be compensated for stray magnetic fields. With a magnetic compass, it must be pointed towards magnetic north and then adjusted. This procedure is repeated at all four main points of the compass until the compass is calibrated. This procedure is lengthy and also requires another calibrated compass to point the vehicle in the correct direction.

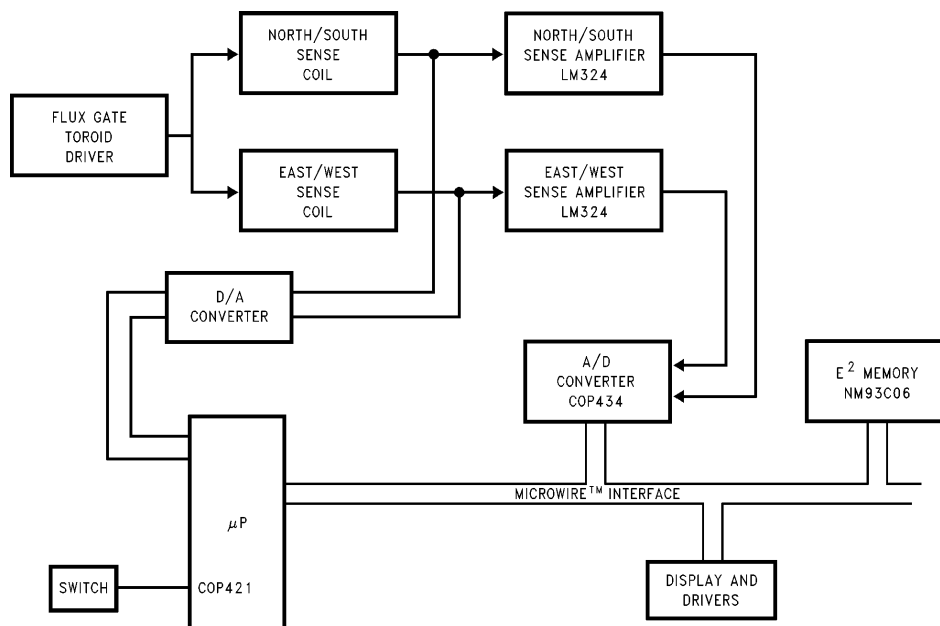
The block diagram illustrates an electronic compass that, with the aid of an E² memory, makes adjusting a compass as easy as pushing a button, and also eliminates the need for another compass. In addition it gives you the ability to adjust for variation between magnetic and true north. This is a major advantage because it is something that even the most expensive magnetic compass cannot do.

The brain of the electronic compass is the COP421 microcontroller. There are two sense coils, one for north/south and one for east/west. The output of each of the sense amplifiers is an analog voltage which is fed into the A to D converter. These voltages are read by the COP421 over the microwire interface. From these voltages, the microcontroller determines the direction and displays the results

once again over the microwire interface. To compensate the compass in a new environment the procedure is very simple. Start by pointing the car in any direction and push the switch. The CPU at this time will measure the voltage at the sense amplifiers and store this information in the E² memory over the microwire interface. Now the vehicle is turned 180°, and the button is pushed again. The same procedure will be followed internally. The compensation procedures are now complete. During operation the CPU will compensate for stray fields by adding an analog voltage back into the sense amplifiers. This value is stored in E² memory and not lost when the power is turned off, but is readjustable if its environment is modified.

Compass variation is the difference between true and magnetic north. This variation differs all over the world and is something that must be taken into consideration when navigating by compass. With the E² memory device, a variance can be programmed in for any given location. In California this is approximately 17°, in Michigan approximately 1°. Once again, this cannot be accomplished by a magnetic compass, and would have been impossible to accomplish without an E² memory device.

Electronic Compass Block Diagram



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National Semiconductor Corporation
1111 West Bardin Road
Arlington, TX 76017
Tel: 1(800) 272-9959
Fax: 1(800) 737-7018

National Semiconductor Europe
Fax: (+49) 0-180-530 85 86
Email: cnjwge@tevm2.nsc.com
Deutsch Tel: (+49) 0-180-530 85 85
English Tel: (+49) 0-180-532 78 32
Français Tel: (+49) 0-180-532 93 58
Italiano Tel: (+49) 0-180-534 16 80

National Semiconductor Hong Kong Ltd.
19th Floor, Straight Block,
Ocean Centre, 5 Canton Rd.
Tsimshatsui, Kowloon
Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2737-1600
Fax: (852) 2736-9960

National Semiconductor Japan Ltd.
Tel: 81-043-299-2309
Fax: 81-043-299-2408