

2005

Corrosion of Steel by Lead Bismuth Eutectic

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Farley, J., Johnson, A. L., Perry, D. L. (2005). Corrosion of Steel by Lead Bismuth Eutectic. 10-11.

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Task 3

Corrosion of Steel by Lead Bismuth Eutectic

J.W. Farley, A. Johnson, and D.L. Perry

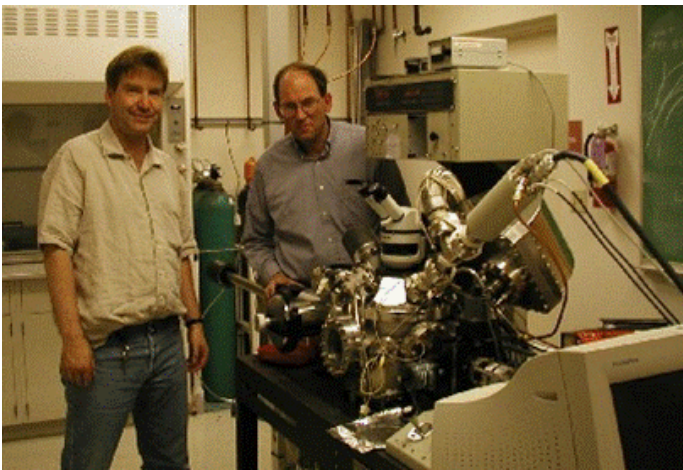
BACKGROUND

There is an active international interest in lead-bismuth eutectic and similar liquid lead systems because of the relevance to the transmutation of nuclear waste, fast reactors, and spallation neutron sources.

Materials in these systems must be able to tolerate high neutron fluxes, high temperatures, and chemical corrosion. For lead bismuth eutectic (LBE) systems, there is an additional challenge because the corrosive behaviors of materials in LBE are not well understood. Most of the available information on LBE systems has come from the Russians, who have over 80 reactor-years experience with LBE coolant in their Alpha-class submarine reactors. The Russians found that the presence of small amounts of oxygen (on the order of parts per million) in the LBE significantly reduced corrosion. However, a fundamental understanding and verification of its role in the corrosion of steels is incomplete.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

This research program has analyzed various steel samples that have been exposed to lead bismuth eutectic as part of the national program to develop LBE and allied technologies. The goal of this research is to understand the basic science of corrosion in the steel/LBE system. This information will be paramount in developing engineering efforts to control, avoid, and/or minimize the effect of corrosion of steels by LBE in transmuter and LBE systems. Additionally, this program provides UNLV researchers with hands-on experience that will be crucial in developing the UNLV molten metal program.



Professors Allen Johnson and John Farley next to an X-ray Photoelectron Spectrometer.

Investigators performed post-experiment testing and analysis on steel samples that have been exposed to lead bismuth eutectic. Surface analysis techniques were employed that included Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM), Energy Dispersive X-ray (EDAX) spectroscopy, X-ray Photoelectron Spectrometry (XPS), and laser Raman spectrometry.

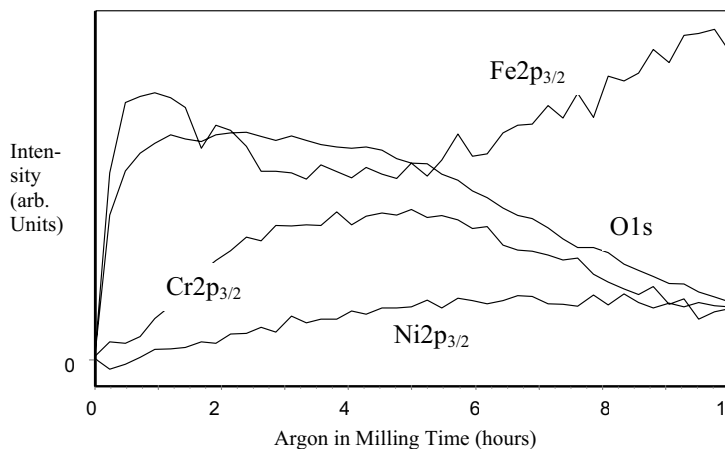
These techniques, applied to the steel surface, have probed the surface morphology, elemental composition, and oxidation states as a function of position. Chemical alterations and resulting chemical species were studied at the steel surface. Additionally, the experimental facilities at the Advanced Light Source (Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory) and the Advanced Photon Source (Argonne National Laboratory) were used to characterize the systems. This allowed spectroscopic characterization of the stainless steel before and after interaction with LBE to determine its composition.

RESEARCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS

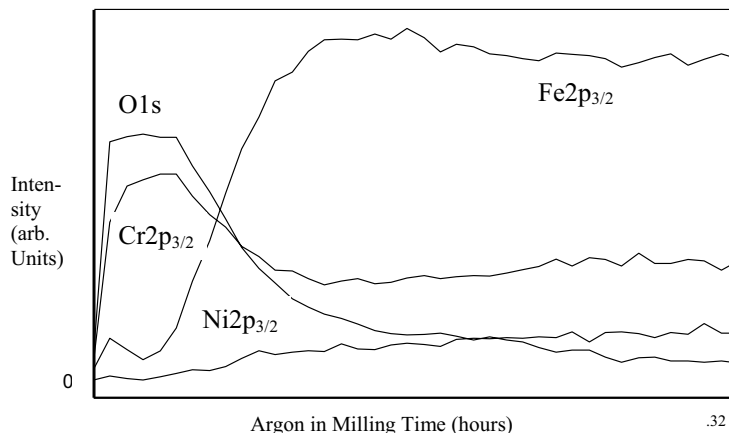
Several samples were compared having the same or similar compositions (standard nuclear grade 316/316L) but different surface preparation, including cold-rolled, annealed and a special low-corrosion treatment, "D-9." The cold-rolled sample had an order of magnitude less corrosion (i.e., both lower oxidation and less weight change) than the annealed sample.

Sputter depth profiling of the exposed annealed sample and cold-rolled sample showed a marked difference in oxide layer composition between the annealed and cold-rolled sample. The annealed sample showed a complex oxide structure (iron oxide over chromium/iron oxide mixtures) of tens of microns thickness, while the cold-rolled sample was covered with a simple, primarily chromium oxide layer approximately one micron thick. Interestingly, the D-9 material behaved more like the annealed than the more resistant cold-rolled material. In addition to these studies of 316/316L steel, other compositions of steel such as HT9 were also studied. These studies show the importance of surface preparation in resistance to corrosion by LBE.

Another alloy studied in the IPPE series was EP823, an alloy similar to HT9 but with added silicon to improve corrosion resistance. A study of silicon in iron was undertaken to investigate the role of silicon in steels for LBE service. A series of silicon-containing iron samples were examined that were exposed to LBE at INL. Several unique features were observed: at low silicon concentrations in the starting alloy, the silicon was found as a silicate (SiO_3^-). As the concentration of silicon increased in the starting alloy, a layer containing silica (SiO_2) was found also. Under the oxide layer, the silicon concentration in the metal was found to be decreased by approx-



Sputter Depth Profile of annealed 316/316L stainless steel sample. Note iron oxide at the surface.



Sputter Depth Profile of cold-rolled 316/316L stainless steel sample. Note chromium oxide at the surface.

-mately 30%. These were model systems, and the oxide layers that formed were not very protective. In all cases, pockets of LBE were found underneath the oxide layer, potentially corroding the steel.

TASK 3 PROFILE

Start Date: June 2001

Completion Date: May 2004

(This work is continued as Task 18, see pages 40-41.)

Thesis Generated:

Daniel Koury, M.S., Physics Department, "Investigation of the Corrosion of Steel by Lead-bismuth Eutectic (LBE) Using Scanning Electron Microscopy And X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy," December 2002.

Journal Article:

A.L. Johnson, D. Parsons, J. Manzerova, D.L. Perry, D. Koury, B. Hosterman, and J.W. Farley, "Spectroscopic and Microscopic Investigation of the Corrosion of 316/316L Stainless Steel by Lead-Bismuth Eutectic (LBE) at Elevated Temperatures: Importance of Surface Preparation," *J. Nuclear Materials*, **328** (2004) 88-96.

Conference Proceedings:

"Mechanisms of Lead-Bismuth Eutectic Corrosion Chemistry involving Stainless Steels in Nuclear Reactor Cooling Systems," Annual Meeting of the American Chemical Society, Anaheim, CA, March 29-31, 2004.

A. Johnson, D. Parsons, J. Manzerova, D. Koury, B. Hosterman, D.L. Perry, and J.W. Farley, "Surface Studies of the High Temperature Corrosion of Stainless Steel by Oxygen Controlled Lead-Bismuth Eutectic," American Vacuum Society, Baltimore, MD, Nov. 2-7, 2003.

"Chemical Species Involved in High Temperature Corrosion Resulting from the Interaction Between Stainless Steel and Lead-Bismuth Eutectic," 38th Western Regional Meeting of the American Chemical Society, Long Beach, CA, October 15-18, 2003.

A.L. Johnson, D. Parsons, J. Manzerova, D.L. Perry, D. Koury, B. Hosterman, and J.W. Farley, "Surface Studies of the Corrosion of Stainless Steel by Lead Bismuth Eutectic: Surface Preparation Effects on 316 Stainless Steels," American Nuclear Society Summer Meeting, San Diego, CA, June 1-5, 2003.

D. Koury, A.L. Johnson, D.L. Perry, and J.W. Farley, "Investigation of Corrosion of Steel by Lead Bismuth Eutectic," ANS Topical Mtg. on Accelerator Applications, AccApp/ADTTA01, Reno, NV, Nov. 2001.

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