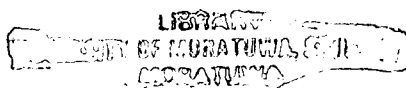


MODELLING OF THE VULCANIZATION PROCESS OF THICK-WALLED NATURAL RUBBER ARTICLES

By

V.S.C Weragoda



A thesis submitted to the Department of Materials Engineering in the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy



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DECLARATION

"I hereby certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published, written or orally communicated by another person except where due reference is made in the text."

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ABSTRACT

MODELLING OF THE VULCANIZATION PROCESS OF THICK-WALLED NATURAL RUBBER ARTICLES.

By: V.S.C. Weragoda

Chairperson of Supervisory Committee : Dr. P.Y. Gunapala
Co-Supervisor : Dr. N. Munasinghe

A computer-based technique was developed to render the state of cure in thick-walled natural rubber compounds as measured by the oscillating disk rheometer torque. The method was based on a mathematical function derived to replicate the rate of change in the rheometer torque with respect to the curing time and the curing temperature.

The mathematical function was able to trace the temperature related changes in the rheometer curves of different rubber compounds exceptionally well, at a 99.9% level of certainty. This was used to model the vulcanisation process for thick-walled articles through a deterministic simulation approach, which was made it possible to predict the scorch time, curing time, and the time for onset of reversion to a precision within $\pm 5\%$, as verified against programmed a temperature profile curing in a rheometer.

This study also investigated the variation of the thermal conductivity and the thermal diffusivity of rubber compounds during the curing process, to determine the effectiveness of such variations in estimating the curing time of thick-walled rubber articles. The experiments were carried out using a modified hot wire technique.

The coefficient of variation in the thermal diffusivity was estimated at 20%, and the same for the thermal conductivity was found to be 15%, for the compounds tested. The simulation model showed that this variation was not significant in affecting the curing time.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I hereby wish to express my gratitude to all who assisted me in numerous ways to complete this study successfully.

With greatest gratitude I appreciate Dr. P. Y Gunapala, Senior lecturer, University of Moratuwa, for accepting me as a graduate student, for introducing me to the field of the polymer engineering, and for his unyielding support and academic guidance given throughout this study as my supervisor.

I also thank my co-supervisor, Dr. R. G. N. De S. Munasinghe, Senior lecturer, University of Moratuwa, for the guidance, helpful advice and above all for motivating me to embark in this venture.

My thanks also go out to Dr. S.U. Adikary, Head of the Department of Materials Engineering, University of Moratuwa, for his support given by coordinating the administrative work on this study and for facilitating my work to the fullest extent.

I appreciate with gratitude, the generous help rendered by Dr. O. Gunapala, Senior Lecturer, University of Moratuwa, who guided and advised me on many of the theoretical aspects of this study, and for spending her valuable time in making this a success.



I also thank the Dr. L. Karunanayake, Senior Lecturer, University of Sri Jayawardenapura, for his valuable comments and advice on the analytical aspects of the study and for his valuable time spent on my behalf.

I also appreciate the assistance provided by the Director and the staff at the Rubber Research Institute, Sri Lanka, for providing the rubber compounds used in the study.

My thanks also go out to the Director/ Post Graduate Studies, University of Moratuwa, for timely coordination of my research work.

I am also grateful to all academic and non-academic staff members, and the students of the department of Materials Engineering, who assisted me in numerous ways in making my work possible and I especially acknowledge the support of Mr. A.M.P.B Samarasekara, and Ms. C.N. Liyanage, who supported me with all their spirit.

Finally, I am much indebted to my parents and sister for their patience and understanding.

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02nd January 2006

LIST OF SYMBOLS

a	-	Thermal diffusivity (m^2/s)
A	-	Area (mm^2)
C	-	Degree of chemical conversion
C_p	-	Specific heat capacity at constant pressure
G	-	Gradient (of a curve)
h	-	Heat transfer coefficient ($Wm^{-2}K^{-1}$)
k_{th}	-	Thermal conductivity ($Wm^{-1}K^{-1}$)
k_1, k_2, k_3	-	Arbitrary constants
M	-	Rheometer torque
M_L	-	Minimum torque in rheometer curve
M_H	-	Maximum torque in rheometer curve
Q	-	Specific Heat generated (J/m^3)
\dot{Q}	-	Rate of heat generation (W/m^3)
T	-	Temperature
t	-	Time
t_{S1}	-	Time taken for the rheometer torque to increase by 1dNm from M_L (induction period)
α	-	State of cure (By rheometer torque or by degree of cross-links)
β_1, β_2	-	Parametric constants in the curing rate curve
γ_1, γ_2	-	Parametric constants in the curing rate curve
δ_1, δ_2	-	Parametric constants in the curing rate curve
ρ	-	Density (kg/m^3)
χ	-	Euler's Constant (0.5772)