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NBS 9/64

PROCESSOR:
INFRARED TRANSMISSION AND EMISSION OF TEFLOM

by

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Contract No. AF 04(647)-278

March 1960

prepared for

AIR FORCE BALLISTIC MISSILE DIVISION
AIR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMAND
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ABSTRACT

The infrared absorption spectrum of Teflon at 298° K from 2 to 15μ and the surface emission spectrum at a minimum temperature of 700° K from 2.7 to 6.0μ are reported. Corresponding absorption coefficients and emissivity are discussed. The emissivity varies with wavelength in accordance with the absorption, as expected, so that assignment of a color temperature or description of the hot surface as a grey body are not valid.
I. INTRODUCTION

We have reported instrumentation and results from a study of the infrared (IR) emission of quartz.\footnote{1} The following is a report of a similar investigation on Teflon\footnote{2} under ablating conditions.\footnote{3}

The plastic Teflon (polytetrafluoroethylene) is of interest because of its high temperature (for organic materials) stability. The material is very stable, up to 650° K,\footnote{4,5} and decomposes rapidly and smoothly in the 700-800° K range.\footnote{6} We present here some results on the IR emission spectra of Teflon above 700° K and discuss the emissivity ($\epsilon$).

II. EXPERIMENTAL

The instrumentation and experimental approach were identical to that described previously.\footnote{1} Our approach was to record the emission spectra, with the absolute radiation intensity known by comparison with a calibrated black body, and in a spectral region where the assumption of $\epsilon$ near unity was made. Thus the true surface temperature could be estimated. Hence, in adjacent spectral regions where the emissivity was clearly less than unity, it can be deduced from the known temperature and absolute intensity.

A study of the IR absorption of Teflon was necessary for interpretation of the emission data. Liang and Krim\footnote{7} have reported absorption spectra for films (0.004 to 0.041 mm thickness) in the spectral range 3 to 13μ, and in greater thicknesses from 11 to 140μ. The room temperature absorption spectra of sections (0.013 to 0.76 mm) were measured.
in the 2 to 15\(\mu\) region are shown in Fig. 1. The strong absorption at \(\lambda < 3\mu\) is due to optical scattering in the opaque crystalline milky white polymer.

However, above 324°C, a transition temperature, Teflon is optically clear so that this scatter "absorption" is not expected to contribute to the high temperature emissivity. The only significant absorption in thin sections out to about 6\(\mu\) is that due to a C-F vibrational overtone at 4.2\(\mu\). Hence, one would predict in the region 2 to 6\(\mu\) the emission from Teflon would be characterized by a pronounced peak at 4.2\(\mu\).

An emission spectrum of Teflon is shown in Fig. 2. The presence of a sharp peak at 4.2\(\mu\) is in agreement with the prediction of the emissivity from the absorption spectrum. The absorption noted in the emission spectrum is attributed to CO\(_2\) outside the test chamber. Normally the gases C\(_2\)F\(_4\) (the monomer from Teflon decomposition) and CO\(_2\) (from C\(_2\)F\(_4\) oxidation)\(^4,6\) would be a problem due to the large absorption coefficients of these molecules. However, these can be ignored because of the low gas density and short gas path lengths of the test conditions.

III. DISCUSSION

The surface temperature deduced from the emission was 700 ± 30°K, on the assumption of \(\epsilon = 1\) at the peak, and no correction for the CO\(_2\) absorption. Both of these approximations tend to lower the calculated temperature and so set a lower bound of the temperature during ablation. The wavelength of measurement is near the black body maximum at the
temperature involved, a situation favorable in determining the temperature from the measured sterradiancy. For example, at 4.2 μ the black body radiation increases a factor of 7 in going from 650 to 750° K. Hence, the experimental error in the temperature is expected to be small.

However, the assumption of $\epsilon = 1$ is more fraught with uncertainty. This is particularly questionable if, as is indeed expected, the low conductivity of Teflon will make for large temperature gradients below the surface, i.e. the radiating surface of interest is very thin and the transmission becomes appreciable. Then the assumption is poor, and the measurement interpretation becomes more complicated. Thus, a more desirable experiment is to measure the emission of the band at 8-9 μ, where the emissivity assumption is better. (See Fig. 1.)

The scatter effect in the transmission spectra at the shorter wavelengths prevents accurate calculation of absorption coefficients ($\alpha$), although we have estimated such near the absorption band at 4.2 μ. The data fit in most cases the usual expression $I/I_0 = \exp (-\alpha d)$. These coefficients are 9.08 and 1.61 (in mm$^{-1}$) at the peak and lowest absorption wavelengths, 4.2 and 4.8 μ, respectively. Beyond 5 microns the data should permit a better determination of the coefficients. Some typical values are 4.90, 2.60, and 12.15 (in mm$^{-1}$) at 5.6, 6.1, and 7.5 μ, respectively.

An estimate of the surface layer thickness needed to give an $\epsilon$ close to 1.0 can be made with the approximation that the $\alpha$ is insensitive to temperature. Thus, at 4.2 μ where $\alpha = 9.08$ mm$^{-1}$, $d = 0.1, 0.2, \text{ and } 0.5$ mm correspond to transmission of 40, 16, and 1%. It is tempting
to estimate an emissivity for our case. However, the temperature distribution normal to the surface under our test conditions is sufficiently uncertain (the average ablating layer thickness 0.2 to 0.5 mm) so that we refrain from this estimate and corresponding correction to the measured minimum temperature.

The ablation of the Teflon models, monitored with motion pictures, proceeded smoothly and with no indication of a liquid layer. The surface temperature measured and general behavior observed are in qualitative agreement with the mechanism of pyrolysis and decomposition temperatures given by Siegle and Muus and Madorsky et al, especially in view of the great difference in heating rates between their and our experiments. The temperature for "rapid and complete" decomposition of Teflon to the monomer is given as 780° K by Madorsky. Our data are reasonable if we assume there is equilibrium at the surface during ablation.

Since completion of the present set of experiments we have learned of several results that indicate the temperature of ablating Teflon is in the 900-1,000° K range. Jennings and Easton have calculated a surface temperature 833° K to 1127° K at heating rates of 1 Btu/sec ft² to 1,000 Btu/sec ft², and cite the pyrometer measurement of Zirinsky of 922° K (in a cyanogen-oxygen flame at 450 Btu/sec ft²). Our heating rate was approximately 1,000 Btu/sec- ft². The most extensive work known to us is that of Hanst, which is based on measured spectral emissivity and covered the 8-9μ band. This gives temperatures in the 950-1,000° K range.
Thus, calculation of the emissivity in the IR region from our data is not warranted, since our operating true temperature is not known sufficiently accurately. However, the most important result is confirmation that the surface emissivity of Teflon varies with wavelength in accordance with the absorption spectrum. Thus nonspectral measurements leading to a "color" temperature can be misleading, i.e. treatment as a grey body is not justified.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our thanks to Drs. J. C. Siegle of the DuPont Company and S. L. Madorsky of the National Bureau of Standards. The former supplied thin film samples, and both provided much useful information. Dr. P. Hanst of Avco RAD contributed considerably invaluable discussions, and particularly in supplying his unpublished data and calling other results to our attention.
Fig. 1  IR transmission of Teflon (room temperature). (The 0.025 mm sample was cast film and transparent in the visible; the thicker samples were "skived" (shaved) from bulk, milk-white stock and opaque in the visible.)
Fig. 2  IR emission spectrum of Teflon (Au-Ge detector; 
Al$_2$O$_3$ window; CaF$_2$ spectrometer prism; 
0.1 volts/large division).
REFERENCES


2. For convenience and briefness we use Teflon loosely as a generic term. However, it should be noted that Teflon is the registered trademark of the DuPont Company, covering fluorocarbon resins. These include the TFE-fluorocarbon resins (polymers of tetrafluoroethylene) and FEP-fluorocarbon resins (copolymers of hexafluoropropylene and tetrafluoroethylene). Here we deal only with the TFE-resins.

3. See, for example, Georgiev, Hidalgo, and Adams, Avco-Everett Research Laboratory, Research Reports 47 and 65 (1959). These discuss enthalpy conditions and present photographs of the ablating models studied. These data are pertinent to earth satellite problems.


5. Wentink, T., Jr., Avco-Everett Research Laboratory, Research Report 55, July 1959 (presented for publication).


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INFRARED TRANSMISSION AND EMISION OF TELLON, by T. Wentink, Jr. and Walter G. Planet, Jr., March, 1960, 8 p. illus. (AERMD TN 60-20, Research Note 195)

(Contract AF 64(647)-278)

Unclassified report

The infrared absorption spectrum of Teflon at 700 to 15 μm is discussed. The surface emission spectrum at a temperature of 700 K is from 7 to 15 μm is reported. The emissivity varies with temperature, as expected, and the assignment of a color temperature of the hot surface as a gray body is not valid.