

EMISSION OF TRACE ELEMENTS DURING COAL COMBUSTION IN AIR VERSUS O₂/CO₂ MIXTURES

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Electricity generation from conventional coal firing in air is a major source for the emissions of heavy metals worldwide. In Australia, it contributes to ~31% of the total antimony (Sb), ~42% of the total cadmium (Cd), 38% of the total cobalt (Co), 43% of the total mercury (Hg) and 19% of the total chromium (Cr). Wood burning and waste materials incineration also contribute to a large fraction of hazardous metals including arsenic (As), lead (Pb) and zinc (Zn). These metals are mostly emitted as fine/ultrafine particulates with an aerodynamic size down to 0.01 μm , which are of great concern from a public health perspective. The inhalable ultrafine particles are difficult to capture and transport over long distances in air.

Emission of heavy metals could be substantially influenced with shifting coal combustion from conventional air-firing to oxy-firing. For oxy-firing of coal in O₂/CO₂ mixture, apart from the accumulation of the impurities including SO₂, HCl, steam and dust in flue gas, the distinct properties of CO₂ also play an important role in the partitioning of inorganic elements, which has been greatly underestimated or overlooked. For an O₂ fraction of 27~30% in CO₂ to match volatile flame and char temperatures in air (Buhre 2005), a number of issues are still greatly altered when compared with in air: char reactivity, structure and local gas environment (Rathnam 2009); diffusivity of inorganic vapours through char pores and CO₂ boundary layer (Molina and Shaddix 2007); and coagulation propensity of primary nuclei in flue gas.

Char properties can be changed due to high O₂ content and potential char-CO₂ gasification during oxy-firing, which in turn result in distinct char structure and formation of extra reducing gases on char surface to promote the vaporization of heavy

metals and the melting of refractory minerals. For instance, pyrite converts and melts differently in the reducing and oxidizing atmospheres (McLennan 2000), which accordingly influences the diffusion of the pyrite-bound As, *i.e.* arsenopyrite ($\text{As}_2\text{S}_3\text{-FeS}_2$), through the pyrite melt and the diffusion of gaseous As through char pore. The gaseous As may even diffuse differently through the CO_2 boundary layer on char surface, since a variety of properties such as density and viscosity for CO_2 differ from N_2 . The diffusivity of CH_4 in CO_2 has been confirmed to be around 20% less than in N_2 (Molina and Shaddix 2007). All these factors will eventually lead to distinguished vaporization rates for heavy metals in O_2/CO_2 mixture.

The emission behavior of Cr in drop-tube furnace and its partitioning between coarse ($>5.0 \mu\text{m}$) and fine ash particles in figure 1 evidenced the importance of bulk gas composition on the emission of heavy metals. As can be seen, compared to case 1 for air, the retention extent of Cr in coarse ash fraction is greatly reduced with bulk gas shifting to 27% O_2 in CO_2 and the addition of steam (H_2O), HCl and SO_2 in bulk gas. Apparently, the Cr vaporisation extent is increased during oxy-fuel combustion of Victorian brown coal. Characterisation of the chemical forms of Cr (Cr^{3+} versus Cr^{6+}) by X-ray adsorption Near-Edge Spectroscopy (XANES) has also been conducted, which will be further reported to elucidate the behavior of Cr during coal combustion in air versus O_2/CO_2 .

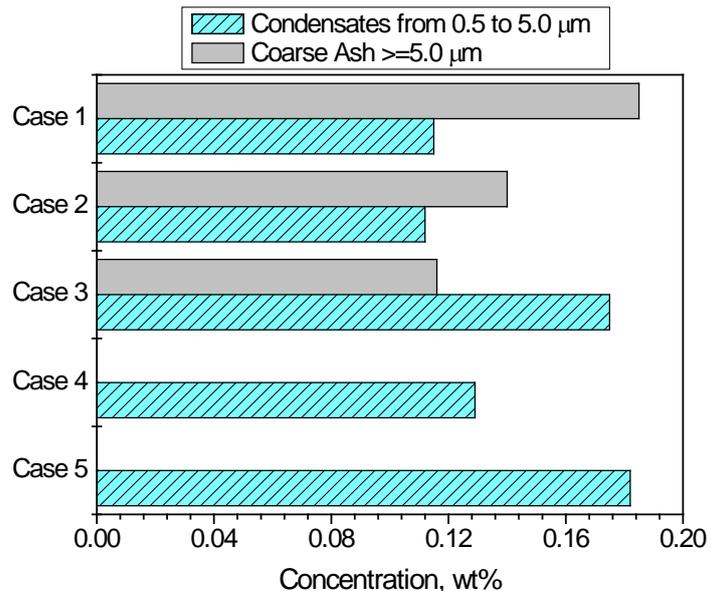


Figure 1 Partitioning of Cr in Victorian brown coal ash generated during combustion at 1000°C in a variety of bulk gases. Case 1 is air, case 2 is 27% O_2 in CO_2 , case 3 is 27% O_2 and 20% H_2O in CO_2 , case 4 is the bulk gas of case 3 added with 250 ppm HCl, and case 5 is the bulk gas of case 4 added with 250 ppm HCl and 500 ppm SO_2 .

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