Remaining Life Assessment of Coker Heater Tubes

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Overview

• Introduction
  ▪ Coker Heaters
  ▪ Creep

• Remaining Life Assessment
  ▪ API 579-1 / ASME FFS-1 creep life assessment

• Creep Testing
  ▪ Tube removal guidelines
  ▪ Test Procedure
  ▪ Case study

• Other Damage Mechanisms

• Concluding Remarks
Coker Heaters

- Operating conditions typically different from other fired heaters due to coking of radiant tubes
- Industry moving towards heavier/cheaper crudes
  - Larger quantities of vacuum residue
- Throughput limited by Fouling
  - Frequent decoking cycles
Coker Heaters

• Creep is one of the most prominent damage mechanisms in coker heaters
• 9Cr-1Mo steel is the workhorse alloy in the refining industry
  ▪ 5Cr-½Mo and 7Cr-½Mo in radiant sections of few old furnaces
  ▪ Upgrades to austenitic stainless steel series or Incoloy 800H/HT are now common
What is Creep?

• Time-dependent permanent inelastic strain in materials when subjected to stresses below yield at elevated temperatures

\[ \varepsilon_c = f(\sigma, t, T) \]

\[ \dot{\varepsilon}_c = A\sigma^n \exp\left(\frac{-Q}{RT}\right) \]  
Bailey-Norton steady state creep law

• Creep properties are determined from stress-rupture tests and/or accelerated creep tests
Larson-Miller Parameter

- Time-Temperature parameter developed in the early 1950s by F. R. Larson and J. Miller in order to extrapolate short-term rupture test results to long-term predictions

\[ LMP = T(C + \log t) \]
MPC Omega Method

- Based on the concept that strain rate is a direct gage of creep damage

\[ \dot{\varepsilon}_c = \dot{\varepsilon}_{co} \exp(\Omega \varepsilon_c) \]

- Practical engineering alloys used in high temperature applications display little or no primary or secondary creep, residing in the tertiary range for most of their lives
- \(\dot{\varepsilon}_c\) is the creep damage coefficient and defines the rate at which the strain rate accelerates with increasing strain
- It is not required to run creep tests to rupture

\[ t_r = \frac{1}{\dot{\varepsilon}_{co} \Omega_m} \]
Modeling Creep Behavior

• Both LMP and Omega are fairly easy to use and are applicable to a number of engineering alloys
• LMP and MPC Omega are not the only methods available to model creep behavior
  ▪ These are the only two methods provided in API 579-1 / ASME FFS-1
• Neither methods are any more accurate than some of the other approaches that have been proposed
  ▪ Manson-Haferd
  ▪ Orr-Sherby-Dorn
  ▪ Monkman-Grant
Why Do Creep Life Assessment?

- Determine how much life is remaining in the tubes
- Screen for creep damage prior to shutdowns to prevent/limit costly inspection/testing
- Determine if the furnace can be operated at higher temperatures
  - Higher EOR temperatures are often desired in coker heaters to reduce the frequency of decoking cycles
  - Creep life assessment can show where operating limits should be set to maximize throughput vs. risk of failure
Inputs for Heater Tube Assessment

• Design Data
  ▪ Material of construction
  ▪ Tube size and schedule

• Service History
  ▪ Tube metal temperatures
    – Thermocouple data and/or infrared data
  ▪ Pressure
    – Inlet pressure and pressure drop
  ▪ Corrosion
    – UT and replacement history
    – Retirement thickness
  ▪ Upsets
API 579-1 / ASME FFS-1 Creep Life Assessment

- Part 10 provides assessment procedures for pressurized components operating in the creep range.
- Methodologies are provided to compute accumulated creep damage at each time increment where the component is subjected to a specific stress-temperature combination:
  - Rupture data in terms of Larson-Miller parameter
  - MPC Project Omega data
- Based on a linear damage accumulation model.
Remaining Life Calculations

- Remaining life calculated for each time increment $n t$

**MPC Omega**

$$nL = \frac{1}{\dot{\epsilon}_{co} \Omega_m}$$

**LMP (US Customary Units)**

$$\log_{10} nL = \frac{1000 \times LMP(n S_{eff})}{(nT + 460)} - C_{LMP}$$

- Total damage fraction

$$D_c^{total} = \sum_{n=1}^{N} \frac{n t}{nL}$$

- Creep life is fully consumed when the accumulated creep damage fraction equals 1.0
  - API 579-1 / ASME FFS-1 adds a safety margin (useful life consumed at D = 0.8)
Example: Remaining Life Results
Why Do Creep Testing?

• Precise description of the furnace operating history is not available
  ▪ Reliable assessments cannot be made without accurate history

• Tubes have (or are suspected to have) suffered in-service degradation
  ▪ Visual indications of creep damage are not always present

• Life assessment based on API 579-1 / ASME FFS-1 creep properties predicted that the tubes are near end of life
  ▪ Testing provides creep properties specific to your tubes
Guidelines for Tube Removal

- Sample from the areas exposed to the highest temperature regions that will be remaining in service
  - Use combination of IR data, thermocouple data, tube visual inspection, thickness measurements, and bulging checks (visual, strapping, lamping, and/or crawlers)
- Clearly mark the tubes before removal
  - Location in the heater (Furnace number, pass, elevation, distance to closest thermocouple, etc.)
  - Fire-side & back-side (if applicable)
- Testing the wrong tubes could be worse than not testing at all!
- Tube sample should be a minimum of 18” long if cold cut, or 24” long if torch cut
Accelerated Creep Testing

- Five specimens from each tube
  - Four hoop specimens from the fire-side
  - One axial specimen from the back-side
- The back-side specimen is a reference sample intended to represent, to the degree possible, a sample with minimal creep damage
- Specimens are typically nickel plated to limit oxidation
Creep Testing: Omega vs. LMP

• Omega method requires testing in two stages
  ▪ Initial creep rate (ICR) more sensitive to changes in temperature and stress compared to Omega
    – Determine initial creep rate (ICR) at test conditions close to operating conditions
    – Determination of Omega requires further acceleration of test conditions

• LMP can be obtained by:
  ▪ Testing to rupture
  ▪ Predicting the time to rupture once a clear tertiary behavior is observed

• Materials that have not been thermally stabilized in service may not conform to the Omega model
Case Study: Background

- Coker heater commissioned in 1982
- Tube Material: 9Cr-1Mo (SA213-T9)
- Tube Size: 3” Sch. 160
- Pressure: 450 psi
- Corrosion Rate: 3 mpy
Case Study: Fire-side Specimen

9Cr-1Mo
Fire-side hoop specimen A

- 1152°F, 5.22ksi
- 1200°F, 5.61ksi

\[ t_r = \frac{1}{\dot{\varepsilon}_{co} \Omega} = 1914 \text{hrs.} \]

\[ \varepsilon_c = -\frac{1}{\Omega} \ln(1 - \dot{\varepsilon}_{co} \Omega t) \]

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- 1 hr = 3600 s
- 24 hr = 1 day
- 24 hr = 1 day
- 7 day = 1 week

An employee-owned company
Case Study: Fire-side Specimen

9Cr-1Mo
Fire-side hoop specimen D

\[ \varepsilon_c = -\frac{1}{\Omega} \ln(1 - \dot{\varepsilon}_{co} \Omega t) \]

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1372°F
1.71ksi

1372°F
2.57ksi

Strain (in/in)

Time (Hours)
Case Study: Remaining Life

- Plenty of creep life left in the tube at EOR temperatures less than 1275°F
- Test results show some scatter
- Back-side specimen test results lie within the scatter
Case Study: Omega vs. LMP

\[ LMP = (T + 460)(20 + \log t_r) \times 10^{-3} \]
Other Damage Mechanisms

- Creep is not the only damage mechanism in coker heaters
  - Carburization
  - Sigma Phase (Stainless Steels)
  - External Oxidation
  - Sulfidic Corrosion
  - Brittle Fracture
  - Erosion
- Any of these damage mechanisms can lead to tube failures before creep life is consumed
  - Some might interact with creep, accelerating rupture
Carburization

- Coke deposits promote carburization on the ID
  - Carbon combines with carbide-forming elements in the alloy to form internal carbides
  - Occurs in CS, Cr-Mo alloys, 300 and 400 series SS typically above 1100°F
  - Reduces ambient temperature ductility, toughness, and weldability of the alloy

Brittle fracture in carburized 9Cr coker heater tube
Sigma Phase Embrittlement

- Iron-Chromium intermetallic phase that forms in ferritic and austenitic stainless steels when exposed to 1050°F - 1800°F
  - Causes loss of ductility and embrittlement below 250°F - 300°F
  - May affect creep properties and reduce creep ductility
External Oxidation

• Conversion of metal to oxide scale in the presence of oxygen
  ▪ Metal loss increases with increasing temperature

• Flame impingement causes localized heating
  ▪ Increased oxidation on the OD
  ▪ Increased coke formation on the ID
Erosion

- Tubes in Coker furnaces require frequent decoking processes to remove ID deposits
- Steam air and spall decoking are regularly used in refinery operations
  - Localized thinning at areas of high velocities decoking
  - Return bends are particularly affected
  - All alloys are susceptible
Concluding Remarks

• Creep is becoming more and more relevant as heaters age and profit margins are pushing process limits
• Useful life can be prolonged with a combination of life assessment calculations and process changes
• Accelerated creep testing can be employed to shift the operating history of the tubes
• Other possible damage mechanisms must not be overlooked
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Creep voids in 9Cr-1Mo steel