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Effect of Capillary Retention by Dusts on the Corrosivity of Deliquescence Brines

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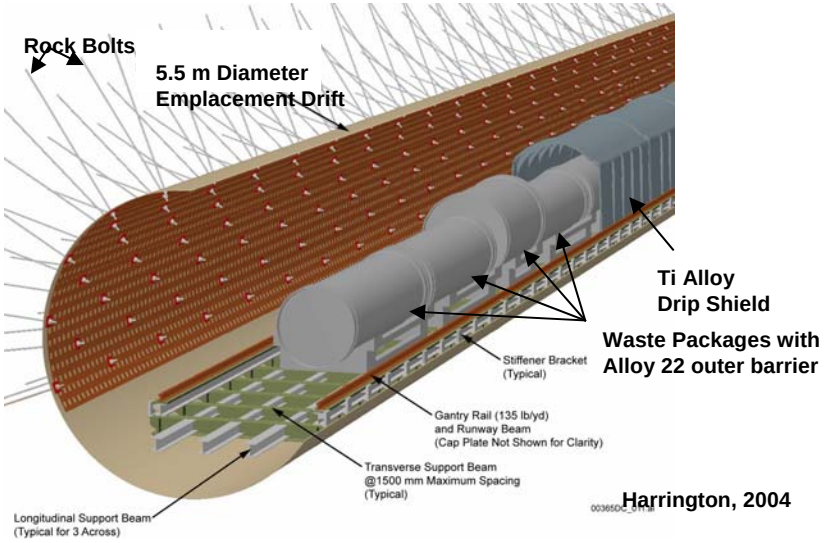
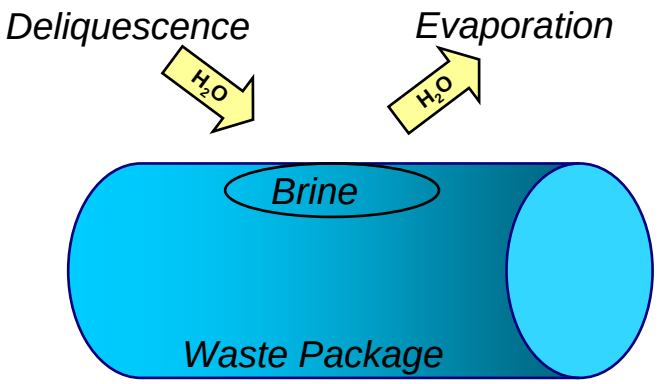
Materials Research Society
Symposium on the Scientific Basis for Nuclear Waste Management XXXI
Sheffield, U.K.
September 16–21, 2007

Background

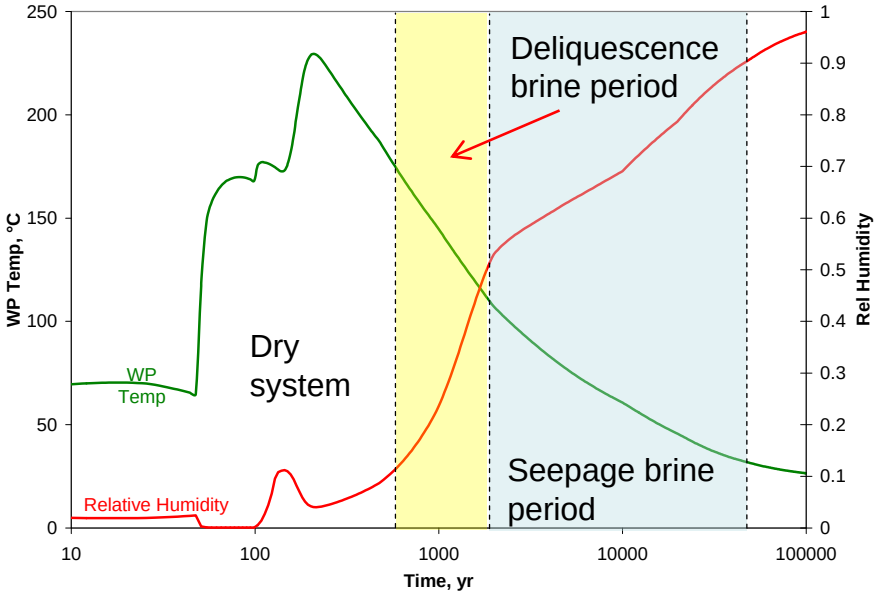
- Engineered barriers at a potential Yucca Mountain, Nevada, high-level waste repository include waste packages and drip shields
- Corrosion due to brines is a potential degradation process
  - Deliquescence of inorganic salts present in dusts
  - Evaporative concentration of seepage water





Background (Cont'd.)

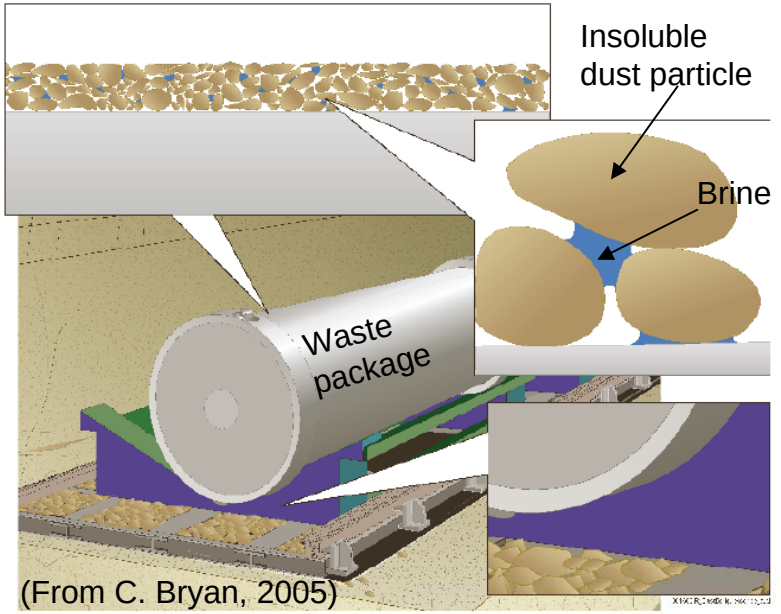
- Deliquescence
  - Rapid absorption of water from humid air by inorganic salts to form a saturated solution
- Potential corrosion of engineered barriers at elevated temperatures
  - $NaCl$-KNO_3-$NaNO_3$ salts have deliquescence points exceeding 190 °C [374 °F]
  - These salts are possible deliquescent mineral assemblages at Yucca Mountain (C. Bryan, 2005)



Calculated Waste Package Temperature and Relative Humidity for a Degraded Drift Scenario

Background (Cont'd.)

- Rock dusts could mitigate corrosion by deliquescence brines (C. Bryan, 2005)
  - Physical isolation of salt minerals in the dust may inhibit the formation of eutectic salt mixtures with low deliquescence relative humidity
  - Limited volume of brine
  - Capillary and surface tension effects in the dust will limit brine contact with metal surface



(From C. Bryan, 2005)

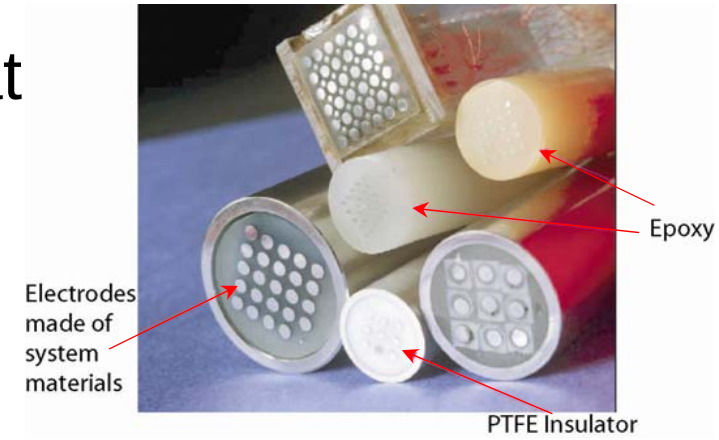
Objectives of This Study

- Measure corrosion in brines formed by deliquescence of salts mixed with rock dusts
- Evaluate the effect of capillary retention by dusts on corrosivity of deliquescence brines

Experimental Method

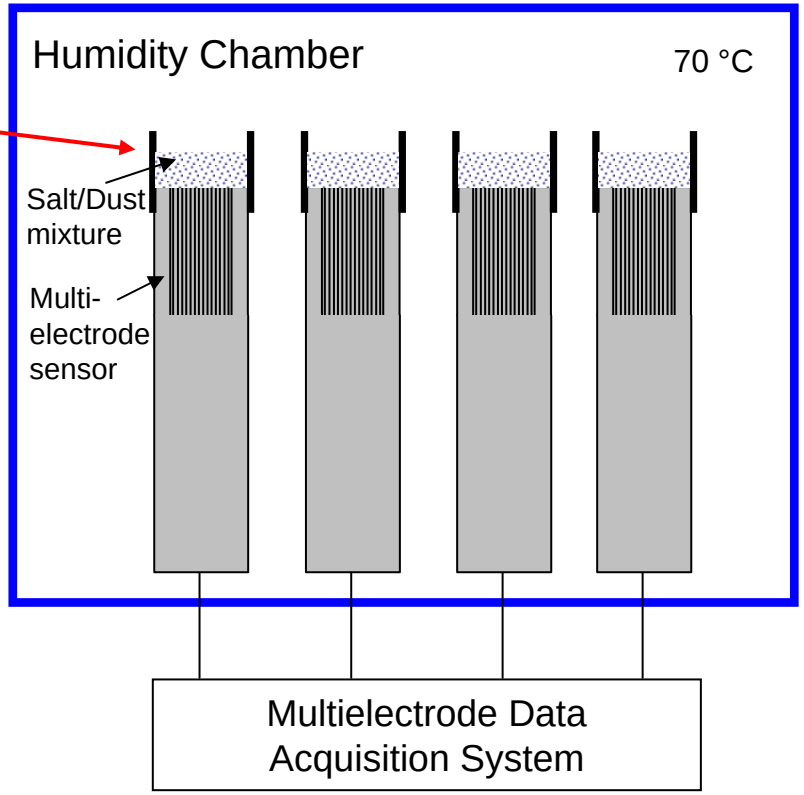
- Corrosion was monitored using a coupled multielectrode array sensor (MAS) probe developed at SwRI® (Yang et al., 2002)
  - Carbon steel electrodes for higher sensitivity to corrosivity of brine
- Deliquescent salt: NaCl
- Rock dust: Topopah Spring Tuff
  - Potential repository host rock
  - Crushed and sieved to <74 μm [<0.003 in] diameter
- Quartz powder used for comparison
  - Ground and sieved to <250 μm [<0.01 in] diameter
  - Acid washed

Coupled Multielectrode Array Sensors

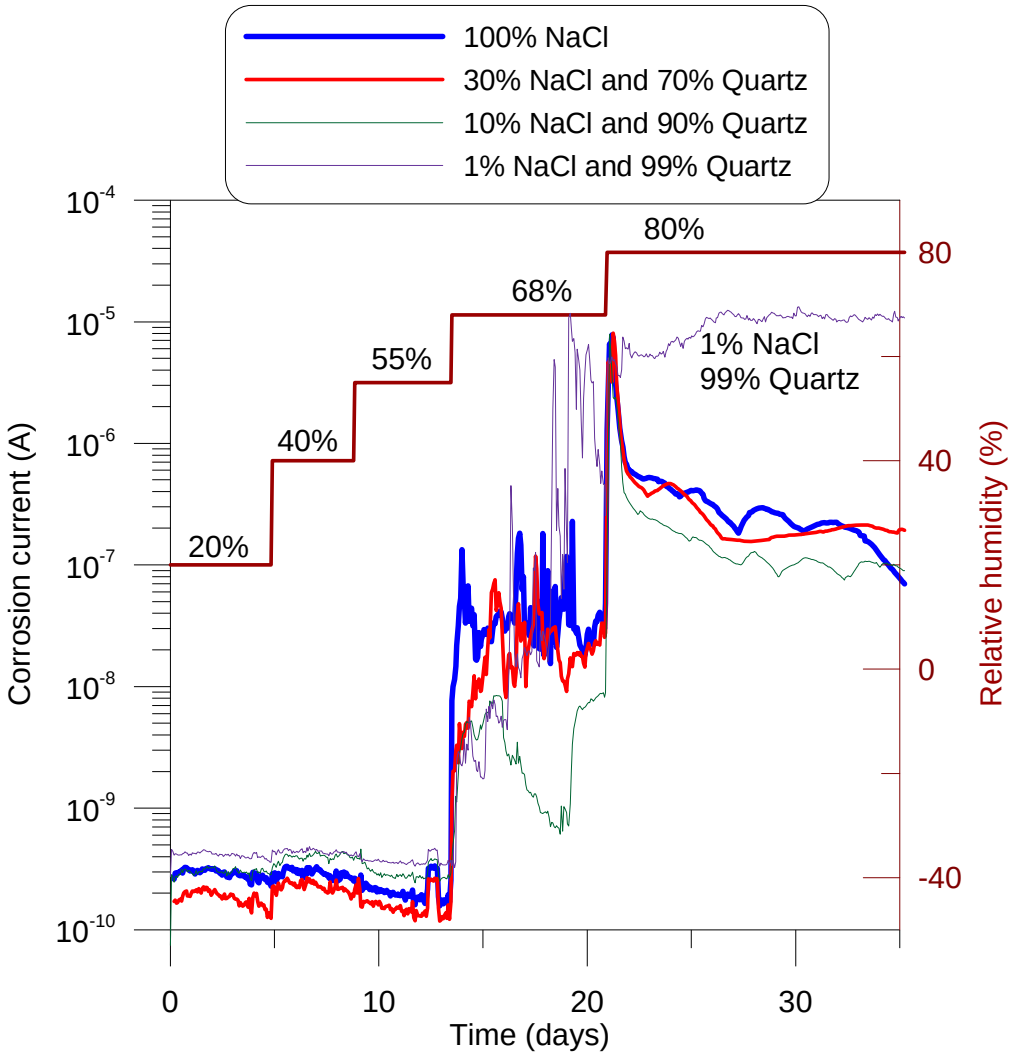


Experimental Setup

- Salt/dust mixture placed inside Tygon® sleeve above the MAS probe
  - 10 g [0.35 oz] total mass
  - Relative amount of NaCl varied from 0.4 to 100 wt%
- Controlled temperature-humidity chamber (ESPEC)
  - Temperature = 70 °C [158 °F]
  - Relative humidity raised stepwise from <20% to above the deliquescence point of NaCl (75% at 70 °C [158 °F])



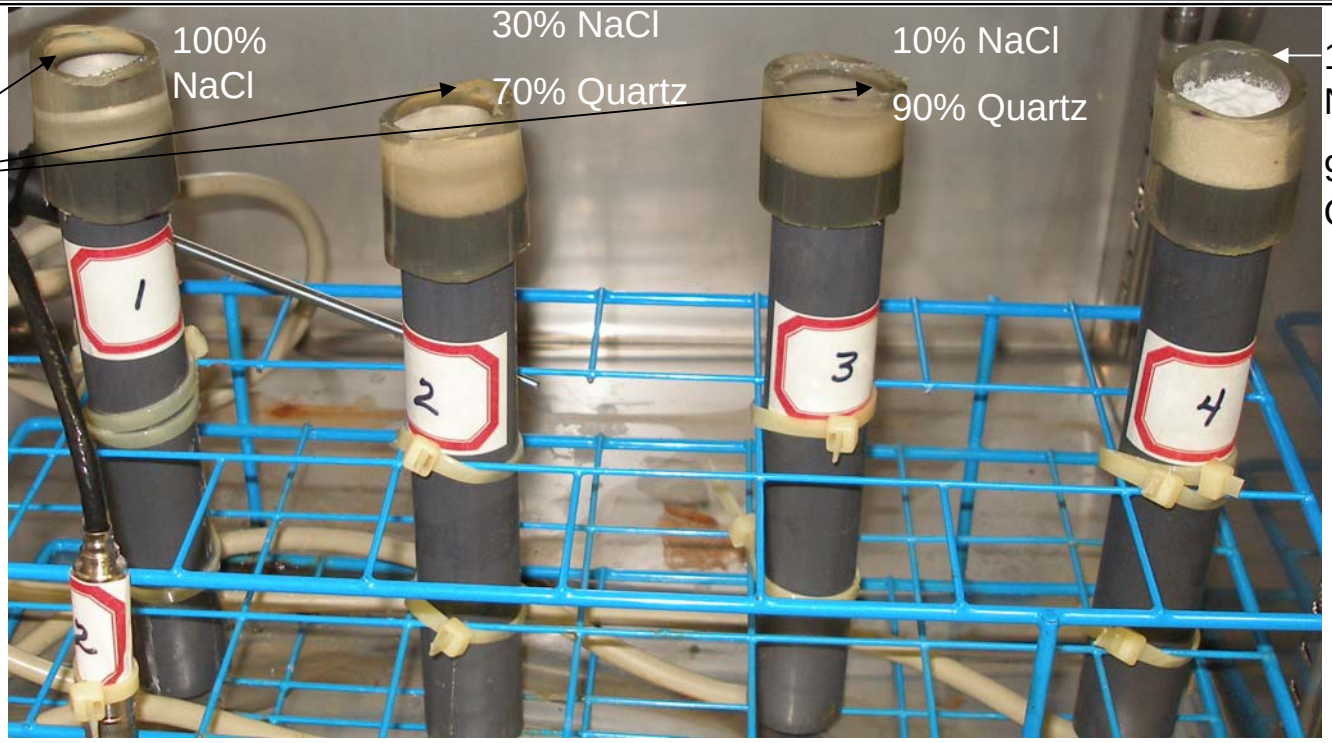
Results–Test 1: NaCl/Quartz Mixture



- Brine started to form at 68% RH, below the NaCl deliquescence relative humidity (75% RH)
- Brine from 1%-NaCl/99%-quartz mixture is the most corrosive
  - Possibly due to very thin electrolyte film where oxygen transport is not a limiting factor
  - Calculated volume of deliquescence brines (per 10 g of solid)
    - 100% NaCl: 31 mL
    - 30% NaCl: 9.3 mL
    - 10% NaCl: 3.1 mL
    - 1% NaCl: 0.31 mL

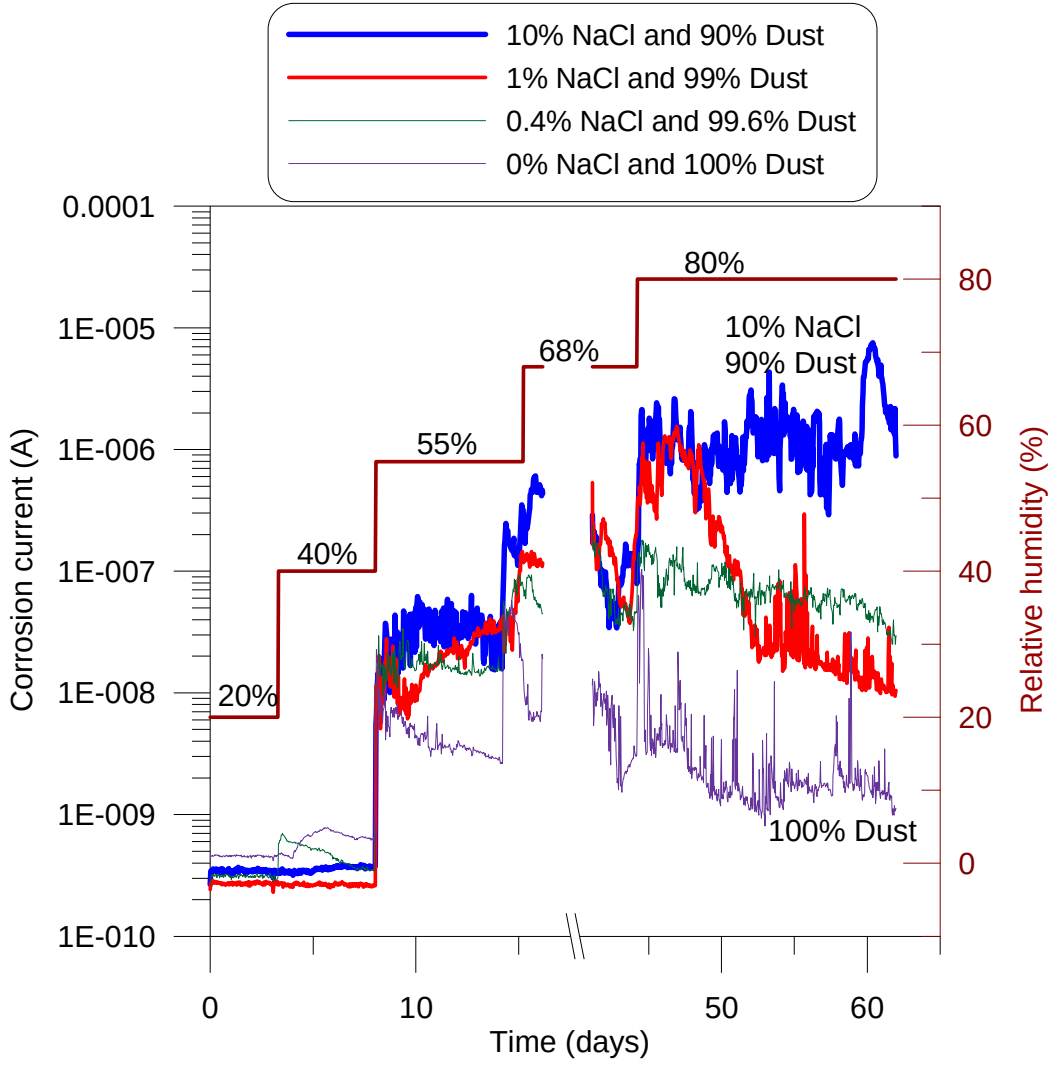
Test 1 (NaCl/Quartz): Post-Test Observations

- Deliquescence brines formed at 68% RH and 80% RH
- H_2O overflow observed at 80% RH for probes 1, 2, and 3, but not on probe #4



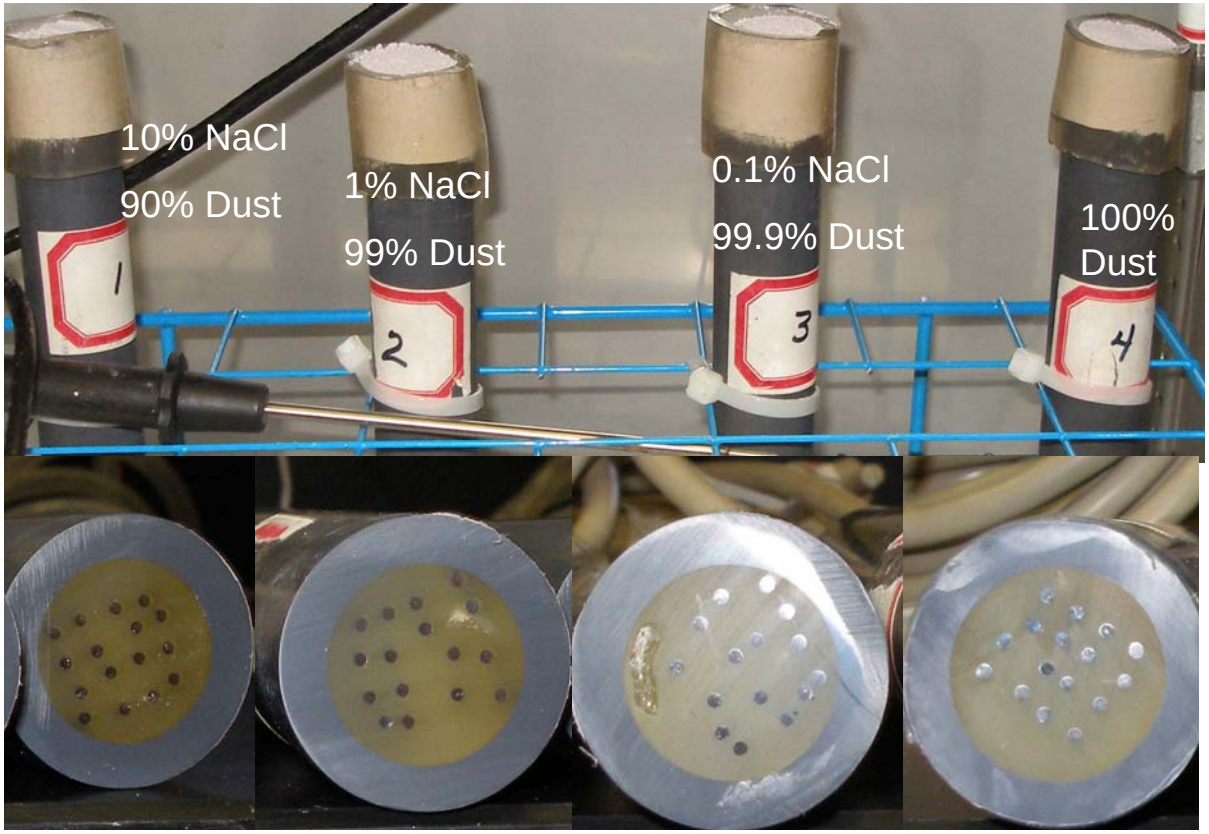
Corrosion was observed on each probe indicating solution contacted the metal surface

Results–Test 2: NaCl/Dust Mixture



- Brine formed at 55% RH, below that observed for NaCl/quartz mixture (68% RH) and much lower than NaCl deliquescence point
  - Possible moisture absorption on dust
- Dust reduced the corrosion current, but did not prevent brine from contacting the metal surface

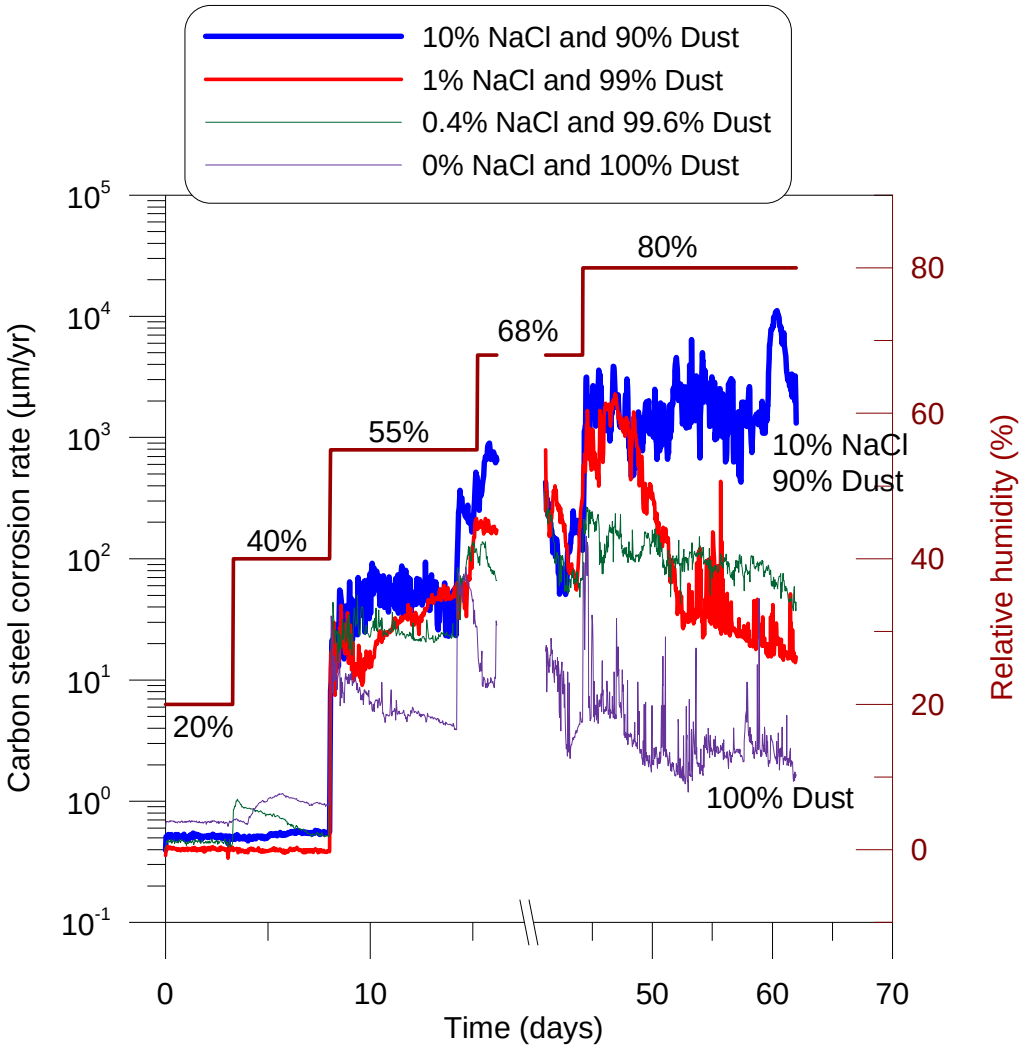
Test 2 (NaCl/Dust): Post-Test Observations



All the probes were corroded indicating liquid formed at each test condition

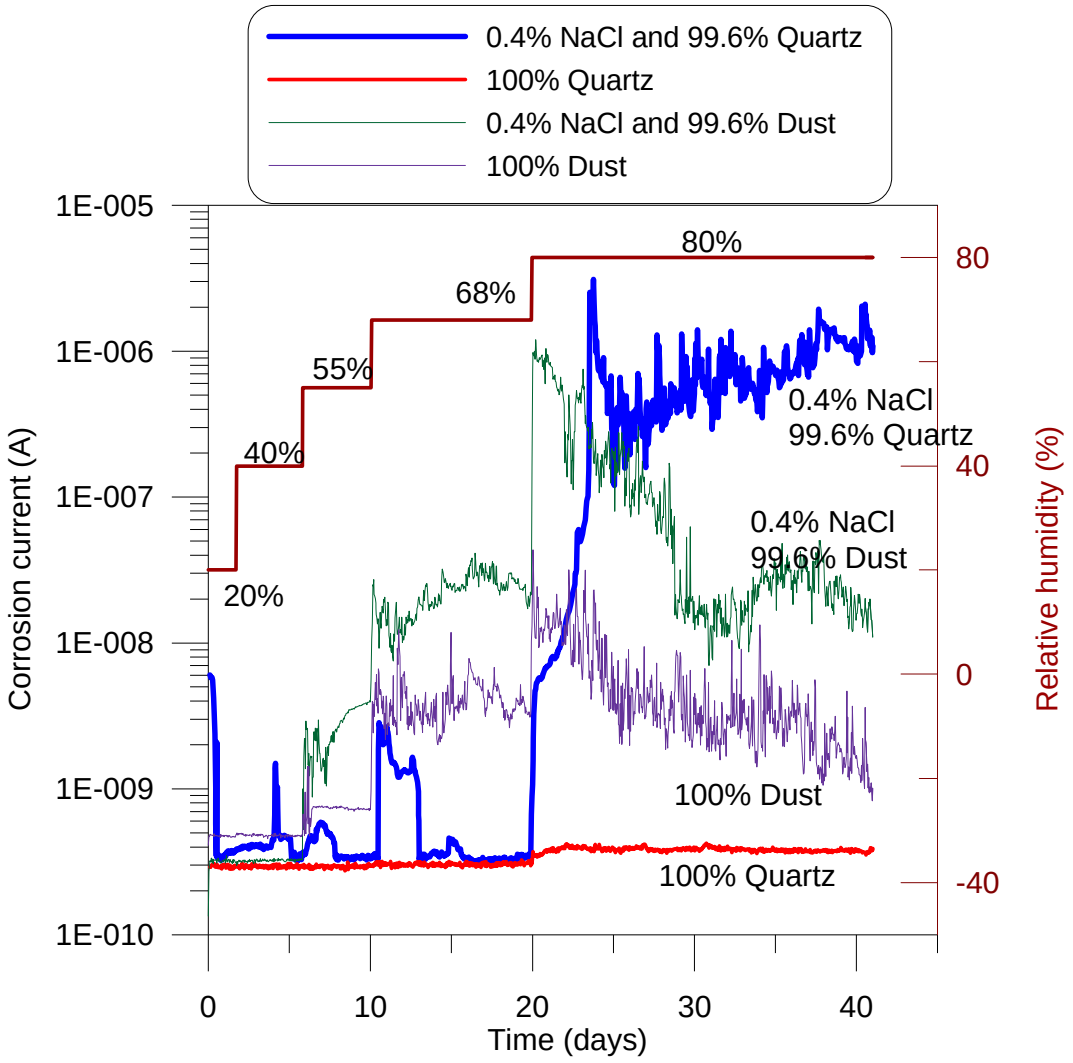
- Calculated volume of deliquescence brines (per 10 g of solid)
  - 10% NaCl: 3.1 mL
  - 1% NaCl: 0.31 mL
  - 0.4% NaCl: 0.12 mL
- No visible liquid formed even at 80% RH, but the solid mixtures were damp

Test 2 (NaCl/Dust): Corrosion Rate



- For all mixtures (even for NaCl-free system), carbon steel corrosion rate increased above 1 µm/yr once relative humidity exceeded 55%
  - Brine formed by deliquescence is sufficient to support ionic transport
  - Sufficient leachable salt present in pure rock dust to initiate corrosion of carbon steel

Results–Test 3: NaCl/Quartz and NaCl/Dust Mixtures



- In 100% quartz test (no NaCl), no deliquescence brine was formed
- In 100% rock dust test (no NaCl), corrosion was observed indicating deliquescence brine was formed
- Deliquescence brine formed at lower relative humidity (55% RH) in NaCl/dust mixture compared to NaCl/quartz mixture (RH 68%)
- Carbon steel corrosion rate increased above 1 µm/yr once relative humidity exceeded 55%

Conclusions

- Capillary retention by rock dust reduces the amount of deliquescence brine contacting the metal surface
- For carbon steel, however, capillary retention does not prevent corrosion by brines formed by salt deliquescence
- Future tests are planned using Alloy 22 material for the MAS probes at temperatures >70 °C [158 °F]

Acknowledgment

The work presented here was performed by the Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analyses (CNWRA) for the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, Division of High-Level Waste Repository Safety, under Contract No. NRC-02-02-012.

This presentation is an independent product of the CNWRA and does not necessarily reflect the view or regulatory position of the NRC.

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