

Nagra / PSI

Chemical Thermodynamic

Data Base 01/01

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The cover shows quartz crystals in a big vein in Grimsel granodiorite (Swiss Alps).

Photograph: Comet Photoshopping GmbH, Zürich. The periodic table of the elements indicates the database contents, i.e. elements commonly found as major solutes in natural waters (green), and actinides and fission products (red).

ABSTRACT

The Nagra/PSI Chemical Thermodynamic Data Base has been updated from version 05/92 to 01/01 to support an ongoing safety assessment of a planned Swiss repository for high-level radioactive waste. Database version 05/92 distinguished between “core data” and “supplemental data”. Core data are for elements commonly found as major solutes in natural waters. These data are well established and have not been changed to any significant degree in this update. Supplemental data comprise actinides and fission products, Mn, Fe, Si and Al. Our update from version 05/92 to 01/01 involved major revisions for most of the supplemental data. Altogether, more than 70% of our database contents have been updated.

Data for U, Np, Pu, Am and Tc recommended by the internationally recognised NEA TDB project were considered in our update. Our reasons for not accepting several NEA recommendations are documented in detail. Thermodynamic data for Th, Sn, Eu, Pd, Al, and solubility and metal complexation of sulphides and silicates were extensively reviewed. Data for Zr, Ni and Se were examined less rigorously as these elements are currently being reviewed in phase II of the NEA TDB project.

Our experiences from this two year team effort can be summarised as follows. (1) Detailed in-house reviews and critical appraisal of NEA recommendations greatly improved the chemical consistency and quality of the selected data, as shown e.g. by comparison of complexation constants for M(III) and M(IV) oxidation states of actinides and fission products. (2) On the other hand, we could discern major gaps in the data, especially missing carbonate complexes. (3) In some systems, e.g. $\text{ThO}_2 - \text{H}_2\text{O}$ and $\text{UO}_2 - \text{H}_2\text{O}$, experimental data could not be described by a unique set of thermodynamic constants. There, a pragmatic approach based on solubility data was chosen to provide data for application to performance assessment.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Nagra/PSI Datenbank für chemische Thermodynamik wurde im Rahmen einer Sicherheitsanalyse für ein geplantes Schweizer Endlager für hochaktive Abfälle von Version 05/92 auf Version 01/01 aktualisiert. Die Datenbankversion 05/92 unterschied zwischen “Kerndaten” (core data) und “Ergänzungsdaten” (supplemental data). Kerndaten betreffen Elemente die normalerweise die Hauptbestandteile der gelösten Inhaltsstoffe natürlicher Wässer bilden. Diese Daten sind gut fundiert und wurden bei diesem Update nicht wesentlich geändert. Ergänzungsdaten umfassen Aktiniden und Spaltprodukte, Mn, Fe, Si und Al. Unser Update von Version 05/92 zu Version 01/01 bedingte eine wesentliche Überarbeitung der meisten dieser Ergänzungsdaten. Insgesamt wurden mehr als 70% der Werte in unserer Datenbank aktualisiert.

Daten für U, Np, Pu, Am und Tc, die im Rahmen des international anerkannten NEA TDB Projekts empfohlen wurden, sind in unserem Update berücksichtigt. Unsere Gründe dafür, dass wir nicht alle NEA Empfehlungen übernommen haben, sind ausführlich dokumentiert. Thermodynamische Daten für Th, Sn, Eu, Pd und Al, sowie Daten zur Löslichkeit und Metallkomplexierung von Sulfiden und Silikaten wurden detailliert von uns begutachtet. Daten für Zr, Ni und Se haben wir weniger rigoros überprüft, da diese Elemente zur Zeit im Rahmen der Phase II des NEA TDB Projekts begutachtet werden.

Die Erfahrungen aus dieser zweijährigen intensiven Arbeit unserer Gruppe können wie folgt zusammengefasst werden. (1) Ausführliche eigene Begutachtungen und die kritische Bewertung der NEA Empfehlungen haben die chemische Konsistenz und die Qualität der ausgewählten Daten deutlich verbessert. Dies wird z.B. mit einem Vergleich der Komplexbildungskonstanten für die Oxidationszustände M(III) und M(IV) von Aktiniden und Spaltprodukten aufgezeigt. (2) Andererseits konnten wir bedeutende Lücken in den Daten identifizieren. Besonders erwähnt seien hier fehlende Carbonat Komplexe. (3) In einigen Systemen, z.B. $\text{ThO}_2 - \text{H}_2\text{O}$ und $\text{UO}_2 - \text{H}_2\text{O}$, konnten die experimentellen Daten nicht mit einem einzigen widerspruchsfreien Satz thermodynamischer Konstanten beschrieben werden. Um dennoch Datensätze für die Sicherheitsanalyse bereitstellen zu können, wurde in diesen Fällen ein pragmatischer, auf Löslichkeitsdaten basierender Weg gewählt.

RÉSUMÉ

La banque de données chimiques et thermodynamiques de Cisra/PSI a été mise à jour dans le but d'appuyer l'analyse de sécurité en cours pour le dépôt planifié en Suisse de déchets hautement radioactifs. La version 05/92 de cette banque de données distinguait entre "données essentielles" et "données complémentaires". Les données essentielles correspondent aux éléments que l'on trouve communément en concentration élevée dans les eaux naturelles. Ces données sont bien établies et n'ont pas été modifiées de manière significative dans cette mise à jour. Les données complémentaires incluent les actinides et les produits de fission, Mn, Fe, Si et Al. Notre mise à jour de la version 05/92 à 01/01 implique des révisions majeures pour la plupart des données complémentaires. Au total, plus de 70 % de notre banque de données a été revue.

Dans la mise à jour, les données pour U, Np, Pu, Am et Tc recommandées par le projet NEA-TDB, reconnu au niveau international, ont été considérées. Les raisons qui nous amènent à ne pas accepter la totalité des recommandations de NEA ont été documentées en détail. Les données thermodynamiques pour Th, Sn, Eu, Pd, Al, ainsi que la solubilité et la complexation des sulfures et silicates avec les métaux ont été extensivement révisées. Les données pour Zr, Ni et Se ont été examinées avec moins de rigueur, en considérant que ces éléments sont actuellement en révision dans le cadre de la phase II du projet NEA-TDB.

Les enseignements tirés de cet effort de deux ans effectué par notre équipe, peuvent être résumés de la façon suivante. (1) Les révisions accomplies, ainsi que l'évaluation critique des recommandations de NEA, ont amélioré la consistance chimique et la qualité des données sélectionnées. La preuve en est apportée par la comparaison entre elles des constantes de complexation pour les états d'oxydation M(III) et M(IV) des actinides et des produits de fission. (2) D'autre part, nous avons pu discerner des lacunes majeures dans les données, en particulier l'absence de nombreux complexes du carbonate. (3) Pour certains systèmes, par exemple $\text{ThO}_2 - \text{H}_2\text{O}$ et $\text{UO}_2 - \text{H}_2\text{O}$, l'ensemble des données expérimentales n'a pas pu être décrite par une série unique de constantes thermodynamiques. Dans ce cas, une approche pragmatique basée sur les données de solubilité a été choisie.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first proposal of a database update in 1997 and the support of this proposal by Dr. Bernhard Schwyn (Nagra) initialised the work documented in this report. At that time the modest project plan for a database update envisaged relying mainly on NEA's TDB reviews and to summarise the various bits and pieces of TDB work done at PSI.

Shortly after the project actually commenced in 1999 it turned into a fascinating team effort lasting for two years and resulting in a detailed review and update of more than 70% of our database contents. I want to thank my colleagues at PSI/LES, Drs. Urs Berner, Enzo Curti and Tres Thoenen, and the "founding father" of the original Nagra TDB, Dr. F.J. Pearson, for joining me in the seemingly never-ending task of reviewing a huge pile of literature, and reading, commenting on, and thus significantly improving each others' manuscripts.

The project of updating our database management program, PMATCHC, turned into an equally fascinating multi-national effort involving the designer F.J. Pearson, New Bern, USA, the programmer Svetlana Dmytriyeva, Kiev, Ukraine, the "interface" between designer and programmer Dmitrii A. Kulik, the principal user Tres Thoenen, and myself as the co-ordinator.

Comments and discussions that helped clarifying and improving the most opaque parts of drafts of this report have been provided by Prof. Ingmar Grenthe, KTH Stockholm, Sweden, by Dr. Volker Neck and Prof. J.I. Kim, FZK/INE Karlsruhe, Germany, and by Prof. Th. Fanghänel, FZR/IfR Dresden, Germany.

The entire manuscript of this report has undergone a peer review by an independent reviewer, according to Nagra's QA procedures. The peer review comment records may be obtained on request from Nagra. The peer reviewer is Prof. Ingmar Grenthe, Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Stockholm, Sweden. His contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

I would like to thank Dr. Paul Wersin (Nagra) for his continuous support of our project, for patiently reminding us of our promised deadlines, for reviewing the entire report, and last but not least, for handling some non-trivial financial aspects of this project.

I appreciate the tireless efforts of Beatrice Gschwend merging "almost compatible" text files from different computer systems, solving numerous technical problems, and doing the layout work of the entire report.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The safety of radioactive waste disposal is one of the most debated topics in the field of environmental hazards. From a scientific point of view, to be convincing, evaluations of any waste disposal project must be based on sound theories and methods. One of these sound and well-established scientific theories is chemical equilibrium thermodynamics. Heavy metals (i.e. most radionuclides) will not dissolve without limits in the pore fluids of an underground repository due to the precipitation of sparingly soluble solids. Chemical equilibrium thermodynamics allows estimation of the maximum concentration of a given radionuclide in a specified pore fluid. This concept of solubility limits on radionuclide concentrations constitutes one of the pillars of safety of most radioactive waste disposal concepts (HADERMANN 1997).

Thermodynamic constants in PA are used for more than assessing radionuclide solubility limits (BERNER 1995, 1999). They are also used in modelling reference pore waters (PEARSON & SCHOLTIS 1993, CURTI 1993), and they are needed in deriving case-specific sorption coefficients (BRADBURY & BAEYENS 1997). It is important to use the same database throughout this model chain in order to guarantee internally consistent results: The definition of the pore water of a host rock, e.g. the pore water of a clay formation or crystalline rock, is a prerequisite for deriving consistent pore water compositions of cementitious waste and of the backfill of the underground caverns, e.g. bentonite. This bentonite pore water in turn is needed to calculate elemental solubility limits for all radionuclides within the repository. Likewise, cement, backfill and host rock pore water compositions are needed to adjust radionuclide sorption coefficients to these site specific conditions.

The original Nagra Thermochemical Data Base (TDB), issued in 1992, was based on data reviews and experimental studies published through 1990 (PEARSON & BERNER 1991, PEARSON et al. 1992). It was developed to support the performance assessment of a planned Swiss repository for high-level waste in crystalline rock (NAGRA 1994). The Nagra/PSI Chemical Thermodynamic Data Base has now been updated to support the ongoing performance assessment of an alternative repository concept for high-level waste in a clay formation.

Our update work was guided by the following questions which have to be answered when using thermodynamic data in performance assessment:

- Are the thermodynamic data sufficiently accurate ?
- Does the thermodynamic database contain the information necessary to describe the safety relevant processes in sufficient detail?
- Is equilibrium thermodynamics applicable for the system to be modelled?