

METHOD FOR CONTROLLING AN OZONE GENERATING
MACHINE

The present invention relates to a method for controlling an ozone generating machine, and is directed in particular to an ozone generating machine comprising an ozone generator with at least two electrodes separated by a ozonizing gap and a dielectric layer, and coupled to an electric power unit to generate electric discharges in a gas containing dioxygen and flowing in the ozonizing gap.

Document US8728402B2 describes an example of ozone generating machine comprising at least two electrodes. However, such machine, while generating a given amount of ozone (at a given concentration and given output gas flow), might be set to deliver another amount of ozone. In such case, the electric power supplied to the electrodes and/or the inlet gas flow are changed to reach the new production target. However, the efficiency of the method disclosed in this document might be increased.

The present invention aims to address the above mentioned drawbacks of the prior art, and to propose first a method for controlling an ozone generating machine comprising at least two electrodes, so as to enhance the efficiency of ozone production (in terms of electricity costs or raw material costs), even when productions ranges are changed.

In this aim, a first aspect of the invention is a method for producing ozone in an ozone generating machine comprising at least two electrodes separated by an ozonizing gap and a dielectric layer, and located in an ozone generator comprising at least a gas inlet for receiving a feed gas containing dioxygen, and a gas outlet for exhausting gas comprising ozone, the method comprising the steps of:

- supplying the feed gas containing dioxygen at the gas inlet of the ozone

- generator, at a given feed gas flow and feed gas pressure,
- supplying an alternating electric current to said at least two electrodes of the ozone generator so as to create electric discharges in the ozonizing gap, to generate a given amount of ozone at the gas outlet of the ozone generator,
- 5 - adjusting electric current power and at least one of a plurality of process parameters comprising feed gas flow, electric current frequency, electric current voltage, cooling temperature of the ozone generator, to adjust the amount of generated ozone at the gas outlet of the ozone generator, characterized in that the method comprises, during ozone production, the
- 10 steps of:
- monitoring electric power and said at least one parameter of the plurality of process parameters comprising feed gas flow, electric current frequency, electric current voltage, cooling temperature,
 - adjusting the feed gas pressure in response to the adjustment of the electric
- 15 current power and said at least one process parameter. According to the above method, the process parameters are monitored during all the production, and the gas feed pressure is adjusted, in addition to an adjustment of electric power with another process parameter. This gas feed pressure adjustment is done to enhance the overall efficiency of ozone
- 20 production, which is typically a quantity of generated ozone compared with an electric power consumption (also called ozone yield or specific energy consumption). In other words, the method comprises a step of gas feed pressure adjustment to put the production conditions in an optimized configuration, so as to decrease the production costs.
- 25 In particular, the cooling temperature of the ozone generator is a temperature of a cooling liquid entering a cooling path of the ozone generator. The cooling path is part of a cooling circuit typically comprising the cooling path of the ozone generator, a pump and a heat exchanger. The cooling liquid might be water, optionally containing additives (against
- 30 corrosion, freezing...).

In particular, an adjustment of electric current power is an adjustment of electric power density (kW per square meter of electrode).

Advantageously, the step of adjusting the feed gas pressure comprises:

- 5 - a step of calculating a derivative with respect to feed gas pressure of a model predicting a performance of the ozone generator based on feed gas pressure, electric current power and said at least one of the said process parameters, to determine an optimum feed gas pressure leading to an optimized efficiency of the ozone generator operated with the adjusted value
10 of electric current power and said at least one adjusted process parameter, and
- adjusting the feed gas pressure to reach the optimum gas feed pressure within the ozone generator. According to this embodiment, the adjustment of gas feed pressure is done according to a prediction model, which gives for
15 the adjusted values of electric power and the said at least one parameter, an optimum value for gas feed pressure to end in the most efficient production of ozone. Such model can be an empirical model, but it might also be established by a deep neural network during a learning phase, or it might be also a model driven by fuzzy logic.

20 Advantageously, the method comprises a step of monitoring the generated amount of ozone at the gas outlet of the ozone generator by measuring an ozone concentration and/or measuring a flow of gas flowing through the ozone generator. This measurement step is typically the basis for accurate calculation of ozone concentration (with flow and pressure
25 measurements). Typically, any ozone generating machine is by default equipped with such sensor, or if not, an ozone concentration sensor can be easily added to the installation.

Advantageously, the steps of calculating the optimum feed gas pressure and adjusting the feed gas pressure are performed simultaneously
30 to, or within a predetermined operating time following a change in electric current power or said at least one parameter of the plurality of process

parameters. In other words, the gas feed pressure is adjusted on the go, during the production, as soon as there is a change to adjust the amount of generated ozone.

Advantageously, an adjustment of electric current power is an
5 adjustment of electric current frequency. Indeed, the electric current power might be adjusted by a change in the frequency. In such case, the other parameter to be adjusted is another process parameter than the frequency: it might be feed gas flow, cooling temperature...

Advantageously, only the electric current frequency and the feed gas
10 flow are adjusted, and:

- an increase of electric current frequency leads to an increase of feed gas pressure,
- a decrease of electric current frequency leads to a decrease of feed gas pressure. These changes in gas feed pressure lead to enhance the
15 efficiency.

Advantageously, an adjustment electric power is an adjustment of electric current voltage. Indeed, the electric current power might be adjusted by a change in the current voltage (also called voltage amplitude or peak voltage). In such case, the other parameter to be adjusted is another process
20 parameter than the voltage: it might be feed gas flow, cooling temperature...

Advantageously, only the electric current voltage and the feed gas flow are adjusted, and wherein:

- an increase of electric current voltage leads to an increase of feed gas pressure,
- 25 - a decrease of electric current voltage leads to a decrease of feed gas pressure. These changes in gas feed pressure lead to enhance the efficiency.

Advantageously, the absolute gas pressure in the ozone generator is varied in a range of [0.5bar(a) – 6bar(a)].

30 Advantageously, the ozone generating machine comprises a pressure regulator connected to the ozone generator, and the step of adjusting the

feed gas pressure in the ozone generator comprises a step of controlling the pressure regulator.

Advantageously, the ozone generating machine comprises an electric power unit connected to the at least two electrodes of the ozone generator, and the step of adjusting the electric power supplied to the electrodes comprises a step of controlling the electric power unit.

Advantageously, the ozone generating machine comprises a flow regulator connected to the ozone generator, and the step of adjusting the feed gas flow comprises a step of controlling the flow regulator.

Advantageously, the step of supplying feed gas at the gas inlet of the ozone generator is a step consisting in supplying a gas containing at least 95% of dioxygen gas.

Advantageously, the step of supplying dioxygen gas at the gas inlet of the ozone generator is a step consisting in supplying a gas containing no more than 5% of nitrogen gas or argon gas.

Advantageously, the step of supplying feed gas at the gas inlet of the ozone generator is a step consisting in supplying air.

Advantageously, the method comprises the steps of:

- monitoring the generated amount of ozone,
- monitoring the feed gas pressure,
- monitoring an amount of electricity consumed,
- calculating and/or measuring and monitoring an ozone yield based on the generated amount of ozone and the amount of electricity consumed,
- comparing the ozone yield before and after the step of adjusting the gas feed pressure, and
- re iterating the step of adjusting the feed gas pressure if ozone yield is decreased after the step of adjusting the gas feed pressure, so as to optimize the ozone yield.

According to the above embodiment, the effect of adjusting the feed gas pressure is checked (by calculation, or based on measurement of ozone concentration, gas flow/gas pressure), and a further adjustment is done if

there is a loss of efficiency (loss of ozone yield). The adjustment can be set according to a "try and test" strategy, to screen the operating range, so as to find the optimum gas feed pressure by trial and error. It might also be based on the instructions given by a deep neural network, or basic calculations from
5 a predicting model, or from fuzzy logic calculations.

Advantageously, the method comprises the step of further adjusting the feed gas pressure if ozone yield is increased or is the same after the step of adjusting the gas feed pressure, so as to further increase the ozone yield.

Advantageously, the method comprises the step of maintaining the
10 feed gas pressure if ozone yield is increased or is the same after the step of adjusting the gas feed pressure. The optimum conditions are maintained once reached, to produce ozone in the most efficient conditions.

A second aspect of the invention relates to an ozone generating machine comprising:

- 15 - an ozone generator comprising an inlet for receiving feed gas containing dioxygen, and an outlet for exhausting gas comprising ozone,
- at least two electrodes located in the ozone generator and separated by an ozonizing gap and a dielectric layer,
- a pressure regulator connected to the ozone generator,
- 20 - an electric power unit connected to the at least two electrodes,
- a flow regulator connected to the ozone generator,
- a control unit arranged to control said pressure regulator, electric power unit, flow regulator, so as to implement the method according to the first aspect.

25 In an embodiment, the electrodes are metallic, and the dielectric layer comprises a ceramic coating, applied onto at least one of the electrodes.

Other features and advantages of the present invention will appear more clearly from the following detailed description of particular non-limitative examples of the invention, illustrated by the appended drawings where:

- figure 1 represents a schematic diagram of an ozone generating machine according to the invention;

- figure 2 represents example of curves of efficiency of the ozone generating machine of figure 1;

5 - figure 3 represents a cross section of an ozone generator of the ozone generating machine of figure 1.

Figure 1 represents a simplified ozone generating machine OGM comprising an ozone generator OzG where a plurality of electrodes sets ES are placed within a housing H, as shown on figure 3. Each electrodes set
10 comprises two electrodes E1 and E2, separated by an ozonizing gap OG, and a dielectric layer (not shown on figures for clarity). The ozone generating machine OGM comprises also an electric power unit EPU for supplying electric current to each of the electrodes sets. Each ozonizing gap OG is connected upstream to a gas inlet O2IN of the ozone generator OzG for
15 receiving a gas containing dioxygen, and downstream to a gas outlet O3OUT for exhausting gas containing ozone, when the ozone generating machine is operated.

In order to create a gas flow in the ozonizing gaps OG, the ozone generating machine comprises an oxygen circulation pump OCP, which is
20 designed to set a specific gas feed flow and a specific gas feed pressure in the ozone generator OzG. When electric power is supplied to the electrodes and gas flow is established, electric discharges occurs in the ozonizing gap OG between the electrodes allowing corona affect, and a portion of oxygen supplied at the gas inlet O2IN is transformed into ozone, which is exhausted
25 at the gas outlet O3OUT in a given amount.

To ensure stable conditions during production of ozone, a cooling circuit is comprising a cooling path within the ozone generator OzG, so that a cooling liquid can flow through the ozone generator OzG, to cool directly each of the electrodes sets ES. Figure 3 shows that cooling water WC is present in

the ozone generator OzG. The ozone generator comprises an inlet of water cooling WCIN, and an outlet of water cooling WCOOUT.

Typically, the ozone generating machine OGM can be operated in the following ranges:

- 5 range of power density: [0.1 to 10] kW per square meter of electrode
- range of electric current frequency: [10 to 30000] Hz
- range of upper limit of peak voltage: [2 to 20] kV
- Ozone concentration at the gas outlet: 1-16 % by weight
- Range of absolute pressure of feed gas, [0.5bar(a) – 6bar(a)]

- 10 It might be desired that Nitrogen (N_2) and/or Argon (Ar) is present in the feed gas at least with a concentration of: 0.1-5 % by weight, and the rest is dioxygen. Alternatively, one can supply air to the ozone generator.

- The ozone generating machine OGM is also equipped with adequate sensors to monitor and check the ozone production, and the machine can
- 15 comprise, as shown on figure 1 an oxygen concentration sensor OCS, an oxygen pressure sensor OPS, an oxygen flow sensor OFS, an ozone concentration sensor O3S, an ozone pressure sensor O3PS, an ozone circulation flow sensor O3Q, an inlet water cooling temperature sensor IWCTS and an outlet water cooling temperature sensor OWCTS, an inlet
 - 20 water cooling flow sensor IWCQS and an outlet water cooling flow sensor OWCQS, electrode power measurement means EPS with for example an electrode intensity sensor, an electrode voltage sensor, and a frequency sensor.

- The production of ozone is adjustable according to user requirements,
- 25 and typically, the electric power unit EPU is arranged to adjust the electric power supplied to the electrodes E1, E2. One might adjust the electric current voltage (also called current amplitude, or peak voltage) and/or the electric current frequency. It is also possible to adjust the gas feed flow, so that the

oxygen circulation pump OCS is able to vary the circulation flow. Alternatively or in addition, it is possible to implement a flow regulator O3R along the gaseous path to set the gas feed flow (and by way of consequence the gas exhaust flow) at a particular value. Another parameter subjected to
5 adjustment is the temperature of the ozone generator, and for this, it is possible to adjust the water cooling temperature.

All in all, it is possible to adjust the electric power supplied to the electrodes, and at least one of a plurality of process parameters comprising feed gas flow, electric current frequency, electric current voltage, cooling
10 temperature of the ozone generator, to adjust the amount of generated ozone at the gas outlet O3OUT of the ozone generator.

During production of ozone, it is possible to adjust the electric power and some other parameters to modify the amount of ozone generated in the ozone generator. In addition to these adjustments, it is proposed also to
15 adjust the gas feed pressure, to place the ozone generator OzG in optimized production conditions.

To enable this, the method proposes to adjust, simultaneously to the change of the electric power and the other process parameter(s), or within a predetermined operating time, the gas feed pressure, by continuously
20 monitoring the values of the electric power and the other process parameter(s).

Then, several possibilities exist to manage the adjustment of gas feed pressure.

A first option is to calculate a derivative with respect to feed gas
25 pressure of a model predicting a performance of the ozone generator based on feed gas pressure, electric current power and said at least one of the said process parameters, to determine an optimum feed gas pressure leading to an optimized efficiency of the ozone generator operated with the adjusted value of electric current power and said at least one adjusted process
30 parameter. Then, setting the gas feed pressure to the calculated value leads

to improve the efficiency of ozone production, leading to costs savings, either on raw material, or on energy cost.

As an example of model, one might use the following formula to calculate the machine efficiency in relation to the ozone concentration, feed
 5 gas pressure, power density, cooling water temperature and frequency of the electric current:

$$\eta(c, p, q, T, f) = 9.234E+00 + 2.124E-01 \times c + 2.451E+00 \times p + 3.072E-01 \times q + 2.568E-01 \times T + 1.688E-03 \times f + 0.000E+00 \times c \times p - 1.774E-01 \times c \times q - 2.679E-02 \times c \times T + 0.000E+00 \times c \times f + 9.869E-01 \times p \times q + 10 \quad 0.000E+00 \times p \times T - 1.502E-03 \times p \times f - 3.585E-02 \times q \times T + 3.888E-04 \times q \times f + 0.000E+00 \times T \times f - 4.680E-02 \times c^2 - 1.238E+00 \times p^2 - 2.777E-01 \times q^2 - 1.873E-03 \times T^2 + 1.000E-08 \times f^2$$

where:

c = ozone concentration (% by weight)

15 p = feed gas pressure (bar-a)

q = power density (kW/m²)

T = cooling water temperature (°C)

f = frequency of the electric current supplied to the ozone generator (Hz).

20 Such a model is typically determined by running a measurement campaign according to a design of experiments (DoE) measurement plan. To determine the coefficients of the model describing the physical behaviour of the technology with changing variables, a prototype for each new technology or a machine of existing technology is connected to process control and
 25 measurement instrumentation, preferably with high precision/accuracy. Subsequently, a measurement plan with five variables according to the rules of design of experiments is generated where all five variables are varied over the required range [Ref.: Myers, Raymond H. Response Surface

Methodology. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971]. This range could be, as an example:

$$\begin{aligned} c &\in [1;5] \text{ \%wt} \\ p &\in [1;2] \text{ bar-a} \\ 5 \quad q &\in [0.5;2.5] \text{ kW/m}^2 \\ T &\in [5;40] \text{ }^\circ\text{C} \\ f &\in [500;1000] \text{ Hz.} \end{aligned}$$

Subsequently, a mathematical function suitable to model the physical behaviour of the system in the required range of values for each variable, in our case a fully quadratic polynomial of the form

$$\begin{aligned} \eta(c,p,q,T,f) = & a_0 + a_1 \times c + a_2 \times p + a_3 \times q + a_4 \times T + a_5 \times f + a_6 \times c \times p \\ & + a_7 \times c \times q + a_8 \times c \times T + a_9 \times c \times f + a_{10} \times p \times q + a_{11} \times p \times T + a_{12} \times p \times f \\ & + a_{13} \times q \times T + a_{14} \times q \times f + a_{15} \times T \times f + a_{16} \times c^2 + a_{17} \times p^2 + a_{18} \times q^2 + a_{19} \times T^2 \\ & + a_{20} \times f^2, \end{aligned}$$

is chosen. After measuring a sufficient number of variable combinations a linear regression analysis of the recorded dataset is performed in order to determine the exact values of all coefficients a_i ($i = 0 \dots 20$).

According to this first option, the optimum gas feed pressure is predicted with accuracy and the setting of the machine parameters to the new values leads directly and quickly to the optimized production of ozone. One should note that some coefficients are zero, this is because it depends from a specific technology. It has to be kept in mind that for another technology, e.g. different gap width, other electrode materials, or different generator geometry, the model coefficients will be different, so that a standard step is to perform or re-perform such measurement campaign to determine the adequate model/coefficients. It should be also noted that other mathematical functions, included but not limited to polynomials of different order, logarithmic or exponential functions, power functions, or combinations thereof could be used to predict the efficiency. However, for each implementation of an ozone

generator using a dielectric barrier discharge it will be possible to find a suitable mathematical function to generate a fitted curve to predict the efficiency according to the procedure stated above.

However, it is also possible to use deep neural networks being able, after a learning phase, to predict the optimized value for gas feed pressure after a change in the set up of electric power and another process parameter. In this case, the model is purely empirical, as built during the learning phase during which the deep neural networks store the production parameters, changes and consequences in the production data (amount of generated ozone). In another alternative, it is also possible to drive the gas feed pressure change by using fuzzy logic to build empirical models.

In a second option, it is possible to screen the range of gas feed pressure after a change in the set up of electric power and at least one other process parameter, according to a trial and error method. In this case, an ozone yield is calculated (based on the amount of generated ozone and electric power consumed) and monitored at least before and after the gas feed pressure change. If the gas feed pressure leads to a decrease of ozone yield, then the gas feed pressure is changed another time, either to the previous value to restore the previously better production conditions, or to another value, to check if better conditions might be found. The aim is to optimize the machine efficiency by screening the gas feed pressure.

Several procedures can be followed in this second option, such as a screening from a minimal pressure to a maximum pressure, and comparison of results to set the feed gas pressure to the point having the greatest efficiency. It is also possible, to plan after an adjustment of electric power and of the said at least other process parameter a systematic decrease of feed gas pressure and an increase of feed gas pressure to determine first the trend to follow in order to maximize the efficiency of the ozone generating machine. Of course, the method will maintain the feed gas pressure at the

level determined either to have at minimum an increase of ozone yield, or to have the highest possible ozone yield.

It is also possible to mix the first option (calculation to predict the optimum gas feed pressure) and second option (adjustment of feed gas pressure and comparison of before/after efficiency to decide for further adjustment) to minimize the iterations of gas feed pressure adjustments.

Figure 2 shows curves of efficiency of the ozone generating machine OGM of figure 1, when gas feed pressure is adjusted as per the present method. The curves show relative efficiencies, baseline being the production point where ozone concentration is 10% by weight, 100% load, at 2.8 bar-a.

A first case shows the effect on the efficiency when a first ozone amount is generated (10% by weight), during production at full capacity of the machine (100% load) and during production at half capacity of the machine (50% load). This case is represented by the two upper curves (the small dots line and the two dots chain line).

In this case (10% by weight of ozone generated), the top curve (small dots line) shows that optimum feed gas pressure is about 2.6 bar-a (absolute pressure) when the machine is operated at 50% of its capacity. When the load is increased to full capacity, the second curve (two dots chain line) show that the optimum feed gas pressure is about 2.75 bar-a (absolute pressure). When the production (amount of generated ozone) is increased with same ozone concentration of 10% by weight at the gas outlet of the ozone generator, it is advantageous to increase the feed gas pressure to save a few points of efficiency.

A second case is also represented, when the concentration of generated ozone is 13% by weight at the gas outlet O3OUT of the ozone generator OzG. This case is represented by the two lower curves (large dots line, and one dot chain line).

In this case (13% by weight of ozone generated), the lowest curve (one dot chain line) shows that optimum feed gas pressure is about 2.1 bar-a (absolute pressure) when the machine is operated at 50% of its capacity. When the load is increased to full capacity, the second curve from bottom
5 (large dots line) show that the optimum feed gas pressure is about 2.35 bar-a (absolute pressure). When the production (amount of generated ozone) is increased with same ozone concentration of 13% by weight at the gas outlet of the ozone generator, it is advantageous to increase the feed gas pressure to save a few points of efficiency.

It is of course understood that obvious improvements and/or modifications for one skilled in the art may be implemented, still being under the scope of the invention as it is defined by the appended claims.