

ABSTRACT

The invention is directed to a method for reversibly transforming a hydrocarbon into a phase more suitable for subsequent handling but from which the original hydrocarbon can be readily recovered. The hydrocarbon is contacted with a first reagent - which is usually a fatty acid - and then added to a second reagent - which is usually a mixture of Latex and an acetate - to produce an absorbent which absorbs the hydrocarbon to form a homogenous product. The elasticity of this homogenous product can be controlled. This homogenous product can be readily handled, collected and moved and the original hydrocarbon can be recovered by simple evaporation, distillation or re-dissolution of the homogenous product. The invention is of particular use in the recovery of hydrocarbons from an oil spill on water, for the sealing of leaking or damaged containers of liquid hydrocarbons, for the preparation of solid fuels and for the quelling of oil-well fires.

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