

MULTISTAGE COMPRESSION REFRIGERATING MACHINE
FOR SUPPLYING REFRIGERANT FROM INTERCOOLER
TO COOL ROTATING MACHINE AND LUBRICATING OIL

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a multistage compression refrigerating machine such as a centrifugal chiller, screw chiller, or the like.

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Description of the Related Art

Multistage compression refrigerating machines are widely used in air conditioning systems of general buildings, factories, and the like. For example, the two-stage compression refrigerating machine as shown in Fig. 3 comprises an evaporator 15 51, a first-stage compressor 53 and a second-stage compressor 54 which are rotationally driven by an electric motor 52 (abbreviated to the motor 52, hereinbelow), a condenser 55, an intercooler 56, a motor cooler 57 for cooling the motor 52 by using a refrigerant, and a lubricating-oil cooler 58 for cooling lubricating oil by using a refrigerant.

In the evaporator 51, a liquid refrigerant is heated by cold water 60 having a 20 temperature of 12°C passing through a tube 59, so that vaporized refrigerant 61 is generated. In this process, the cold water 60 is cooled to approximately 7°C thorough the heat exchange in the evaporator 51, and it is then delivered outside. Therefore, the temperature in the evaporator 51 is maintained to be approximately 5°C.

The vaporized refrigerant 61 generated in the evaporator 51 is absorbed into the

first-stage compressor 53 and second-stage compressor 54, and the absorbed refrigerant is two-stage-compressed by using impellers which are rotated by the motor 52, thereby discharging high-temperature and high-pressure vaporized refrigerant 61a. Here, vaporized refrigerant 61b from the intercooler 56 is also introduced (or absorbed) into a
5 path between the first-stage and second-stage compressors 53 and 54 (i.e., the upstream side of the second-stage compressor 54), and the absorbed vaporized refrigerant 61b is also compressed together with the vaporized refrigerant 61 from the evaporator 51.

In the condenser 55, the high-temperature and high-pressure vaporized refrigerant 61a discharged from the second-stage compressor 54 is cooled using cooling
10 water 63 which flows through a tube 62, thereby condensing the vaporized refrigerant 61a into a liquid. In this process, the cooling water 63 is heated through the heat exchange in the condenser 55 and is then discharged outside. The condensed liquid refrigerant 64 is collected at the bottom of the condenser 55; thus, the temperature inside the condenser 55 is approximately 40°C.

15 The pressure of the liquid refrigerant 64a supplied from the condenser 55 is reduced to an intermediate pressure by using a first-stage expansion valve 65, so that the refrigerant 64a is expanded, and a portion of the expanded refrigerant is output from the intercooler 56 as vaporized refrigerant 61b. As explained above, this vaporized refrigerant 61b is supplied to an intermediate position between the first-stage compressor
20 53 and the second-stage compressor 54. On the other hand, the pressure of the remaining refrigerant 64a cooled through the evaporation of the refrigerant 64a is further reduced using a second-stage expansion valve 66 and is then supplied to the evaporator 51.

In addition, a portion 64b of the refrigerant 64, which is collected at the bottom

of the condenser 55, is used for cooling the motor 52 and the lubricating oil. More specifically, the refrigerant 64b is first supplied to the lubricating-oil cooler 58 so as to cool the lubricating oil and is then supplied to the motor cooler 57 so as to cool the motor 52. After that, the refrigerant 64b including a vaporized portion is returned to
5 the evaporator 51.

However, in the conventional multistage compression refrigerating machines, the refrigerant 64b (a portion of the liquid refrigerant 64) collected at the bottom of the condenser 55 having a temperature of approximately 40°C is used for cooling the motor 52 and the lubricating oil, and the refrigerant 64b after the cooling process is returned to
10 the evaporator 51 whose inner temperature is approximately 5°C. Therefore, the liquid refrigerant 64b expands due to a pressure difference between the condenser 55 and the evaporator 51, and as a result, the refrigerant 64b evaporates in the evaporator 51. Accordingly, the amount of the liquid refrigerant to be used to provide or increase the refrigerating capacity is reduced, thereby decreasing the refrigerating capacity.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In consideration of the above circumstances, an object of the present invention is to provide a multistage compression refrigerating machine for efficiently cooling a rotating machine such as an electric motor and lubricating oil by using a refrigerant and
20 increasing the amount of refrigerant to be used to provide the refrigerating capacity in the evaporator, thereby improving the refrigerating capacity.

Therefore, the present invention provides a multistage compression refrigerating machine comprising:

an evaporator;

a condenser for condensing a refrigerant and supplying the condensed refrigerant to the evaporator via an intercooler:

a multistage compression system having a plurality of compressors which are connected in series, for:

5 absorbing the refrigerant evaporated in the evaporator;

 absorbing a refrigerant evaporated from the intercooler, from an intermediate position between adjacent compressors in the multistage compression system; and

 compressing the absorbed refrigerants together and discharging the
10 compressed refrigerant to the condenser;

 a rotating machine for driving the multistage compression system;

 a rotating-machine cooler for cooling the rotating machine; and

 a lubricating-oil cooler for cooling lubricating oil for lubricating the rotating machine, and wherein:

15 the refrigerant extracted from the intercooler is supplied to the rotating-machine cooler and the lubricating-oil cooler, and this refrigerant is returned to the evaporator after cooling.

 According to the present invention, the rotating machine and the refrigerant can be efficiently cooled, and the amount of the liquid refrigerant (in the evaporator) to be
20 used to provide or increase the refrigerating capacity can be reduced, thereby improving the refrigerating capacity and reducing the running cost.

 It is possible that:

 one or more intercoolers connected in series are provided for supplying the evaporated refrigerant from each intercooler to each intermediate position between
25 adjacent compressors of the multistage compression system; and

the refrigerant supplied to the lubricating-oil cooler and the rotation-machine cooler is extracted from the intercooler positioned at a position most downstream of the intercoolers connected in series.

In this case, the refrigerant capacity can be further improved and the cost can be further reduced.

Typically, the rotating machine is an electric motor.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a diagram showing the general structure of a multistage compression refrigerating machine of the first embodiment according to the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a diagram showing the general structure of a multistage compression refrigerating machine of the second embodiment according to the present invention.

Fig. 3 is a diagram showing the general structure of a conventional multistage compression refrigerating machine.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Hereinafter, embodiments according to the present invention will be explained in detail with reference to the drawings.

Fig. 1 is a diagram showing the general structure of a multistage compression refrigerating machine of the first embodiment according to the present invention. In this multistage compression refrigerating machine having a two-stage compressor system, (i) a refrigerant condensed in a condenser is supplied via an intercooler to an evaporator, (ii) first vaporized refrigerant obtained by evaporating the refrigerant in the evaporator is absorbed by the two-stage compressor system, (iii) second vaporized refrigerant obtained by evaporating the refrigerant through the intercooler is absorbed

from an intermediate position between the two stages, (iv) and the first vaporized refrigerant and the second vaporized refrigerant are compressed and discharged into a condenser.

Therefore, as shown in Fig. 1, the multistage compression refrigerating machine in the present embodiment comprises an evaporator 1, a first-stage compressor 3 and a second-stage compressor 4 which are rotationally driven by an electric motor 2 (abbreviated to the motor 2, hereinbelow), a condenser 5, an intercooler 6, a motor cooler 7 for cooling the motor 2 by using a refrigerant, and a lubricating-oil cooler 8 for cooling lubricating oil by using a refrigerant.

The evaporator 1 and the first-stage compressor 3 are joined to each other via a pipe line 9. The first-stage compressor 3 and the second-stage compressor 4 are joined to each other via a pipe line 10. The second-stage compressor 4 and the condenser 5 are joined to each other via a pipe line 11. The condenser 5 and the intercooler 6 are joined to each other via a pipe line 12. The intercooler 6 and the evaporator 1 are joined to each other via a pipe line 13. The intercooler 6, the lubricating-oil cooler 8, and the motor cooler 7 are joined to each other via a pipe line 14. The intercooler 6, the first-stage compressor 3, the second-stage compressor 4 are joined to each other via a pipe line 15 and the pipe line 10, and the motor cooler 7 and the evaporator 1 are joined to each other via a pipe line 16.

In the evaporator 1, cold water 18 having a temperature of 12°C passes through a tube 17 which is arranged in the evaporator 1, as shown in Fig. 1, and a liquid refrigerant is heated by the cold water 18, so that vaporized refrigerant 19 is generated. In this process, the cold water 18 is cooled to approximately 7°C thorough the heat exchange in the evaporator 1, and it is then delivered outside the evaporator 1. As a

result, the temperature of the evaporator 1 is approximately 5°C.

The vaporized refrigerant 19 generated in the evaporator 1 is absorbed into the first-stage compressor 3 and second-stage compressor 4 via the pipe line 9, and the absorbed refrigerant is compressed by using an impeller of the first-stage compressor 3 which is rotated by the motor 2. This compressed vaporized refrigerant is absorbed into the second-stage compressor 4 via the pipe line 10 and is further compressed by using an impeller of the second-stage compressor 4, thereby discharging high-temperature and high-pressure vaporized refrigerant 19a. Here, vaporized refrigerant 19b from the intercooler 6 via the pipe line 15 is also introduced (or absorbed) into an intermediate position of the pipe line 10 between the first-stage and second-stage compressors 3 and 4 (i.e., the upstream side of the second-stage compressor 4), and the absorbed vaporized refrigerant 19b is also compressed together with the vaporized refrigerant 19 from the evaporator 1.

In the condenser 5, cooling water 21 passes through a tube 20 which is arranged in the condenser 5, as shown in Fig. 1. The high-temperature and high-pressure vaporized refrigerant 19a discharged from the second-stage compressor 4 and supplied via the pipe line 11 is cooled using the cooling water 21, thereby condensing the vaporized refrigerant 19a into a liquid. In this process, the cooling water 21 is heated through the heat exchange in the condenser 5 and is then discharged outside the condenser 5. The condensed liquid refrigerant 22 is collected at the bottom of the condenser 5. As a result, the temperature inside the condenser 5 is approximately 40°C.

The intercooler 6 is provided for maintaining a specific pressure difference between the condenser 5 and the evaporator 1, evaporating a portion of the refrigerant 22,

and increasing latent heat in the evaporator 1. Therefore, in the intercooler 6, the pressure of the liquid refrigerant 22 supplied from the condenser 5 is reduced to an intermediate pressure by using a first-stage expansion valve 23 provided in the middle of the pipe line 12, so that the refrigerant 22 is expanded. A portion of the expanded refrigerant is used as vaporized refrigerant 19b. As explained above, this vaporized refrigerant 19b is supplied to the pipe line 10 between the first-stage compressor 3 and the second-stage compressor 4. On the other hand, the pressure of the remaining refrigerant cooled through the evaporation of the refrigerant 22 is further reduced using a second-stage expansion valve 24 in the middle of the pipe line 13 and is then supplied to the evaporator 1. As a result, the temperature inside the intercooler 6 is approximately 20°C.

In addition, a portion of the refrigerant 22 in the intercooler 6 is extracted as refrigerant 25 used for cooling the motor 2 and the lubricating oil. More specifically, the refrigerant 25 is first supplied to the lubricating-oil cooler 8 via the pipe line 14 and the like so as to cool the lubricating oil and is then further supplied to the motor cooler 7 so as to cool the motor 2. After that, the refrigerant 25 including a vaporized portion is returned to the evaporator 1 via the pipe line 16.

As explained above, in the two-stage compression refrigerating machine in the first embodiment, as shown in Fig. 1, a portion of the liquid refrigerant 22 of the intercooler 6 is extracted, where the temperature of the intercooler 6 is approximately 20°C which is lower than the temperature of the condenser 5 (i.e., 40°C), and the pressure difference between the intercooler 6 and the evaporator 1 is lower than that between the condenser 5 and the evaporator 1. This extracted liquid refrigerant 25 is used for cooling the motor 2 and the lubricating oil, and after cooling, the refrigerant is

returned to the evaporator 1 whose inner temperature is approximately 5°C. Therefore, the amount of the liquid refrigerant 25 which expands due to a pressure difference between the intercooler 6 and the evaporator 1 is smaller in comparison with the case in which the refrigerant is taken from the condenser 5.

5 Therefore, the amount of the liquid refrigerant, which evaporates in the evaporator 1 and thus can be used to provide or increase the refrigerating capacity, is increased, and the flow rate of the refrigerant per unit refrigerating capacity is reduced. Accordingly, the COP (coefficient of performance) can be improved and a two-stage compression refrigerating machine having a superior refrigerating efficiency can be
10 obtained. Here, the COP is defined as "the refrigerating capacity / the motor input".

Fig. 2 is a diagram showing the structure of the multistage compression refrigerating machine of the second embodiment according to the present invention. The distinctive feature of the second embodiment in comparison with the first embodiment is the provision of a four-stage compression refrigerating machine having a
15 third-stage compressor 26 and a fourth-stage compressor 27 in addition to the first-stage compressor 3 and the second-stage compressor 4. Therefore, two intercoolers 28 and 29, pipe lines 30 to 35 for joining these elements, and third and fourth expansion valves 36 and 37 are also added in the second embodiment.

The pressure in the intercoolers 28 and 29 provided at the downstream side of
20 the intercooler 6 which is provided immediately after the condenser 5 is further reduced using the expansion valves 24 and 36, and these intercoolers 28 and 29 are cooled through the evaporation of the refrigerant 22 through the intercoolers 6 and 28. Therefore, the temperature of the intercooler 28 is approximately 15°C, and the temperature of the intercooler 29 is approximately 10°C.

The refrigerant 25 extracted from the intercooler 29 at the most downstream side is used for cooling the motor 2 and the lubricating oil. The other structural elements and functions are similar to those of the first embodiment.

As shown in Fig. 2, in the four-stage compression refrigerating machine of the second embodiment, a portion of the refrigerant 22 of the intercooler 29 at the most downstream side is extracted, where the temperature of the intercooler 29 is approximately 10°C , which is considerably lower than the temperature of the condenser 5, that is, approximately 40°C , and the pressure difference between the intercooler 29 and the evaporator 1 is much smaller. This extracted refrigerant 25 is used for cooling the motor 2 and the lubricating oil, and after cooling, the refrigerant is returned to the evaporator 1 having an inner temperature of approximately 5°C . Therefore, the amount of the refrigerant (for cooling) which self-expands due to the pressure difference between the intercooler 29 and the evaporator 1 is much more reduced in comparison with the case in which the refrigerant for cooling is taken from the condenser 5. Accordingly, the amount of the liquid refrigerant which evaporates in the evaporator 1 and is used to provide the refrigerating capacity is considerably increased. As a result, the flow rate of the refrigerant per unit refrigerating capacity is reduced and the COP is increased, thereby obtaining a four-stage compression refrigerating machine having a superior refrigerating efficiency.

The embodiments of the present invention have been explained above. However, the present invention is not limited to these embodiments, and various variations and modifications are possible within the scope and spirit of the present invention.

For example, the number of stages of the multistage compression refrigerating

machine is not limited to two or four in the above embodiments, and three or more than four is also possible.

In addition, the rotating machine is an electric motor in the above embodiment. However, the present invention can be applied to multistage compression refrigerating
5 machines employing other kinds of rotating machine, such as a gas engine, Diesel engine, steam turbine, gas turbine, and the like.



What is claimed is:

1. A multistage compression refrigerating machine comprising:
an evaporator;
a condenser for condensing a refrigerant and supplying the condensed
refrigerant to the evaporator via an intercooler:
5 a multistage compression system having a plurality of compressors which are
connected in series, for:
absorbing the refrigerant evaporated in the evaporator;
absorbing a refrigerant evaporated from the intercooler, from an
intermediate position between adjacent compressors in the multistage compression
10 system; and
compressing the absorbed refrigerants together and discharging the
compressed refrigerant to the condenser;
a rotating machine for driving the multistage compression system;
a rotating-machine cooler for cooling the rotating machine; and
15 a lubricating-oil cooler for cooling lubricating oil for lubricating the rotating
machine, and wherein:
the refrigerant extracted from the intercooler is supplied to the rotating-machine
cooler and the lubricating-oil cooler, and this refrigerant is returned to the evaporator
after cooling.
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2. A multistage compression refrigerating machine as claimed in claim 1, wherein:
one or more intercoolers connected in series are provided for supplying the
evaporated refrigerant from each intercooler to each intermediate position between



- adjacent compressors of the multistage compression system; and
- 5 the refrigerant supplied to the lubricating-oil cooler and the rotation-machine cooler is extracted from the intercooler positioned at a position most downstream of the intercoolers connected in series.
3. A multistage compression refrigerating machine as claimed in claim 1, wherein the rotating machine is an electric motor.