IRSTI 61.51.15

R.A. Fedorov, A.V. Akopyan, A.V. Anisimov, E.A. Karakhanov
Lomonosov Moscow State University, Chemistry Department, Moscow, Russia
e-mail: sulfur45@mail.ru

Peroxide Oxidative Desulfurization
of Crude Petroleum in the presence of fatty acids

Abstract. Oxidative desulfurization of crude petroleum with hydrogen peroxide in the presence of fatty acids has been studied. A procedure for the recovery of oxidized sulfur-containing compounds from the petroleum by extracting the oxidation products with acetone has been selected. The influence of fatty acid on the residual sulfur content and oil viscosity was determined. As a result of oxidative desulfurization, up to 45% of total sulfur is recovered from petroleum, with the viscosity decreasing of crude oil.

Key words: petroleum, oxidative desulfurization, hydrogen peroxide, viscosity, fatty acids.

Introduction

Due to constant growth in the consumption of petroleum refinery products, the sulfur content in oil is subject to strict limitation. Nowadays is essential the search for cost-efficient technologies for decreasing the total sulfur content in refinery products and viscosity of crude oil [1]. Sulfur-containing compounds have a negative influence on many performance characteristics of petroleum products: stability and response to additives of motor gasolines decrease and their sooting tendency and corrosion activity increase; the service life of oil-refining equipment and transportation pipes decreases [2-4].

In the process of oxidative desulfurization with hydrogen peroxide, sulfur-containing compounds are oxidized first to sulfoxides and then to sulfones. This method allows to achieve low levels of sulfur in crude oil with a very simple technological design process [5] with the removal of chemically inactive benzothiophene derivatives and dibenzothiophene [6-8]. Currently, hydrogen peroxide is one of the most suitable oxidizing agents for the process of oxidative desulfurization. This is due to the fact that it has the highest percentage of active oxygen (47.1%), in addition, it has such technological and economic advantages as relatively low cost, environmental friendliness and commercial availability [9,10]. As additives to hydrogen peroxide, carboxyl compounds are effectively used, which significantly accelerate the oxidation of organic sulfur compounds and increase the degree of desulfurization of the feed-stock [11, 12]. The combination of hydrogen peroxide with complexes of various metals also provides a high degree of petroleum fractions organic sulfur compounds oxidation[13–15]. Removing of oxidized sulfur-containing compounds from raw materials is carried out by extraction from oxidized oil fractions with polar solvents.

The reduction of viscosity is especially important for the transportation of oils with increased viscosity, since the process of pumping them requires an increase in the power of pumping units. The processing of such oil requires the improvement of technological schemes at all stages, which leads to an increase in the cost not only of its transportation, but also of production and refining [16]. The main characteristics that determine the technological processes associated with the oil processing with high viscosity are structural and mechanical properties, which are particularly influenced by the content in the oil of high-molecular compounds, including asphaltenes. In low-paraffinic oils, the important reason for high viscosity of oil is the presence of asphaltenes [17, 18]. To improve the rheological characteristics of viscous and highly viscous oils and increase their stability against delamination, synthetic surfactants, such as fatty acids, as well as specialized technological processes, such as aquatermolysis, are used [19]. The aim of this work was to develop a method for transferring oil from the medium-sour class to the low-sour class, without affecting the basic physico-chemical parameters, such as viscosity and density, applying the principles of oxidative desulfurization.
Materials and Methods

Crude oil from the Moscow refinery with a sulfur content of 1.24% was used in the study. This oil belongs to the medium and low-viscosity. The main physicochemical parameters are presented in Table 1.

| Parameter                  | Initial oil |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Density, kg/m³             | 872.7       |
| Kinematic viscosity, cSt   | 2.623       |
| Dynamic viscosity, mPas    | 2.3         |
| Total sulfur, ppm          | 12400       |
| Mercaptan sulfur, ppm      | 8           |
| Asphaltenes, wt %          | 2.5         |
| Water, vol %               | 0.1         |

Aqueous solutions of hydrogen peroxide (Prime Chemicals Group) were used as an oxidizing agents; formic acid (88% aqueous solution, analytical grade, Component-reagent), oleic (reagent grade, Reachim), stearic (97 %, Acros Organics) and lauric acid (reagent grade, Mas Albion). The following metal salts were used: Na₂MO₄·2H₂O, Na₂WO₄·2H₂O (Aldrich Chemical), (NH₄)₂MoO₄ (AMX Line), C₁₀H₁₄MoO₆ (molybdenum acetylacetonate, DALHIM), Mo(CO)₆ (reagent grade, Reachim). Extractants served as solvents: acetone (analytical grade), methanol (reagent grade), N, N-dimethylformamide (reagent grade), acetonitrile (reagent grade), methyl ethyl ketone, dimethyl sulfoxide (reagent grade), N, N- dimethylacetamide (reagent grade). N-hexane (analytical grade, Ecos-1) was used as a solvent for determining the mass fraction of asphaltenes.

The sulfur content in the samples before and after desulfurization was determined on an ASE-2 X-ray energy dispersive sulfur analyzer (Burevestnik) with the relative error of no more than 5% and concentration range from 50 to 50000 ppm.

Crude oil desulfurization was carried out according to the following scheme: the required volume of the oxidizing system was added to a 10 ml sample of crude oil based on the molar ratios S: H₂O₂: acid: Me from 1: 1: 0: 0 to 1: 4: 1: 0.02. The reaction was carried out with constant stirring at 20 °C for 2 to 6 hours. 10 mL of the oxidized petroleum were rinsed with 10 mL of water, and the extracting agent and petroleum were separated by centrifugation. The operation was repeated twice, after which petroleum was rinsed with 10 mL of water, and the petroleum after extraction was analyzed for sulfur.

Determination of kinematic and dynamic of crude oil viscosity was carried out according to the method GOST 33-2016 using a glass viscometer at room temperature.

Fractional composition was determined by distillation according to GOST 2177-99.

Asphaltenes determination in the initial and oxidized crude oil was carried out according to the following procedure: 5 – 10 g of the sample were dissolved in 40-fold amount of n-hexane and left in the darkness for 18 – 20 h to precipitate asphaltenes. The solution was filtered, the precipitate was washed with hexane until the oil stains on the filter disappeared and until the flowing hexane was completely transparent. After that, the filter cake was dissolved in hot benzene and placed in a suspended flask, and benzene was distilled off to obtain a constant mass of the flask with an error of 0.01% [20]. The content of asphaltenes was found by the formula:

\[ \text{Asphaltenes} = 100 \times \left( \frac{a}{A} \right), \text{wt. %} \]

\(a\) – weight of the obtained sediment, \(A\) – weight of the sample.

Results and discussion

The process of oxidative desulfurization of hydrocarbon feedstock generally includes two steps: (1) oxidation of sulfur compounds present in the fraction and (2) the recovery of oxidation products from the fraction. Adsorption, extraction, or thermal methods are used to selectively remove oxidation products of sulfur compounds [21]. Previous studies have shown that the most effective method for extracting oxidized sulfur-containing compounds is extraction with polar solvents [5]. At the initial stage of work, the evaluation of extractants of various chemical nature was carried out.

The data obtained (Fig. 1) show that acetone and N, N-DMF most oxidized sulfur-containing compounds are extracted from oil, which is most likely due to the high polarity of the extracted compounds. Due to the simplicity of its regeneration and the best result on the residual sulfur content, acetone was used as extraction agent for oxidative products.
Aqueous solutions of hydrogen peroxide were used as oxidizing agents. To ensure optimal desulfurization conditions, the effect of the amount and concentration of hydrogen peroxide on the residual sulfur content was studied.

According to the data obtained (Table 2), 5 and 10% aqueous solutions of hydrogen peroxide are advisable to use in a molar ratio of 1:1 for 10% hydrogen peroxide and 4:1 and 2:1 for 5% hydrogen peroxide. These solutions in combination with 88% formic acid and subsequent extraction can reduce the residual sulfur content in the oil to 5500 ppm. This is most likely due to the fact that at high concentrations of hydrogen peroxide, the mainly oxidized compounds which are difficult to extract.

| Molar ratio H₂O₂ : S | 50     | 37     | 24     | 10     | 5     |
|----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 4 : 1                | 9000   | 8400   | 7800   | 8000   | 5500  |
| 2 : 1                | 8700   | 8700   | 7700   | 7600   | 6000  |
| 1 : 1                | 8000   | 8700   | 7800   | 7000   | 7700  |

It is known from the published data [11,12] that desulfurization in an acidic medium provides positive results on the residual sulfur content in the feedstock, and the use of fatty acids has a positive effect on the viscosity of oil. During the work, the effect of carboxylic acids on the residual content of oxidized sulfur-containing compounds, the mass fraction of asphaltenes and the viscosity of oil were investigated.

The data obtained indicate that the use of fatty acids can reduce the viscosity of oil, but does not provide oxidation of sulfur-containing compounds of oil compared with formic acid. The increase in the mass fraction of asphaltenes in oxidized oil is most likely due to the increase in the proportion of the fraction of insoluble asphaltenes.

The published data suggest that salts of transition metals forming peroxo complexes with H₂O₂

Table 2 – The dependence of the residual sulfur content on the concentration and amount of hydrogen peroxide. (Conditions: S: HCOOH = 1:1 (mol.), 20 °C, 2 hours)
contribute to the reduction of the content of sulfur-containing compounds in the feedstock [22]. Sodium molybdate and sodium tungstate were used as salts containing transition metals.

Based on the data obtained, the use of sodium molybdate in the oxidative system in combination with oleic acid can reduce the residual sulfur content to 6000 ppm as compared with tungstates.

In connection with obtaining a positive effect from the use of molybdenum as a catalyst for the oxidation of sulfur compounds of oil, various molybdenum salts were used in the work.

**Table 3** – Effect of carboxylic acids on the residual sulfur content and oil viscosity. (Conditions: S: H$_2$O$_2$ (10%): acid = 1: 1: 1 (mol.), 20 °C, 2 h, * – conditions: S: H$_2$O$_2$ (10%): mixture of acids = 1: 2 (mol.), 20°C, 2 hours)

| Acid       | Residual sulfur content, ppm | Kinematic viscosity, cSt | Asphaltenes, wt % |
|------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Formic     | 7300                         | 2.76                    | 6.17              |
| Acetic     | 8300                         | 2.64                    | 5.3               |
| Stearic    | 9066                         | 2.23                    | 4.16              |
| Oleic      | 9500                         | 2.30                    | 4.38              |
| Lauric     | 11000                        | 2.34                    | 4.46              |
| Stearic + formic* | 9700           | 2.05                    | 5.9               |
| Oleic + formic* | 8800            | 2.13                    | 5.34              |
| Lauric + formic* | 9400            | 2.21                    | 6.23              |

**Figure 2** – The effect of transition metal salts and fatty acids on the residual sulfur content. (Conditions: S: H$_2$O$_2$ (10%): acid: Me = 1: 1: 1: 0.02 (mole), 20 °C, 2 hours)

Based on the data obtained (Fig. 3), the use of sodium molybdate in a molar ratio of sulfur to 1: 200 is preferable compared with other salts of molybdenum and sodium molybdate in a molar ratio of 1: 100.

The work also determined the fractional composition of the original oil, oil after oxidation with an excess of hydrogen peroxide and formic acid, as well as oil after its oxidation. The oxidizing system in the presence of oleic acid and sodium molybdate was used, followed by extraction of sulfur-containing compounds of oxidation products, as well as the of total sulfur content in each of the oil fractions was determined (Table 4).
Table 4 – Fractional composition of the original and oxidized oil. (Conditions: 1) S: H₂O₂ (50%): HCOOH = 1: 10: 6 (mole), 20 °C, 6 h; 2) S: H₂O₂ (10%): oleic acid: Me = 1: 1: 1: 0.02 (mole), 20 °C, 2 hours)

| Fraction      | Initial crude oil | Oxidized oil (Conditions 1) | Oxidized oil (Conditions 2) |
|---------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
|               | Volume, ml        | Sulfur content, ppm         | Volume, ml                  | Sulfur content, ppm | Volume, ml | Sulfur content, ppm |
| Petrol (38°C – 180°C) | 9                 | 600                         | 7.6                         | 220               | 9           | 350                |
| Diesel (180°C – 360°C) | 16.5               | 6690                        | 14.5                        | 158               | 15          | 3200               |
| Residue       | 24                | 19400                       | 27                          | 9800              | 25          | 12800              |
| Oil           | 50                | 12400                       | 50                          | 4000              | 50          | 4500               |

The data obtained from table 4 indicate that the oxidation composition in an excess of hydrogen peroxide and formic acid changes the oil fractional composition. The decrease in the residual content of oil sulfur-containing compounds and in each of the fractions was also observed. When using a 10% solution of hydrogen peroxide, oleic acid and sodium molybdate, the residual sulfur content in the fractions is higher than when using an excess amount of hydrogen peroxide and formic acid.

**Conclusion**

The use of fatty acids in oxidizing systems allows to reduce the viscosity of oil by 10 – 15%, but not in all cases it allows to reduce the sulfur content to acceptable parameters specified when using the oxidizing system with hydrogen peroxide (10%): formic acid (88%) 1: 1. The oxidative system with hydrogen peroxide (10%): oleic acid: sodium molybdate in a molar ratio of 1: 1: 0.02 able to transfer oil from medium-sulfur to low-sulfur and reduce kinematic viscosity by 12%.

**Acknowledgments**

The work was performed within the framework of implementation of and with financial support from the Federal Targeted Program for Research and Development in Priority Areas of Development of the Russian Scientific and Technological Complex for 2014–2020. Activity 1.3, Grant Agreement no. 14.607.21.0173. The unique identifier of applied research is RFMEFI60717X0173.
References

1. Javadli R., de Klerk A. // Petrochem. Res. 2012. N 1. P. 3-19.
2. Shang H., Zhang H. // J. Industrial and Engineering Chem. 2013. V. 19. P. 1426-1432.
3. Campos-Martin J.M., Capel-Sanchez M.C., Perez-Pres P., Fierro J.L. // J. Chem. Technol. Biotechnol. 2010. V. 85. P. 879-890.
4. Rana M.S., Samano V.A. // Fuel. 2007. V. 86. P. 1216-1231.
5. Akopyan A.V., Fedorov R.A., Anisimov A.V. et al. // Petrol. Chemistry. 2018. V. 58. №1. P. 13-17
6. Ismagilov Z., Yashnik S., Kerzhentsev M. et al. // Catalysis Reviews. 2011.V. 53. Is. 3. P. 199-255.
7. Akopyan A.V., Ivanov E.V., Polikarpova P.D. et al. // Petrol. Chemistry. 2015. V. 55. №7. P. 571-574
8. Jiang Z., Lu H., Zhang Y., Li C. // Chin. J. Catal. 2011. V. 32. Is. 5. P. 70-715.
9. Dehkordi A.M., Kiai Z., Sobati M.A. // Fuel Process. Technol. 2009. V. 90. P. 435-445.
10. Akopyan A. V., Kardasheva Yu. S., Eseva E. A. et al. // Petrol. Chemistry 2016. V. 56. № 5. P. 1-3.
11. Sharipov A.Kh., Mukhametova R.R., Nigmatullin I.R., Nigmatullin V.R. et al. // Petrol. Chemistry. 2008. V. 48. № 6. P. 466-470.
12. Borisov I.M., Gazizova Z.Sh., Shayakhmetova G.V. et al. // Petrol. Chemistry. 2015. V. 55. №3. P. 224-228.
13. Gobara H.M., Nessim M.I., Zaky M.T. et al. // Catal. Letters. 2014. V.144. N. 6. P. 1043-1052.
14. Pat. RU 2472841 C2 (2013). Sulfo-oxidation catalysts and methods and systems for their use.
15. Pat. RU 2235112 C1 (2012). Desulfurization of light oil distillates.
16. Husnutdinov I. Sh. // Chemistry and chemical technology. 2004. V. 47. № 4. P. 3-9.
17. Argillier J-F., Barré L., Brucy F. et al. // 2001 SPE International Thermal Operations and Heavy Oil Symposium held in Porlamar, Margarita Island, Venezuela, 12–14 March 2001.
18. Chavez-Miyauchi T. E., Zamudio-Rivera L.S., Barba-Lopez V. // Energy & Fuels. 2013. V. 27. P. 1994–2001.
19. Chia-Lu Chang, Scott Fogler H. // Langmuir. 1994. V. 10. P. 1749–1757.
20. Shkalikov N. V., Vasil’ev S. G., Skirda V.D. // Colloid Journal. 2010. V. 72. № 1. P. 133–140.
21. Zhang M., Zhu W., Hun S. et al. // Chem. Eng. J. 2013. V. 220. P. 328-336.
22. Rakhmanov E.V., Tarakanova A.V., Valieva T. et al. // Petrol. Chemistry. 2014. V. 54. №1. P. 48-50.