Benchmarking of HEU mental annuli critical assemblies with internally reflected graphite cylinder

Liu Xiaobo\textsuperscript{1,a}, John D. Bess\textsuperscript{2}, and Margaret A. Marshall\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1} Institute of Nuclear Physics and Chemistry, CAEP, PO Box 919–210, Mianyang, Sichuan 621900, China
\textsuperscript{2} Idaho National Laboratory, PO Box 1625, MS 3855, Idaho Falls, Idaho 83415, USA

Abstract. Three experimental configurations of critical assemblies, performed in 1963 at the Oak Ridge Critical Experiment Facility, which are assembled using three different diameter HEU annuli (15-9 inches, 15-7 inches and 13-7 inches) metal annuli with internally reflected graphite cylinder are evaluated and benchmarked. The experimental uncertainties which are 0.00057, 0.00058 and 0.00057 respectively, and biases to the benchmark models which are $-0.00286$, $-0.00242$ and $-0.00168$ respectively, were determined, and the experimental benchmark $k_{\text{eff}}$ results were obtained for both detailed and simplified models. The calculation results for both detailed and simplified models using MCNP6-1.0 and ENDF/B-VII.1 agree well to the benchmark experimental results within difference less than 0.2%. The benchmarking results were accepted for the inclusion of ICSBEP Handbook.

1. Introduction

An extensive series of delayed critical experiments were performed at the Oak Ridge Critical Experiments Facility (ORCEF), using high enriched uranium (HEU) metal during the 1960s and 1970s in support of criticality safety operations at the Y-12 Plant. These experiments were designed to evaluate the storage, casting, and handling limits of the Y-12 Plant and to provide data for the verification of cross sections and calculation methods utilized in nuclear criticality safety applications.

Many of these experiments have already been evaluated and included in the International Handbook of Evaluated Criticality Safety Benchmark Experiments (ICSBEP Handbook [1]): unreflected cylinder (HEU-MET-FAST-051), 1 and 2 inch-thick graphite-reflected (HEU-MET-FAST-071), polyethylene-reflected (HEU-MET-FAST-076), and beryllium-reflected [2] (HEU-MET-FAST-059 and HEU-MET-FAST-069), and one case of HEU metal annuli surrounding potassium-filled, stainless steel cans was included in IRPhEP Handbook [3] (ORCEF-SPACE-EXP-001).

In this paper another three experimental configurations of critical assemblies, which are internal graphite reflected metal uranium assemblies with three different diameter HEU annuli (15-9 inches, 15-7 inches and 13-7 inches) are taken to evaluate the experimental uncertainty and bias, and to benchmark the detailed and simplified model for further inclusion of ICSBEP Handbook [1]. These experiments can be found in Reference [4] and in their associated logbook [5].

Firstly, the experimental uncertainties were analyzed, then the experimental biases were determined, at last the benchmark models were developed for both detailed and simplified configurations. The calculation results agree to the benchmark experimental results within difference less than 0.2% (equivalently less than 3 times of experimental 1 $\sigma$ uncertainty). The benchmarking results for these three critical configurations were accepted for inclusion of ICSBEP Handbook.

2. Evaluation of uncertainties and biases

2.1. Descriptions of assemblies

These experiments were performed on a vertical assembly machine previously described by Rohrer et al. [6]. The assemblies were coaxial high enriched uranium metal (HEU) annuli with outside diameters varying in two-inch steps from 11 to 15 inches and the inside diameters varying in two-inches steps from 7 to 9 inches, and had only internal graphite cylinder without reflector. The sketch map of vertical cross-section view for case 1 is shown in Fig. 1.

Each assembly comprised of two sections: lower and upper section, of which the lower one was supported on a low-mass support stand and the upper section was mounted on a 0.010-inch-thick stainless steel diaphragm. The radial alignment for each assembly were performed with level to the accuracy of $\pm 0.001$ inch. The lower section was raised until it made contact with the diaphragm and actually slightly lifted the upper section of material mounted on the diaphragm and then the reactivity was measured. The reactivity worth of each parts of the support structure was measured by perturbation experiments respectively, then the reactivity of each “clean” assembly was obtained.

The basic information and measured reactivity for the three cases was summarized in Table 1.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Case} & \textbf{Lower Section} & \textbf{Upper Section} & \textbf{Reactivity} \\
\hline
\textbf{1} & 15-9 inches & 13-7 inches & 0.00057 \\
\textbf{2} & 15-7 inches & 13-7 inches & 0.00058 \\
\textbf{3} & 13-7 inches & 13-7 inches & 0.00057 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Basic information of experimental configurations.}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{a} e-mail: liu_express11@yahoo.com

\begin{thebibliography}{1}
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should be adequate for these small changes in $k_{\text{eff}}$ given uncertainty divided by SF, assuming linearity, which change is then scaled to a value corresponding to the results, the changes in the variable are amplified by less than the statistical uncertainty of the Monte Carlo upper and a lower perturbation from the base case), is models (double-sided perturbation directly comparing an model (single-sided perturbation), or two perturbed configurations.

where experimental data are not available, Monte Carlo information is available to analyze the uncertainties. Uncertainties are evaluated using two approaches. Measured data are used where sufficient experimental information is available to evaluate the uncertainties. Where experimental data are not available, Monte Carlo calculations were performed using the Monte Carlo N-Particle (MCNP) versions 6-1.0 [7] and ENDF/B-VII.1 [8] neutron cross section libraries.

For the last approach the bounding uncertainties and change in $k_{\text{eff}}$ between the base case and the perturbed model (single-sided perturbation), or two perturbed models (double-sided perturbation directly comparing an upper and a lower perturbation from the base case), is less than the statistical uncertainty of the Monte Carlo results, the changes in the variable are amplified by scaling factor (SF), if possible. The resulting calculated change is then scaled to a value corresponding to the given uncertainty divided by SF, assuming linearity, which should be adequate for these small changes in $k_{\text{eff}}$. For double-sided perturbation with scaling factor, this method is equated as following:

$$\Delta k_{\text{eff}}(1\sigma) = \frac{|k_{\text{upper}} - k_{\text{lower}}|}{2 \times SF}$$  \hspace{1cm} (1)$$

where $k_{\text{upper}}$ and $k_{\text{lower}}$ stand for the $k_{\text{eff}}$ of perturbed models with an upper and a lower perturbation from the base model, respectively.

Sometimes, to find the effect of one kind of parameter on the $k_{\text{eff}}$ value (which is assumed to be negligible based on evaluator experience), this parameter from several similar parts was perturbed simultaneously and the combination of the uncertainty should be decoded for accounting for this circumstance. This is the case such as diameter, mass of HEU annuli parts for the all three configurations.

### 2.2. Experimental uncertainty analysis

Uncertainties are evaluated using two approaches. Measured data are used where sufficient experimental information is available to analyze the uncertainties. Where experimental data are not available, Monte Carlo calculations were performed using the Monte Carlo N-Particle (MCNP) versions 6-1.0 [7] and ENDF/B-VII.1 [8] neutron cross section libraries.

For the last approach the bounding uncertainties and $1\sigma$ uncertainties for each of parameter were determined, and then the perturbations were introduced into MCNP model to calculate the uncertainties respectively. When the change in $k_{\text{eff}}$ between the base case and the perturbed model (single-sided perturbation), or two perturbed models (double-sided perturbation directly comparing an upper and a lower perturbation from the base case), is less than the statistical uncertainty of the Monte Carlo results, the changes in the variable are amplified by scaling factor (SF), if possible. The resulting calculated change is then scaled to a value corresponding to the given uncertainty divided by SF, assuming linearity, which should be adequate for these small changes in $k_{\text{eff}}$. For double-sided perturbation with scaling factor, this method is equated as following:

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### Table 1. Basic information of assemblies.

| Case | Nominal Dimensions (in.) | Internal Material | Reactivity (cents) |
|------|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| OD  | ID | Height | |
| 1   | 15 | 9 | 5 5/16 | graphite | $-11.5$ |
| 2   | 15 | 7 | 4 1/16 | graphite | $-24.7$ |
| 3   | 13 | 7 | 5 1/4 | graphite | $+15.6$ |

[b] Measured reactivity values are for the assembled experiment corrected for support structure. These values can be converted to $k_{\text{eff}}$ by using an effective delayed-neutron fraction of 0.0066.

$$\beta_{\text{er}} = \frac{k_{\text{upper}} - k_{\text{lower}}}{2 \times SF}$$  \hspace{1cm} (1)$$

where $k_{\text{upper}}$ and $k_{\text{lower}}$ stand for the $k_{\text{eff}}$ of perturbed models with an upper and a lower perturbation from the base model, respectively.

Sometimes, to find the effect of one kind of parameter on the $k_{\text{eff}}$ value (which is assumed to be negligible based on evaluator experience), this parameter from several similar parts was perturbed simultaneously and the combination of the uncertainty should be decoded for accounting for this circumstance. This is the case such as diameter, mass of HEU annuli parts for the all three configurations.

The uncertainty from experiment, dimensions, mass, alignment and gaps are negligible.

where sufficient experimental information is available to evaluate the uncertainties. Where experimental data are not available, Monte Carlo calculations were performed using the Monte Carlo N-Particle (MCNP) versions 6-1.0 [7] and ENDF/B-VII.1 [8] neutron cross section libraries.

For the last approach the bounding uncertainties and $1\sigma$ uncertainties for each of parameter were determined, and then the perturbations were introduced into MCNP model to calculate the uncertainties respectively. When the change in $k_{\text{eff}}$ between the base case and the perturbed model (single-sided perturbation), or two perturbed models (double-sided perturbation directly comparing an upper and a lower perturbation from the base case), is less than the statistical uncertainty of the Monte Carlo results, the changes in the variable are amplified by scaling factor (SF), if possible. The resulting calculated change is then scaled to a value corresponding to the given uncertainty divided by SF, assuming linearity, which should be adequate for these small changes in $k_{\text{eff}}$. For double-sided perturbation with scaling factor, this method is equated as following:

$$\Delta k_{\text{eff}}(1\sigma) = \frac{|k_{\text{upper}} - k_{\text{lower}}|}{2 \times SF}$$  \hspace{1cm} (1)$$

where $k_{\text{upper}}$ and $k_{\text{lower}}$ stand for the $k_{\text{eff}}$ of perturbed models with an upper and a lower perturbation from the base model, respectively.

Sometimes, to find the effect of one kind of parameter on the $k_{\text{eff}}$ value (which is assumed to be negligible based on evaluator experience), this parameter from several similar parts was perturbed simultaneously and the combination of the uncertainty should be decoded for accounting for this circumstance. This is the case such as diameter, mass of HEU annuli parts for the all three configurations.
Experimental benchmark results were obtained for detailed and simplified models of critical assemblies. The calculation results for both detailed and simplified models using MCNP6-1.0 and ENDF/B VII.1 agree well to the benchmark experimental results within difference less than 0.2%. The three configurations are accepted for inclusion of ICSBEP Handbook.

### 4. Conclusions

Three experimental configurations of critical assemblies, HEU annuli (15–9 inches, 15–7 inches and 13–7 inches) metal annuli with internally reflected graphite cylinder, are evaluated and benchmarked. The experimental uncertainties and biases were determined, and the experimental benchmark $k_{eff}$ results were obtained for both detailed and simplified model.

The calculation results for both detailed and simplified models using MCNP6-1.0 and ENDF/B VII.1 agree well to the benchmark experimental results within difference less than 0.2%. The three configurations are accepted for inclusion of ICSBEP Handbook.

### Table 3. Experimental bias.

| Bias/Correction                        | $\Delta k_{eff}$ |
|----------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Room Return and Air                 |                  |
| 2. Removal of Stainless Steel Diaphragm|                  |
| 3. Removal of Diaphragm Support Ring   |                  |
| 4. Removal of Support Structure        |                  |
| 5. Temperature                         |                  |
| 6. Homogenization of Graphite Cylinder |                  |
| 7. Removal of Graphite Impurities      |                  |
| 8. Homogenization of HEU Annuli        |                  |
| 9. Removal of HEU Impurities           |                  |
| Total Bias for Simplified Model$^a$    |                  |

(a) Bias is the arithmetic sum of Items 1 through 5; bias uncertainty is 0.0006 for all the three cases.
(b) Bias is the arithmetic sum of Items 1 through 9; bias uncertainty is 0.00013 for all the three cases.

which agree well to the benchmark experimental results within difference less than 0.2% (equivalently less than 3 times of experimental 1 $\sigma$ uncertainty) and accepted for inclusion of ICSBEP Handbook.

### Table 4. Experiment benchmark results.

| Case | Detailed Model | Simplified Model |
|------|----------------|------------------|
| $k_{eff}$ $\pm$ $\sigma$ | $k_{eff}$ $\pm$ $\sigma$ |
| 1    | 0.9981 ± 0.0006 | 0.9970 ± 0.0006  |
| 2    | 0.9971 ± 0.0006 | 0.9966 ± 0.0006  |
| 3    | 1.0001 ± 0.0006 | 0.9995 ± 0.0006  |

### Table 5. Calculation results.

| Case | Calculation of Model | (C-E)/E % |
|------|----------------------|-----------|
|      | Detailed | Simplified | Detailed Simplified |
| 1    | 0.9970 ± 0.0006 | 0.99784 ± 0.00004 | −0.08 | 0.08 |
| 2    | 0.9966 ± 0.0006 | 0.99619 ± 0.00004 | −0.08 | −0.04 |
| 3    | 0.9995 ± 0.0006 | 0.99911 ± 0.00004 | −0.12 | −0.04 |

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