

<b>Thesis Title</b>	Water Management in a Strip Cell Stack of Proton Exchange Membrane Fuel Cells		
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### ABSTRACT

Water management is a major problem in proton exchange membrane fuel cell. The objective of this research is to develop the water management strategies in a strip cell stack of proton exchange membrane fuel cell and also one-dimensional numerical model was developed to study the effect of operating parameters on water management and fuel cell performance. A single cell and a three-strip cell stack were designed in direct visualization configuration. The brass current collector plates were machined in a single-serpentine flow field pattern with 1.5 mm of channel width, 2 mm of channel depth and 1.5 mm of channel rib within 25 cm<sup>2</sup> active area. Image processing technique was introduced to quantify the water content inside the flow field channel of a transparent single cell. The video recorder camera and digital camera were used to capture the water images in anode and cathode sides in different fuel cell operating conditions. In this study, the operational control and sequential exhaust control were presented as the water management strategies in a transparent strip cell stack. The individual cell and stack cell voltages in various operating conditions were recorded by using the computer interface system. The experimental results show that the image processing technique can be used to quantify the water content inside the flow field channel in term of water coverage area. The single cell performances in different operating conditions have relationship with the water content inside the cathode flow field channel. The operational controls were performed to study the effect of operating temperature, humidification, oxygen flow rate and pressure on the water management in a transparent strip cell stack. The information of water images and stack cell voltages were simultaneously recorded although the stack cell operating test. The proper operational control provides the best stack cell performance or the most positive shift in the polarization curve. By comparing among these operational controls, the humidification control is a major effect on the performance and water management in a strip cell stack while the minor effects were presented in other operational controls. The voltage losses from water flooding and water dehydration cause of reduction on the stack cell performance. Anode flooding was occurred in low current densities (0.1 A/cm<sup>2</sup>- 0.3 A/cm<sup>2</sup>). Cathode flooding was precisely observed in medium range of current densities (0.4 A/cm<sup>2</sup> - 0.7 A/cm<sup>2</sup>). Water dehydration in anode and cathode sides was detected in

high current densities ( $0.8 \text{ A/cm}^2$  -  $1 \text{ A/cm}^2$ ). The sequential exhaust control can force the individual cell to push the accumulated water out of the anode and cathode flow channels, uniformly. The experimental results show that the duration of 3 seconds for close and open of solenoid valves provided performance on stack cell operation slightly higher than other duration times. Its performance was increased about  $0.34 \text{ W/cm}^2$  or 31.20 percent at  $1 \text{ A/cm}^2$  with respect to the operating without sequential exhaust control. Moreover, the sequential exhaust control also improves more reliability on the stack cell operation. The numerical results of proton exchange membrane fuel cell model show that a strip cell stack configuration has higher pressure drop in the flow field channel than the conventional configuration. The Reynolds number for flow field channel and manifolds flow is in the laminar flow region. The wall friction loss is dominated in this stack cell configuration and the gas flow deviation is about 4 % from the average, which is in the acceptable range for the normal stack cell operating condition. The concept of residual term and water balance threshold were newly defined in the present study. At the first attempt, the water generation rate was assigned as a value of water balance threshold. Therefore, the water balance condition and stack cell performance can be predicted from this numerical model. The validation result shows that there is only a small difference between the numerical and experimental result, which is confirmed the validity of this model.



