A Coupled CFD/FEM Structural Analysis to Determine Deformed Shapes of the RSRM Inhibitors

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Abstract

Recent trends towards an increase in the stiffness of the NBR insulation material used in the construction of RSRM propellant inhibitors prompted questions about possible effects on RSRM performance. The specific objectives of the CFD task included: 1) the definition of pressure loads to calculate the deformed shape of stiffer inhibitors, 2) the calculation of higher port velocities over the inhibitors to determine shifts in the vortex shedding or edge tone frequencies and 3) the quantification of higher slag impingement and collection rates on the inhibitors and in the submerged nose nozzle cavity.

A coupled CFD/Finite element structural analysis was required to calculate the deformed inhibitor geometry. Since the NBR inhibitor material erodes at a different rate than the motor propellant burns, an inhibitor stub which protrudes above the propellant into the port cavity is created during motor operation. The impinging port flow causes the inhibitor stub to bend in the downstream flow direction. Since a stiffer NBR inhibitor material would cause the inhibitor to bend less, it was necessary to know the difference in the bending of the original NBR material compared to the stiffer NBR material. The CELMINT CFD computer code was used to perform the fluid dynamic calculations of the motor flow field. The structural bending effect of the pressure loads from the CFD code was analyzed by ED28. Initially, the CELMINT code was used to determine the flow field and inhibitor pressure loads for unbent motor inhibitors. This pressure loading on the inhibitors was used by ED28 to generate the bending which would occur in the inhibitor. The computed bent inhibitor geometry was then used again by the CFD code to compute a new pressure loading on the inhibitors. This iterative computation between the CFD code and the structural analysis code was continued until convergence in the inhibitor bent geometry was achieved.

The CFD solution was then used to assess the effect of higher flow velocities and edge tone frequencies from the reduced inhibitor bending on the maximum oscillating pressure amplitudes that occur during resonance between the edge tones and the motor longitudinal modes. Also, a comparison of the difference in slag accumulation between the two NBR materials was also made to determine if the stiffer material increases slag collection in the field joints and the submerged nozzle cavity.

The coupled CFD/FEM structural analysis was successful in defining the effect of inhibitor stiffness on inhibitor geometry and the shift in edge tone frequencies. Also, the two-phase CFD analysis showed that there was a small increase in the rate of slag accumulation at the aft inhibitor; however, motor trajectory analyses of slag debris shed from the inhibitors showed that the debris would pass out the motor nozzle and therefore create no additional slag accumulation in the slag pool around the nozzle.
A COUPLED CFD/FEM STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS TO DETERMINE DEFORMED SHAPES OF THE RSRM INHIBITORS

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Background

- In October, 1994, Thiokol reported the use of NBR material in RSRM's with properties significantly different from the historical database.

- A 30% to 40% increase in modulus was reported.

- This increased stiffness had the potential to affect the amplitude of chamber pressure oscillations in the SRM.

- By changing the inhibitor structural response.

- The slag accumulation in the field joints and submerged nozzle region might also be increased thereby increasing the potential for pressure and thrust perturbations.
Objectives of Coupled CFD/FEM and Two-Phase CFD Analyses

- Determine deformed geometry of NBR inhibitors at the forward, center and aft joints for both nominal and stiff NBR materials using a coupled CFD/FEM analysis.

- Determine effect of inhibitor properties/geometry on inhibitor hole velocities to evaluate effect on hole edge tone (vortex shedding) frequencies.

- Determine effect of inhibitor properties/geometry on slag accumulation on both the inhibitor surfaces and underneath the nozzle nose.
Coupled CFD/FEM Analysis Approach

1) Perform single-phase gas CFD analysis of entire RSRM port at 80 second burn time using straight inhibitor lengths from erosion analysis.

2) Perform FEM structural analysis on inhibitors to determine deformations using surface pressure distributions from CFD analysis.

3) Perform CFD analysis using deformed inhibitor geometries from step 2).

4) Repeat steps 2) and 3) until convergence of inhibitor geometry is achieved.

5) Provide velocity profile at each inhibitor location for both nominal and stiff inhibitors as input to flow/acoustic interaction analysis.
Two-Phase Flow CFD Methodology
CELMINT Code
(Combined Eulerian Lagrangian Multi-Dimensional Implicit Nonlinear Time-Dependent)

- Navier-Stokes Solution
  - Fully implicit, density-based, conservative, ensemble-averaged Navier-Stokes code
  - Low and high Reynolds number and wall injection $\kappa-\varepsilon$ models
  - Equilibrium and finite-rate chemistry for multi-species flows

- Two-phase Flow Models
  - Coupled Eulerian-Lagrangian for solid and liquid phases
  - Hermsen aluminum burn rate model for particle combustion
  - Specification of particle properties (density, size distribution)
  - Particle break-up based on Weber number
  - Agglomeration based on collisions between discrete phase particles and continuous phase smoke particles
  - Programmable for various particle capture criteria
## Propellant Thermochemical Properties and Motor Operating Conditions

**RSRM 80 Second Burn Time**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Propellant</td>
<td>TP-H1148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>625 psia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Temperature</td>
<td>6093° R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molecular Weight</td>
<td>28.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic Viscosity</td>
<td>6.189x10^-5 lbm/ft-sec</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ratio of Specific Heats</td>
<td>1.138</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flow Rate, Forward Segment</td>
<td>1555.9 lbm/sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow Rate, Center Segment 1</td>
<td>2587.5 lbm/sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow Rate, Center Segment 2</td>
<td>2578.6 lbm/sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow Rate, Aft Segment</td>
<td>2849.0 lbm/sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow Rate, Total</td>
<td>9571.0 lbm/sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throat Diameter</td>
<td>55.42 inches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Computational Grid Resolution

Port 400X50
Field Joints 30X20
Inhibitor Stub 4X20
Submerged Region 70X20
Overall Grid 488X70
Computational Grid, Full Motor

RSRM 80 Second Stiff NBR Inhibitor
Computational Grid, Forward Slot

RSRM 80 Second Stiff NBR Inhibitor
Computational Grid, Center Slot

RSRM 80 Second Stiff NBR Inhibitor
Computational Grid, Aft Slot

RSRM 80 Second Stiff NBR Inhibitor
Computational Grid, Submerged Nozzle

RSRM 80 Second Stiff NBR Inhibitor
Flowfield Velocity Magnitude

RSRM 80 Second Stiff NBR Inhibitor
Flowfield Static Pressure

RSRM 80 Second Stiff NBR Inhibitor
Velocity Vectors, Forward Slot
RSRM 80 Second Stiff NBR Inhibitor
Velocity Vectors, Aft Slot
RSRM 80 Second Stiff NBR Inhibitor
Velocity Vectors, Submerged Nozzle

RSRM 80 Second Stiff NBR Inhibitor
Forward Inhibitor Radial Pressure Distribution
RSRM 80 Seconds Burn Time
Stiff NBR

Motor Radius (inches)

Pressure (psia)
Center Inhibitor Radial Pressure Distribution
RSRM 80 Seconds Burn Time
Stiff NBR

Motor Radius (inches)

Pressure (psia)
Aft Inhibitor Radial Pressure Distribution
RSRM 80 Seconds Burn Time
Stiff NBR

Pressure (psia)

Motor Radius (Inches)

Upstream Face

Downstream Face

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Forward Inhibitor Deformations 
Nominal and Stiff NBR 
RSRM 80 Seconds Burn Time
Center Inhibitor Deformations
Nominal and Stiff NBR
RSRM 80 Seconds Burn Time

Motor Radius (inches)

Axial Motor Station (inches)
Port Velocity Profile at Forward Inhibitor
Nominal and Stiff NBR
RSRM 80 Seconds Burn Time

Motor Radius (inches)

Axial Velocity (ft/sec)

Pressure: 626 psia
Mass Flow Rate: 1503 lbm/sec
Average Velocity, Stiff: 133 ft/sec
Average Velocity, Nominal: 131 ft/sec
Port Velocity Profile at Center Inhibitor
Nominal and Stiff NBR
RSRM 80 Seconds Burn Time

Pressure: 822 psi
Mass Flow Rate: 4158 lbm/sec
Average Velocity, Stiff: 273 ft/sec
Average Velocity, Nominal: 263 ft/sec

Motor Radius (inches)
Axial Velocity (ft/sec)
Comparison of the Motor Port Velocity Profiles Immediately Upstream of Nozzle Nose
RSRM 80 Seconds Burn Time

Motor Radius (inches)

Axial Velocity (ft/sec)
Coupled CFD/FEM Analysis Conclusions

- The coupled CFD/FEM inhibitor structural analysis was successfully iterated to convergence to determined the deformed geometry of inhibitors at the forward, center and aft joints.

- The velocity through the inhibitor hole for the stiff inhibitors is somewhat higher which would increase the hole true frequency and delay tuning with the acoustic mode until a later burn time.

- The velocity profile at the nozzle entrance just upstream of the nose is not affected by the inhibitor stiffness/geometry and thus nozzle internal aerotorque would not be impacted.
Two-Phase CFD Analysis Approach

- Perform two-phase CFD analysis of RSRM port at 80 second burn time using final deformed inhibitor geometries for both nominal and stiff inhibitors.

- Calculate slag captured on both nominal and stiff inhibitors at all three field joints.

- Perform trajectory analysis for slag debris shed from inhibitor tips for all above cases to determine whether it passes through nozzle or accumulates underneath nozzle nose.
Slag Debris Trajectories

RSRM 80 Second Stiff NBR Inhibitor

Debris Diameter: 0.2 Inches
Slag Debris Trajectories

RSRM 80 Second Stiff NBR Inhibitor

Debris Diameter: 0.2 Inches
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Release Location</th>
<th>Debris Diameter</th>
<th>Nominal NBR</th>
<th>Stiff NBR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.2 inches</td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forward</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aft</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nozzle Nose</td>
<td>Nozzle Nose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.4 inches</td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aft</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nozzle Nose</td>
<td>Nozzle Nose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.8 inches</td>
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<td>Forward</td>
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<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aft</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nozzle Nose</td>
<td>Nozzle Nose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.6 inches</td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
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<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
<td>Exits Nozzle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aft</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nozzle Nose</td>
<td>Nozzle Nose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Two-Phase CFD Analysis Conclusions

- The rate of slag accumulation for both the nominal and stiff inhibitors at all joints is a very small percentage of the total motor slag accumulation rate.

- The rate of slag accumulation on the center inhibitor is approximately four times greater for the stiff NBR compared to the nominal NBR.

- Slag debris shed from the nominal inhibitors at all three joints exits the nozzle throat plane.

- Slag debris shed from the stiff inhibitors at the forward and center joints exits the nozzle throat plane. Slag from the aft joint stiff inhibitor impacts the nozzle entrance ramp.

- No excess slag collected on the stiff inhibitors is transported underneath the nozzle nose to add to the normal slag pool.