The space shuttle foams are rigid closed-cell polyurethane foams. The two foams used most extensively on the space shuttle external tank are BX-265 and NCFI24-124. Because of the foaming and rising process, the foam microstructures are elongated in the rise direction. As a result, these two foams exhibit a nonisotropic mechanical behavior. A detailed microstructural characterization of the two foams is presented. Key features of the foam cells are described and the average cell dimensions in the two foams are summarized. Experimental studies are also conducted to measure the room temperature mechanical response of the two foams in the two principal material directions (parallel to the rise and perpendicular to the rise). The measured elastic modulus, proportional limit stiffness, ultimate tensile strength, and Poisson’s ratios are reported. The generalized elongated Kelvin foam model previously developed by the authors is reviewed and the equations which result from this model are summarized. Using the measured microstructural dimensions and the measured stiffness ratio, the foam tensile strength ratio and Poisson’s ratio are predicted for both foams and are compared with the experimental data. The predicted tensile strength ratio is in close agreement with the measured strength ratio for both BX-265 and NCFI24-124. The comparison between the predicted Poisson’s ratios and the measured values is not as favorable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nomenclature</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$A$</td>
<td>edge cross-sectional area, $\mu m^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>cell edge length, $\mu m$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$C_1$</td>
<td>nondimensional constant relating the edge cross-sectional area to $r^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$C_2$</td>
<td>nondimensional constant relating the edge moment of inertia to $A \cdot r^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$D$</td>
<td>unit cell width, $\mu m$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$E$</td>
<td>solid material Young’s modulus, MPa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$E_x$</td>
<td>perpendicular-to-rise direction foam Young’s modulus (along the $x$ direction), MPa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$E_y$</td>
<td>perpendicular-to-rise direction foam Young’s modulus (along the $y$ direction), MPa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$E_z$</td>
<td>foam rise direction Young’s modulus (along the $z$ direction), MPa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$G$</td>
<td>solid material shear modulus, MPa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H$</td>
<td>unit cell height, $\mu m$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$I$</td>
<td>edge moment of inertia, $\mu m^4$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$I_{xx}$</td>
<td>moment of inertia of $L_x$ edges about the neutral axis parallel to the unit cell $x$ axis, $\mu m^4$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$I_{yy}$</td>
<td>moment of inertia of $L_y$ edges about the neutral axis parallel to the unit cell $y$ axis, $\mu m^4$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$I_{zz}$</td>
<td>moment of inertia of $b$-length edges about the neutral axis parallel to the unit cell $z$ axis, $\mu m^4$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$J$</td>
<td>edge torsional constant, $\mu m^3$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$L$</td>
<td>cell length, $\mu m$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$L_x$</td>
<td>$L$-length edges that bend about the neutral axis parallel to the unit cell $x$ axis, $\mu m$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$L_y$</td>
<td>$L$-length edges that bend about the neutral axis parallel to the unit cell $y$ axis, $\mu m$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>number of measurements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Q$</td>
<td>nondimensional cell shape parameter, $Q = b/(L \cos \theta)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Q_1$</td>
<td>nondimensional cell shape parameter, $Q_1 = 2 + \sqrt{2}Q = 2 + (\sqrt{2}b)/(L \cos \theta)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R$</td>
<td>average cell aspect ratio, $H/D$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R_d$</td>
<td>foam stiffness ratio, $E_x/E_y = E_z/E_y$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R_g$</td>
<td>foam strength ratio, $\sigma_{xx}/\sigma_{xy} = \sigma_{zz}/\sigma_{zy}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$r$</td>
<td>edge cross section characteristic dimension (equal to the cross section radius for a circular or Plateau border cross section), $\mu m$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$S$</td>
<td>section modulus, $\mu m^3$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$S_{xx}$</td>
<td>section modulus of $L_x$ edges about the neutral axis parallel to the unit cell $x$ axis, $\mu m^3$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$S_{yy}$</td>
<td>section modulus of $L_y$ edges about the neutral axis parallel to the unit cell $y$ axis, $\mu m^3$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$S_{zz}$</td>
<td>section modulus of $b$-length edges about the neutral axis parallel to the unit cell $z$ axis, $\mu m^3$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$T$</td>
<td>nondimensional cell shape parameter, $\sqrt{16 + Q^2R}^2 = \sqrt{16 + (2 + \sqrt{2}Q)^2R^2}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$x$</td>
<td>Cartesian coordinate perpendicular to the rise direction and normal to the $y$ direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$y$</td>
<td>Cartesian coordinate perpendicular to the rise direction and normal to the $x$ direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$z$</td>
<td>Cartesian coordinate along the rise direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\gamma$</td>
<td>foam relative density</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\theta$</td>
<td>inclination angle, deg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$v_{xy} = v_{yx}$</td>
<td>foam Poisson’s ratio in the plane perpendicular to the rise direction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

Spray-on foam insulation is applied to the exterior of the space shuttle’s external tank to limit propellant boil off and to prevent ice formation. As a result of the catastrophic loss of the Space Shuttle Columbia, numerous studies have been conducted which aim to reduce the likelihood and the severity of foam shedding events during the Shuttle’s ascent to space. Some of these studies have focused on understanding the mechanisms that cause foam fracture and debris liberation. This requires a thorough understanding of the foam mechanical response behavior and the mechanics of foam fracture.

The space shuttle foams are rigid polyurethane, closed-cell foams. The two foams used most extensively on the space shuttle external tank are BX-265 and NCFI24-124. NCFI24-124 is applied with an automated spray process and covers the majority of the exterior surface of the tank. The BX-265 is generally sprayed manually with a handheld spray gun. The microstructure of BX-265 and NCFI24-124 foams is illustrated in the photomicrographs shown in Fig. 1. Notice that both foams possess a distribution of cell sizes and shapes and that the cells in both foams tend to have an elongated shape. Because of the foaming and rising process, the foam microstructure is elongated in the rise direction. The elongated microstructure causes the foam mechanical response and strength behavior to be nonisotropic.

Wright and Lerch [1] measured the average cell dimensions and average number of faces per cell in both BX-265 and NCFI24-124 using a scanning electron microscope. They found that the average number of faces per cell was 12.4 for BX-265 and 13.7 for NCFI24-124.

The photomicrographs shown in Fig. 2 are higher resolution images of the foam microstructure, illustrating the features of a typical cell. The cells are formed by both faces and edges; the cell edges are formed by the intersection of multiple faces (see Fig. 2a). Figure 2b is a close-up view of a cell edge cross section. The shape of the cell edge cross section resembles a three-cusp hypocycloid, otherwise known as a Plateau border cross section.

The photomicrograph in Fig. 1b shows a portion of a knit line in the upper half of the photo. A knit line is a higher density region that forms between successive spray layers. The cell dimensions are smaller and the cell edges and faces tend to be thicker in the knit lines, causing the knit lines to be a stronger and stiffer region of the microstructure.

Numerous studies [2–11] have attempted to develop equations which express the relation between the foam microstructure and the physical, mechanical, and strength properties of open- and closed-cell foams. Many of these studies used a tetrakaidecahedron as the repeating unit cell. A tetrakaidecahedron is a 14-sided polyhedron possessing eight hexagonal and six quadrilateral sides and packs to fill space. The tetrakaidecahedron foam model is commonly referred to as the Kelvin foam model after Thomson [12]. Zhu et al. [5] and Warren and Kraynik [6] adopted an equiaxed tetrakaidecahedron to develop equations for the foam Young’s modulus, shear modulus, and Poisson’s ratio for isotropic, open-celled foams. They assumed that the mechanical behavior of open-celled foams could be simulated by treating the cell edges as structural elements possessing axial, bending, and torsional rigidity. The equations for the foam elastic constants were derived and written in terms of the cell edge length \( L \), the edge cross-sectional area \( A \), moment of inertia \( I \), and torsional constant \( J \), as well as the Young’s modulus \( E \), and shear modulus \( G \) of the solid material.

To treat nonisotropic foams with a preferentially elongated microstructure, some researchers [7–10] adopted an elongated tetrakaidecahedron as their repeating unit cell. An elongated tetrakaidecahedron also packs to fill space and possesses eight hexagonal sides, two horizontal square sides, and four rhombic-shaped vertical sides (see Fig. 3). The horizontal square faces have sides of length \( b \), and the diamond faces have sides of length \( L \). The hexagonal faces have four sides with length \( L \) and two sides with length \( b \). The inclination angle \( \theta \) defines the orientation of the hexagonal faces with respect to the rise direction \( z \), as well as the obtuse angle of the vertical diamond faces \( 2\phi \).

Dement'ev and Tarakanov [7] used the elongated Kelvin model to derive equations for the elastic constants and compressive strengths, in the two principal material directions, for nonisotropic, open-celled foams. The equations for the elastic constants were derived by only considering the flexural deformation of the cell edges under the applied stresses. The compressive strength equations were obtained based on the critical (Euler) buckling load of the edges. Gong et al. [8,9] also adopted an elongated Kelvin model and improved upon the fidelity of the previous models by using Plateau borders to represent the edge cross sections and by allowing the dimensions of the cross section to vary along the edge length. They also included the effects of shear deformation.

The size and shape of an elongated tetrakaidecahedron is uniquely defined by specifying the value of any three of the unit cell

\[
\begin{align*}
    \nu_{zx} & = \text{foam Poisson’s ratio for contraction in the } x \text{ direction due to tensile loading in the rise direction} \\
    \nu_{zy} & = \text{foam Poisson’s ratio for contraction in the } y \text{ direction due to tensile loading in the rise direction} \\
    \nu_{xz} & = \text{foam Poisson’s ratio for contraction rise direction due to tensile loading in the } x \text{ direction} \\
    \nu_{yz} & = \text{foam Poisson’s ratio for contraction rise direction due to tensile loading in the } y \text{ direction} \\
    \sigma^* & = \text{solid material intrinsic strength, } \text{kPa} \\
    \sigma_{xx}^* & = \text{foam perpendicular-to-rise direction strength (along the } x \text{ direction), } \text{kPa} \\
    \sigma_{yy}^* & = \text{foam perpendicular-to-rise direction strength (along the } y \text{ direction), } \text{kPa} \\
    \sigma_{zz}^* & = \text{foam rise direction strength (along the } z \text{ direction), } \text{kPa} \\
    \kappa_x & = \text{solid material intrinsic strength, } \text{kPa} \\
    \kappa_y & = \text{solid material intrinsic strength, } \text{kPa} \\
    \kappa_z & = \text{solid material intrinsic strength, } \text{kPa} \\
    v_{xz} & = \text{foam Poisson’s ratio for contraction in the } x \text{ direction due to tensile loading in the rise direction} \\
    v_{zy} & = \text{foam Poisson’s ratio for contraction in the } y \text{ direction due to tensile loading in the rise direction} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Fig. 1 Photomicrographs of a) BX-265 and b) NCFI24-124.

Fig. 2 Photomicrographs showing a) the distinction between faces and edges and b) the cross section of an edge.

Fig. 3 Sketch of an elongated Kelvin foam model repeating unit cell.
dimensions \( H, D, b, L, \) and \( \theta \), because the cell height \( H \) and cell width \( D \) are related to \( b, L, \) and \( \theta \) by

\[
H = 4L \sin \theta \quad \text{and} \quad D = 2L \cos \theta + \sqrt{2b} \tag{1}
\]

Thus, to apply the elongated Kelvin unit cell model to predict foam behavior, one must specify three foam microstructural dimensions to define the size and shape of the repeating unit cell, in addition to specifying the edge cross section shape and cross section dimensions.

Previous authors \([7-10]\) have developed their equations by placing the restriction on the unit cell geometry that \( b/L = \sqrt{2} \cos \theta \). This reduces the complexity of the derivations by reducing the number of independent dimensions. However, this restriction on the unit cell shape limits the generality of the model and could jeopardize its applicability to the widest range of foams.

Recently, Sullivan et al. \([11]\) has developed equations for the elastic constants and tensile strengths for nonisotropic, open-celled foams using the most general description of an elongated Kelvin unit cell geometry. Using an approach similar to Zhu et al. \([5]\), equations were derived and written as a function of the repeating unit cell dimensions \( b, L, \) and \( \theta \), the modulus \( E \), and strength \( \sigma^a \) of the solid material and the edge cross section properties. Sullivan et al. \([11]\) demonstrated the effect of this additional variation in the cell microstructure on the nonisotropic stiffness and strength behavior.

The objective of this paper is to apply the equations from Sullivan et al. \([11]\) and attempt to model the elastic response and strength behavior of the two space shuttle external tank foams: BX-265 and NCFI24-124 foams. In applying the open-cell micromechanics model to simulate the mechanical and strength behavior of the closed-cell space shuttle foams, we must proceed under the assumption that the majority of the solid mass is concentrated in the cell edges and that the faces do not contribute significantly to the overall mechanical behavior of these foams.

In this paper, the micromechanics model from Sullivan et al. \([11]\) is first reviewed. We then report on the results of some recent experimental studies that have been conducted on BX-265 and NCFI24-124 specimens. We report on our efforts to measure the average cell dimensions, the average mass density, and the tensile mechanical behavior of the two foams. In the mechanical testing, we measured the elastic modulus, the proportional limit stress, the ultimate strength, and the Poisson’s ratios for the two foams in the principal material directions (parallel to the rise and perpendicular to the unit cell z axis). The section properties for this flexural deformation are listed in the Appendix. We will denote these edges as the \( L_x \) edges and the \( L_y \) edges, and we will denote the neutral axis, which is parallel to the unit cell \( x \) axis. We will denote these edges as the \( L_z \) edges, and we will denote the moment of inertia and section modulus for this flexural deformation as \( I_{L_x} \) and \( S_{L_x} \), respectively. Under \( y \)-direction loading, the other half of the \( L \)-length edges (\( L_y \) edges) will bend about the neutral axis, which is parallel to the unit cell \( x \) axis. We will denote the section properties for this flexural deformation as \( I_{L_y} \) and \( S_{L_y} \). Under \( z \)-direction loading, both the \( L_x \) edges and the \( L_y \) edges will bend about their respective neutral axes.

Under a perpendicular-to-rise (\( x \) or \( y \)) direction loading, the \( b \)-length edges will bend about the neutral axis, which is parallel to the unit cell \( z \) axis. The section properties for this flexural deformation may be denoted as \( I_b \) and \( S_b \). If the \( L_x \) edges, the \( L_y \) edges, and the \( b \)-length edges are all assumed to have the same cross section, then \( I_{L_x} = I_b = I = \frac{bL}{2} \) and \( S_{L_x} = S_b = S = \frac{bL}{2} \). The equations for the elastic constants and strengths in the two directions as well as the Poisson’s ratios for both foams.

### II. Review of the General Micromechanics Model

Sullivan et al. \([11]\) derived the equations for the elastic constants and strengths in the principal material directions by treating the cell edges as structural members possessing both axial and flexural rigidity and by applying the minimum potential energy theorem to the unit cell (Fig. 3) deformation. They developed their equations using the simplifying assumption that the edge cross sections were constant along the edge length, and they wrote the equations for the elastic constants and strengths in terms of the unit cell dimensions \( b, L, \) and \( \theta \), the modulus \( E \), and strength \( \sigma^a \) of the solid material and the edge cross section properties. The equations for the elastic constants and the tensile strengths are listed in the Appendix. Note that, due to symmetry of the unit cell, \( E_x = E_y = E, \) \( V_{xy} = \frac{1}{2}, \) and \( \sigma_{xx} = \sigma_{yy} \).

Under the action of the applied stresses \( \sigma_{xx}, \sigma_{yy}, \) and \( \sigma_{xy} \), the edges will experience both axial and flexural deformations. The \( L \)-length edges will bend about the neutral axis, which is parallel to the unit cell \( x \) or \( y \) axis (see Fig. 3). Under \( x \)-direction loading, half the \( L \)-length edges will bend about the neutral axis, which is parallel to the unit cell \( y \) axis. We will denote these edges as the \( L_x \) edges, and we will denote the moment of inertia and section modulus for this flexural deformation as \( I_{L_x} \) and \( S_{L_x} \), respectively. Under \( y \)-direction loading, the other half of the \( L \)-length edges (\( L_y \) edges) will bend about the neutral axis, which is parallel to the unit cell \( x \) axis. We will denote the section properties for this flexural deformation as \( I_{L_y} \) and \( S_{L_y} \). Under \( z \)-direction loading, both the \( L_x \) edges and the \( L_y \) edges will bend about their respective neutral axes.

### Equations for the Cross Section Properties of a Three-Cusp Hypocycloid (Plateau Border)

\[
A = \left( \sqrt{3} - \frac{\pi}{2} \right) r^2
\]

\[
I_{L_x} = I_{L_y} = \frac{40(3\sqrt{3} - 11\pi) r^4}{24}
\]

\[
S_{L_x} = \frac{60(3\sqrt{3} - 11\pi) r^2}{12}
\]

\[
S_{L_y} = \frac{20(3\sqrt{3} - 11\pi) r^2}{12}
\]
\[
\begin{align*}
\cos \theta &= \frac{4}{\sqrt{16 + \hat{Q}^2 R^2}} , \\
\sin \theta &= \frac{\hat{Q} R}{\sqrt{16 + \hat{Q}^2 R^2}} , \\
\frac{b}{L} &= \frac{4Q}{\sqrt{16 + \hat{Q}^2 R^2}} .
\end{align*}
\] (4)

where \( \hat{Q} = 2 + \sqrt{2Q} \). Notice that the restriction placed on the microstructure by previous authors [7-10] is such that \( Q \leq \sqrt{2} \). Using Eq. (2), Eq. (3) can be rearranged to obtain \( A/L^2 = 8 \sin^2 \theta / (Q + b/L) R^2 \). Upon substituting Eqs. (4), this becomes

\[
\frac{A}{L^2} = \frac{4\sqrt{Q} R}{(16 + \hat{Q}^2 R^2)(2Q + \sqrt{16 + \hat{Q}^2 R^2})} .
\] (5)

Defining the constants \( C_1, C_2, \) and \( C_3 \) as \( C_1 = A/r^2, \ C_2 = 12I/Ar^2, \) and \( C_3 = S/AL \), then \( 12I/AL^2 = (C_2/C_1) \cdot (A/L^2) \) and \( S/AL = (C_3/\sqrt{C_1} \sqrt{14/AL}) \). Substituting these relations along with Eqs. (4) and (5), the expressions in the Appendix for the elastic parameters \( R \) and \( Q \) and the relative density \( y \) as

\[
\frac{E_z}{E} = \frac{C_2 \hat{Q}^2 R^2 y^2 / (2Q + T)^2}{4C_1 T + C_2 \hat{Q}^2 R^3 y/ (2QT + T^2)} .
\] (6a)

\[
\frac{E_x}{E} = \frac{8C_2 \hat{Q}^2 R y^2 / (2Q + T)}{(32Q^3 + \hat{Q}^2 R^2 T)C_1 + 8C_2 \hat{Q}^2 R y(8 + QT) / (2QT + T^2)} .
\] (6b)

\[
\nu_{xy} = \frac{8Q[4C_1 Q^2 - C_2 \hat{Q}^2 R y/(2Q + T)]}{(32Q^3 + \hat{Q}^2 R^2 T)C_1 + 8C_2 \hat{Q}^2 R y(8 + QT)/(2QT + T^2)} .
\] (7a)

\[
\nu_{xz} = \frac{2 \hat{Q}^2 R^2 [C_1 - 4C_2 \hat{Q}^2 R y/(2QT + T^2)]}{8C_1 + 2C_2 \hat{Q}^2 R^3 y/(2QT^2 + T^3)} .
\] (7b)

\[
\nu_{zx} = \frac{\hat{Q}^2 R^2 [C_1 - 4C_2 \hat{Q}^2 R y/(2QT^2 + T^3)]}{8C_1 + 2C_2 \hat{Q}^2 R^3 y/(2QT^2 + T^3)} .
\] (7c)

\[
\frac{\sigma_{zz}^s}{\sigma} = \frac{C_1 C_2 \hat{Q}^{2.5} R^{1.5} y^{1.5}}{(2Q + T)^{1.5} \sqrt{C_1 + C_2 \hat{Q}^{2.5} R^{1.5} y^{0.5}} / (2QT^2 + T^3)^{0.5}} .
\] (8a)

\[
\frac{\sigma_{zz}^s}{\sigma} = \frac{4C_1 \hat{Q}^{12.5} R^{15.5} y^{10.5}}{R(2Q + T)^{15.5} \sqrt{C_1 + 16C_1 \hat{Q}^{12.5} R^{15.5} y^{5.5}} / (2QT^2 + T^3)^{0.5}} .
\] (8b)

where \( T = \sqrt{16 + \hat{Q}^2 R^2} \).

For a Plateau border cross section, the constants are \( C_1 = \sqrt{3 - \pi/2}, \ C_2 = (20 \sqrt{3} - 11\pi)/(2 \sqrt{3} - \pi), \) and \( C_3 = (60 - 11 \sqrt{3} \pi)/24(\sqrt{3} - \pi/2) \).

The ratio of the stiffness in the rise direction to the stiffness in the perpendicular-to-rise direction can be written using Eqs. (6a) and (6b) as

\[
R_e = \frac{E_x}{E_z} = \frac{R^2}{8} \left[ \frac{(32Q^3 + \hat{Q}^2 R^2 T)C_1 + 8C_2 \hat{Q}^2 R y(8 + QT) / (2QT + T^2)}{4C_1 T + C_2 \hat{Q}^2 R^3 y/(2QT + T^2)} \right] .
\] (9)

The strength ratio follows from Eqs. (8a) and (8b) as

\[
R_s = \frac{\sigma_{zz}^s}{\sigma} = \frac{R^2}{4} \left[ \frac{\sqrt{C_1 + 16C_1 \hat{Q}^{12.5} R^{15.5} y^{5.5}} / (2QT^2 + T^3)^{0.5}}{C_1 C_2 \hat{Q}^{2.5} R^{1.5} y^{1.5}} \right] .
\] (10)

III. Experimental Studies

The foam microstructure is dependent on many variables such as the geometric constraints imposed on the foam during the foaming process, the ambient temperature, and the ambient relative humidity. As such, there can be considerable variation in the microstructural features between two spray applications of the same foam formulation. To address this, samples for the microstructural measurements and mechanical properties were excised from the same block of foam. The mass density was measured on the tensile test specimens before performing the tensile tests. Thus, the density, the average microstructural dimensions, and the average tensile properties were measured from the same spray block. This eliminated any error associated with spray-to-spray variability.

Although the tensile specimens contain knit lines, the volume of the knit lines is only a small fraction of the specimen volume. We assume that the knit lines do not significantly affect the measured density, mechanical behavior, or strength of the specimens.

A. Microstructural Characterization

We measured the average cell height and average cell width in the BX-265 and NCFI24-124 spray blocks using a scanning electron microscope. We also measured the average cross section radius in the NCFI24-124 block. Unfortunately, we did not measure the average cross section radius in the BX-265 block. The results of the microstructural measurements are summarized in Table I, where the average values are listed for each of the foams along with the number of measurements taken \( n \) to obtain each average value. Table I also lists the average aspect ratio \( R = H/D \) for each foam. It appears that the cells in NCFI24-124 are more elongated than the cells in BX-265.

B. Mechanical Property Testing and Density Measurements

Specimens were excised from the BX-265 and NCFI24-124 blocks for mechanical property testing. The room temperature tensile stress-strain behavior of BX-265 and NCFI24-124 was measured using 50.8-mm-long (2.0 in.) parallelepiped specimens. The BX-265 specimens had a square cross section with the dimensions of 12.7 x 12.7 mm (0.5 x 0.5 in.) and the NCFI24-124 specimens had a rectangular cross section with the dimensions of 15.24 x 10.16 mm (0.6 x 0.4 in.). To measure the material response in both material directions, specimens were cut so that the length dimension was coincident with the rise and perpendicular-to-rise directions.

The samples were glued to aluminum platens using epoxy and tested in a standard load frame. A stroke rate of 0.762 mm per minute was employed. A calibrated 222.4 N (50 lb) load cell was used to measure loads. Displacement was measured using both a linear variable displacement transducer (LVDT) associated with the load frame and a laser micrometer, which read the distance between two flags glued onto the sample. Both methods gave similar values. However, only the strains calculated from the LVDT will be used here, as the LVDT method resulted in a larger signal-to-noise ratio.

The tensile stress-strain curves are shown in Fig. 5. Figure 5a shows the BX-265 stress-strain response in the perpendicular-to-rise and rise direction, and Fig. 5b shows the NCFI24-124 results. Note that the strength and stiffness in the rise direction is considerably higher than in the perpendicular-to-rise direction for both materials.
failed at the glue line. In two of these tests (T1 and T5), the adhesive did not fully cure, which led to premature separation of the glue. All NCFI24-124 specimens failed in the gauge section.

In some of the tensile tests, the lateral strain in the specimen was also measured to determine the Poisson’s ratios. The test specimens that were used to measure the Poisson’s ratios are identified by footnote markers in Tables 2 and 3. The lateral strains were measured using a high-resolution noncontacting laser micrometer. Multiple lateral strain measurements were made within the same specimen at various locations within the gauge section. The Poisson’s ratio for each specimen was calculated from the average lateral strain in the specimen divided by the measured longitudinal strain. The measured Poisson’s ratios are listed in Table 4 along with the standard deviations.

The ratio of the modulus in the rise direction to that in the perpendicular-to-rise direction, as well as the ratio of the strengths in the two material directions, is indicative of the extent of elongation of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specimen</th>
<th>Density, g/cm³</th>
<th>No. of knit lines</th>
<th>E, MPa</th>
<th>PL, kPa</th>
<th>UTS, kPa</th>
<th>Fail location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>0.0369</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>227.5</td>
<td>359.8</td>
<td>Gauge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td>0.0369</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>165.4</td>
<td>301.9</td>
<td>Gauge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4</td>
<td>0.0369</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>7.12</td>
<td>179.2</td>
<td>357.1</td>
<td>Gauge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also, both materials exhibit an initial linear region followed by a nonlinear response leading up to failure. The nonlinear behavior of BX-265 is much more pronounced than NCFI24-124.

The initial modulus and proportional limit was estimated for each specimen from the stress-strain curves shown in Fig. 5. The estimated initial modulus, the estimated proportional limit (PL), and ultimate tensile strength (UTS) for the BX-265 and NCFI24-124 tensile tests are summarized in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. Also listed in Tables 2 and 3 are the density of the specimen, the number of knit lines in the specimen, and the location of fracture. The average density of the BX-265 and NCFI24-124 test specimens is 0.0369 g/cm³ and 0.0373 g/cm³, respectively. Assuming a density of 1.2 g/cm³ for polyurethane, the relative density of both BX-265 and NCFI24-124 is approximately 0.031.

A large number of the BX-265 rise direction specimens failed prematurely and, as a result, the strength values associated with these tests are not reported in Table 2. In all of these tests, the specimens failed at the glue line. In two of these tests (T1 and T5), the adhesive did not fully cure, which led to premature separation of the glue. All NCFI24-124 specimens failed in the gauge section.

In some of the tensile tests, the lateral strain in the specimen was also measured to determine the Poisson’s ratios. The test specimens that were used to measure the Poisson’s ratios are identified by footnote markers in Tables 2 and 3. The lateral strains were measured using a high-resolution noncontacting laser micrometer. Multiple lateral strain measurements were made within the same specimen at various locations within the gauge section. The Poisson’s ratio for each specimen was calculated from the average lateral strain in the specimen divided by the measured longitudinal strain. The measured Poisson’s ratios are listed in Table 4 along with the standard deviations.

The ratio of the modulus in the rise direction to that in the perpendicular-to-rise direction, as well as the ratio of the strengths in the two material directions, is indicative of the extent of elongation of
Table 3  Summary of tensile test results on NCF124-124

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specimen</th>
<th>Density, g/cm³</th>
<th>No. of knit lines</th>
<th>E, MPa</th>
<th>PL, kPa</th>
<th>UTS, kPa</th>
<th>Fail location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>0.0367</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>7.09</td>
<td>131.0</td>
<td>182.7</td>
<td>Gauge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>0.0393</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>103.4</td>
<td>227.5</td>
<td>Gauge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td>0.0385</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>110.3</td>
<td>208.2</td>
<td>Gauge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4</td>
<td>0.0382</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>7.73</td>
<td>117.2</td>
<td>220.6</td>
<td>Gauge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L5*</td>
<td>0.0369</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>6.54</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>148.2</td>
<td>Gauge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L5-2a</td>
<td>0.0396</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>117.2</td>
<td>157.8</td>
<td>Gauge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L6-4a</td>
<td>0.0370</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>124.1</td>
<td>172.3</td>
<td>Gauge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>111.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>0.0367</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>20.35</td>
<td>220.6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>0.0350</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>20.27</td>
<td>255.0</td>
<td>377.7</td>
<td>Gauge</td>
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<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td>0.0364</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>19.90</td>
<td>248.1</td>
<td>330.2</td>
<td>Gauge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4</td>
<td>0.0364</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>20.95</td>
<td>248.1</td>
<td>382.6</td>
<td>Gauge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>20.80</td>
<td>250.9</td>
<td>375.4</td>
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<td>L6-1</td>
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<td>0.06</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L6-2</td>
<td>0.273</td>
<td>0.0007</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCF124-124</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L5</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L5-2a</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.03</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L6-4a</td>
<td>0.382</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NCF1 Avg.* 0.0373

Table 4  Summary of measured Poisson’s ratios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specimen</th>
<th>Avg. measured Poisson’s ratio</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BX-265</td>
<td>vxy</td>
<td>0.355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vxy</td>
<td>0.273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vxy</td>
<td>0.273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vxy</td>
<td>0.273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCF124-124</td>
<td>vxy</td>
<td>0.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vxy</td>
<td>0.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vxy</td>
<td>0.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vxy</td>
<td>0.641</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5  Strength and stiffness ratios from tensile test results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specimen</th>
<th>Stiffness ratio</th>
<th>Proportional limit ratio</th>
<th>Ultimate tensile strength ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BX-265</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCF124-124</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value of $Q$ was obtained for BX-265 and NCF124-124 by solving Eq. (9) using the measured values for $\gamma$, $R$, and $R_E$. Once the value of $Q$ was obtained, the tensile strength ratio $R_Q$ for the two foams was calculated from Eq. (10). The results of these calculations are summarized in Table 6. The measured strength ratios from Table 5 are also included for the sake of comparison. There is good agreement between the predicted strength ratios and the measured strength ratios for both BX-265 and NCF124-124. In particular, the agreement between the predicted strength ratios and the measured proportional limit strength ratios are quite good.

IV. Application of the Model to BX-265 and NCF124-124

Using Eq. (9), the stiffness ratio $R_E$ is plotted in Fig. 6 as a function of the aspect ratio $R$ for various values of the shape parameter $Q$. A Plateau border cross section and a relative density of 0.03 have been assumed. We have also plotted the measured stiffness ratio versus the average measured aspect ratio for BX-265 and NCF124-124 as individual data points. These results indicate that $Q \approx 1$ for BX-265 and $Q < 1$ for NCF124-124.

The value of $Q$ was obtained for BX-265 and NCF124-124 by solving Eq. (9) using the measured values for $\gamma$, $R$, and $R_E$. Once the value of $Q$ was obtained, the tensile strength ratio $R_Q$ for the two foams was calculated from Eq. (10). The results of these calculations are summarized in Table 6. The measured strength ratios from Table 5 are also included for the sake of comparison. There is good agreement between the predicted strength ratios and the measured strength ratios for both BX-265 and NCF124-124. In particular, the agreement between the predicted strength ratios and the measured proportional limit strength ratios are quite good.

The edge length $b$ was calculated from $b = D / (\sqrt{2} + 2/Q)$, which is obtained from the second expression in Eq. (1) and from the expression $Q = b / (L \cos \theta)$. The edge length $L$ was then determined from $b / L = 4Q / \sqrt{16 + Q^2 R^2}$, and the inclination angle $\theta$ was determined from $\cos \theta = b / Q L$. The predicted cross section radius $r$ was calculated from $A = C_1 r^2 = \gamma R D^3 / (16L + 8b)$, which is obtained from Eqs. (2) and (3).
The predicted edge lengths and cross section radius for BX-265 and NCFI24-124 are listed in Table 6. The predicted edge cross section radius for NCFI24-124 compares very well with the measured average radius. Unfortunately, we do not currently have a measurement of the average edge length for this block of NCFI24-124. We also do not have a measurement of the average edge length and average cross section radius for the specific block of BX-265 that was the subject of this study. We have obtained measurements of the average edge lengths and the average cross section radius in another block of BX-265 (see [13]). These measurements are shown in Table 6 in bold print. Notice that the predicted values for the BX-265 edge lengths and cross section radius are close to the average values measured in the other block of BX-265. This provides us with further validation of the micromechanics model and its application to these types of foams.

Notice that the micromechanics of both foams is such that 2S \cos \theta + AL \sin \theta > \sqrt{2S + Ab/\sqrt{2}}. Thus, we are justified in using Eq. (A3a) to represent the perpendicular-to-rise direction strength in calculating the foam strength ratios.

The predicted values of the Poisson ratios \( \nu_{xy}, \nu_{xz}, \) and \( \nu_{yz} \) are obtained from Eqs. (7a–7c), respectively. The predicted Poisson’s ratios are listed in Table 6 along with the measured values from Table 4. Note that the predicted values for the Poisson’s ratios do not agree with the measured values. For both foams, the predicted values for \( \nu_{xy} \) are significantly lower than the measured values, and the predicted values for \( \nu_{xz} \) and \( \nu_{yz} \) are significantly higher than the measured values. In all cases except one (\( \nu_{xz} \) for BX-265), the predicted Poisson’s ratios fall outside the range of values established by the measured average value plus or minus one standard deviation. The most likely reason for the poor correlation between the measured and predicted Poisson’s ratios is that the open-celled micromechanics model neglects the effect of the cell faces and, in reality, the strain energy of the cell faces will effect the unit cell displacements in the direction normal to loading. We have recently performed finite element analysis of an elongated Kelvin unit cell with and without the cell faces [13]. The results of these finite element analyses [13] reveal that the effect of including the cell faces in the model is to increase the value of \( \nu_{xy} \) and to decrease the values of \( \nu_{xz} \) and \( \nu_{yz} \).

### V. Conclusions

Using the average measured cell dimensions \( H \) and \( D \), the average measured density and the measured stiffness ratio \( R_s \), the equations which result from the general elongated Kelvin micromechanics model were successfully applied to predict the measured tensile strength ratio of BX-265 and NCFI24-124. These equations were also successful in predicting other microstructural dimensions, such as the edge lengths \( b \) and \( L \) and the edge cross section radius \( r \). Consequently, we could expect that, given the average values for four of the microstructural dimensions, the model would predict the measured stiffness ratio and measured tensile strength ratio of these two foams. If the modulus and strength of the solid material is known, the model would then be capable of predicting the foam modulus and strength in the principal material directions. We thus conclude that the general elongated Kelvin foam model is a convenient tool for estimating the foam strength and stiffness from the average microstructural dimensions.

The comparison between the predicted Poisson’s ratio and the measured values was not as favorable. The micromechanics model predicted a value for \( \nu_{xy} \), which was less than the measured value for both BX-265 and NCFI24-124. Conversely, the model predicted values for \( \nu_{xz} \) and \( \nu_{yz} \) that were greater than what was measured for both foams. The reason for this discrepancy is due to the fact that the current micromechanics model neglects the cell faces and we believe the cell faces have a significant effect on the strains transverse to the loading direction.

Finally, we note that the microstructure of the BX-265 and NCFI24-124 foams appears to have a shape parameter \( Q = 1.075 \) and \( Q = 0.777 \), respectively. Thus, a model which restricts the foam microstructure to \( Q = v^2 \) is inappropriate for BX-265 and NCFI24-124.

### Appendix: Summary of the Equations for the Elastic Constants and Strengths

From Sullivan et al. [11], we summarize the equations for the elastic constants and strengths written in terms of \( b, L, \theta, A, I, \) and \( S \).

**Young’s modulus:**

\[
E_x = E_y = \frac{12EI}{L\sin\theta[2L^3\sin^2\theta+b^3+(12I/A)(2L^3\cos^2\theta+b)]}
\]

(A1a)

\[
E_z = \frac{2AEI\sin\theta}{L^2[\cos^2\theta+(12I/AL^2)\sin^2\theta(\sqrt{2L^2\cos^2\theta+b})^2]}
\]

(A1b)

**Poisson’s ratio:**

\[
\nu_{xy} = \nu_{yx} = \frac{b(A^2-12I)}{12I(2L^3\cos^2\theta+b)+A(2L^3\sin^2\theta+b^3)}
\]

(A2a)
\[ v_x = v_z = \frac{(AL^2 - 121)(2L \cos \theta + \sqrt{2}b) \cos \theta}{2[12L(2L \cos^2 \theta + b) + A(2L^3 \sin^2 \theta + b^3)]} \]  
\[ v_y = v_x = \frac{\sqrt{2L}(AL^2 - 121) \cos \theta \sin^2 \theta}{(12L \sin^2 \theta + A \sqrt{2}L \cos^2 \theta)(\sqrt{2}L \cos \theta + b)} \]

**Strength:**

- **x or y direction (failure of L-length members):**
  \[ \sigma_{xx} = \sigma_{yy} = \frac{\sigma^*}{[\cos \theta \sin \theta/A + (L^2 \sin^2 \theta/2S)](2L \cos \theta + \sqrt{2}b)} \]

- **x or y direction (failure of b-length members):**
  \[ \sigma_{xx} = \sigma_{yy} = \frac{\sqrt{2} \sigma^*}{(L \sin \theta/A + (Lb \sin \theta/2S)(2L \cos \theta + \sqrt{2}b)} \]

- **z direction:**
  \[ \sigma_{zz} = \frac{\sigma^*}{((\sin \theta/2A) + (L \cos \theta/4S)(\sqrt{2}L \cos \theta + b)^2} \]

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**References**


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