

NATIONAL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS SCHOOL OF APPLIED MATHEMATICS AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES

UPGRADE OF THE RESEARCH AND OPERATIONAL CAPABILIES OF NUCLEAR REASEARCH REACTORS

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION NEFELI CHRYSANTHOPOULOU

B.Sc. in Physics (NKUA) M.Sc. in Electronic Automation (NKUA)

SUPERVISOR:

E.N. Gazis,

NTUA Professor



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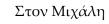
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Abstract

Going through a new phase of Fast Reactors (FRs) design, several advanced Sodium Fast Reactor (SFR) concepts are under development. The concept of SFR has been selected by the Generation IV International Forum as a promising nuclear energy system able to fulfill the following criteria: safety assurance, economic competitiveness, reduction of environmental burden, efficient utilization of resources as well as proliferation resistance and enhanced physical protection. With the perspective to put into operation the above type of reactors, extensive research related to the behavior of the structural materials and the fuel under irradiation conditions (nominal and transient) is required, comprising also relevant studies for the fuel fabrication, the pin cladding and wrapper material. The Material Testing Reactors (MTRs) have been key tools to address the above mentioned irradiation requirements.

The objective of this thesis regards the neutronic calculations of a device which, when introduced in the reflector area of the thermal Jules Horowitz Reactor (JHR) will provide a neutron energy spectrum similar to that characterizing SFR. JHR is a thermal MTR and one of its main objectives is the investigation and study of materials for future generations of power plants. Therefore the development of devices that will serve for representative tests of structural materials and fuel is required.

The existing (used, under development or proposed) technology related to spectrum tailoring has been studied and is comprehensively presented in the beginning of this thesis.

With respect to the existing technology an extended study on thermal neutron absorbers and their effect on the reference spectrum (JHR reflector) has been carried out. Following the methods reported in literature, the addition of a booster fuel inside the JHR has been investigated. Moreover, the introduction of ²³Na surrounding the fissile material has been considered. The failure of the above mentioned methods to simulate the SFR spectrum led to the utilization of scattering interactions.

The results obtained in this study suggest that elements with important inelastic scattering cross sections around 1MeV can provide a similar to a SFR neutron spectrum, without even the necessity to utilize fissile material. The factors which are important for an effective inelastic scatterer comprise the density and inelastic microscopic cross section values of the scatterer material as well as the energy ranges where inelastic scattering occurs. In prospect to suggest a device capable of achieving the required spectrum modification all the above mentioned factors are separately examined. Current neutron data indicate that potential introduction of this device inside the JHR reflector will not raise safety issues.

Περίληψη

Η τέταρτη γενιά πυρηνικών σταθμών παραγωγής ισχύος που βρίσκεται στη φάση του σχεδιασμού, περιλαμβάνει και εξελιγμένους αντιδραστήρες ταχέων νετρονίων που ψύχονται με υγρό Νάτριο (SFR, Sodium cooled Fast Reactor). Τα δομικά υλικά των νέων αυτών αντιδραστήρων θα πρέπει να επιλεγούν με κριτήριο την άψογη συμπεριφορά τους στις συνθήκες λειτουργίας των SFRs. Δυστυχώς, οι ερευνητικοί αντιδραστήρες στους οποίους πιστοποιείται η συμπεριφορά των νέων υλικών σε συνθήκες λειτουργίας υπό ακτινοβολία είναι στη συντριπτική τους πλειοψηφία αντιδραστήρες θερμικών νετρονίων. Στη συνέχεια, μια από τις σύγχρονες προκλήσεις της πυρηνικής τεχνολογίας είναι ακριβώς η δημιουργία σε θερμικούς ερευνητικούς αντιδραστήρες των κατάλληλων συνθηκών για τη διακρίβωση των υλικών που πρόκειται να χρησιμοποιηθούν σε SFRs.

Σκοπός της παρούσας διατριβής είναι η διερεύνηση υλικών και μεθόδων που αποσκοπούν στη μετατροπή του νετρονικού φάσματος που επικρατεί σε θέσεις ακτινοβόλησης θερμικού ερευνητικού αντιδραστήρα, σε ένα τυπικό φάσμα αντιδραστήρα ταχέων νετρονίων υγρού νατρίου. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, πραγματοποιήθηκαν νετρονικοί υπολογισμοί που αφορούσαν την εισαγωγή μίας διάταξης στην περιοχή του ανακλαστή του αντιδραστήρα Jules Horowitz (JHR, Jules Horowitz Reactor). Η αλληλεπίδραση των νετρονίων με τα υλικά της διάταξης οδηγεί στην προσαρμογή του επικρατούντος νετρονικού φάσματος του JHR στην ενεργειακή νετρονική κατανομή που χαρακτηρίζει έναν SFR. Ο JHR είναι ένας θερμικός ερευνητικός αντιδραστήρας και ένας από τους κύριους στόχους του είναι η έρευνα και η μελέτη υλικών για τους πυρηνικούς σταθμούς παραγωγής ενέργειας 2^{ης}, 3^{ης} και 4^{ης} γενιάς. Για αυτό το λόγο μία από τις κύριες δραστηριότητες του είναι η ανάπτυξη διατάξεων που θα παρέχουν συνθήκες ακτινοβόλησης των δομικών υλικών και των καυσίμων αντιπροσωπευτικές του περιβάλλοντος όπου αυτά πρόκειται τελικά να χρησιμοποιηθούν.

Στο πλαίσιο της διατριβής πραγματοποιήθηκε μελέτη της σχετικής υπάρχουσας (ήδη σε χρήση, υπό ανάπτυξη ή προτεινόμενης) τεχνολογίας, η οποία αποτέλεσε υπόβαθρο για την προσέγγιση επίλυσης του προβλήματος και παρουσιάζεται περιεκτικά στην αρχή της διατριβής. Η ρύθμιση του φάσματος επιτυγχάνεται με την ενίσχυση του λόγου ταχέων προς θερμικά νετρόνια, δηλαδή, είτε με την εγκατάσταση υλικών που απορροφούν αποτελεσματικά τα θερμικά νετρόνια ή/και με την προσθήκη σχάσιμου υλικών, ενισχύοντας έτσι την συνιστώσα των ταχέων νετρονίων. Και οι δύο μέθοδοι σχετίζονται με αλληλεπιδράσεις νετρονικής σύλληψης. Με άξονα τις μεθόδους που έχουν ήδη αναπτυχθεί, πραγματοποιήθηκε εκτεταμένη μελέτη των υλικών που παρουσιάζουν ισχυρή ικανότητα απορρόφησης θερμικών νετρονίων καθώς και της επίδρασής τους στο φάσμα αναφοράς (JHR-ανακλαστής). Στη συνέχεια, ακολουθώντας τις μεθόδους που αναφέρονται στη

βιβλιογραφία, διερευνήθηκε η επίδραση της προσθήκης σχασίμου υλικού στο εσωτερικό του JHR-ανακλαστή. Επιπλέον, θεωρήθηκε ικανή ποσότητα νατρίου ως περίβλημα του σχάσιμου υλικού προκειμένου να μελετηθεί εάν η παρουσία του μπορεί να προκαλέσει μετατόπιση του φάσματος. Οι τεχνικές αυτές, αν και μπορούν να χρησιμοποιηθούν για τη μετατροπή ενός θερμικού φάσματος σε φάσμα ταχέων νετρονίων, αποτυγχάνουν να προσομοιώσουν το SFR φάσμα. Δεδομένου αυτού, η εργασία οδηγήθηκε στην προσαρμογή του φάσματος κάνοντας χρήση των αλληλεπιδράσεων σκέδασης.

Τα αποτελέσματα της μελέτης έδειξαν ότι μία διάταξη υλικών που χαρακτηρίζονται από σημαντικές μικροσκοπικές διατομές ανελαστικής σκέδασης περί το 1 MeV, μπορεί να δημιουργήσει ένα νετρονικό φάσμα που προσεγγίζει σε αρκετά ικανοποιητικό βαθμό αυτό του SFR, χωρίς καν να απαιτείται η ενίσχυση της συνιστώσας ταχέων νετρονίων με σχάσιμο υλικό. Οι παράγοντες που προσδιορίζουν αποτελεσματικούς ανελαστικούς σκεδαστές περιλαμβάνουν την πυκνότητα και την μικροσκοπική ενεργό διατομή ανελαστικής σκέδασης καθώς και τις ενεργειακές περιοχές όπου αυτή λαμβάνει χώρα. Για την πρόταση μιας διάταξης που μπορεί να επιτύχει την απαιτούμενη τροποποίηση του φάσματος όλοι οι παραπάνω παράγοντες πρέπει να εξετάζονται ξεχωριστά. Προκαταρκτικοί νετρονικοί υπολογισμοί έδειξαν ότι η εισαγωγή μίας τέτοιας διάταξης στον ανακλαστή του JHR δεν εγείρει ζητήματα ασφάλειας.

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List of Abbreviations

AFC Advanced Fuel Cycle
appm Atomic parts per million
ATR Advanced Test Reactor
BFFL Boosted Fast Flux Loop
BOI Beginning Of Irradiation

BOL Beginning Of Life BR2 Belgian Reactor 2

BRR Budapest Research Reactor
BWR Boiling Water Reactor

CCD Cycling and Calibration Device

CMS Center of Mass System

CONFIRM Collaboration On Nitride Fuel IRradiation and Modeling

dpa Displacements per atom

DWD Dry-Wet Dry

EFDPs Effective Full Power Days

EFT East flux Trap

ESF European Social Fund

F/T Fast to Thermal
FR Fast Reactor
FT Flux Trap
GEN-IV Generation IV
GTL Gas Test Loop

HFIR High Flux Isotope Reactor

HFR High Flux Reactor

HICU High Neutron fluence Irradiation of pebble staCks for fUsion

INL Idaho National Laboratory
 ITV Irradiation Test Vehicle
 JHR Jules Horowitz Reactor
 LHGR Linear Heat Generation Rate
 LMFR Liquid Metal cooled Fast Reactor

LMFBR Liquid Metal cooled Fast Breeder Reactor

LWR Light Water Reactors

MCNP Monte Carlo Neutron Particle

MCWO MCNP With Origen 2

MIT Massachusetts Institute of Technology

MTR Material Testing Reactor

MOX Mixed Oxide

NPP Nuclear Power Plants

NSRF National Strategic Reference Framework

ORNL Oak Ridge National Laboratory

PBR Pebble Bed Reactor

pcm per cent mille PSF Pool Side Facility

PWC Pressurized Water Capsule PWR Pressurized Water Reactor

RODEO ROtatable Device for the Execution of Operational transients

SCK/CEN Center for Nuclear Energy Research SFBR Sodium cooled Fast Breeder Reactor

SFR Sodium-Cooled Fast Reactor

TRIO Irradiation device with three thimbles

TRIOX TRIO modified for irradiation of MOX fuels

VIC Variable Irradiation Conditions

WP Work Package

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background & Motivation

The presence of fast neutron spectra in new reactor concepts [OECD13, Loc13, Deb04] (such as Gas Cooled Fast Reactor [Poe15], new generation Sodium Cooled Fast Reactor [Aot14, OECD09], Lead Fast Reactor [Ale16], Accelerator Driven System [IAEA15] and nuclear Fusion Reactors [Rae16] is expected to induce a strong impact on the contained materials, including structural materials (e.g. steels), nuclear fuels, neutron reflecting materials (e.g. beryllium) and tritium breeding materials (for fusion reactors) [Laa12]. Therefore, introduction of these reactors into operation will require prior extensive testing [IAEA12a] to well characterize and model behaviors of the components, which must be performed under neutronic conditions representative of those expected to prevail inside the reactor facilities when in operation [OECD11]. Depending on the material, the requirements of a test irradiation can vary [Yvo14], the main importance placed to the achievement either of sufficiently high fast neutron fluence (e.g. for steels) and/or to the ratio of thermal neutron flux over fast neutron flux (e.g. for nuclear fuel and Tritium breeder materials and a priori for steels) which must be typical of fast reactor conditions [Kel14]. It should be underlined that irradiation duration and flux level should be the result of a compromise in order to prevent the irradiated materials from being deteriorated. According to experience an optimum irradiation duration is ~30 times lower than the time that the material is about to remain in the facility. Due to limited availability of fast reactors [Kel14], testing of future reactor materials will mostly take place in water cooled Material Test Reactors (MTRs), which provide a neutron spectrum with two peaks, one at 1 eV and another at 1 MeV (Figure 1-1)[Yan12,Oku14]. Seeing that the thermal neutron component in MTRs is one to two tens larger compared to fast reactors, appropriate neutronic conditions can be achieved in MTRs by tailoring the neutron spectrum in order to tune properly the reaction rates. For the spectrum tailoring there are two options, i.e. either to remove the thermal component or to increase the ratio fast/thermal neutrons inside an MTR, using the appropriate neutron shields [Chr14]. The latter relies on the utilization of materials capable to absorb neutrons at specific energy or on the introduction of fissile material, enhancing thus the fast neutron component.

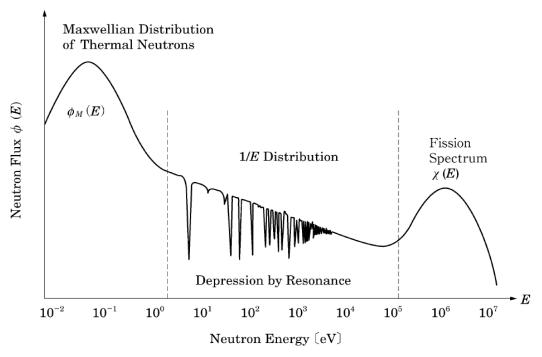


Figure 1-1: Neutron energy spectrum of a typical thermal reactor [Oku14]

1.2 Objective

Possible methods are investigated in this thesis in order to create a neutron energy spectrum similar to that characterizing Sodium cooled Fast Reactor (SFR) in a thermal neutron reactor. The concept of SFR has been selected by the Generation IV International Forum (GIF) as a promising nuclear energy system able to fulfill the GIF IV criteria: safety assurance, economic competitiveness, reduction in environmental burden, efficient utilization of resources as well as proliferation resistance and enhanced physical protection [Del13, Ich11]. Extensive research related to the behavior and characteristics of material and fuel under irradiation conditions (nominal and transient), the fuel fabrication as well as the pin cladding and wrapper material is required [Dek11, Del13]. Such study can be carried out in MTRs. The reflector area of Jules Horowitz material testing Reactor (JHR) [Par15,Big15] provides good neutronic conditions for the realization of this kind of study. Furthermore, JHR targets to investigate and study materials for future generations of power plants. Accordingly, the development of devices that will serve for representative tests of structural materials and fuel is required. In this context, this thesis focuses on the investigation of methods by which the neutron population distributed in the reflector area (Figure 1-2) of JHR (thermal neutron spectrum) can be reversed from low to high energies with the final neutron distribution to be similar to that of a SFR.

1.3 Key Features

1.3.1 Jules Horowitz Reactor

JHR is a Material Testing Reactor (MTR) under construction at Cadarache in southern France [Big16, Col15]. This pool-type MTR would have a maximum power of 100 MWth. The design thermal flux is 5.2·10¹⁴ n/cm²/s and the fast flux (here E> 0.9MeV) is 5·10¹⁴ n/cm²/s. The reactor will offer modern irradiation experimental capabilities for studying material and fuel behavior under irradiation. JHR will be a flexible experimental infrastructure to meet industrial and public needs related to Generation II, III and IV Nuclear Power Plants (NPP) and to different reactors technologies [Par15]. JHR is designed to provide high neutron flux (more than the maximum available today in European MTRs), to perform highly instrumented experiments in order to support advanced modeling giving prediction beyond experimental points, and to operate experimental devices giving environment conditions (pressure, temperature, flux, coolant chemistry, etc.) relevant for water reactors, gas cooled thermal or fast reactors, SFRs, etc. [Con13]. For this work a simulation model of JHR provided through TRIPOLI-4.8 was utilized and a series of calculations related with the introduction of materials in the reflector area of JHR was carried out. The irradiation location and the model are illustrated in Figure 1-2.

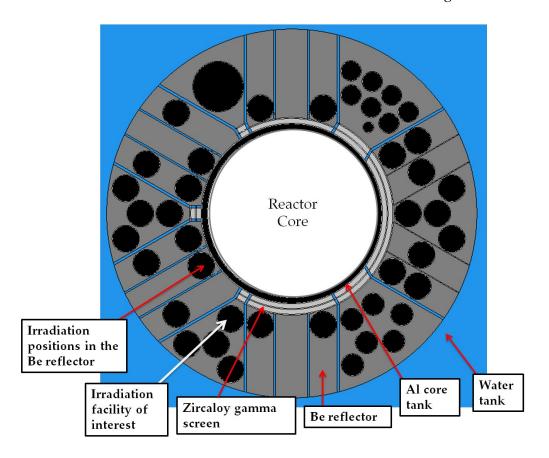


Figure 1-2: Model of JHR, produced with TRIPOLI-4.8; white arrow points to the irradiation location of interest in JHR reflector.

1.3.2 Sodium cooled Fast Reactors (SFRs)

SFRs are classified within the domain of Liquid Metal cooled Fast Reactors (LMFRs). These types of reactors use liquid metal coolants, such as sodium and lead [IAEA12b, Laf10]. The nuclear properties of these materials in addition to their physical properties (i.e. high density, high boiling point, high thermal conductivity, high heat capacity, etc.) justify their selection as coolants [IAEA12c, Laz14]. In Table 1-1 the physical properties of liquid metals are reported: sodium (Na), lead (Pb), bismuth (Bi) and Pb-Bi. The high boiling point of the liquid metals enables operation at high temperatures without requiring high circuit pressure, while the high heat of vaporization of these elements results to a low primary system pressure demand and therefore, for example, a reduced reactor vessel thickness [Laf10]. After the testing of different alternative coolants, Na has been chosen to be the primary coolant medium in the majority of fast reactors constructed to date [OECD14, Sun12].

Table 1-1: Physical Properties of Na, Pb, Bi and Pb-Bi (44.5/55.5%) [IAEA12c]

Properties		Units	Na	Pb	Bi	Pb-Bi
Atomic number		_	11	82	83	_
Atomic mass		_	22.99	207.2	208.98	_
Melting temperature		°C	98	327.4	271.4	125
		K	371	600.85	544	398
Boiling temperature		°C	883	1745	1552	1670
		K	1156	2018	1825	1643
Heat of melting		kJ/kg	114.8	24.7	54.7	38.8
		kJ/mole	2.6	5.1	11.4	8.07
Heat of vaporization		kJ/kg	3871	856.8	852	852
		kJ/mole	89.04	178	178	178
Density	sol. 20°C	kg/m³	966	11340	9780	10474
	liq. 450°C		845	10520	9854	10150
Heat capacity	sol. 20°C	kJ/kgK	1.23	0.127	0.129	0.128
	liq. 450°C		1.269	147.3	150	146
Thermal	sol. 20°C	147/ 16	130	35	8.4	12.6
conductivity	liq. 450°C	— W/mK	68.8	17.1	14.2	14.2
Kinematic viscosity (450°C)		m²/s	3x10 ⁻⁷	1.9x10 ⁻⁷	1.3x10 ⁻⁷	1.4x10 ⁻⁷
Prandtl number (450°C)		_	0.0048	0.0174	0.0135	0.0147
Surface tension (450°C)		mN/m	163	480	370	392
Volume change with melting		%	2.65	3.6	-3.3	~0.5

The use of Na for cooling a FR provides a neutron energy spectrum shifted to lower energies in relation to other fast reactors spectra. The softening of the spectrum is caused by both inelastic and elastic scattering of sodium. As stated in Nim59, Sodium degrades the spectrum at high end as a result of inelastic scattering and builds up the low end of the spectrum by elastic scattering. In fact, this reduction of scattering interactions due to the reduction of sodium density causes a spectrum hardening and constitutes the so-called sodium void effect [Yan12]. For the thesis purposes, a reference SFR spectrum has been utilized, provided by the neutronic data of the prototype SFR reactor, Phenix [Gui05, IAEA07]. Phenix was a pool-type design, generating at 565 MWth power. Before its shutdown [Che12], the plant had achieved all the objectives of demonstration of fast reactor technology, which has been set at this time of construction. A description of the main reactor characteristics can be found in [Che12].

1.3.3 Problem Outline

The spectra of JHR reflector and SFR are illustrated in Figure 1-3. JHR reflector spectrum¹ was produced by TRIPOLI-4.8, while SFR spectrum was provided by neutronic data of the prototype SFR reactor, Phenix. JHR reflector spectrum has a typical energy distribution of a thermal reactor, exhibiting two peaks. That is, the first peak at low energies (below 0.1eV) due to the water-induced neutron thermalization and the second at high energies (~1MeV), corresponding to the neutron produced by fission; in the intermediate energy range (1 eV to 0.1 MeV) an approximately 1/E dependence exists. On the contrary, the thermal range of the SFR spectrum includes an insignificant number of neutrons, the latter being concentrated in energies of an order of magnitude between 10³ and 10⁶ eV. Prompt neutrons are born at energy ranges from 0.1 to 10 MeV and the elastic and inelastic scattering interactions between sodium, as well as structural and other materials existing in a SFR, with fission neutrons, shifts the peak of fission spectrum to lower energies (~200keV). The contrast between the thermal and the SFR spectra is better illustrated at the Chart-Table of Figure 1-4 where the neutron distribution is partitioned in energy groups.

A reversion of the neutron population from one side (low energies) to the other (high energies) is necessary to fulfill the objective of tailoring the neutron spectrum obtained in the irradiation facility of JHR, into a spectrum similar to that of SFR. The subject of this thesis is the investigation of methods, by which the spectrum can be tailored as desired. These methods contain the utilization of thermal neutron absorbers, fissile nuclei and nuclei with high scattering capability. The final task is a tentative design of a device that will provide a neutron energy spectrum similar to that characterizing SFR, when introduced into the JHR reflector.

 $^{^{1}}$ For all simulations carried out in this thesis the neutron flux tallies were requested for 175 energy groups between 1E-11 -20 MeV.

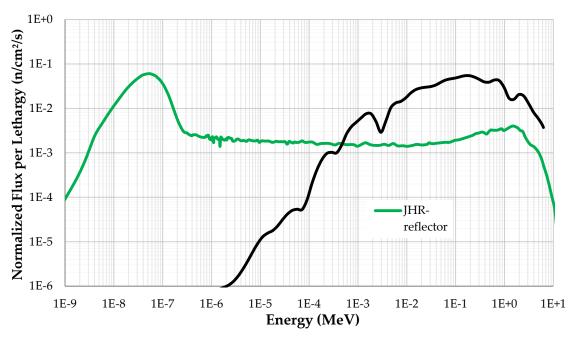


Figure 1-3: Comparing the two reference spectra; green line: JHR reflector, black line: SFR. In each case the neutron fluxes per lethargy are normalized to unit. JHR reflector plot produced by TRIPOLI-4.8. SFR plot provided by neutronic data of the prototype SFR reactor, Phenix.

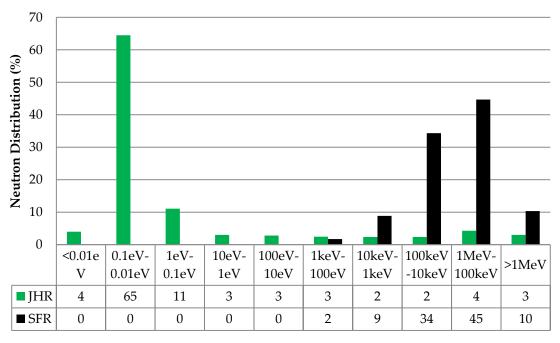


Figure 1-4: Grouped neutron energy distribution (%) for JHR-reflector (green) and SFR (black)

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The overall structure of the thesis is divided into six chapters (Figure 1-5), including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the existing (used and under development or proposed) state of the art neutron screen technology. Its content corresponds to a paper already published [Chr14]. In Chapter 3 the computational tools, used for the simulations at this work, are described, along with the major factors that ensure the accuracy and the precision of the final results, which are presented in Chapter 4. This chapter is divided into four main sections, each of which presents the results relating to one of the neutron interaction taking place for the spectrum tailoring (Figure 1-6). As a final point, the main conclusions as well as the recommendation for future work are given in Chapter 5.

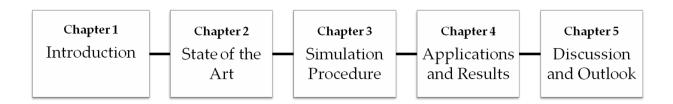


Figure 1-5: Thesis flow chart

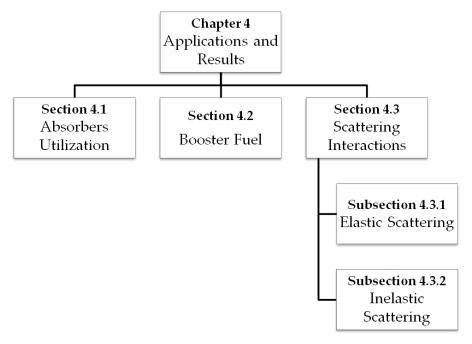


Figure 1-6: Chapter 4 flow chart

Chapter 2. State of the art

The use of neutron screens technology is imperative within the framework of the materials qualification for the development of GEN-IV reactors [Kel14], since their performance can easily and inexpensively simulate the characteristics of a fast neutron flux facility and accomplish power transient experiments. The term neutron screen used in this thesis refers to the configuration (device, model, system or technology) that can be implemented inside the reactor and provide the capability of tailoring locally the neutron spectrum. Neutron screens contribute to the creation of desirable special irradiation conditions that cannot be achieved during normal reactor operation for technological or economic reasons.

Neutronic conditions similar to the ones prevailing in fast reactor cores can be achieved in MTRs by tailoring the neutron spectrum. For the spectrum tailoring two options are offered, i.e. either (a) to remove the thermal component using a neutron screen technique based e.g. on cadmium, boron or hafnium shields, and/or (b) to increase the fast/thermal neutrons ratio inside an MTR by using fissile material. Several complexities, mainly of technological nature, are involved in the use of thermal neutron absorption shields, since all candidate shielding materials have their specific problems induced by welding behaviour, swelling (e.g. boron compounds) or melting (e.g. cadmium). Therefore, research and exchange of information on neutron screens technology is of increasing interest.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on the existing (and available in literature) neutron screens technology; it is examining the neutron screens developed to address the lack of fast research reactors in sufficient number. A neutron screen achieves the required fast neutron environment by cutting off the thermal component of the neutron spectrum, using thermal neutron absorbing material. The absorber is almost transparent to fast - and much less to epithermal - neutrons. In order to reproduce the irradiation conditions prevailing in a Sodium-cooled Fast Reactor (SFR) environment or in a Sodium-cooled Fast Breeder Reactor

(SFBR), coolant loops and booster fuels are combined in the irradiation facility. This work further investigates the power transition facilities that are also based on neutron screens utilization, where also thermal neutron absorbers are used. By varying the absorber's concentration, power transient on the irradiation sample is achieved. The utilization of variable screens is necessary in order to test the fuel behavior when exposed to sudden power transients.

The chapter is divided into two sections, depending on the form of the absorbing material used i.e., solid and fluid neutron screens. Section §2.1 is dedicated to neutron screens which use solid absorbing material and serve for simulation of fast neutron spectrum conditions. In §2.2, neutron screens utilized for power transients are presented. Solid neutron screens can provide larger power transients than fluid screens, since they have higher density, but their utilization is complex. Fluid absorbing materials are often preferred for this purpose since their screening capability can easily change by varying their pressure and/or concentration. Several successful examples of neutron screens performance are reviewed while problems appearing in specific cases are pointed out. Figure 2-1 depicts MTRs presented in this chapter.

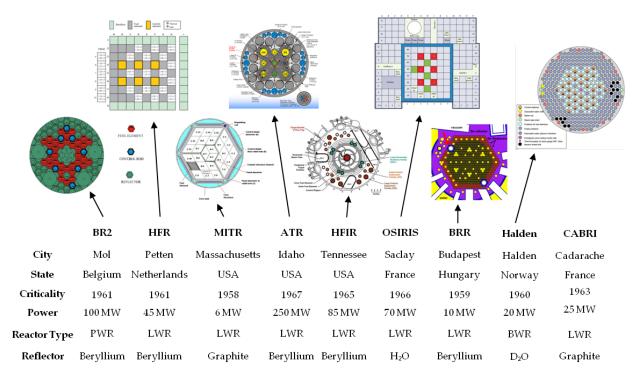


Figure 2-1: MTRs presented in this chapter (present work)

2.1 Solid Neutron Screens

In this section, neutron screens which use a solid material are presented; four solid, thermal neutrons absorbing materials are reported, i.e., cadmium, hafnium, boron and europium. All of them have adequate thermal neutron absorption cross sections (Figure 2-2) and are widely used in nuclear reactors in several applications. In each case, the selection of the appropriate material depends on the requirements of the experiment, the available room for screen loading, the safety issues related to screen loading and the materials compatibility (Table 2-1). Additionally, for the material selection the accumulated experience gained using the specific material for other reactor operations is also exploited. The factors that should be taken into account in a neutron screen design are the geometrical configuration of the screen, its depletion rate, the reactivity effect caused by its insertion in the core, the screen cooling medium, the acting field and the required conditions. The impact that a neutron screen has on reactor operation (reactivity insertion) and on neighboring experiments, if any, should be thoroughly analyzed. In this chapter the last issue has not been raised.

The solid screens are classified by material and are divided into subclasses depending on whether they have already been used or they are under development or study. In cases for which neutron screens are under development or study, the parameters that should be considered for the safety and effective neutron screen design are still under investigation.

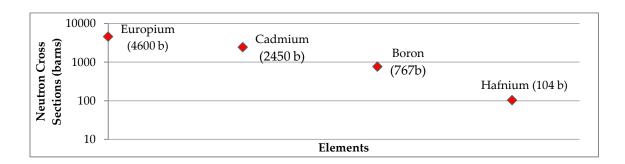


Figure 2-2: Thermal neutron capture values of thermal reported in literature to be used for spectrum tailoring

Table 2-1: Physical properties, cost, toxicity and reaction type of thermal reported in literature to be used for spectrum tailoring [Hyn15,CPP16]

Name	Sym	density (g/cm³)	Melting Point (°C)	Boiling Point (°C)	Prices per 100 g (\$)	Toxicity	Reaction Type
Europium	Eu	5.244	822	1527	1350	middly toxic	n,γ
Cadmium	Cd	8.56	321	767	46	highly toxic	n,γ
Boron	В	10.811	2075	4000	1114	non toxic	n,α
Hafnium	Hf	13.31	2233	4603	120	non toxic	n,γ

2.1.1 Cadmium neutron screens

Cadmium (Cd), is a material widely used for thermal neutron filtering, due to its excellent thermal neutron capture capability. Its utilization in neutron screen technology is very common, since the reactors Community is familiar with its mechanical properties and other technological issues. However, Cd screen construction is complex from the engineering point of view, due to its low melting point and its large thermal expansion. Because of its extremely high thermal neutron cross section, a slightly thin neutron screen is sufficient to tailor the neutron flux distribution in most cases. The more thermal neutron-absorbing Cd isotope is ¹¹³Cd, which constitutes only the 12% of the natural Cd [Wie13b]. In high neutron fluxes, ¹¹³Cd is quickly depletes, demanding thus frequent replacement of the screen (or additional material) in order to avoid unexpected increase of neutron flux deposited on the irradiated samples.

Cd screens are being used for many years now. In BR2 for instance, most of the irradiations from the 1960s until late 1980s were carried out in the framework of the fast reactor development program and most of the irradiation rigs contained a Cd thermal neutron-absorbing screen [Rae00].

2.1.1.1 Cadmium neutron screens already being used

Belgian Reactor 2, Center for Nuclear Energy Research (BR2, SCK·CEN)

In BR2² core at SCK·CEN a Cd screen of 0.25 cm thickness has been installed around a large Sodium (Na) loop (hosting a single fast reactor fuel pin) which was already surrounded by a gaseous ³He screen at variable pressure Figure 2-3. The experiment named VIC (Variable Irradiation Conditions) was installed in a standard 84.2 mm channel of BR2 (Figure 2-4)and its utilization aimed at Liquid-Metal Fast Breeder Reactor (LMFBR) fuel pins testing under transient operating conditions³. The ³He gas screen serves for fuel power transient (pressure variation), while the Cd screen provides a fast spectrum environment, by cutting off the thermal neutrons. Figure 2-5 illustrates the neutron spectra in a BR2 experiment with (red line) and without (dashed line) Cd screen located axially in a fuel element channel. The installation of the screen cuts off the thermal component of the neutron spectrum, whereas it has practically no impact on the high fast flux, leading thus the radial fission density distributions across fuel pin bundles, and inside the fuel pins themselves, to become much flatter and therefore simulating better the conditions of fast reactor. The optimization of the current neutronic design of the loop was done by calculating an optimal thickness of the water annuli between the ³He and Cd screens, in order to allow for a certain re-thermalization (so that the ³He screen would be able to induce a transient), keeping at the same time the thermal component of the neutron flux low enough, so as to be representative of a FR. The utilization of ³He screen in VIC is also examined in §2.2.1.

² The main characteristics of BR2 can be found in Dyc13.

³ Power increase or decrease in a few seconds, on the volume of a fuel pin.

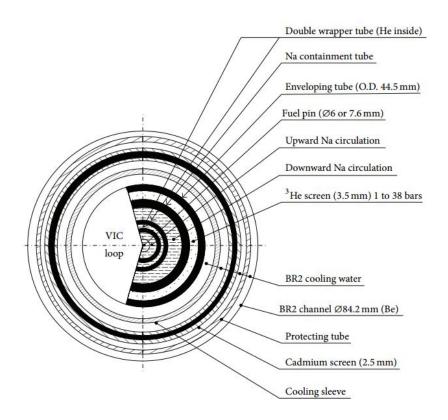


Figure 2-3: Horizontal cross section of VIC loop [Eyn09a]

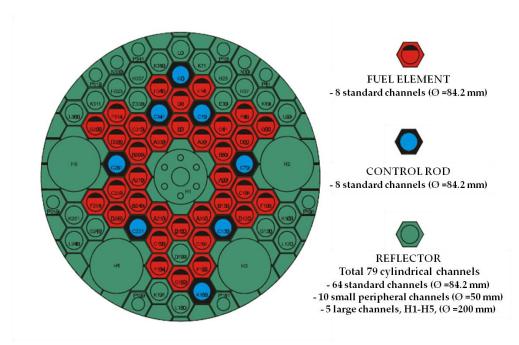


Figure 2-4: Horizontal cross-section of BR2 with a typical loading [Rae00]

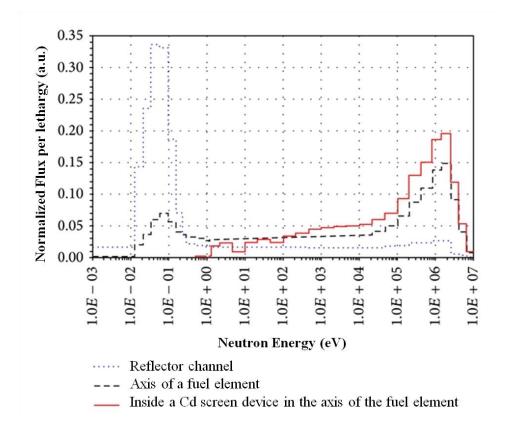


Figure 2-5: Effect of a 0.25 cm Cd neutron screen on the neutron spectrum within the fuel element. The neutron spectrum of the reflector channel is included for comparison. [Rae00]

High Flux Reactor (HFR), Petten

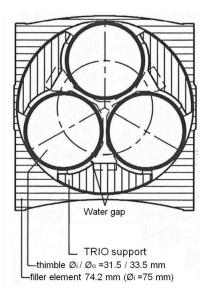
TRIO modified for irradiation of MOX fuels (TRIOX) capsule

TRIO is an irradiation device consisted of three sampler holders of circular cross section positioned radially per 120° (Figure 2-6). In HFR⁴ (Figure 2-7) a TRIO concept, i.e. TRIOX, was utilized for MOX fuels irradiation [Arl13,Sha16,Ren02], with a Cd screen adapted into the sample holder carrier for spectrum hardening at the location of testing fuel [Eyn09b]. Starting from the center and moving towards periphery (i.e. from inside to outside), a TRIOX channel is configured in terms of its radially arranged materials as follows (Figure 2-6): sample (i.e. fuel pin), Na, molybdenum (Mo) shroud, Na, Stainless Steel (SS) (1st containment), gas gap, SS (2nd containment, reactor coolant water, aluminum (Al), Cd (3 mm, embedded into Al over part of the device height), Al (the capsule material). The gas gap between primary and secondary containments, consisting of Helium-Neon (He-Ne) or Neon-Nitrogen (Ne-N) mixtures, helps to the control of the fuel pin clad temperature. The Mo shroud was immersed in the He

⁴ A short description of HFR can be found in Zem12, JRC05.

pressurized stagnant Na which fills the primary containment in order to prevent convection currents from appearing in Na when the gap between fuel pin and primary containment is too wide. Molybdenum presents high thermal conductivity and dimensional stability [Tan81], thus its concentric arrangement around the fuel pin serves to create a barrier against convection currents, flows of Na vapor and undesirable heating of the support structure.

The Cd incorporated into TRIOX capsule acts as a neutron screen for the reduction of the thermal flux influence. It is a 0.5 x 1.9mm² wire which is embedded into Al structure in a spiral groove made in the Al tube, giving a partial Cd cover in the TRIOX holder. Effective Cd cover can be changed depending on the design requirements. In order to avoid design complications, Cd screen is not directly incorporated to the sample holder. On the other hand, the Cd placement in the coolant water channel allows for sufficient cooling required for Cd, but has the drawback that some fast neutrons turn thermal once they have passed the neutron screen, which constitutes a compromise in the design. Moreover, all three TRIOX channels can contain Cd but this causes a significant reactivity effect. From the HFR operation safety point of view, the TRIOX capsule should be placed in the lower flux positions, since in this way it limits the impact of Cd wire on the neutronics of the reactor [Eyn09a].



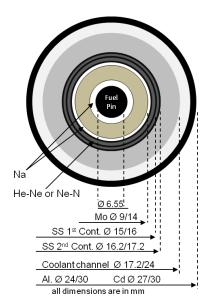


Figure 2-6: Left: Horizontal cross section of the three legs incorporated in the TRIO irradiation rig. Right: Horizontal cross section of a TRIOX containing a fuel sample holder. Only one leg is shown. [Eyn09b]

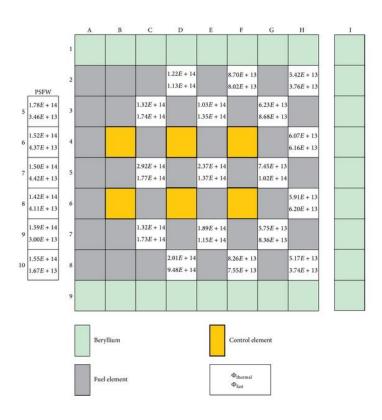


Figure 2-7: Schematic horizontal cross section of HFR [JRC05]

High neutron fluence Irradiation of pebble staCks for fUsion (HICU) Project

The HICU irradiation project has been implemented in HFR (Figure 2-7) for Li-ceramics⁵ irradiation under conditions similar to those of a Pebble Bed Reactor (PBR) [Li15, Man12,Ros14]. HICU combines two thermal neutron absorbers: hafnium (Hf) rings have been placed along with Cd rings creating a neutron screen layer within the sample holder tube. Figure 2-8 presents the power density versus time generated by (n,α) reactions on Li₄SiO₄ (Li ceramics material) in the dominant spectrum inside the HICU at core position C7 (Figure 2-7), for five cases: unshielded (A); 1 mm Cd at C7 (B) and 2 mm Cd at C7 (C); 2 mm Cd, 400 days at C7 and then at H8 (D); 2 mm Cd and 0.5 mm Hf at C7 (E). The abrupt upturn in power generation (curves B, C, D, E) is due to Cd depletion. The combination of Hf, which has low -in relation to Cd-microscopic cross section (Figure 2-2), with Cd (curve E) introduces a significant delay to the power upturn and allows longer irradiation duration -over 500 days- in the fast spectrum. As expected, the behavior of the unshielded (not accounting for burnup) facility (curve A) is constant. The power generated by both thermal and fast neutrons was calculated using the MCNP code [Bri00].

 $^{\rm 5}$ Li-ceramics are candidate materials for the breeder blanket of fusion reactor.

In order to study the screen's behavior, the neutron flux inside the HICU was computed with the MCNP code. The screen consisted of a 2 mm Cd shield and a Hf wire (0.6x0.6 mm²). The computations were performed considering the HICU loaded at the third highest flux position (C3 or C7) of HFR core (Figure 2-7). Additionally two types of fusion breeder materials, containing lithium metatitanate, i.e. Li₂TiO₃ with natural lithium (7.5% ⁶Li) and lithium-enriched material (30% ⁶Li), were assumed [Eyn09b]. The implementation of the neutron screen resulted to the cutoff of thermal neutrons (Figure 2-9). As referred in Eyn09a, the installation of HICU in C7 irradiation position (Figure 2-7) caused a negative reactivity effect of about 1200 pcm (per cent mille), due to the reduction of the thermal component available for further fission reactions. However the effect was considered acceptable by the HFR limiting conditions for operation [Eyn09a].

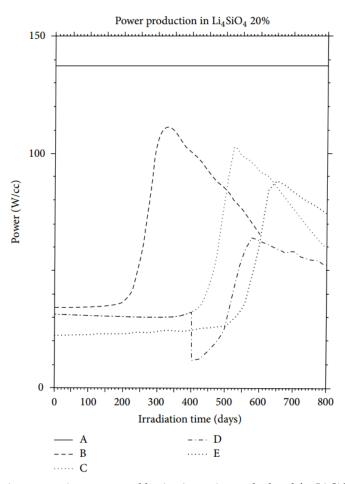


Figure 2-8: Power density versus time generated by (n,α) reactions calculated for Li₄SiO₄ 20% enriched in ⁶Li. Notation for curves is as following: unshielded (A); 1 mm Cd at C7 (B) and 2 mm Cd at C7 (C); 2 mm Cd, 400 days at C7 and then at H8 (D); 2 mm Cd and 0.5 mm Hf at C7 (E) [Eyn09a]

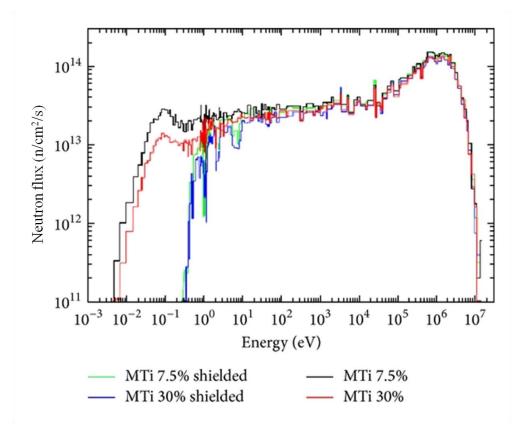


Figure 2-9: Effect of HICU (2 mm Cd and 0.6x0.6 mm2 Hf wire) neutron screen on the neutron spectrum with natural Li (7.5% ⁶Li) or with lithium-enriched material (30% ⁶Li) [Eyn09b]

2.1.1.2 Cadmium neutron screens under investigation or development

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

In the MIT reactor [Sun15], a design to achieve significantly high neutron flux has been proposed. The proposed facility would be hosted in the central fast flux trap of the MIT reactor core [Ell08]. The design includes a fast flux trap loop surrounded by fissionable material (233U, 235U, 239Pu and 242mAm), reflected and cooled by liquid eutectic Pb-Bi coolant [Ell09]. The fissile material could be enriched in either 235U or 233U. The area containing the fissile pins, called amplifier ring, consists of 164 fuel oxide pins arranged in four rings of 32, 38, 44 and 50 pins respectively in a hexagonal arrangement [New04, Sun15]. The Pb-Bi coolant acts as a "driver" by reflecting fast neutrons and sending them back to the central irradiation facility. Between the amplifier ring and the experimental irradiation facility area, a Cd filter was placed [Ell09]. The optimum thickness of Cd was investigated and the impact of various Cd thicknesses on the neutron flux is summarized in Table 2-2. An extremely thin layer of Cd (0.1mm) was found able to reduce the thermal flux well over 50% while the fast flux decrease was limited to 2% (Figure 2-10) [Ell09].

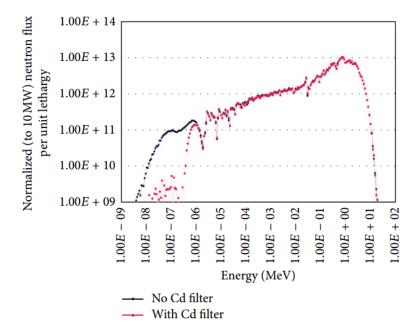


Figure 2-10 Effect of a 0.1 mm Cd neutron screen on the neutron spectrum hosted in the central fast flux trap of the MIT reactor core [Ell09]

Table 2-2: Effect of different Cd neutron screen thicknesses on the neutron flux of the central fast flux trap in MIT core [Ell09]

Cd filter	Neutron flux modification (%) for four neutron energy groups					
thickness(cm)	0-0.4 eV	0.4 eV - 2 keV	3keV - 1 MeV	1-10 MeV		
0.00	0	0	0	0		
0.01	-55	0	-2	-2		
0.02	-65	-1	-2	-3		
0.05	-69	-2	-2	-4		
0.07	-71	-2	-1	-4		
0.08	-72	-5	-1	-4		
0.13	-73	-5	-2	-5		
0.21	-73	-6	-2	-8		

Advanced Test Reactor (ATR), Idaho National Laboratory (INL)

In the east flux trap (EFT) of the ATR (Figure 2-11) at INL, irradiation tests of high-actinides-content fuels, AFC, have been performed, with the aim to examine the transmutation of long-lived isotopes in spent nuclear fuel into shorter lived fission products in an irradiation environment similar to that of a FR [Mar05].

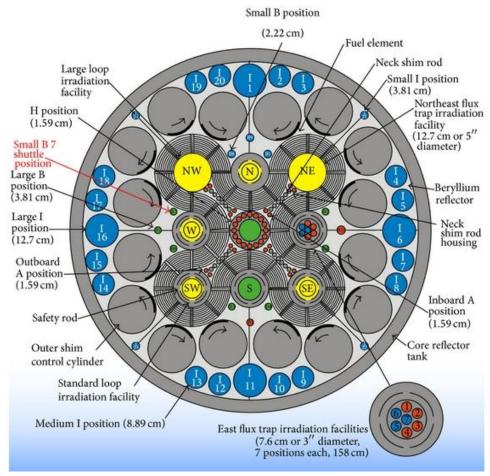


Figure 2-11: Horizontal cross section of ATR Core (77 irradiation positions: 4 flux traps, 5 in-pile tubes, 68 in reflector) [Mar05]

The fuels were loaded in an experiment Al-sheathed basket with a 0.114 cm thick Cd absorber filter. The device was cooled by light water, which is the primary coolant of the reactor. From a study performed with the combination of MCNP and ORIGEN-2 codes [ORIGEN2] it was found that at the beginning of irradiation the peak of the linear heat rate generated by the metal fuel, with and without absorber filter, was 237 and 2174 W/cm respectively [Cha05]. The maximum basket lifetime (Cd depletion) was estimated to be about 48 effective full power days (EFPDs). Figure 2-12 compares the neutron flux (per lethargy normalized to 1) spectrum in two cases, i.e. the neutron spectrum produced with and without Cd filter and the neutron flux spectrum type of a LMFBR [Cha11]. The results indicate that omission of a Cd filter (Al-basket) results in a softest neutron spectrum and that Cd-filter can provide a hardened neutron spectrum in EFT position.

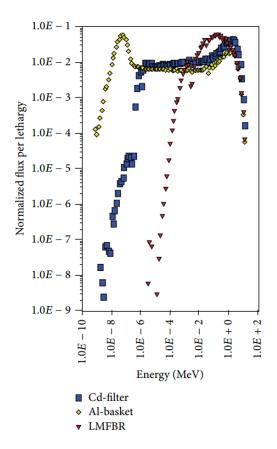


Figure 2-12: Effect of an Al-basket with and without a Cd (0.114 cm) filter on the neutron spectrum. The neutron flux spectrum of a LMFBR is included for comparison. Plot produced by MCNP [Cha11]

2.1.2 Hafnium neutron screens

Hafnium (Hf) is also a widely used material in nuclear reactors [IAEA08]. It has excellent mechanical properties, it is extremely corrosion-resistant and therefore can be used without enrichment. Another advantage is its high melting point. Hf thermal neutron cross section is not as high as that of the other absorbers (Figure 2-2) presented in this section. However, the formation of Hf isotopes under irradiation, which are good thermal neutron absorbers too, makes Hf a good candidate material for neutron screen technology. Since it decays to good thermal absorbers, its depletion occurs slowly, thus usually delaying its replacement in a neutron screen. Moreover, Hf is a well processed material, characterized by necessary mechanical strength, good stability and ability to maintain high mechanical properties under radiation and can be used without cladding (due its corrosion resistance in water) [IAEA08]. Hf is usually combined with Al, which is a good heat conductor and transparent to fast neutrons.

2.1.2.1 Hafnium neutron screens already in operation

HFR, Petten

A TRIO-facility sample-holder (Figure 2-6) called CONFIRM (Collaboration On Nitride Fuel IRradiation and Modeling) was prepared in 2006 [Fue09] for fast reactor fuel irradiation in HFR (Figure 2-7). In CONFIRM (Figure 2-13) the fuel pin (typical diameter 6.55 mm) is surrounded by a Na layer (1.325 mm thick) enclosed in a Mo-shroud (2.4 mm thick) for heat conductivity purposes (reference TRIOX). The material is placed in a Stainless Steel (SS) containment (1.4 mm thick) while a Na zone (2.5 mm thick) is interposed between the containment and the Moshroud. A second SS containment (1 mm thick) with a 0.5mm Hf shield endues the first containment; a 0.1mm gap exists between the two containments. The whole structure is placed axially in the TRIO wet channel of 31.5 mm diameter confined by a 1 mm thick stainless steel tube. The irradiation holder was fabricated with Hf and was loaded at the lower flux positions of the core. The outer surface of Hf was cooled by flowing water (Figure 2-13). The height of the shield was larger than that of the fuel, thus providing an effective shielding. In order to study the impact of Hf on the power density, computations using MCNP were performed for various Hf thicknesses (1mm, 2mm and two fuel pins of plutonium with 87% Pu-239. The variation in the shield thickness (Figure 2-14) has a large impact on the power density (up to ~80% in the cases of Hf of 3 and 4 mm thickness). The neutron spectrum in Mo shroud - surrounded the fuel sample- was computed with the MCNP code. Figure 2-15 illustrates the impact of a 4mm Hf shield on the spectrum, while Figure 2-16 the impact of five different Hf thicknesses on the thermal energy region. As follows, the addition of even only 1mm of Hf is capable to reduce the thermal neutron component to the half. Figure 2-17 shows the variation of the normalized power as well as of the normalized flux per unit lethargy, as a function of the Hf thickness. The variations are very similar, since the power is mainly produced by thermal neutrons and Hf is transparent to fast neutrons (Figure 2-15).

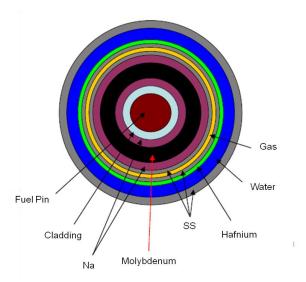
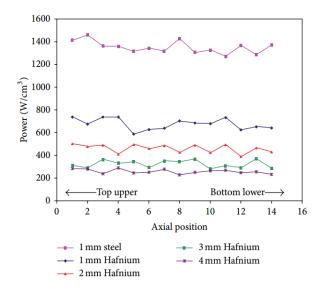


Figure 2-13: Horizontal cross section of the Confirm experiment [Eyn09a]



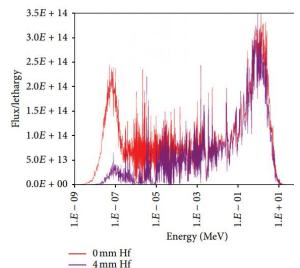
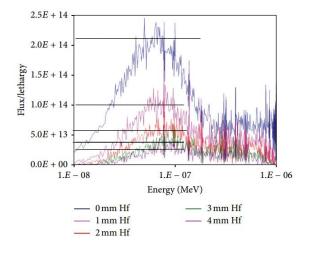


Figure 2-14: Power density in the two fuel pins (87% enriched ²³⁹Pu) as a function of Hf thickness [Eyn09a]

Figure 2-15: Effect of a 0.4 cm Hf neutron screen on the neutron spectrum within the Mo shroud [Eyn09a]



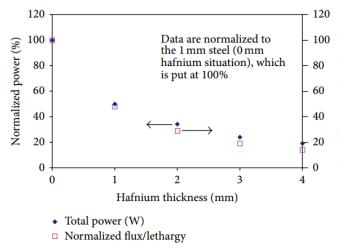


Figure 2-16: Effect of Hf neutron screens with different thicknesses on the neutron spectrum within the Mo shroud The horizontal lines mark the height of the thermal peak [Eyn09a]

Figure 2-17: Normalized power density and normalized flux per unit lethargy at the thermal peak, plotted as a function of the Hf thickness [Eyn09a]

High Flux Isotope Reactor (HFIR), Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL)

In HFIR⁶, ORNL (Figure 2-18), an irradiation facility that allows testing of advanced nuclear fuels under prototype LWR (Light Water Reactors) operating conditions in approximately half the time it takes in other research reactors, has been developed. The cylindrical irradiation

⁶ The main characteristics of HFIR can be found in [Geh08].

device holds three sample holders of circular cross section, with their centers located radially per 120°, forming an inscribed concentric circle (Figure 2-19). The intermediate space around irradiation holes is filled with Al and each capsule is surrounded by a coolant channel. Three flux monitor tubes, also surrounded by coolant, are placed radially, each one between two successive irradiation holes. The goal of this design is to maintain a relatively constant linear heat rate. A Hf screen surrounds the facility basket which is located in the reflector region of HFIR. Two LWR experiments have taken place using the above irradiation facility; the first contained uranium nitride (UN) [Joh16, Wat02], and the second uranium dioxide (UO2), fuel pellets inside silicon carbide (SiC) cladding [Dec15]. The facilities contain nine fuel pins - each comprising 10 fuel pellets - arranged as three fuel rods (Figure 2-19) [Ell11]. Design calculations indicated that a Hf shield of 1.61mm thickness degrades at a rate similar to the burnup of 3.8%enriched UO2 fuel, so that the linear heat generation rate of the fuel remains relatively constant, at least over the first few cycles. With this configuration and shield thickness, linear power ratings average at 22 kW/m for the upper and lower capsules and at 32 kW/m in the medium capsule. Design calculations suggested that a thickness of 0.232 cm would lead to linear power generation rates in the hottest pin in the middle axial position that will satisfy UO2 safety requirements with a rate of 28.41 kW/m.

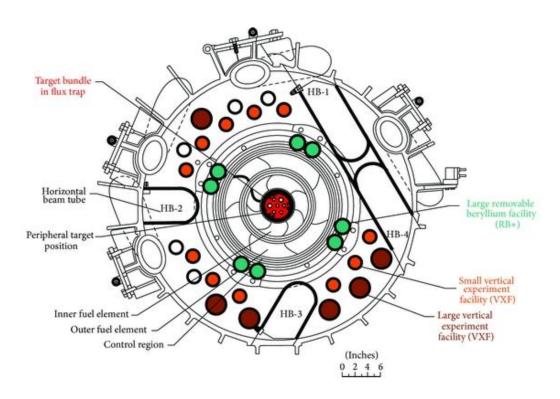


Figure 2-18: Schematic horizontal cross section of HFIR and its irradiation sites [Ell11]

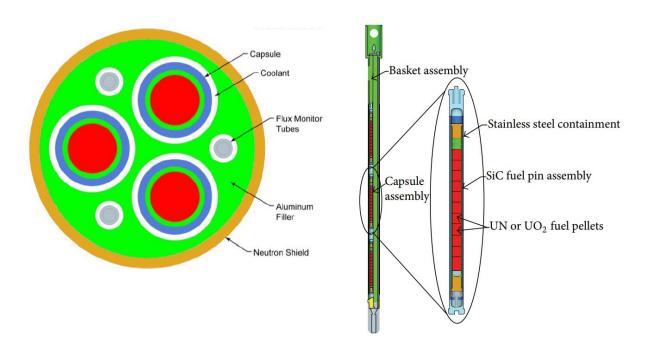


Figure 2-19: Left: Horizontal cross section of the thermal neutron irradiation facility. Right: Vertical view of the thermal neutron irradiation facility with a close-up of one of the nine capsule assemblies [Ell11]

2.1.2.2 Hafnium neutron screens under development or investigation

ATR, INL

Regarding the development of irradiation capabilities under fast neutron spectrum conditions at ATR (Figure 2-11), a Boosted Fast Flux Loop (BFFL) concept (Figure 2-20) has been proposed [Lon07]. The desired fast to thermal neutron flux ratio was set to exceed 15. The BFFL was designed to be hosted in a Gas Test Loop (GTL) in one of ATR corner lobes i.e., NW or NE (Figure 2-11), where large space is available. In the framework of the GTL Project Conceptual Design, several configurations of an experiment facility that could replicate a fast flux test environment have been studied. The BFFL combines boosters, as silicide uranium (U₃Si₂), for neutron flux enhancing, as well as Hf filter for thermal neutron absorbing and for reinforcing the increase of fast to thermal flux ratio. The composition of the absorbing material is a Hf-Al. This material retains the high thermal conductivity of Al combined with the thermal neutron absorption properties of Hf. With this approach, the produced heat can be removed by conduction and can be transferred from the experiment to pressurized water cooling channels (INL, 2009) [Gui10]. The fuel meat in the booster fuel is Si meat enriched to 93% (U₃Si₂) in ²³⁵U. U-Si plates of the required fuel loading, meat thickness and curvature are prototypes INL, 2009. The design depicted in Figure 2-20 provided a fast flux of approximately 1.05×10¹⁵ n/cm²s and a

fast (>0.1MeV) to thermal (here<0.625eV) neutron flux ratio of about 23, averaged over 16 cm in the three tubes (test spaces) [Par05]. The coolants of the configuration include ATR primary light water coolant, He and Na. Helium being inert, single phase, without reactivity effects, it was chosen as the gas coolant medium. In order to study the impact of Hf concentration on the fast/thermal neutron flux ratio, MCNP calculations were performed (Figure 2-21, Figure 2-22). The greater the presence of Hf in Al, the greater would be the removed fraction of thermal neutrons (Figure 2-21) [Lon07]. The heating rates in the Hf-Al as a function of the Hf concentration in the absorber are plotted in Figure 2-22. The heating rate appears to saturate at about 6% to 7 % Hf concentration, which suggests that this percentage may correspond to an optimum Hf loading [Lon07]. It was indicated that with a 6.5% or greater concentration in Hf, a fast to thermal neutron flux ratio greater than 40 can be produced [McD09].

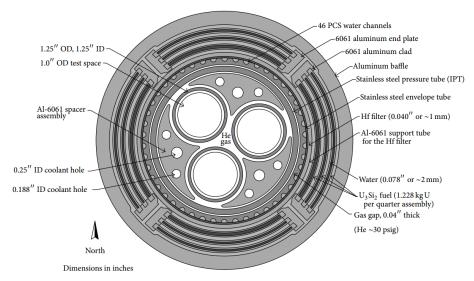


Figure 2-20: Schematic horizontal cross section of the Gas Test Loop conceptual design [Par05]

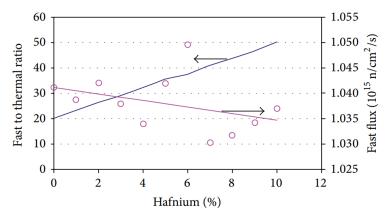


Figure 2-21: Sensitivity of fast-to-thermal ratio (blue line) and fast flux intensity (magenta line), to the Hf content in the Al central filler piece. The cycles on the graph correspond to the fast flux measurements [Lon07].

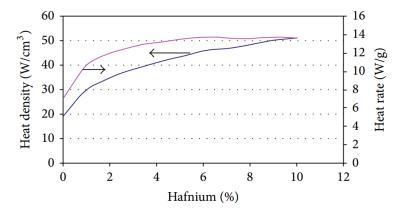


Figure 2-22: The heating rate (magenta line) and heat density (blue line) of the Hf-Al averaged over the central 40 cm of the core height [Lon07]

2.1.3 Boron neutron screens

Boron and its compounds find extensive application in nuclear reactors [IAEA08]. In contrast with other absorbers, i.e. Cd, B has a significant neutron absorption in the epithermal energy range. Natural boron (B) consists of around 20% ¹⁰B and 80% ¹¹B [Wie13b,Wie13b]. The extremely high thermal cross section of ¹⁰B (Figure 2-2) together with its low abundance cause quick depletion of the B screen. However, the depletion can be delayed by ¹⁰B enrichment. Boron is usually combined as carbide, oxide and nitride. A factor that should be taken into account in a B neutron screen design is the swelling that can be caused [Zha15], due to helium (He) generation after boron irradiation with fast neutrons (eq 2.1-2.2).

$${}_{0}^{1}n + {}_{5}^{10}B \rightarrow \begin{cases} {}_{3}^{7}Li^{*} + {}_{2}^{4}He \ (93.7\%) \\ {}_{3}^{7}Li + {}_{2}^{4}He \ (6.3\%) \end{cases}$$
eq. 2.1

High-energy neutrons can produce tritium $\binom{3}{1}H$ from lithium $\binom{7}{3}Li$ with a threshold energy E=2.466 MeV:

$${}_{0}^{1}n + {}_{3}^{7}Li \rightarrow {}_{2}^{4}He + {}_{1}^{3}H$$
 eq. 2.2

High-energy neutrons irradiating ¹⁰B will also occasionally produce tritium:

$${}_{0}^{1}n + {}_{5}^{10}B \rightarrow 2 {}_{2}^{4}He + {}_{1}^{3}H$$
 eq. 2.3

All of these reactions include the production of He [Mon12].

An Al-B alloy has been successfully used as neutron screen (§2.1.3.1) and another is under development (§2.1.3.2).

2.1.3.1 Boron neutron screens already in operation

ATR, INL

In order to achieve high fast (>0.1MeV) to thermal (here <0.1eV) neutron flux ratio [Ing98], a 0.25cm thick neutron screen of Al-B alloy filter has been inserted in the Irradiation Test Vehicle (ITV, Figure 2-23) in ATR (Figure 2-11). The ITV is loaded in the central flux trap where the highest neutron flux occurs. The inert inner region of the ITV is filled with Al (Figure 2-23), in order to avoid water that would increase neutrons thermalization. He or N₂ gases have been selected for the specimens cooling. The screen should be replaced after a certain irradiation time. In Table 2-3 the neutron flux values for a case with Al-B alloy filter (4.3% wt of ¹⁰B in Al) and a case without are presented. The presence of the Al-B screen increases the fast over thermal flux ratio about twice.

Table 2-3: Neutron	fluxes for	ATR-ITV	mid-plane	specimens	[Ing98]
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	Neutron flux at 26 MW Center lobe power (n/cm²/s) Filtered Unfiltered		
Thermal (here < 0.1 MeV)	$1.13 \cdot 10^{14}$	$1.76 \cdot 10^{14}$	
Fast (>0.1MeV)	$4.55 \cdot 10^{14}$	$4.54 \cdot 10^{14}$	
F/T	4.03	2.58	

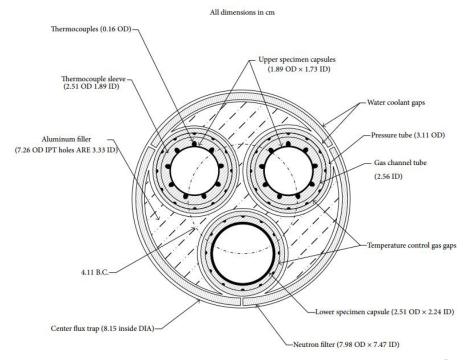


Figure 2-23: Horizontal cross section of ITV without specimens [Ing98]

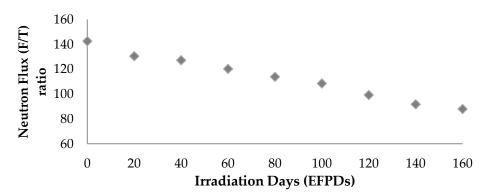
2.1.3.2 Boron neutron screens under development or study

ATR, INL

An Al-B screen has been proposed to be loaded in a test facility in the ATR (Figure 2-11), in order to harden the spectrum, providing an acceptable environment for V alloy testing.⁷ The ITV is installed in the central flux trap, where the highest value of the neutron flux occurs. The fast (>0.1MeV) to thermal (here <0.415eV) [Lon07] neutron flux ratios for a 0.254 cm Al-B screen (with 95% ¹⁰B enrichment) have been calculated with MCNP and ORIGEN-2 codes [Zhe14]. The computer codes MCNP and ORIGEN-2 were coupled by MCWO [Cha00]. The results are presented in Table 2-4. From the data it is apparent that the fast over thermal flux ratio (F/T) decreases almost linearly (Figure 2-24) over operation time, due to the ¹⁰B depletion in the Al-B alloy.

Table 2-4:Fast (>0.1MeV) to thermal (here<0.415eV) neutron flux ratios versus irradiation EFPDs at ITV [Cha02]

Irradiation days	Neutron flux F/T ratio	
BoL	142.51	
EFPDs 20	130.48	
EFPDs 40	127.21	
EFPDs 60	120.25	
EFPDS 80	113.84	
EFPDS 100	108.54	
EFPDS 120	99.24	
EFPDS 140	91.78	
EFPDS 160	87.99	



Figure~2-24: Fast~(>0.1 MeV)~to~thermal~(here < 0.415 eV)~neutron~flux~ratios~versus~irradiation~EFPDs~at~ITV~[Cha02]

 $^{^{7}}$ The test assembly design goals are a) vanadium (V-Li bond) specimen displacement per atom (dpa) greater than 10 dpa per year and b) 51 V transmutation at 30 dpa less than 0.5 atom%.

Figure 2-25 presents the impact of an Al-B filter installation on the neutron. As the enrichment increases the hardening of the neutron spectrum is more intense. Three different cases are depicted; a) without filter, b) with Al-B (10 B 60% enrichment) filter and c) with Al-B (10 B 95% enrichment) filter. The F/T ratios for the unfiltered case have been estimated 14.6, whereas with the highly enriched Al-B filter (10 B 95%) the F/T ratio in BOL (Beginning of Life) reaches 142.5 In order to hold the averaged ratio over 80, the filter needs to be replaced after 160 EFPDs (4 typical operation cycles). The Al-B (10 B 95%) screen can meet the desirable requirements [Cha02].

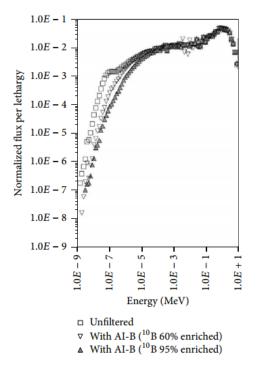


Figure 2-25: Effect of a 0.254 cm Al-B neutron screen with ¹⁰B 60% enrichment and 95% enrichment on the neutron spectrum [Cha05]

Budapest Research Reactor (BRR)

In the frame of the MTR+I3 project⁸ a parametric neutron screen study was made for the largest irradiation channel of the BRR (Figure 2-26). The boron carbide (B₄C) filter was inserted between the walls of an Al irradiation tube. The area outside the irradiation tube was surrounded by Al displacers. The dimensions of the irradiation tube are given in Table 2-5. Two changing parameters were investigated, i.e. the thickness of the filter and the enrichment of ¹⁰B. In total, eight cases were studied and compared with the reference case, in which the B₄C filter was replaced by Al. The energy spectrum was divided in five groups with their upper boundaries given in Table 2-6. The influence of the thickness and enrichment variations on the energy spectrum is presented in Figure 2-27.

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⁸ Integrated Infrastructure Initiative for Material Testing Reactors Innovations

Table 2-5: Dimensions of the BRR neutron screen [Hor09]

Component	mm
Irradiation tube inner radius	28
Irradiation tube inner wall thickness	2
Neutron filter thickness, maximum	7
Irradiation tube outer wall thickness	3
Irradiation tube outer radius	40

Table 2-6: BRR energy spectrum boundaries [Hor09]

Group number	Upper boundary (MeV)		
1	0.0		
2	0.1		
3	0.5		
4	1.0		
5	20.0		

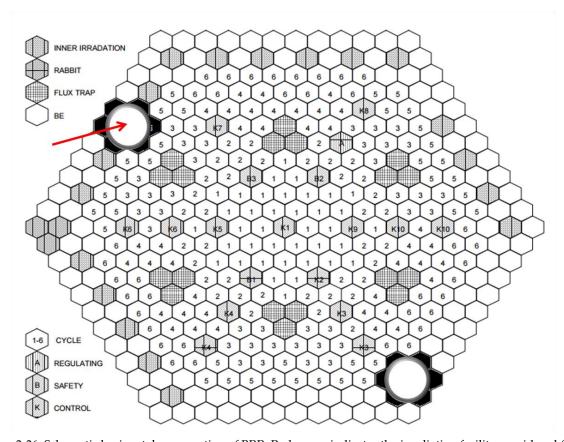


Figure 2-26: Schematic horizontal cross section of BRR. Red arrow indicates the irradiation facility considered for a parametric neutron screen study [Pon99]

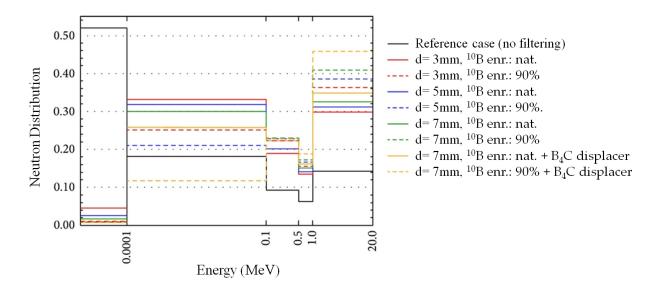


Figure 2-27: Comparing the effect of different neutron screen configurations on the BRR neutron spectrum [Eyn09b, Hor09]

The following results were derived by this study:

- i. The greatest spectrum tailoring is obtained with the denser ¹⁰B configuration (highest amount of ¹⁰B content in the screen that can be provided with different filtering configurations).
- ii. All filtering configurations in the thermal energy group have as a result an effective reduction of the thermal part of the spectrum.
- iii. For groups 3 (0.1-0.5MeV) and 4 (0.5-1MeV) the effect is very similar.
- iv. The presence of the filters resulted to a negative reactivity effect of 1100–1400 pcm. In the cases where B₄C screens were considered the reactivity effect of ranged from 1500 to 1800 pcm

Although the findings of the study highlighted the great thermal neutron absorption capability of B₄C, its utilization was not considered in practice, because of its reactivity effect and its low heat conductivity [Hor09].

2.1.4 Europium neutron screens

Europium (Eu) is a material with extremely high thermal neutron cross section (Figure 2-2). Moreover, Eu absorbs neutrons and transmutes to gadolinium (Gd) that has a higher neutron cross section. The use of Eu is limited since it is rare and hence expensive (Table 2-1). In nuclear reactors, Eu is used in control rods [IAEA08]. In this section, only one neutron screen with Eu is presented, in fact being under development in HFIR (§2.1.4.2). The F/T flux ratio that is predicted to be achieved with Eu screen is remarkable (>400).

2.1.4.1 Europium neutron screens already in operation

Eu neutron screens "to the authors knowledge" already used in reactor facilities have not been found in the open literature, possibly due to the reasons described in the previous paragraph.

2.1.4.2 Europium neutron screens under development or investigation

HFIR, ORNL

An analysis of a fast spectrum irradiation facility design has been performed in HFIR (Figure 2-18) at ORNL. The screen has been planned to be installed at the reactor flux trap (FT) (southeastern core part) where the fast neutron flux exceeds 1·10¹⁵ n/cm²·s and the thermal neutron flux may exceed 2.5·10¹⁵ n/cm²·s [McD08]. A tri-pin assembly design (Figure 2-28), occupying seven existing sites in flux trap region of HFIR (Figure 2-18), was selected for the application. Calculations of performance characteristics such as linear heat generation rate, neutron flux magnitude, fast-to-thermal flux ratio, displacements per atom (dpa), etc., were performed in HFIR using the MCNP code [Xou04]. From the obtained results (Table 2-7) it appears that the proposed requirements of fast neutron flux greater than 1×10¹⁵ n/cm²·s and fast-to-thermal flux ratio greater than 300 are achieved. It was concluded that this design could provide a fast (>0.1MeV) to thermal (here <0.625eV) neutron flux ratio over 400. Figure 2-29 presents a comparison between the existing neutron spectrum in the FT and the spectrum inside a 3mm thick Eu shield. The insertion of the screen has an acceptable impact on the power distribution (less than 9%, as required by the HFIR safety analysis [Geh08].

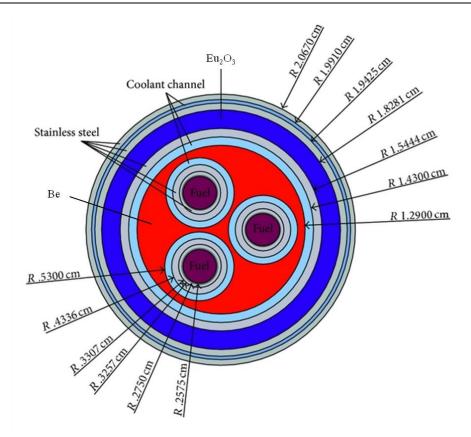


Figure 2-28:Horizontal cross section of tri-pin fast flux shielded irradiation design at HFIR (ORNL) [Geh08]

Table 2-7: HFIR irradiation parameters for the proposed tri-pin concept [McD08]

Parameters	Value
Fast (>0.1 MeV) neutron flux in irradiation volume	1.2 · 10 ¹⁵ n/cm ² ·sec
(a) Annual ⁹ fast (>0.1 MeV) neutron fluence at peak irradiation position	$1.6 \cdot 10^{22} \text{n/cm}^2$
(b) Burnup/year	5.9%
(c) dpa	19.5
Fuel ¹⁰ burnup-to-clad dpa ratio at peak irradiation position	0.3 atoms % per dpa
Fast (>0.1 MeV) to thermal (here <0.625 eV) flux ratio	400
He-to-dpa ratio in iron at peak irradiation position	0.2 appm He per dpa
Linear heat rate (variable, depending upon design of Eu ₂ O ₃ shield)	300 W/cm

⁹ Annual estimates are conservatively based on seven cycles per year

 $^{^{\}rm 10}$ The composition of the HFIR fuel can be found in Geh08.

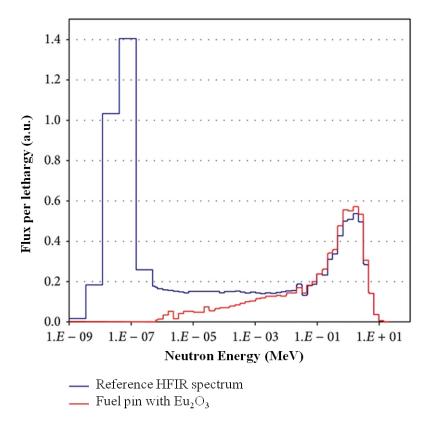


Figure 2-29: Effect of a $2.84~cm~Eu_2O_3$ neutron screen on the neutron spectrum in the FT region of HFIR [McD08]

2.1.5 Concluding Remarks on Solid Neutron Screens

Neutron screen performances can easily and inexpensively meet demands for a fast neutron flux facility, which arise due to the absence of adequate number of fast experimental reactors. In §2.1, neutron screens which use a solid shielding material were presented. The screens that were reported are, either already successfully implemented and used, or are still under development or study. The purpose of their use is the creation of an environment with a neutron energy spectrum as much as possible free from thermal and epithermal neutrons in order to reach fast reactor spectrum, which becomes negligible below ~10eV. Four solid materials were presented i.e., boron (B), cadmium (Cd), hafnium (Hf) and europium (Eu). In principle the material selection depends on the considerations of the reactor which will host the screen and on the required conditions that should be achieved. Europium has not met great

industrial development, due to its excessively high cost compared to B, Cd and Hf, which are widespread in nuclear reactors. From the safety point of view, europium oxide reacts readily with water and B gets highly corrosive at high temperatures. On the contrary, Hf and Cd are both corrosion-resistant metals. Regarding their physical properties, Cd has the disadvantages of low melting and low boiling point. Irradiating boron with fast neutrons induces generation of helium, causing swelling. Hafnium exhibits the best mechanical properties. The thickness of the screen depends on the materials depletion and on the safety requirements of the experiment. The fact that Eu and Hf activation products have high cross sections, delays their depletion with time, extending thus the neutron screen operational time. However, the gamma emission that may arise by both (Eu and Hf) initial screens and products may result into an undesirable power increase in the sample. On the contrary, B and Cd have only one isotope with high cross section - and in low abundance - so that both deplete fast with time. Therefore B and Cd neutron screens demand frequent replacement in order to prevent a sudden upturn on the reactor's power deposited on the irradiated sample. In order to compensate the fast depletion, increment of the absorber's content in the screen is sought. This is achieved either by increasing the volume of the material or through enrichment of the absorber (i.e., 10B enrichment), the cost of the screen being increased accordingly. On the other hand, Hf has the lowest cross section than all four materials. Therefore, in order to fulfill the same requirements, larger volume of Hf must be used, compared to the necessary volumes of other screening materials. In general, few mm of absorber thickness are sufficient. From all four materials, B has the highest cross section in the epithermal energy range, while in addition its cross section presents smooth behavior. Europium and its isotopes have also very important cross section in that region (order of 104 barns), but in contrast with Boron, they present many resonances. Hafnium and its isotopes present also high neutron capture in the epithermal region with many resonances (order of 10³-10⁵ barns).

Finally, Cd has the lowest epithermal cross sections (order of 10³-10⁴ barns). The epithermal neutron capture capability of the absorbers serves to a more representative simulation of a fast neutron spectrum. A combination of absorbers can be utilized in order to create a more efficient neutron screen.

2.2 Fluid Neutron Screens

In this section, neutron screens which use a gaseous or a liquid thermal neutrons absorbing material, are presented. The purpose of fluid screens is to generate power transients i.e., power increase or decrease in a few seconds, on the volume of a fuel sample. Fuels fission power variation is achieved through the fluctuation of the absorbent content in the screen (thickness of the screen or absorber's enrichment). The fluctuation is accomplished by pressure variation (i.e., ³He case) or variation of the concentration of the absorber (i.e., ¹⁰B in boron compounds) in the screen surrounding the fuel. The understanding and accurate prediction of fuel thermal response is of prime importance for the evaluation of fuel rod performance under normal and transient conditions [Hor99]. Three different types of variable neutron screens are reported in this section i.e., gaseous ³He, liquid boric acid (H₃BO₃) and gaseous boron trifluoride (BF₃). Gaseous BF₃ and ³He screens performance has been abandoned in most of the reactors, since both gases present characteristics that can jeopardize reactor's safety. ³He screens have been replaced by liquid H₃BO₃ ones.

Parameters that can enhance the power transient amplitude (ratio between the lowest and the highest achievable power) comprise the core location where the screen is adapted, the distance between the screen and the sample, the absorber type that is used in the screen, the absorber content in the screen and the operational phase of the reactor. In addition, large amplitude transients can be achieved by combining the screen modification and the reactor power changes, e.g. scram. The fluid screens are classified by material and are divided into subclasses depending on whether they have already been used or they are under development or study.

2.2.1 Helium-3 neutron screens

³He is a gaseous synthetic isotope of natural Helium and is often used in nuclear reactors. ³He thermal neutron cross section is extremely high [Mug73, ENDF], making this material an excellent absorber. Most of power transients with a ³He neutron screen have nowadays been abandoned, as raising safety issues due to Tritium production via the ³He activation. The first experiment with a variable ³He neutron screen was made in 1977.

2.2.1.1 Helium-3 neutron screens already operational

BR2, SCK·CEN

Pressurized Water Capsule / Cycling and Calibration Device (PWC/CCD)

In BR2 at SCK·CEN a Pressurized Water Capsule/ Cycling and Calibration Device (PWC/CCD) (Figure 2-30) device has been used for fast power transients on fuel pins, under conditions similar to those of a Boiling Water Reactor (BWR) or a PWR. This is accomplished through ³He

pressurization/depressurization (1 – 38 bars). With a 2 mm wide gas gap, a transient factor (i.e. the ratio between maximum and minimum power level) of 1.75 has been achieved. The PWC/CCD device has been applied in several fuel ramping tests during the last 30 years [Mou07, Eyn09a].

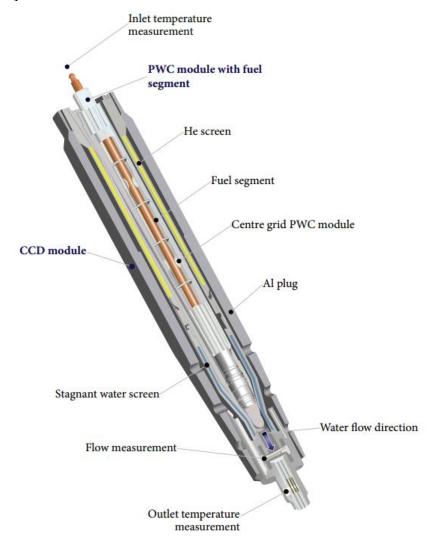


Figure 2-30: Global view of PWC/CCD assembly [Mou07,Eyn09a]

VIC experiment

A variable pressure ³He screen has been utilized in BR2 (Figure 2-4) for fuel power transient in VIC experiment (Figure 2-31). The screen surrounded a Na loop, in which the sample was inserted. The use of ³He screen provided a transient amplitude of 80%. As it has been stated in §2.1, the VIC experiment consisted also of a Cd screen, which presence reduces the transient amplitude to 25% [Eyn09a].

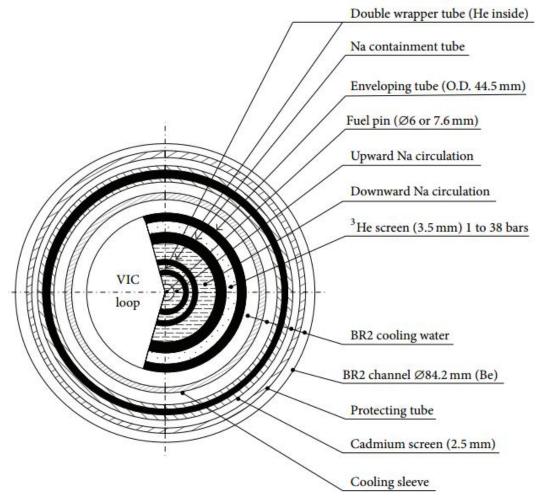


Figure 2-31: Horizontal cross section of VIC loop [Eyn09a]

Halden, Norway

Although the helium screen performance has been abandoned in most reactors, ramp test facilities with ³He screen are still in operation in Halden reactor [Vol15,Vit01]. More precisely, in-pile loops with gaseous ³He are utilized for studying the fuel rods performance under power transient conditions. The experiment is surrounded by zircaloy¹¹ in order to be isolated from the reactor environment. The pressure variance of the gaseous ³He can provide a ramping factor up to 4 and a ramp rate between 100 and 200 W/(cm·min). Several power test series have been executed for the investigation of fuels' behavior during normal/off normal operational transients [IAEA13b]. Four typical power ramp tests are depicted in Figure 2-32.

¹¹ A typical composition of nuclear-grade zirconium alloys is more than 95 weight percent zirconium and less than 2% of tin, niobium, iron, chromium, nickel and other metals, which are added to improve mechanical properties and corrosion resistance.[IAEA98]

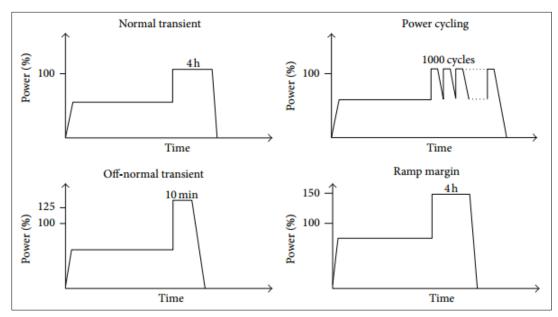


Figure 2-32: Four typical power ramp tests at Halden [IAEA13b]

CABRI, Cadarache

CABRI (Figure 2-33) is a pool-type reactor with a core made of 1487 stainless steel clad fuel rods with 6% ²³⁵U enrichment, operated by CEA at the Cadarache research center [Imh16]. Since 1978, one of the reactors aims has been the fuel behavior under Reactivity Initiated Accident (RIA) conditions. With the utilization of an ³He transient rods system power transient experiments can be performed.

CABRI reactor is able to reach a 23.7 MW steady state power level. A key feature of CABRI reactor is its reactivity injection system. Apart from the 6 control and safety rods, the reactor is equipped with 4 transient rods filled with pressurized ³He (Figure 2-34) device allows the very fast depressurization into a discharge tank of the ³He previously introduced inside 96 tubes, transient rods, located among the CABRI fuel rods (Figure 2-34). The rods used to increase the reactor power before dropping back just as quickly due to the Doppler effect; the natural regulation of neutron absorption results in reduced neutron power (Figure 2-35). The procedure (power variation from ~100kW to ~20GW) takes place in few milliseconds (Figure 2-35). The total energy deposit in the tested rod is adjusted by dropping the control and safety rods after the power transient [Hud16, Hud14, Duc14].

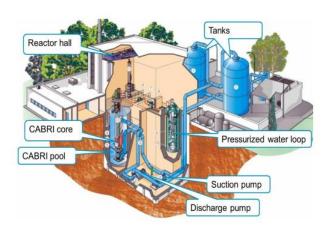


Figure 2-33: Overall view of the CABRI facility [Hud14]

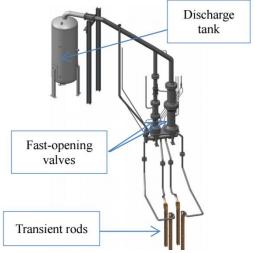


Figure 2-34: Global view of the CABRI transient rods system [Hud16]

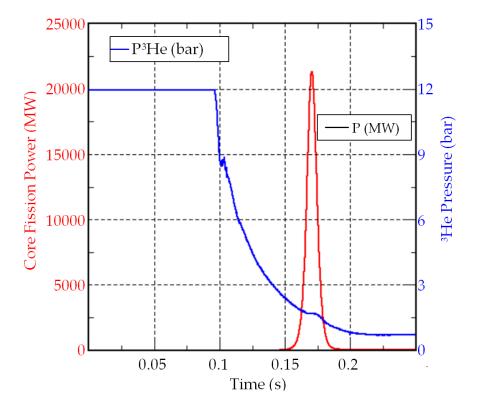


Figure 2-35: Typical CABRI ³He Pressure and core power shapes during a RIA transient [Hud16]

2.2.2 Boron neutron screens

Boron (B) isotope ¹⁰B has an extremely high thermal cross section. For power transient experiments B compounds are used. ¹⁰B enrichment can be utilized in order to increase the power transient. As stated in §2.1.3, the use of B should seriously be considered, due to its high reactivity effect. Two types of B fluid screens are described, gaseous BF₃ and liquid H₃BO₃. BF₃ utilization has been abandoned due to its corrosive and poisonous nature and its relatively low absorption cross section, which requires screen utilization at high pressure.

2.2.2.1 Boron neutron screens already operational

HFR, Petten

MOKA-POTRA-BISAR experiments

A BF₃ gas screen has been used in the MOKA, POTRA, and BISAR boiling water fuel capsules in HFR (Figure 2-7) for power control in fuel irradiation experiments. The capsule carrier is placed in an Al filled space and its horizontal cross section is described by nine concentric rings surrounding the 10.4 mm radius fuel rod. The rings' compositions and widths in mm, from center to periphery, are respectively: zirconium (Zr), 1.34; water coolant, 14.6; Al, 9; water coolant, 2; Al, 11; SS, 6; BF₃, 13.5; SS, 6; water coolant, 1.5. The high thermal neutron absorption of ¹⁰B can cause a power reduction, although the BF₃ gas was not sufficient for large power ramps in the in-pile experiments performed. Stainless steel was used as a construction material and BF₃ gas was inserted into a special annular space surrounding the fuel. The typical pressure of the gas screen was of 50 bar, causing 20% power reduction. The possibility of using enriched BF₃ – instead of natural - was considered. With the same amount of enriched BF₃ less space would be necessary and more neutron absorption could be achieved, without pressure changes. Moreover, safety would also be increased. BF₃ is no longer in use at the HFR, due to its corrosiveness, poisonous nature; BF₃ can potentially form F₂ which is a poisonous and corrosive gas. In addition the relatively low absorption cross section of BF3 leads to the requirement of the screen utilization at high pressure.

TOP experiment

BF₃ gas screen has been used in a TOP-scenario experiment, in order to study the influence of fast reactor fuel's structure under overpower conditions. The facility was placed outside the core in the Pool Side Facility (PSF). The region around the Na containment was filled with BF₃ gas, acting as neutron shield. The variation of BF₃ concentration, the displacement of the facility (to and from the core) or the combination of both, allowed a power transient factor of 2 to 4. The maximum pressure of BF₃ into the irradiation device was 45bar. BF₃ pressure increase, varied slightly the power reduction and neutron absorption.

2.2.2.2 Boron neutron screens under development or study

BR2, SCK·GEN

A water screen with a variable concentration of H₃BO₃ was developed at SCK•CEN for fuel power transient experiments (Figure 2-36). The screen, called VANESSA, surrounds a "classic" pressurized water capsule (PWC) in BR2 (Figure 2-5) and was developed in order to replace the existing screen, based on ³He pressurization / depressurization. The modification of B concentration allows the tuning of the basic linear power. The H₃BO₃ concentration can vary between zero (i.e. pure water) and slightly below the saturation value of about 60g/l H₃BO₃ per liter at room temperature. The concentration evolution can be achieved during 20s and the result is a non linear power transient, however it can be adapted to provide a linear power evolution [Ver09]. VANESSA screen was loaded in a BR2 high flux channel for transient testing on very high burn-up fuel. VANESSA not only provides the variable thermal neutron absorption but -via the thermal balance method - serves also for fuel rod power determination. Through the volume of H₃BO₃ solution generated during the operation, limited number of transients during a cycle takes place.

Various enrichments of ¹⁰B have been studied. The results indicated that with natural B, a fuel power transient factor of about 2.0 could be achieved, while with 100% enriched ¹⁰B the power transient factor was increased to 4.5. The ramp factor has been calculated for two different screen thicknesses, i.e. (a) 2 mm: ramp factor 2 (almost linear dependence on B concentration) and (b) 6.5 mm: ramp factor 4 (strongly non-linear). A study of the thermal behavior of the VANESSA part showed that H₃BO₃ should be continuously refreshed (at least every 3s) in order to avoid its stagnancy, that could lead to unacceptably high temperatures. The cooling of the screen is performed by the primary BR2 cooling system water. VANESSA can also be used in combination with RODEO (ROtatable Device for the Execution of Operational transients) device (Figure 2-37).

The RODEO concept is a rotating plug, inserted in the peripheral 200 mm diameter channel of BR2. A 180° rotation allows a maximum displacement of 106 mm towards BR2 centre (Figure 2-38, leading to up to more than threefold increase of the linear power of a fuel rod in PWC. Three solutions for the plug material were studied; RODEO filled with water gives the highest transient ratio. The results are presented in Table 2-8.

Table 2-8: The three solutions for the plug material under evaluation: beryllium (Be), light water (H2O), and Al [Ver09]

		Min linear power (kW/cm)	Max linear power (kW/cm)	RODEO transient ratio
Be	Without H ₃ BO ₃	1.23	2.45	2
	63 g/L H3ntBO3	0.61	1.21	2
	63 g/L H ₃ 10BO ₃	0.2	0.44	2.2
H_2O	Without H ₃ BO ₃	0.39	1.87	4.8
	63 g/L H3BO3	0.165	0.67	4.1
	63 g/L H ₃ 10BO ₃	0.055	0.24	4.4
Al	Without H ₃ BO ₃	1.2	1.52	1.3
	63 g/L H₃natBO₃	0.69	0.92	1.3
	63 g/L H ₃ 10BO ₃	0.31	0.42	1.3

The power increase in the H3 and H4 channels (Figure 2-5) was calculated. With zero H₃BO₃ concentration in VANESSA, the power in these channels increases by 0 to 4 % by RODEO rotation (from the remote position to the near position). With saturated natural B in H₃BO₃, the rotation has a result of 1 to 5 % decrease. For intermediate B concentrations, the influence of the RODEO rotation on the neighboring fuel elements will therefore be extremely small. RODEO rotation can be achieved on a time scale of the order of a few seconds. This leads to the conclusion that very fast power transients with RODEO are possible. Figure 2-38 exhibits the combined utilization of VANESSA and RODEO.

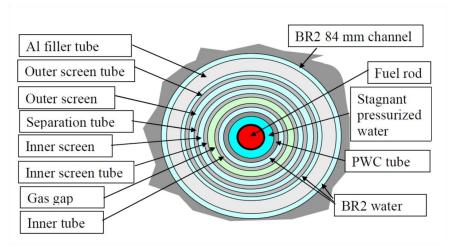


Figure 2-36: Horizontal cross section of VANESSA [Mou07]

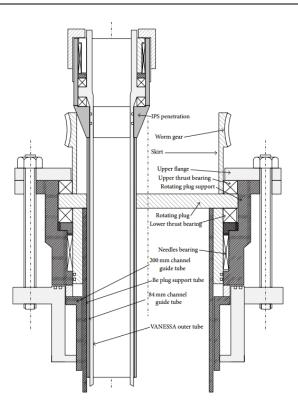


Figure 2-37: Vertical view of RODEO rotating plug at BR2 [Ver09]

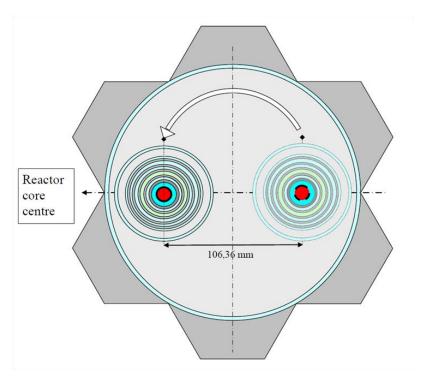


Figure 2-38: Horizontal cross section of RODEO and VANESSA. The arrow indicates the availability of 180° rotation towards BR2 centre [Mou07]

2.2.3 Concluding Results on Fluid Neutron Screens

In §2.2, neutron screens which use a gaseous or a liquid thermal absorbing material were presented. The purpose of fluid screens is to generate power transients in order to examine fuel's behavior in case of exposure to sudden power transient conditions.

Two different elements are typically utilized, helium and boron, i.e. gaseous ³He, gaseous BF₃ and liquid H₃BO₃. BF₃ and H₃BO₃ screens were developed with the purpose to replace the widely used ³He screen for safety reasons, since ³He generates (through neutron capture) tritium. BF₃ performance also causes safety concerns, as BF₃ can potentially form F₂ which is a poisonous and corrosive gas. Compared to the previous materials, H₃BO₃ can be considered a safe candidate for performing power transients, since it is not corrosive and does not produce active by-products.

³He has an extremely high neutron absorption cross section. For this reason its replacement with boron compounds having much lower cross sections, cannot provide the same power transients. This can be compensated either by pressure increment or by B enrichment. Moreover, the screen can be combined with a displacement system (RODEO).

Fluid neutron screens can provide successful power transients. In cases requiring higher power deviations, the screens can be combined with reactor's power alterations or with displacement systems.

2.3 Concluding Remarks

Neutron screen technology has been developed in order to fulfill several application requirements. The key idea of the neutron screens is the utilization of some elements capability to absorb neutrons at specific energy range. In this chapter only screens which utilize thermal (and epithermal) absorbers were presented.

First, the capability to simulate fast nuclear reactor conditions in a specific area by adapting a neutron screen, is reviewed through the presentation of relevant studies and applications. As arises from the available literature, several neutron spectra have been simulated in different reactors. Four solid materials were presented i.e., boron, cadmium, hafnium and europium. Their performance characteristics differ in terms of their mechanical properties, compatibility, depletion, etc. However, in most cases presented in this chapter, the utilized material could be replaced by one of the rest. The material selection is determined by factors such as the reactor safety, the reactor type in which the screen will be inserted (and its operational conditions), the reactor coolant, the available space for the screen, etc.

Second, the capability of the existing reactors to irradiate fuel under power transients by exploiting the performance of neutron screens is examined, based on reported experience. More specifically, the utilization of neutron screens with fluid materials is reviewed. The method is based on the gas pressure or the liquid concentration variation so that power transients can be initiated. Two different fluid fluids have been reported, i.e. helium and boron, namely gaseous ³He, gaseous BF₃ and H₃BO₃. The last two neutron screens have been developed in order to replace the unsafe utilization of ³He, because of the tritium generation problem. BF₃ utilization has been limited and eventually abandoned due to its corrosive and poisonous nature. Moreover, its performance could not reach power transient ranges equivalent to those obtained using ³He. Likewise, by using H₃BO₃ the achieved power transients appear much lower, so that the screen is combined with a displacement system (RODEO), providing thus very fast power transients.

The main conclusion is that neutron screens are worth studying and developing since they can successfully contribute to the creation of desirable special irradiation conditions, which cannot be achieved during normal reactor operation due to technological or economic reasons.

Chapter 3.

Simulation Procedure

3.1 Neutron Transport

The aim of neutron transport theory is to describe the movement of neutrons in space and their interaction with the other nuclei. Two methods exist for reactor physics to simulate and model the neutron transport: *deterministic* and *stochastic* approaches. With the former the average particle behavior is retrieved by solving analytically approximated formulations of the transport equation, while in the latter by simulating individual particles and calculating some aspects of their average behavior [Gra09, Wag97]. The benefit of using Monte Carlo (MC) in simulations is related to equivalent deterministic calculations that complex problems can be modeled with relatively simple calculations, where the deterministic ones cannot provide explicit solution [Fis95, Kla10]. However, the computation time required by MC codes is extremely longer than the small amount of time required by the deterministic calculations [Rus12]. For the present thesis the MC method has been employed; the complexity of the geometry of a nuclear reactor such as JHR is extremely hard to be modeled with the deterministic method. In the following paragraphs the MC method is briefly outlined.

3.2 Monte Carlo method

In the MC calculations for a nuclear reactor, the life of a neutron is governed by random processes. After its birth, the trajectory and lifetime of the neutron depend on many factors (i.e. location, incident energy, type of isotope and reaction at the collision site, etc.). The MC method is trying to simulate, as closely as possible, every neutron travelling story, which follows a probability density function. In this stochastic method, each neutron is considered to be a Markov process, meaning that at present state its future and past are independent. The various events (i.e. collision, absorption, fission, escape, etc.) that occur during its "walk" are recorded constituting its history. The necessary information is supplied by the actual transport data. The average behavior of the particles in the system is estimated based on the average behavior of the simulated particles [Gra09,Tut14, Kla10].

The interaction of a neutron with the different nuclei is based on physical laws and mechanisms of each interaction. For instance, if a neutron interacts via elastic scattering then the neutron will continue its trajectory with a new direction; its deviation angle will change according to its distribution probability. After that, the outgoing energy is calculated with the help of the kinetic energy and momentum conservation rules. In cases where the neutron's interface is a vacuum linked area (reactor boundaries) or in cases where neutron capture reaction takes place, the end of lifetime of the neutron is occurred, with the relative simulated particle being killed. On the contrary, in fission interaction types, neutrons are created [Kra87].

3.2.1 Basics of statistical sampling

The Monte Carlo method is based on two fundamental laws; the Law of Large Numbers and the Central Limit Theorem [Gra11]. According to the Law of Large Numbers, the average of the results obtained from a large number of trials should converge to a specific value (expected/true value) as the number of trials is increased. Thus, the average of N events, $\overline{x_N}$, should converge to a unique expected value u, while N tends towards infinity. The different N events are sampled according to a probability density function f(x), which describes the relative likelihood of a random variable x to obtain a given value.

$$E(x) = u = \int x f(x) dx$$
 eq. 3.1

$$\overline{x_N} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=1}^{N} x_n$$
 eq. 3.2

$$\lim_{N \to \infty} \overline{x_N} = E(x) = u$$
 eq. 3.3

According to the Central Limit Theorem for large N, $\overline{x_N}$ follows a Gaussian distribution, $G\left(u,\frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{N}}\right)$, where the $\frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{N}}$ value stands for the standard deviation of the distribution. The unique value u corresponds to the deterministic solution with standard deviation equal to zero, $\frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{N}}=0$. In practice σ is not known and for large N is approximated by the estimated sample variance:

$$Var[\overline{x_N}] \cong S^2 = \frac{1}{N(N-1)} \sum_{m=1}^{M} (x_n - \overline{x_N})^2 = \frac{1}{N-1} (\overline{x_N}^2 - \overline{x_N}^2)$$
 eq. 3.4

The estimated standard deviation of the mean $\overline{x_N}$ is given by:

$$S_{\overline{x_N}} = \frac{S}{\sqrt{N}}$$
 eq. 3.5

Eq. 3.5 highlights a very important characteristic of the Monte Carlo method; the uncertainty in the mean of a result is inversely proportional to the number of the sampled events. That indicates that the reduction of the uncertainty by a factor of two demands the fourfold increase of the original number of events N. Assuming that the computational time, T_{sim} , of a given Monte Carlo simulation is directly proportional to the number of events N, then the reduction of uncertainty to the half demands a fourfold increase of computer time.

After the sampling of N different independent events, $\overline{x_N}$ is obtained with the uncertainty described above. If this sampling is repeated M times, a new set of results is provided, $\overline{x_N}^m$, m=1,2,...M. The new results follow a Gaussian distribution function noted as $G\left(u,\frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{NM}}\right)$. The repetition causes the Gaussian variance to be reduced by the total number of the sampled independent events $N \cdot M$. The expected value u is estimated by performing algebraic average over all M scores.

$$u = \frac{1}{M} \sum_{m=1}^{M} \overline{x_N}^m$$
 eq. 3.6

The standard variation, S_M^2 , is estimated as shown in eq. 3.7:

$$S_M^2 = \frac{1}{M(M-1)} \sum_{m=1}^M (\overline{x_N}^m - u)^2$$
 eq. 3.7

A large number of repetitions (batch number M) of the sampling of N independent neutrons are used in Monte Carlo simulations for the obtaining of good estimates of the averaged results. The number of batches and particles at every problem is crucial, since a minimum of this combination is demanded to provide reliable results. All results provided in each batch are accompanied with an error of the order $O(1/\sqrt{N})$ while the statistical errors of the final results after M iterations are of the order $O(1/\sqrt{N})$. For criticality problems the fission source is estimated iteratively during calculation and a large number of iterations are required for a reliable estimate of its distribution.

It should be highlighted that the above statistics are related to the precision of the results and not to their accuracy. Precision is the uncertainty in the mean estimated value due to statistical fluctuations of the x_n values. A totally precise result may not be accurate. Accuracy is a measure of how close the expected value, E(x), is to the true physical quantity being estimated and can be affected by uncertainties in the data, inaccuracies by mathematical and physical models, coding errors, etc. In addition a very important factor that influences the accuracy of the result is inappropriate modeling of the respective problem.

The goal in each simulation is a precise and accurate result as close as possible to the so called true value.

3.3 Monte Carlo Application in Reactor Physics

3.3.1 Source Convergence

As stated in §3.2.1, the fission source is estimated iteratively during calculation. This is related to the power iteration algorithm on which the Monte Carlo criticality problems are based. M iterations are required for the determination of the fission source distribution of the system as well as for the observation of the value of the effective multiplication factor, k_{eff} ¹² [Bro09]. In each simulation the history of each neutron is recorded during its lifetime, which terminates when it leads to fission neutrons production (or any other extinction process; absorption, boundary escape, etc.). The new neutrons are stored and altogether constitute the fission source of the next iteration. Thus each batch corresponds to a single fission source generation. At each iteration, fission source and k_{eff} updates take place. After an adequate number of neutron batches the fission source distribution is converged from the initial distribution to its stationary state. Yet, the number of iterations is not the only factor of a reliable result; a sampling of a small number of neutrons will introduce systematic errors in the fission source, which will be propagated through the iterations. It is important to highlight that the convergence of the k_{eff} does not guarantee the convergence of the source. It has been proven that the convergence of the fission source occurs slower than that of k_{eff} for problems with a dominance ratio¹³ close to 1 [Bro09,Urb95]. The fission source convergence is essential to obtain reliable and representative results of the simulated problem. A common way to measure the convergence of the source is to use the Shannon entropy of fission, H_{src} [Duf06, Bro09]. H_{src} is computed by overlaying a 3dimensional mesh with N_s grid regions over the fissionable regions of a geometry model, tallying the fraction of fission sites in each mesh (P_i) for a given cycle, and then evaluating [Bro09, Bri00]:

$$H_{src} = -\sum_{j=1}^{N_s} P_j \ln{(P_j)}$$
 eq. 3.8

The convergence of Shannon entropy and k_{eff} can be checked via plots of individual cycle k_{eff} or cumulative k_{eff} vs. cycle (with estimated errors) comparisons [Tut14,Mer11, Bro09].

It is worth underlining that the neutron flux is closely related to the distribution of fission neutrons in the system [Tut14] and thus the convergence of the fission source is essential for reliable neutron flux estimates.

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 $^{^{12}}$ k_{eff} is defined as the ratio of the neutrons produced by fission in one generation to the number of neutrons lost through absorption and leakage in the preceding generation.

¹³ the ratio of the n eigenvalue to the previous n-1

3.3.2 TRIPOLI-4 Neutronics Code

The simulations performed within the scope of this thesis were for criticality assessment, but in specific cases several shielding calculations have also been conducted. Both types of simulations were carried out with TRIPOLI-4 code (Version 8). TRIPOLI-4 is dedicated to nuclear reactor physics and nuclear processes simulation. The code is composed of six software libraries: a geometry library, a cross-section reading library derived from NJOY I/O Fortran routines, a memory management library, a simulation library and two special libraries enabling parallel calculations [Bru15]. The code is used essentially for four major classes of applications: shielding studies, criticality studies, core physics studies and instrumentation studies. The neutron energy domain of TRIPOLI for neutrons ranges from 10^{-5} eV to 20MeV, while for photons, electrons and positrons from 1 keV to 20 MeV. The basic physical quantities computed here comprise neutron flux, reaction rate, photon reaction, energy deposition and k_{eff} estimates.

3.3.2.1 Cross Sections Libraries

The cross-sections of the code can be either continuous (pointwise) in ENDF-format or multigroup (by energy groups) calculated with the APOLLO2 [San10] code. Any pointwise cross-section data in ENDF-6 format may be used: JEF2, ENDF/B-VI, JEFF3, ENDF/B-VII, JENDL4.3 etc [TRIPOLI4]. For the present thesis, the pointwise cross sections from the JEFF-3.1.1 [Jac08,Kla10] have been used.

3.3.2.3 Parallel Implementation on TRIPOLI-4

TRIPOLI-4 running time is comparable to the other state of the art MC codes and is case dependent TRIPOLI4, but, the simulative nature of a MC code implies large computational time [Bre14]. A real system may have, to the order of magnitude, 10^{15} or 10^{18} neutrons per unit volume in unit time. In order to obtain good estimates for the averaged values, a large number of neutrons should be simulated per iteration [Tut14], resulting in large computation time demands. In addition the different physical phenomena and the geometry of each problem may also cause further delay. The time spent on the calculation is proportional to the product of the iterated cycles and the number of neutrons simulated per cycle.

TRIPOLI code supports execution in parallel mode and it was excessively used for the calculations of this thesis. The optimum values of the sample size, the batch number and the number of processors that would provide results equivalent to those obtained from a serial

mode were extensively studied [Chr15]. For the calculations Thales cluster -a cluster available in NCSR "Demokritos"- was utilized. Thales is a 22-node Beowulf cluster with dual-core configuration. A Ethernet network connects the nodes at a rate of 1Gb/s. Cluster specifications¹⁴ are listed in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1: Specifications for computing nodes

CPU	Dual-Core AMD Opteron(tm) Processor 2216
Data width	64 bit
Number of Threads	2
Main memory	1GB
Level one cache	2 x 64 KB 2-way associative instruction cache
Level two cache	2 x 1 MB exclusive 16-way associative cache
OS	Redhat 5
Compiler	gcc 4.1.2

3.3.2.4 Convergence and Uncertainties

As stated in §3.3.1 , important variation of entropy can reveal source convergence problems [Mer11]. For the study conducted in the framework of this thesis JHR reactor was simulated with TRIPOLI-4.8. Several calculations have been performed aiming to conclude to the most efficient (from the aspect of computation time and reliability) statistic combination of the number of neutrons, N, and the iteration number, M. The calculations of the fission source distribution have been requested inside a fuel bin cell of the core for high energies (0.1MeV < E < 20MeV).

Figure 3-1: and Figure 3-2 show the convergence behavior of Shannon entropy, H_{src} , and k_{eff} over the number of iteration cycles for two different simulations of N=10⁴ and N=10⁵. From the plots it is evident that roughly 10⁴ cycles are required to converge both H_{src} and k_{eff} . However using larger N makes it easier to diagnose if both values have been converged.

For the neutron flux calculations, a statistic of $N=10^4$ and $M=10^4$ is accompanied with intense fluctuations in the unresolved resonance region, derived from intense variations in cross section data [ENDF]. However, in the high energy range (E>0.1keV) these fluctuations are limited and this statistic ($N=10^4$ and $M=10^4$) provides results with uncertainties less than 5%.

On the contrary, the calculations that focus on the absorbing capability of materials in thermal energy range were performed with a statistic of N=10⁵ and M=10⁵, providing results with an estimated relative error mainly less than 10% (cases with relative error of 20% have also been reported) in the unresolved resonance region.

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¹⁴ All nodes have the same specifications.

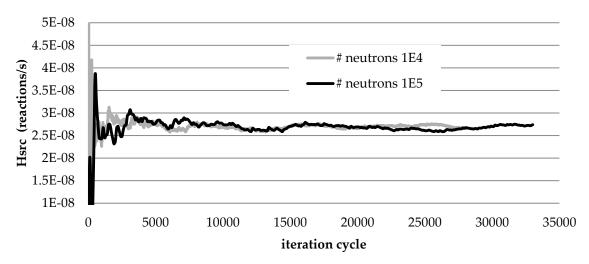


Figure 3-1: Plot of H_{src} over the iteration cycles for runs with 10^4 and 10^5 number of neutrons

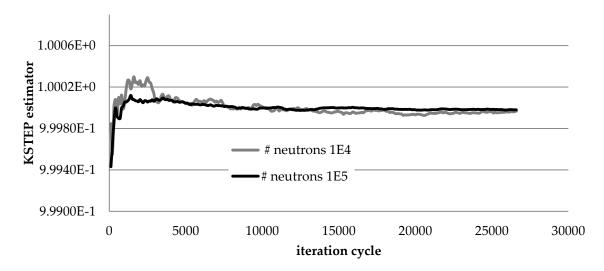


Figure 3-2: Plot of k_{eff} versus cycle iteration, as provided by KSTEP estimator of TRIPOLI-4.8 for runs with 10^4 and 10^5 number of neutrons

3.4 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter the computational tools, used for the simulations at this work, are described, along with the main factors that ensure the accuracy and the precision of the final result. All calculations presented in the thesis refer to the JHR and have been carried out with the MC code TRIPOLI 4.8. The JHR model is of a complex geometry and in addition with the simulative nature of TRIPOLI code implied large computational time. For this reason most of the calculations had to be executed in parallel mode. The triptych of getting accurate and reliable results is consisted by the following factors:

- The fission source must be properly converged, thus a sufficient number of iteration should be chosen.
- A sufficient number of neutrons must be chosen in every cycle for a reduced bias in k_{eff} .
- Bias in the statistics on k_{eff} and reaction rate tallies must be recognized and dealt with.

In order to be ensured that the fission source is not undersampled, the quantity of Shannon entropy of the fission source distribution, H_{src} , was used. Aiming to conclude to the most efficient (from the aspect of computation time and reliability) statistic combination of the number of neutrons, N, and the iteration number, M, several calculations have been carried out. After processing the results it was concluded that a simulation of N=10⁴ and M=10⁴ is sufficient to provide results after convergence of the power iteration. Although a sufficient number of batches and neutron size has been considered, in many cases intense fluctuations was observed at the final results, derived from intense variations in cross section data (i.e. unresolved resonance region [ENDF]). A larger statistic (N=10⁵ and M=10⁵), provides results with an estimated relative error mainly less than 10% (cases with relative error of 20% have also been reported) in the unresolved resonance region. For this reason the latter statistic was selected for simulations focused on the absorbing capability of materials in the thermal energy ranges.

Chapter 4.

Application & Results

The work of this thesis concerns the feasibility study of a preliminary device configuration (noted as *neutron screen*) that will provide a neutron energy spectrum similar -or to the highest possible degree- to that characterizing SFR, when introduced in a thermal neutron reactor. The reflector area of JHR provides good neutronic conditions for the realization of this study. Among the major objectives of JHR is the investigation and study of behaviors of materials or fuel (irradiated or under irradiation) for current and future generations power plants. Therefore, the development of devices that will serve for representative tests of structural materials and fuel is required. In this context, the work of this thesis was focused on the investigation of methods by which the neutron population distributed in the JHR reflector (Figure 1-2) can be reversed from low to high energies with the final neutron distribution to be equivalent to that of a SFR.

The following sections present the results obtained considering the introduction of various neutron screens inside the JHR reflector aiming to alter its existing neutron spectrum. The reactor's neutron energy boundaries range between 1E-11 and 20 MeV, with the part from 1E-9 to 10 MeV to be of greatest importance. The important neutron interactions within this energy range are: **neutron capture** (radiative capture and fission) and **scattering**, elastic and inelastic (§A.3). The methods of spectrum tailoring rely on the utilization of neutron interactions. As reported in the state of the art neutron screen technology (§2.1), two methods of hardening the neutron spectrum are reported:

- employment of thermal absorbers that limit or eliminate the thermal neutron component and
- introduction of fission sources inside the device, enhancing thus the fast component of the neutron spectrum.

Both methods are related to neutron capture interactions. Taking these facts into account, the introduction of thermal absorbers in the irradiation facility of JHR was firstly investigated in §4.1 . The procedure included an extensive research throughout several candidate materials aiming to determine the absorber serving more effectively for the spectrum hardening. In §4.2 , the effect of booster fuels on the neutron spectrum was examined. Following the above steps, the study was focused on scattering interactions (§4.3) and the utilization of elements characterized by intense elastic (§4.3.1) and inelastic (§4.3.2) cross sections at the desired energy range (0.1-10MeV) were researched. At this point it is worth underlining that a similar work (utilization of scattering interactions for spectrum tailoring) has not been found in the open literature. The chart flow of Chapter 4 is illustrated in Figure 4-1.

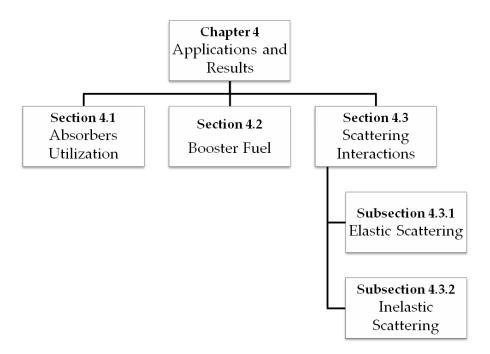


Figure 4-1: Chapter 4 flow chart

4.1 Absorbers Utilization

According to the literature (§2.1), the most common method, by which a thermal spectrum can be tailored to a fast one, is the utilization of materials that present high neutron capture at thermal energies, usually referred to as thermal absorbers. By installing absorbers, the thermal component of the spectrum is limited and as a result the remaining neutron distribution is mainly constituted by fast and epithermal neutrons. Absorbers characterized by huge neutron capture capacity can be used for total elimination of the thermal component.

An extended study on thermal neutron absorbers and their impact on the reference thermal spectrum (JHR reflector) has been carried out and is presented in this section. In Table 4-1 the 21^{15} stronger absorbing elements, as found in the literature [Mug73] are listed. The neutron capture cross section (σ_a) and the atomic number of each isotope are also reported. The last column contains a brief comment about possible disadvantages of the material that may indicate if it is unsuitable for use: a) Actinides such as Fm, Cf, Pu, Bk, Ac, Pa, Np and Es are all fissionable nuclides and thus should not be considered as candidate absorbing materials. b) Pr and Rh are rare elements and thus not taken into account. c) The physical properties of Hg do not allow its usage inside the reactor.

The remaining 8 absorbing elements, Sm, Gd, Eu, Cd, Dy, B, Ir, Er and Hf, are suitable for use inside a reactor's environment and they tb

were further investigated. In most cases there is a specific isotope included in the natural element that provides the element with an important absorbing capability. Within the scope of determining the most appropriate and effective thermal absorbers, instead of natural elements, their absorbing isotopes can be utilized. For this reason the isotopes of the remaining elements (Sm, Gd, Eu, Cd, Dy, B, Ir, Er and Hf) along with their isotopic abundance are reported in Table 4-2. A characterization of the microscopic absorbing cross section of each isotope is given; extreme ($\sigma_a > 10^6$), high ($10^6 > \sigma_a > 10^5$), medium ($10^5 > \sigma_a > 10^4$) and low ($10^4 > \sigma_a > 10^3$). The microscopic cross section data were taken from JEFF-3.1.1 cross section library [ENDF].

At this point it should be pointed out that before proposing a final neutron screen configuration that utilizes a thermal absorber, the inevitable nuclear heating arisen from neutron absorption and gamma emission should be taken into account. The neutron capture of all isotopes in Table 4-2 is radiative capture (n,γ) , except of the case of ¹⁰B which is alpha emission (n,α) .

¹⁵ A table containing all elements is given in Table B-3

Table 4-1: Elements with the highest absorption capability [Mug73]

A/A	σ _α (barns)	Name	Sym	Atomic number	Reasons to reject
1	49000	Gadolinium	Gd	64	-
2	5922	Samarium	Sm	62	-
3	5800	Fermium	Fm	100	Large Z
4	4600	Europium	Eu	63	-
5	2900	Californium	Cf	98	Large Z
6	2450	Cadmium	Cd	48	-
7	1017.3	Plutonium	Pu	94	Large Z
8	920	Dysprosium	Dy	66	-
9	767	Boron	В	5	-
10	710	Berkelium	Bk	97	Large Z
11	515	Actinium	Ac	89	Large Z
12	425	Iridium	Ir	77	-
13	374	Mercury	Hg	80	Bad properties ¹⁶
14	200.6	Protactinium	Pa	91	Large Z
15	194	Indium	In	49	-
16	180	Neptunium	Np	93	Large Z
17	168.4	Promethium	Pm	61	Rare
18	160	Einsteinium	Es	99	Large Z
19	160	Erbium	Er	68	-
20	144.8	Rhodium	Rh	45	Rare
21	104	Hafnium	Hf	72	-

The isotopic analysis of the remaining absorbing elements produced the following results: ^{155}Gd and ^{157}Gd present extreme absorbing capabilities while ^{149}Sm , ^{151}Sm , ^{151}Eu , ^{113}Cd , ^{164}Dy and ^{10}B follow with high absorbing capabilities. The rest isotopes provide a less intense absorbing behaviour. An illustration of the absorption macroscopic neutron cross section, Σ_a , of the most absorbing isotopes of Table 4-2 is given in Figure 4-2. With the employment of Σ_a both parameters of σ_a and nuclide density of each isotope are taken into account. ^{174}Hf and ^{152}Gd present medium absorbing capability and due to their extremely low abundance (0.16% and 0.2% respectively) were excluded. The neutron distribution in the thermal region of a thermal reactor spectrum (see Introduction) dictates the necessity of intense absorbing capability from ~0.01eV to ~0.4eV. Most of the elements (^{10}B , ^{191}Ir , ^{161}Dy , ^{177}Hf and ^{167}Er) present a linear reduction with energy at the energy range of interest (till ~0.2eV). The Σ_a (or σ_a) of ^{113}Cd presents a peak around 0.2eV. Finally, ^{155}Gd and ^{157}Gd , although both present the highest Σ_a values, a drop before 0.01eV is obtained.

_

¹⁶ High toxicity, high vapor pressure even at room temperature, low boiling point, producing noxious fumes when heated, relatively low thermal conductivity

Table 4-2: Elements with high absorbing capability. [ENDF, Hyn15, Wie13a, Wie13b]

150 148 148 148	σ _a (b)	Name	Chemical Symbol	c No.	Atomic No. Density g/cm³	Temperature		sə	Content in	Isotope absorbing capability*			
March Marc				Atomic				 Isotopes	mixture %	E	Н	M	L
March Marc												X	
March Marc										<u>x</u>			
$\begin{array}{c ccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	9000	Gadolinium	Gd	64	7.9	1313	3250						
160G 21.86										X			
Europium Eu 63 5.24 822 1527 151E 47.8 X 153E 52.92 X 160C 1.25 160C 1.25 160C 1.25 160C 1.249 110C 12.49 110C 12.49 110C 12.49 110C 12.49 110C 12.22 X 114C 28.73 116C 7.49 116C 7.49 160D 2.34 160D								¹⁵⁸ G	24.84				
Europium Eu 63 5.24 822 1527 153E 52.92 X											_		
2450 Cadmium Cd 48 8.65 321 767 106C 1.25 108C 0.89 110C 12.49 111C 12.8 112C 24.13 113C 12.22 X 114C 28.73 116C 7.49 116C 7.49 116C 7.49 116C 7.49 128 0.1 160D 2.34 162D 25.51 X 162D 25.51 X 163D 24.9 164D 28.18 X 164D 28.18 X 1767 Boron B 5 2.46 2075 4000 108 19.9 X 11B 80.1 11B 80.1 12 12 12 13 13 13 13 1	600	Europium	Eu	63	5.24	822	1527						
Cadmium Cd 48 8.65 321 767 108C 0.89 110C 12.49 111C 12.8 112C 24.13 113C 12.22		1						_					
Cadmium Cd 48 8.65 321 767 110C 12.49 111C 12.8 112C 24.13 113C 12.22 x 114C 28.73 116C 7.49 156D 0.06 158D 0.1 160D 2.34 162D 25.51 x 162D 25.51 x 163D 24.9 164D 28.18 x 1767 Boron B 5 2.46 2075 4000 191													
2450 Cadmium Cd 48 8.65 321 767 111C 12.8 112C 24.13 113C 12.22 X 114C 28.73 116C 7.49 156D 0.06 158D 0.1 160D 2.34 162D 25.51 X 163D 24.9 164D 28.18 X 767 Boron B 5 2.46 2075 4000 118 80.1 118 80.1 119Ir 37.3 X 193Ir 62.7													
P20 Dysprosium Dy 66 8.55 1412 2567 161D 18.91 X 160D 2.34 160D 2.551 X 162D 25.51 X 164D 28.18 X 164D 28.18 X 167 Boron B 5 2.46 2075 4000 198 19.9 X 168 8.51 1412 191Ir 37.3 X 169 37.3 X 169 5.7 X 169 5.8 3.6 3.6 3.6 3.6 3.6 3.6 3.6 3.6 3.6 3.6													
113C 12.22 X 114C 28.73 116C 7.49 156D 0.06 158D 0.1 160D 2.34 162D 25.51 X 162D 25.51 X 163D 24.9 164D 28.18 X 164D 28.18 X	450	Cadmium	Cd	48	8.65	321	767						
114C 28.73 116C 7.49 156D 0.06 158D 0.1 160D 2.34 162D 25.51 X 162D 25.51 X 163D 24.9 164D 28.18 X 164											X		
Page													
920 Dysprosium Dy 66 8.55 1412 2567 $\begin{array}{c ccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$								116 C					
920 Dysprosium Dy 66 8.55 1412 2567 161D 18.91 X 162D 25.51 X 163D 24.9 164D 28.18 X 767 Boron B 5 2.46 2075 4000 10B 19.9 X 11B 80.1 425 Iridium Ir 77 22.56 2466 4428 191Ir 37.3 X 193Ir 62.7									0.06				X
920 Dysprosium Dy 66 8.55 1412 2567 161D 18.91 X 162D 25.51 X 163D 24.9 164D 28.18 X 767 Boron B 5 2.46 2075 4000 10B 19.9 X 191Ir 37.3 X 193Ir 62.7						1412	2567						X
$\begin{array}{c ccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$			_										X
767 Boron B 5 2.46 2075 4000 10B 19.9 X 191 B 80.1 425 Iridium Ir 77 22.56 2466 4428 191 F 62.7	20	Dysprosium	Dy	66	8.55								
767 Boron B 5 2.46 2075 4000 10B / 11B / 19 / 11B / 19 B X 425 Iridium Ir 77 22.56 2466 4428 191 / 191 r 37.3													<u>-</u>
767 Boron B 5 2.46 2075 4000 10B 19.9 X 11B 80.1 425 Iridium Ir 77 22.56 2466 4428 191 73 37.3 X 193 Ir 62.7											X		
767 Bololi B 3 2.46 2073 4000 11B 80.1 425 Iridium Ir 77 22.56 2466 4428 191 7 37.3 X													
425 Iridium Ir 77 22.56 2466 4428 193Ir 37.3 X	67	Boron	В	5	2.46	2075	4000						
193 Indiant in 77 22.30 2400 4420 193Ir 62.7			_									X	
	25	Iridium	Ir	77	22.56	2466	4428						X
104 In 15 In 40 7.21 157 2072 ¹¹³ ln 4.29	0.4	T., 11	т	40	7.01	1	2072	¹¹³ In	4.29				
194 Indium In 49 7.31 157 2072 115 4.25 x	94	Inaium	ın	49	7.31	157	2072					X	
¹⁶² Er 0.14		Erbium		r 68	9.066	1497	2868	¹⁶² Er	0.14				
¹⁶⁴ Er 1.61			Er					¹⁶⁴ Er	1.61				
160 Erbium Er 68 9.066 1497 2868 166Er 33.61	160								33.61				
^{16/} Er 22.93													
¹⁶⁸ Er 26.78													
170Er 14.93		Hafnium			13.31							X	
1/ * □ 0.16				72 13.		2233	4603						
104 Hafnium Hf 72 12 21 2222 4602 ¹⁷⁷ H 18.6 X												X	
104 Hafnium Hf 72 13.31 2233 4603 177H 18.6 178H 27.28	04		Hf					178 H					X
¹⁷⁹ H 13.62													X
¹⁸⁰ H 35.08													

Isotope absorbing capability*:E--extreme, H--high, M--medium, L--low

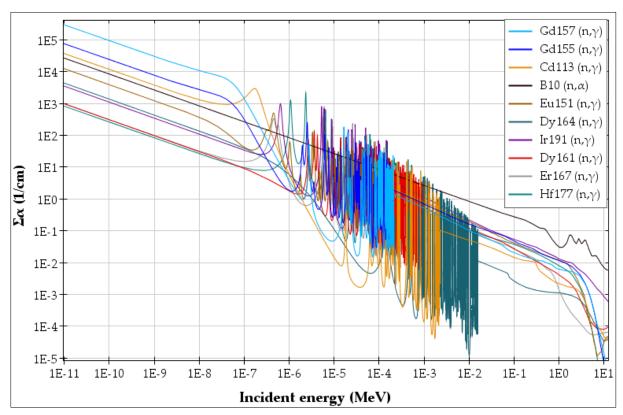


Figure 4-2: Absorption macroscopic cross sections, Σ_{α} , of the absorbing isotopes. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software.

4.1.1 Calculations

The investigation described in the previous paragraph aimed to conclude on the number of potential elements that present strong absorbing capabilities, in order to be used for spectrum tailoring in JHR reflector. After excluding inappropriate materials and classifying the absorbing capability with respect to the absorption macroscopic cross section, the study concluded to a set of effective absorbing isotopes. Although the majority of examined materials are quite known and widely used as absorbing mediums in nuclear reactor technology [IAEA08], the classification of the materials in terms of their absorption capacity is not well reported in the literature. This output is of vital importance for designing the final device; the dimensions of the absorber should be kept quite small. Besides the space availability in the facility, the heat generation in the absorber, due to neutron and gamma radiation, also poses limitations to the absorber thickness.

Several sets of calculations with the aforementioned materials were carried out. The model of JHR (Figure 1-2) was simulated with TRIPOLI-4.8. The neutron flux was calculated within the central irradiation space (Figure 4-3) of JHR reflector. The absorbing screens were considered of cylindrical shape and defined thickness with two different cases; 1cm and 1mm.

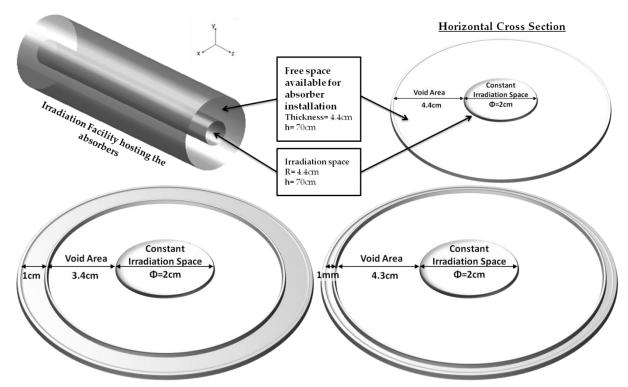


Figure 4-3: Schematic representation of the irradiation facility

4.1.1.1 Absorbers of 1cm thickness

The following isotopes and materials were tested: 149Sm, 151Sm, 155Gd and 157Gd, Gd, 151Eu, Eu, ¹¹³Cd, ¹⁶⁴Dy, Dy, ¹⁹¹Ir, ¹¹⁵In, ¹⁶⁷Er, ¹⁷⁷Hf, and Hf. As shown in Table 4-2, almost all of the isotopes of Gd, Eu, Ir and Dy present absorbing capabilities. For this reason these elements were also examined at their natural composition. Additionally, Hf, a widely used absorber [IAEA08], which decays to good thermal absorbers under irradiation and thus its replacement can be delayed, was also tested. In Figure 4-4 the thermal (<1eV) neutron population as resulted after the introduction of each absorbing element is presented. The thermal area is divided in three energy ranges; 1-0.1eV, 0.1-0.01eV and <0.01eV. It is apparent that all elements absorb almost completely neutrons with energy below 0.01eV (blue column). At the energy range between 0.01 eV and 0.1eV (red column) all elements except Hf hold almost the same percentage of neutrons. At the energy range of 0.1 to 1eV (green column), Hf does not present such good absorption, as the other elements do. In a very simplistic approach it can be concluded that all the above elements, when used in that thickness (1cm), provide good thermal absorption capability. It is obvious that Hf presents the worst absorbing capability, however the non-absorbed neutrons number indicates that it could also be utilized as an absorber. The effectiveness of the above presented absorbers on the neutron spectrum can be highlighted even more when compared with the reference spectrum (Figure 1-2). In the energy range of 0.1eV to 1eV neutrons

population fraction is at 7% in the absence of absorbers, and plunges to below 1%, when absorbing elements are introduced. Most importantly, at the energies between 0.1 and 0.01eV, where all materials present a neutron population percentage of 2%, in the reference case this corresponding value is at 63%. Finally, below 0.01eV the reference component of 10% is totally eliminated after the insertion of absorber in the facility (Figure 4-5).

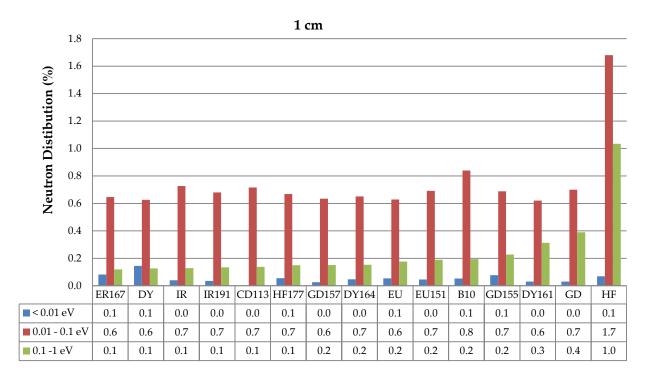


Figure 4-4: Neutron population distribution at three thermal energy groups for all tested materials of 1cm thickness; 1-0.1eV, 0.1-0.01eV and <0.01eV

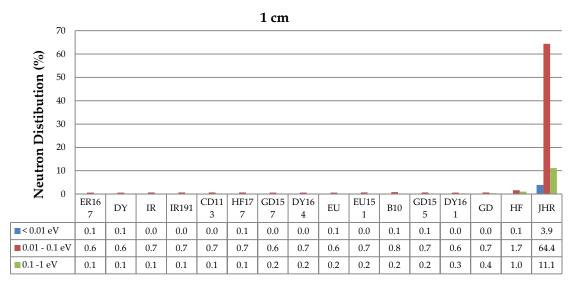


Figure 4-5: Neutron population distribution at three thermal energy groups for all tested materials compared to reference spectrum (JHR-reflector); 1-0.1eV, 0.1-0.01eV and <0.01eV

The results obtained by the set of absorbers investigated are presented in Figure 4-6 for thermal and low epithermal energy groups (till 1keV). All thermal neutrons are merged in a single energy group (<1eV). It can be suggested that the element with the higher absorbing capacity at the low epithermal energy range is 10 B. 151 Eu and Eu follow with low neutron percentages at the low epithermal energies. 10 B does not present resonances (Figure 4-7) and thus the dependence of the cross section ($\propto 1/E$) on energy is maintained, expanding thus intensively the absorbing effect of 10 B at epithermal energies. In contrast, 151 Eu and Eu present resonant behaviour at epithermal region (Figure 4-7), which influences the capture capability of both nuclides.

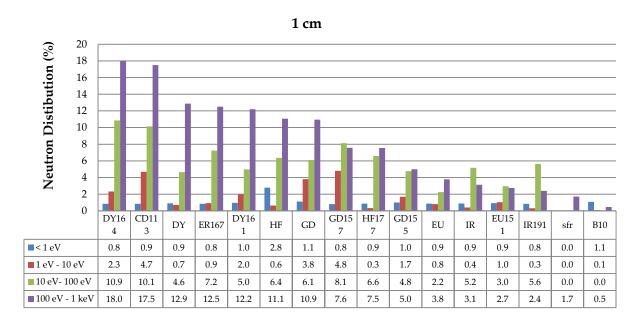


Figure 4-6: Neutron population distribution at thermal and low epithermal energies for all tested materials of 1cm thickness; <1eV, 1-10eV, 10-100eV and 100eV-1keV.

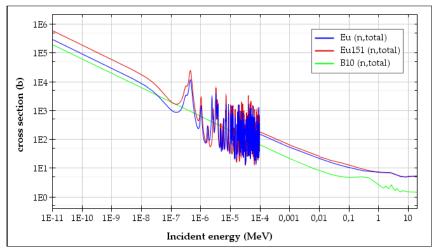


Figure 4-7: Total microscopic cross sections of 10 B, 151 Eu and 153 Eu. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 and JANIS software [Sop14]

The effects of 1cm ¹⁰B, ¹⁵¹Eu and Eu screens on the spectrum are compared in Figure 4-8. SFR and the JHR reflector spectra are included for comparison. All spectra have been normalized to unit and are illustrated in terms of flux per lethargy. All three absorbers provide a spectrum with eliminated thermal and reduced epithermal neutron component. The data result to a formation of a fast spectrum accompanied with a significantly limited thermal and epithermal component. The results confirm the state of the art technology, according to which the capture interaction can be utilized to produce a fast neutron spectrum (accompanied with an epithermal component).

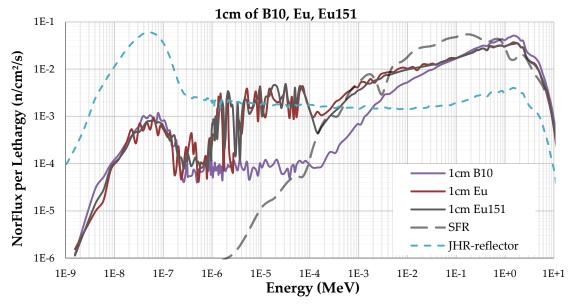


Figure 4-8: Comparing the effects of 1cm ¹⁰B, ¹⁵¹Eu and Eu neutron screens on the neutron spectrum. SFR is included for comparison.

4.1.1.2 Absorbers of 1mm thickness

Following the previous study on the absorbing effectiveness of 1cm thick thermal absorbers, additional detailed calculations for 1mm thickness were carried out (Figure 4-3). Figure 4-9 presents the neutron population distribution at the thermal energy region after their implementation within the JHR reflector. Hf, ¹⁷⁷Hf and ¹⁶¹Dy seem to have inferior performance, since they present a neutron percentage of 36, 14 and 12 respectively at the energy area of 0.01 to 0.1 eV (red column). ¹⁶⁷Er follows with 9% in this energy range. This was expected as these elements present the lowest macroscopic cross section (Figure 4-2). The rest elements present good absorbing capacity even at that small thickness. However, even in the less effective cases an important reduction at the thermal component is observed. For instance, 1mm Hf (worst performance) can reduce the component at the energy range between 0.01 and 0.1eV to half.

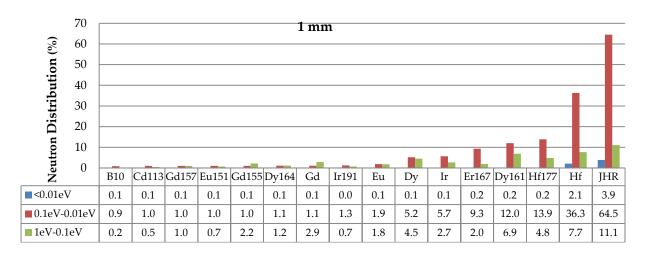


Figure 4-9: Neutron population distribution at three thermal energy groups for all tested materials of 1 mm compared to reference spectrum (JHR-reflector); 1-0.1eV, 0.1-0.01eV and <0.01eV

4.1.1.3 Comparison between 1cm and 1mm thicknesses

In Figure 4-10 the results of both thicknesses for energies below 1eV (1cm and 1mm) are illustrated. ¹⁰B, ¹¹³Cd, ¹⁵¹Eu, ¹⁹¹Ir, ¹⁵⁷Gd, ¹⁶⁴Dy, ¹⁵⁵Gd, Eu and Gd are capable of absorbing the thermal component at a very large extend, even when they are used at a very small thickness. Once again, ¹⁰B has the greatest impact at thermal energies. ¹¹³Cd, ¹⁵¹Eu and ¹⁹¹Ir follow after ¹⁰B.

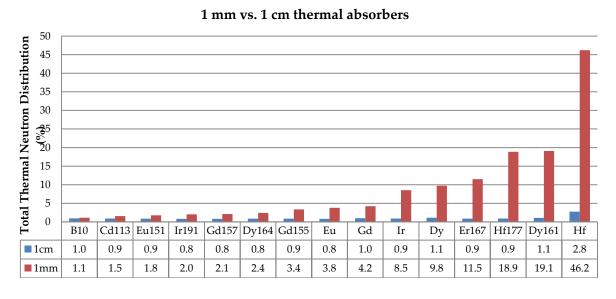


Figure 4-10: Neutron population distribution of thermal neutrons for neutron screens of 1cm and 1mm in the thermal energy range

As stated before, the hardened spectrum of SFR creates the necessity of negligible neutron component in thermal as well as in epithermal energies. The absorbing capability at thermal and low epithermal energy range up to 1keV for the 9 first elements (10 B, 113 Cd, 151 Eu, 191 Ir, 157 Gd, 164 Dy, 155 Gd, Eu and Gd) presented in Figure 4-10 is illustrated in Figure 4-11. The thermal component is emerged in one group (<1eV). The corresponding values of the SFR spectrum are included for comparison. Again, 10 B is the element of higher absorbing capacity (among the studied ones) in the energy range below 10eV. 191 Ir and 151 Eu follow with almost equivalent performances.

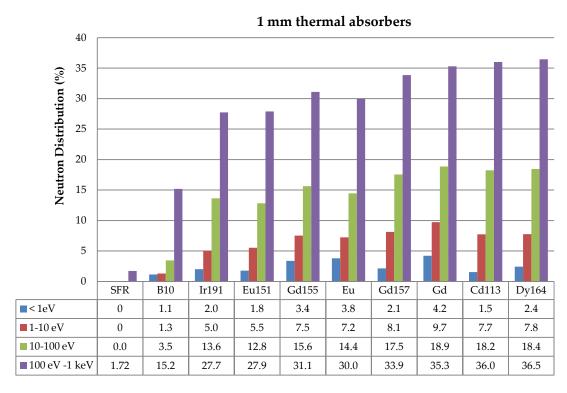


Figure 4-11: Neutron population distribution at thermal and low epithermal energies for all tested materials of 1 mm thickness; <1eV, 1-10eV, 10-100eV and 100eV-1keV.

Both tested thicknesses (1mm and 1cm) results highlighted the ¹⁰B superiority attributed to its linear (in log-log scale) capture cross section in thermal and epithermal energies. The fact that the ¹⁰B elastic scattering in epithermal region is flat (Figure 4-12) implies that it is the macroscopic neutron capture that is responsible for the epithermal component reduction. Comparing the spectra of the two different thickness cases (Figure 4-13), 1mm and 1cm, it is clear that the more the ¹⁰B quantity introduced in the facility the more pronounced the spectrum shift to the right (higher Energies). In addition, it can be suggested that a very small amount of ¹⁰B is adequate to effectively harden a thermal spectrum.

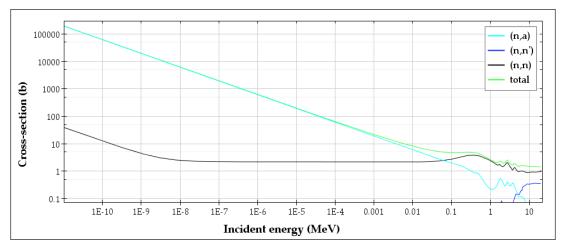


Figure 4-12: Microscopic neutron Cross Sections of ¹⁰B. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software

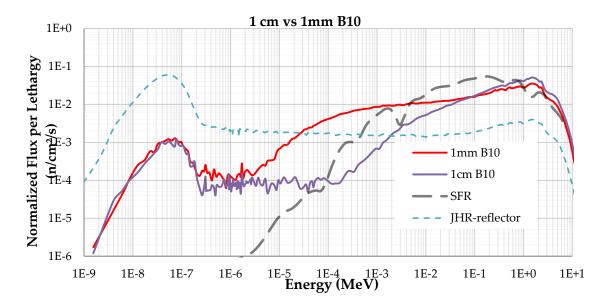


Figure 4-13: Comparing the effects of 1 cm $\,$ and 1 mm ^{10}B neutron screens on the neutron spectrum.

At this point, an important issue regarding the absorbing capability of the different elements must be highlighted; there is a specific thickness threshold above which the efficient absorbing capability of each element is saturated. This statement is based on a parametric study carried out within the framework of investigating the optimum thickness for the different absorbers. The study suggested that the saturation point of the absorber's efficiency can be defined when two thicknesses with significant difference are selected. This justifies the choice of two thicknesses at 1cm and 1mm in this work, without denoting that the 1cm thickness cannot be exceeded if it has to. Further details of the parametric study can be found in [Chr14b].

4.1.2 Concluding Remarks

According to the existing neutron screen technology elements with high absorbing capability at thermal neutrons can be used for spectrum tailoring. By installing absorbers, the thermal component of the spectrum is limited; as a result the remaining spectrum is mainly constituted of fast and epithermal neutrons. Within this framework an extensive study on thermal neutron absorbers and their impact on the reference thermal spectrum (JHR reflector) has been carried out. The procedure included a comprehensive investigation throughout potential candidate materials in order to determine the most appropriate and effective thermal absorbers. After excluding inappropriate materials and classifying their absorbing capability with respect to the absorption macroscopic cross section, the study concluded to the following set of effective absorbing isotopes: 155Gd and 157Gd, Gd, 151Eu, Eu, 113Cd, 164Dy, Dy, 191Ir, 115In, 167Er, 177Hf, and Hf. Several sets of calculations were performed with these materials. The absorbers were considered of cylindrical shape while two different thicknesses were assumed, i.e. 1cm and 1mm. All examined materials, even when considered of 1mm thickness, are capable to provide a strong reduction of the reference thermal neutron component. In most cases, the neutron spectrum was accompanied by a strong low epithermal neutron component. However, ¹⁰B and ¹⁵¹Eu provided a neutron distribution almost free from thermal and low epithermal neutrons.

4.2 Booster Fuel

With respect to the methodologies reported in the State of the art Technology about neutron screens (Introduction), the hardening of the neutron spectrum can be achieved by the implementation of a booster fuel in the desired region in the reactor. The term "booster" is used to describe the enhanced fast neutron flux that arises by the addition of fissile material. In this section the impact of a booster fuel on the JHR-reflector spectrum is investigated.

4.2.1 Fissile material considerations

Nuclides capable to undergo fission after capturing neutrons are noted as fissionable. Fissionable materials are the superset of fissile materials, such as $^{233}_{92}U$, $^{235}_{92}U$, $^{239}_{94}Pu$ and $^{241}_{94}Pu$. The atomic structure (odd number of neutrons) of these isotopes favors absorption of any energy and results to fission reaction. On the contrary, elements with even number of neutrons or protons are more stable and interact with neutrons of high kinetic energy (fissionable but not fissile). Elements that can be converted to fissile, after neutron absorption and subsequent nuclear decay, are noted as fertile and the conversion process is referred to as breeding. Most common fertile materials are 232 Pu and 238 U.

The ratio of the number of produced by fission neutrons to the neutrons absorbed is expressed by eta, $\eta(E)$, factor as follows:

$$\eta(E) = \frac{\nu \sum_{f}(E)}{\sum_{\alpha}(E)} = \frac{fission \ neutrons \ produced}{neutrons \ absorbed}$$
 (5.1)

where v is the number of neutrons produced per fission [Lew08].

The breeding condition demands $\eta > 2$, since one neutron will be reserved for a further fission and the excess of neutrons will be used to convert fertile nucleus to fissile. Fast reactors were originally designed to breed nuclear fissile material by converting abundant fertile materials to fissile. The two known breeding processes, shown below, include the conversion of ²³⁸Uto ²³⁹Pu and Th²³² into ²³³U.

$$^{232}Th(n,\gamma)^{233}Th \xrightarrow{\beta^{-}} ^{233}Pa \xrightarrow{\beta^{-}} ^{233}U$$
 (5.2)

$$^{238}U(n, v) \stackrel{239}{\to} U \stackrel{\beta^{-}}{\to} ^{239}Np \stackrel{\beta^{-}}{\to} ^{239}Pu$$
 (5.3)

Both breeding processes are continued in reactor applications by subsequent neutron capture reactions: 233 U(n, γ) 234 U, 234 U(n, γ) 235 U, 235 U, 235 U(n, γ) 236 U, etc. and 239 Pu(n, γ) 240 Pu, 240 Pu(n, γ) 241 Pu, 241 Pu(n, γ) 242 Pu, etc." [Yan12]. From the comparison of the eta factor, η , for 239 Pu, 233 U and 235 U, follows that 239 Pu surpasses both 235 U and 233 U, producing more neutrons per absorption (h(E)) in the energy range above ~100 keV. In addition, for higher energies (>100keV), 239 Pu superiority increases rapidly with increasing energy (Figure 4-15). Thus, fission neutrons will breed 239 Pu more than the other two, 235 U and 233 U, resulting to higher population of fission neutrons. For this reason in fast reactor technologies the use of 239 Pu is preferred and fissile blankets of 238 U are implemented.

	Natural isotope	Production Method					
ile	U235	Supplied in natural U					
Fissile	Pu239	By transmutation from U238					
Ή	Pu241	By transmutation from Pu239					
	U233	By transmutation if the	By transmutation if thorium present [harms]				
Fissionable	Natural isotope U238	Production Method Associated with fast neutrons fission					
	Natural isotope	Production Method	Fissile isotope				
	Th232	transmutation	U233				
Je	U234	transmutation	U235				
Fertile	U238	transmutation	Pu239				
Ä	Artificial isotope	Production Method	Fissile isotope				
	Pu238	neutron Capture	Pu239				
	Pu240	neutron Capture	Pu231				

Figure 4-14: Nuclei of fissile, fissionable and fertile elements

Since, the neutron environment inside JHR reflector is thermal, the utilization of fissile material is required to enhance the fast component. ²³⁵U and ²³⁹Pu are considered as the two potential options; both nuclides (Figure 4-16) can provide fissions at the entire energy range. The distribution of prompt neutrons (fission spectrum) is independent of the fissioning nucleus [Kra87],indicating that the choice between those two, ²³⁵U and ²³⁹Pu, should be based on other criteria. After comparing the total behavior of ²³⁹Pu and ²³⁵U (Figure 4-18, Figure 4-16, Figure 4-15) it can be concluded that their main difference relies to their eta factor, thus the better breeder behavior of ²³⁹Pu. On the other hand, the ultimate fissile material of JHR is expected to be a metallic uranium-molybdenum (UMo) 19.75% enriched alloy and for this reason a utilization of a single fissile material enrichment and type for all JHR usages is preferred.

Under these circumstances the composition of the fissile material introduced in the facility was based on the JHR fissile material choices, i.e. Uranium 20% enriched in ²³⁵U. With this composition the main attributes of the SFR fissile material are taken into account; the breeding capability of ²³⁹Pu is compensated by enriched ²³⁵U (Figure 4-17), while the major presence of ²³⁸U in SFR is respected. The latter is quite important since the inelastic cross section of ²³⁸U (Figure 4-18) is higher than that of ²³⁹Pu (and ²³⁵U) and this parameter should be taken into account in the final result.

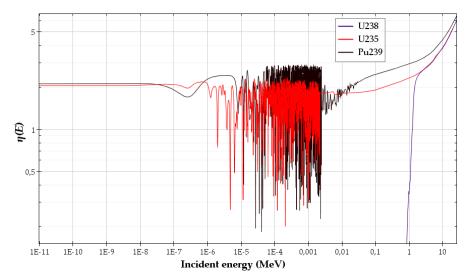


Figure 4-15: Number of neutrons produced by fission per neutron absorption, $\eta(E)$. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software

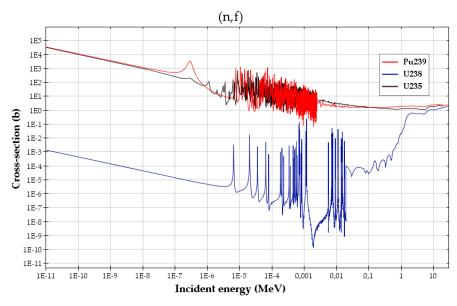


Figure 4-16: Fission microscopic cross sections of ²³⁵U, ²³⁸U and ²³⁹Pu. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software

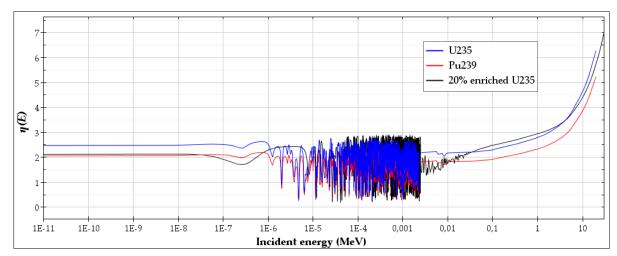


Figure 4-17: Eta factor of 235 U, 239 Pu and 20% enriched 235 U. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software

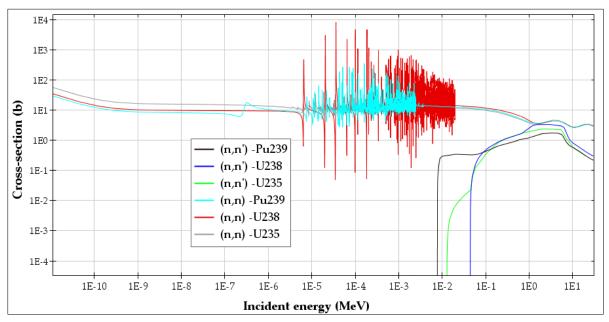


Figure 4-18: Elastic (n,n) and Inelastic (n,n') microscopic cross section of ²³⁵U, ²³⁸Uand ²³⁹Pu. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software

4.2.2 Calculations

In this section the impact of booster fuel on the JHR-reflector spectrum is investigated. The booster fuel (uranium 20% enriched in ²³⁵U) was considered of cylindrical shape (Figure 4-3) and of defined thickness. As in §4.1, the model of JHR was simulated with TRIPOLI-4.8 and the neutron flux was calculated in the central irradiation space (Figure 4-3) of the JHR-reflector area. Runs with successive increase of the quantity of the fuel (thickness) were performed. The start value was set at 0.1cm and the final at 1cm. The results are presented in Figure 4-19 and interpreted in Table 4-3. The reference case (JHR reflector) is also illustrated for comparison (blue column).

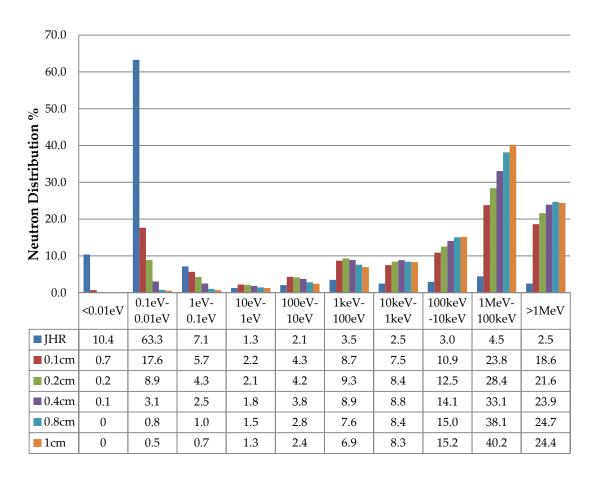


Figure 4-19: Neutron population distribution at the entire neutron spectrum for all booster thicknesses; 0.1 cm, 0.2 cm, 0.4 cm, 0.8 cm and 1 cm

Table 4-3: Analysis of the Figure 4-19 chart

Energy Group <0.01eV

Comments

Only the reference case presents neutron component at this energy area.

The introduction of the fissile material eliminates the neutron population fraction at these energies. Even in cases of 0.2 and 0.4 cm this fraction is negligible. In the case of 0.1cm a small amount of neutrons around 0.7% is observed.

0.1eV-0.01eV

At the reference spectrum the component of thermal neutrons is extremely large, i.e. 63%. Adding only 0.1 cm fissile material in the facility, this component is immediately decreased by 72%, reaching 18%.

The addition of $0.2~\rm cm$ of fissile material further reduces the neutron population fraction at these energies, i.e. by 86% relatively to the reference case and 50% relatively to the case of $0.1~\rm cm$.

For added fissile material thickness $0.4~\rm cm$ the $0.1\rm eV$ - $0.01\rm eV$ neutron population fraction is reduced to 3% (i.e. 95% with respect to the reference case). For thickness of added fissile material higher than $0.4~\rm cm$ the neutron population of energies $0.1\rm eV$ - $0.01\rm eV$ becomes less than 1% of the total.

1eV-0.1eV

In this energy range the neutrons population is low and is gradually decreased with increasing thickness of added fissile material.

10keV-1eV

The values of this group are related to the values of the thermal range.

In all cases the fraction is increased in relation to the reference case. This is due to the fact that after the elimination of the thermal component, its reference percentage is spread at higher than thermal energies.

100keV-10keV

At this energy group an important increase is observed from the reference case to that of 0.1 cm (almost 4 times higher). For fissile material thickness higher than 0.1 cm a gradual and smooth increase is observed with increasing thickness. However, saturation is observed in this increasing rate for fissile material thickness higher than 0.8cm.

1MeV-100keV

This energy group is the one of greatest interest. In this energy region the main impact of the fission neutrons on the spectrum can be obtained.

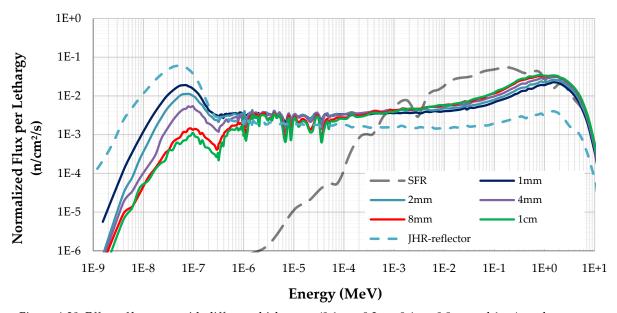
The lower fraction of neutrons population occurs in the case of added fissile material 0.1 cm thick, which is already more than five times higher than in the reference case.

>1MeV

The shifting of the spectrum can be observed in this energy range for fissile material thickness greater or equal to 0.4 cm. Up to 0.4cm the relative values are increased with thickness. However, slight fluctuations are observed during both increase and decrease of the relative values.

In relation with the reference case, even with the introduction of the smallest thickness of extra fissile material (0.1cm) the amount of neutrons has become almost 8 times higher.

The introduction of fissile amount in the facility enhances the fast component with the fast neutron flux distribution following the fission spectrum (Figure 4-20, Figure 4-21). Depending on the thickness of the booster fuel the thermal neutrons fraction is diminished accordingly (Figure 4-20). Moreover the peak of the fast neutrons flux is successively shifted to the left following the successive increase in the thickness of the added fissile material (Figure 4-21).



 $\label{eq:continuous} Figure~4-20: Effect~of~boosters~with~different~thicknesses~(0.1cm~,~0.2cm,~0.4cm,~0.8cm~and~1cm)~on~the~neutron~spectrum.~Log-Log~graph$

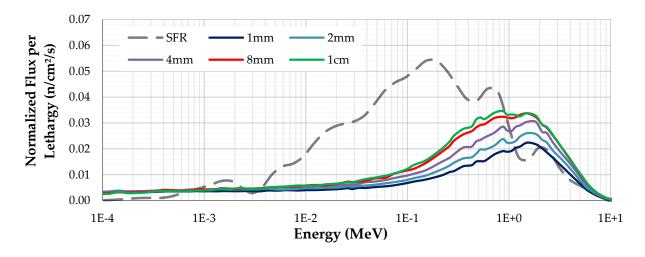


Figure 4-21: Effect of boosters with different thicknesses (0.1cm , 0.2cm, 0.4cm, 0.8cm and 1cm) on the neutron spectrum with detail at high energies. Log x-Lin y graph

In Table 4-4 the ratios of the neutrons with energies above 0.1MeV to the neutrons with energies above 1MeV are reported. In Figure 4-22 the correlation between ratio (Flux>0.1MeV to Flux>1MeV) and thickness is illustrated. It is clear that the ratio increases with increasing thickness. In Table 4-5 the ratio of the maximum flux value, as provided after the insertion of fissile material, to the maximum flux value obtained by the reference spectrum are reported along with the respective percentage growth. As expected, the introduction of fissile material provides a spectrum with higher flux values. Even when 1mm of fissile material is added, the maximum flux value is increased by ~5.5 times, while in case of 1cm the flux maximum is almost multiplied by 9. The relation between the Φ_{i+1}/Φ_i and the fissile material thickness is illustrated in Figure 4-23. For the Φ_i values it has been taken into account that the maximum flux value (in all cases after the introduction of fissile material) is obtained at 0.7145MeV.

Table 4-4: Ratios of neutrons of E>0.1MeV over neutrons of E>1MeV for the different thicknesses of fissile material

Booster Fuel Thickness (cm)	# of neutrons with E> 0.1MeV	# of neutrons with E> 1MeV	Total Flux _{E>0.1 MeV} Total Flux _{E>1 MeV}
0.1	42.4	18.6	2.3
0.2	50.0	21.6	2.3
0.4	57.0	23.9	2.4
0.8	62.8	25.7	2.5
1	65.6	25.4	2.6

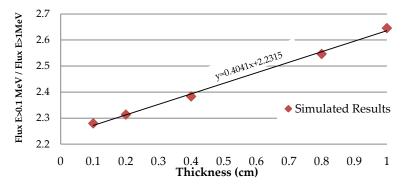


Figure 4-22: Linear correlation (correlation coefficient of 0.998) between flux ratio (Flux >0.1MeV to Flux>1MeV) and fissile material thickness.

Table 4-5: Increase of maximum flux in relation to reference flux value

i	Booster Fuel Thickness (cm)	$rac{oldsymbol{\Phi}_i}{oldsymbol{\Phi}_{ref}}$	% Increase
ref	0	1.00	0
1	0.1	5.45	437
2	0.2	6.19	510
3	0.4	7.05	596
4	0.8	8.14	703
5	1	8.58	747

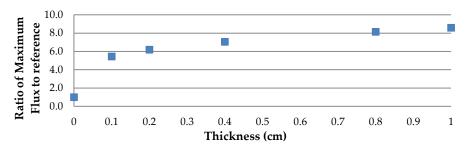


Figure 4-23: Increase of maximum flux after fissile material insertion

4.2.3 Simulating SFR by introducing ²³Na

The introduction of fissile material in the facility provided a neutron spectrum with an enhanced fast and an eliminated thermal component. However, even in the case of 1cm booster fuel the resulted distribution did not approach the desired distribution of SFR. Even neglecting the thermal and epithermal component -that is intensely present in contrast to the distribution of SFR- the neutron population is gathered at higher than preferred energies. Inside the void facility, surrounded by beryllium (Be), only the introduction of booster fuel has been considered. Therefore the fission neutrons interactions are limited to those between 'Be and emitted particles, arriving in the facility from the adjacent regions. The elastic and inelastic cross sections of 'Be are weak at high energies (Figure 4-24), thus the interactions of fission neutrons with its nuclei are insignificant.

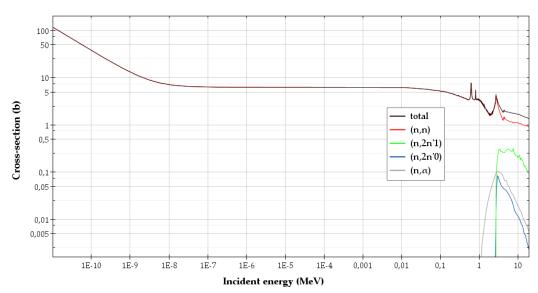


Figure 4-24: Microscopic neutron cross sections of 9Be. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software

Simulating the composition of the SFR, the introduction of sodium (²³Na) has been considered. ²³Na will act as cooling medium (as in the SFR) to the screen. The required space left for the specimen introduction (2cm diameter) in addition with the thickness of the booster fuel free a total space of 3.4cm thickness for ²³Na, if the case of 1cm of fissile material is considered. Altering the inner space of the facility from void to ²³Na did not provide a shifted neutron distribution. The only effect of ²³Na on the neutron spectrum is a flux depression obtained around 3keV (Figure 4-25), where the corresponding elastic scattering resonance of ²³Na takes place (Figure 4-26). The presence of ²³Na in SFR is a major contributing factor to the maximum flux shifting to lower energies (200keV) in relation other FRs spectra. Apparently, the amount of ²³Na -despite significant (3.4cm) in comparison to the 1cm thickness of the fissile material- is not adequate to provide spectrum tailoring through the elastic and inelastic collisions of its nuclides and fast neutrons.

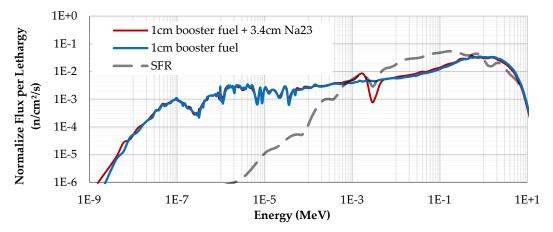


Figure 4-25: Effect of a 3.4 cm ²³Na neutron screen on the neutron spectrum. The screen provided only a flux depression around 3keV corresponding to ²³Na elastic scattering resonance

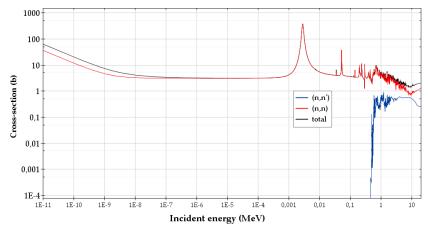


Figure 4-26: Total, elastic and inelastic microscopic cross sections of ²³Na. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software

4.2.3 Concluding Remarks

In order to harden the neutron spectrum, the introduction of booster fuel (Uranium 20% enriched in ²³⁵U) within the JHR reflector had been studied. The neutron distribution obtained in the irradiation facility after the implementation of fissile nuclides of increasing thickness (0.1cm to 1cm) was investigated. As expected the presence of fissile material enhanced the fast spectrum component, which has the form of a fission spectrum with most probable neutron energy around 0.7 MeV. Depending on the quantity (thickness) of the fissile material the thermal neutrons fraction is diminished accordingly. At the same time the peak of the fast neutrons flux is successively shifted to lower energies. However, even in the case of 1cm thickness of fissile screen (extreme case) the resulted distribution fails to reproduce the SFR spectrum. Even neglecting the thermal and epithermal components - which here are intensely present (unlike the case of SFR) - the neutron population at high energies is accumulated at the higher energy-levels.

The presence of ²³Na in SFR is a major contributing factor to the shifting of the maximum flux to lower energies (~200keV) in relation to other FRs spectra. Altering the inner space of the facility from void to ²³Na resulted to a flux depression obtained around 3keV, where the corresponding elastic scattering resonance of ²³Na is located. Apparently the amount of ²³Na, despite significant (3.4cm vs. 1cm of the fissile material) is not adequate to simulate a SFR environment through its elastic and inelastic collisions with fast neutrons.

4.3 Scattering Interactions

4.3.1 Elastic Scattering

Elastic scattering occurs strongly all over the neutron energy range of a thermal reactor (1E-11 to 20 MeV) and is present at every neutron interaction (§A.3.2.2). In the present subsection the capability of spectrum tailoring via the elastic scattering is investigated. The concept behind this is that after elastic collisions with interfered materials a neutron energy loss in specific energy ranges can be occurred. The resulted neutron distribution will present a reduced neutron component at the energies where the elastic scattering interactions occur. In this context a study was carried out, oriented to find elements that present a characteristic elastic cross section at the energies around 1MeV.

4.3.1.1 Helium

The possibility of tailoring, as desired, the neutron spectrum with the help of elastic interaction had first to be examined. For this reason a computational study of a simple scattering experiment was performed; a helium (4He) sample/target was irradiated by an isotropic point source of neutrons with linear energy distribution between 1E-11 and 20 MeV. This energy range corresponds to the energy boundaries obtained in a thermal reactor. The thickness of ⁴He was set at 4cm. The configuration was simulated with TRIPOLI-4.8. A void volume was considered at the right of the target, where the averaged neutron flux distribution was calculated. ⁴He is one of the very few elements that present only elastic interaction (Figure 4-27) with neutrons, due to the fact that the alpha particle is very tightly bonded and has no excited states below 20MeV [Mor69]. Moreover, its elastic cross section exhibits a peak at around 1MeV (Figure 4-27). Given these facts, the effect of the interference of ⁴He on the initial neutron distribution is investigated. Unfortunately, the density of ⁴He is extremely low (0.1786 g/l). For this reason the density of liquid ⁴He (3 orders of magnitude denser) was considered instead of the gaseous ⁴He. In Figure 4-28 the neutron flux profile after the irradiation of liquid ⁴He over the entire energy range is illustrated. The results from gaseous 4He are also included. The neutron spectrum is normalized for a more comprehensive illustration. In the energy area corresponding to the peak of the elastic cross section (Figure 4-27) a flux depression is occurring. Moreover, at very low energies (< 1E-7 MeV), where the σ_e of ⁴He is high, a corresponding decrease is observed. The fluctuations on the spectrum are due to statistical uncertainties. The output of this study suggests that the use of elements with elastic cross sections of "particular" shape in the energy area of interest (intense peak around 1MeV), such as ⁴He, could be utilized in order to provide a neutron spectrum tailoring.

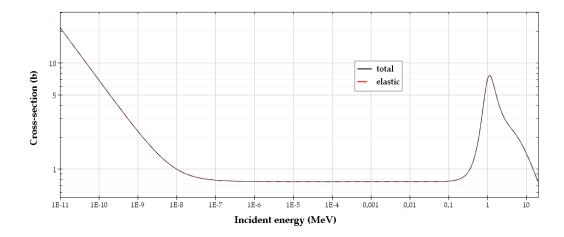


Figure 4-27: Total and elastic microscopic cross sections of ⁴He; total cross section is identical to the elastic. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software

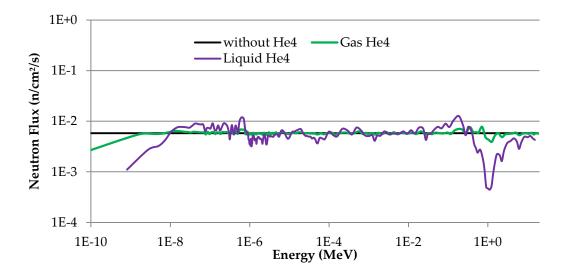


Figure 4-28: Effect of the elastic scattering interaction of ⁴He on the initial irradiation spectrum

Introducing 4He inside JHR reflector

The impact of ⁴He on the JHR-reflector spectrum was further examined. A calculation with a neutron screen of liquid (for more apparent effect) ⁴He introduced in the irradiation facility has been carried out.

Figure 4-29 depicts the neutron flux per lethargy after the introduction of liquid ⁴He inside the irradiation facility of JHR. The reference spectrum (JHR reflector) is illustrated for comparison. The provided spectrum is almost identical to the reference one, except at the energy area around 1MeV, where a weak tailoring can be observed. At 1MeV, where the cross section of ⁴He

exhibits a peak, a flux depression occurs; the neutron population with energies around 1MeV has slightly lost its energy. In addition, a slight peak occurs at the left of the flux depression due to neutron moderations. A representation of the effect at the energy range of interest is given in Figure 4-29. Although the introduction of liquid ⁴He resulted in a weak tailoring in the desired energy range, the neutron distribution in the whole energy spectrum remained unchanged.

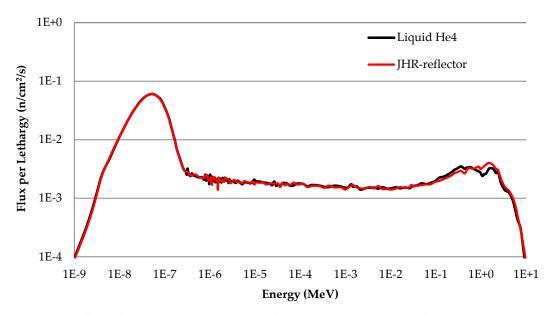


Figure 4-29: Effect of 3 cm liquid 4He on the reference spectrum (JHR reflector). Log-Log graph

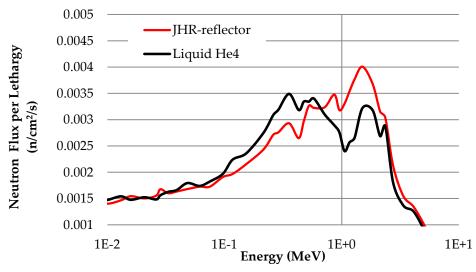


Figure 4-30: The effect of liquid 4 He on the reference spectrum (JHR reflector) around 1MeV. Logx-Liny graph

4.3.1.2 Other Elastic Scatterers

An extensive research among the elements of the periodic table was carried out, aimed to specify other elements (like 4 He) with elastic cross section curves around 1MeV. Unfortunately, few elements found exhibiting the intense peak of 4 He at the desired energy range. Figure 4-31 illustrates the elastic cross sections of 138 Ba and 139 La along with that of 4 He. Both cross section curves (σ_e of 138 Ba and 139 La) are wider with a smoother fluctuation of that of 4 He. Other materials found with their σ_e characterized by the desired variation, were: 36 S, 37 Cl, 40 Ar, 39 K, 40 K, 48 Ca and 197 Au. In Figure 4-32 their σ_e is illustrated. 40 Ar is presented alone in Figure 4-33, due to the fact that the intense fluctuations of its σ_e would complicate the representation of the rest isotopes. In all cases the peak of the σ_e of these isotopes is observed above 2MeV and mainly around 3MeV. At this point it should be emphasized that -unlike 4 He - the examined elements present also inelastic cross section [ENDF]. In addition, all except 197 Au have low densities (Table 4-6).

Elamont	Density	Dhaca
Element	(g/cm ³)	Phase
³⁶ S	1.96	Solid
³⁷ Cl	0.003	Gas
⁴⁰ Ar	0.002	Gas
³⁹ K	0.86	Solid

0.86

1.55

3.51

6.15

19.3

Solid

Solid

Solid

Solid

Solid

 ^{40}K

⁴⁸Ca

¹³⁸Ba

139La

¹⁹⁷Au

Table 4-6: Density and Phase of the studied isotopes [Wie13a]

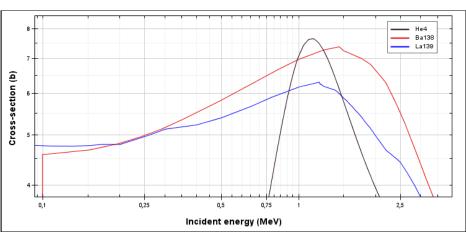


Figure 4-31: Elastic microscopic cross section of ¹³⁸Ba and ¹³⁹La. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software

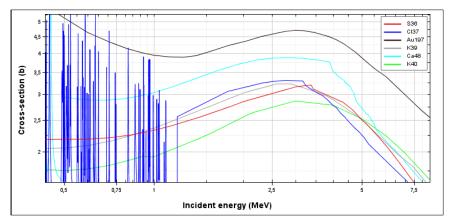


Figure 4-32: Elastic microscopic cross section of ³⁶S, ³⁷Cl, ³⁹K, ⁴⁰K, ⁴⁸Ca and ¹⁹⁷Au. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software

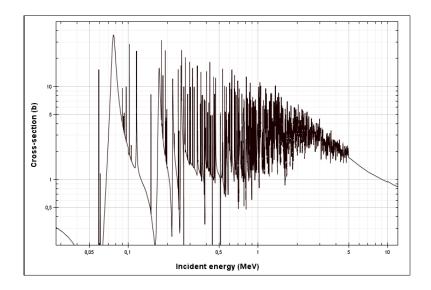


Figure 4-33: Elastic microscopic cross section of 40Ar. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software

Introducing elastic scatterers inside JHR reflector

The introduction of the above elements at 100% isotopic abundance in the irradiation facility of JHR has been considered. 39 Cl and 40 Ar were excluded since both are gases and their extremely low density would render them transparent to neutrons. In all cases a thickness of 3 cm was considered 17 . The macroscopic elastic cross sections of the tested elements are presented in Figure 4-36. The number densities of most isotopes are quite small, thus only 197 Au, 139 La, 36 S and 138 Ba seem to be of importance. However, 36 S and 138 Ba provided negligible shifting (Figure C-1), indicating that the levels of their σ_e were inadequate to affect the spectrum at high energies.

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¹⁷ 1.4 cm was intentionally left available for absorber or fissile material loading.

The effects of ¹⁹⁷Au, ¹³⁹La and ⁴⁰K neutron screens on the neutron spectrum are illustrated in Figure 4-34. The neutron spectra are normalized to unit and are expressed in terms of flux per lethargy.

⁴⁰K and ¹³⁹La both provide a partial thermal elimination (Figure 4-34) and thus theirs normalized neutron spectrum is enhanced in epithermal and fast neutrons in relation to the reference case. However, ⁴⁰K provides no shifting, while ¹³⁹La reduces the fast component (Figure 4-35). With the introduction of ¹⁹⁷Au the neutron spectrum presents a significant change (Figure 4-34). The thermal component is absorbed while at the same time the maximum neutron flux at 1MeV is shifted to the left. Above 0.1MeV the neutron distribution is almost identical with the case of SFR. However, it should be underlined that the increase in high energies in Figure 4-34 appears due to the normalization of the spectra.

As stated before the studied elements (except ⁴He) present also inelastic cross sections. Thus, the intense effect of ¹⁹⁷Au on the spectrum is additionally influenced by its inelastic cross section that starts at 0.1MeV and increases among the fast energies (Figure 4-37). Although the inelastic cross sections of ¹⁹⁷Au and ¹³⁹La are comparable (Figure 4-37) it is the density of ¹⁹⁷Au (Table 4-6) and subsequently its neutron number density - 0.059 in case of ¹⁹⁷Au vs. 0.0266 in the case of ¹³⁹La-that justifies the intense effect of ¹⁹⁷Au in relation to that provided by the ¹³⁹La neutron screen.

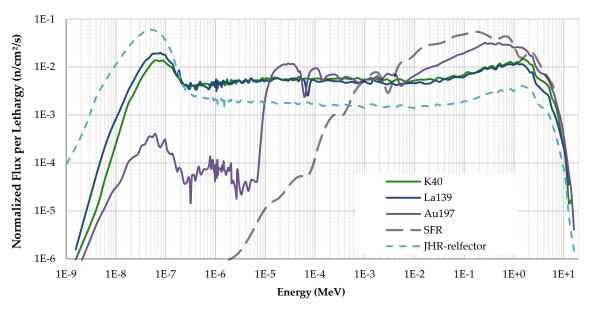


Figure 4-34: Comparing the effects of 3 cm ⁴⁰K, , ¹³⁹La and ¹⁹⁷Au neutron screens on the neutron spectrum. SFR is included for comparison

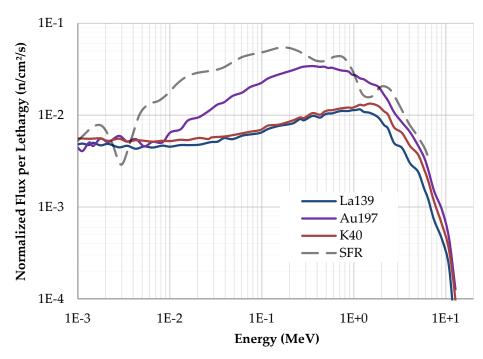


Figure 4-35: Comparing the effects of 3 cm 40 K, , 139 La and 197 Au neutron screens on the neutron spectrum with detail in high energies. SFR is included for comparison

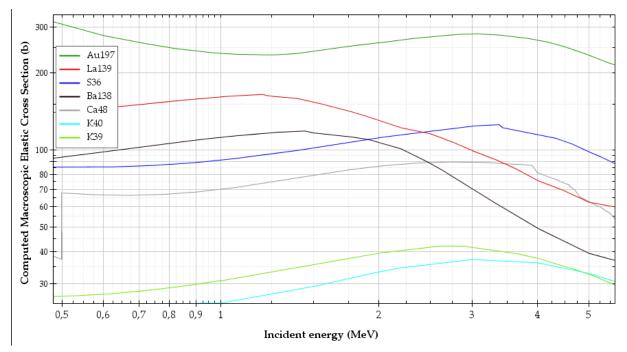


Figure 4-36: Macroscopic elastic cross sections of the tested elements as computed with JANIS software using the JEFF-3.1.1 Library.

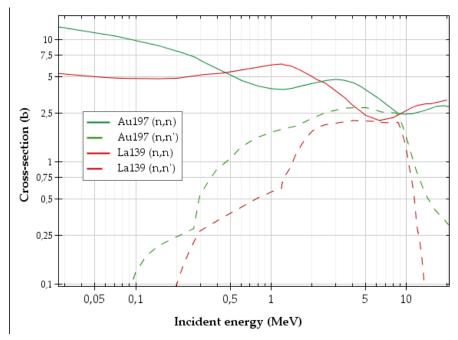


Figure 4-37: Elastic and inelastic microscopic cross section of 197 Au and 139 La. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software.

4.3.2 Inelastic Scattering

In the current section the inelastic interactions are investigated with respect to their contribution for achieving the desired spectrum tailoring. Inelastic scattering is almost present at every interaction between neutrons and nuclei, but it mainly occurs at high energies (§A.3.2.1). The reaction channel opens at a threshold energy recorded around 10-100keV for heavy nuclei and a few MeV for light nuclei [Kra87, Lit12]. The maximum value of the inelastic cross section is around 5b, while for the most nuclei is around 1b. The advantages of inelastic scattering - with regard to elastic (§4.3.1) - comprise the substantial energy loss during collisions and the energy range of occurrence (high energies). However, the low possibility of inelastic reactions is a disadvantage that can be surpassed with the utilization of materials in great quantities.

4.3.2.1 Calculations

As done in §4.3.1 , the possibility of tailoring the neutron spectrum with the help of inelastic interaction had first to be examined. For this reason, an isotope presenting an inelastic scattering at the desired energy had to be found¹⁸. ¹⁶⁵Ho is the only isotope of the solid Holmium. Its neutron inelastic scattering channel opens at 0.1MeV with an inelastic σ about 1b, which increases with energy, reaching finally a value of 3b at 1MeV (Figure 4-38). The introduction of ¹⁶⁵Ho neutron screen of different thicknesses (1cm, 2cm, 3cm and 3.4cm) inside JHR reflector (Figure 1-1) has been considered (Figure 4-39). The small cross section of inelastic reaction (Figure 4-38) imposed the necessity of a large thickness of the screen, since the more thick the screen the more the provided shifting of the spectrum. Moreover, the sufficient thickness of ¹⁶⁵Ho causes a deeper flux depression around 0.2keV, acting as a natural separator between high and low intermediate neutrons (creating a clear distribution constituted of high energy neutrons). The depression of the flux corresponds to the resonances of the capture and elastic cross sections (Figure 4-38).

The 3.4cm thick screen of ¹⁶⁵Ho performed quite effectively at high epithermal and fast energies; 3.4cm of ¹⁶⁵Ho were capable to spread the fast neutron peak of the reference spectrum to lower energies (Figure 4-40). It should be pointed out that it is both scattering interactions, elastic and inelastic of ¹⁶⁵Ho, contributing to the final result. In addition, the resonance region of ¹⁶⁵Ho occurring around 100eV (Figure 4-38), results in a corresponding flux depression at the neutron spectrum, "forming" thus a neutron distribution curve that approaches the desired curve of SFR at an acceptable degree. However, below 100eV, an intense (undesired) epithermal neutron component is obtained. The results (Figure 4-40) are normalized to unit and are presented in terms of flux per unit lethargy for a more comprehensive illustration.

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¹⁸ Along with ¹⁶⁵Ho four other isotopes have been found in Literature described as "materials with strong inelastic cross section at energies around 1 MeV (Figure C-2-Figure C-9)

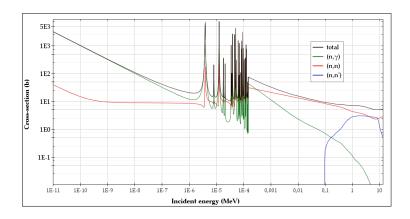


Figure 4-38: Microscopic neutron cross sections of 165 Ho. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software

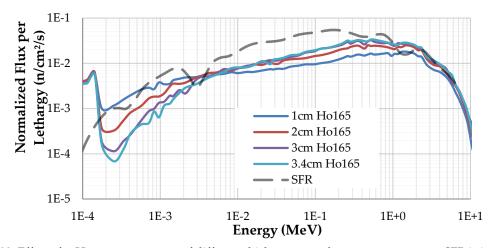


Figure 4-39: Effect of ¹⁶⁵Ho neutron screens of different thicknesses on the neutron spectrum. SFR is included for comparison

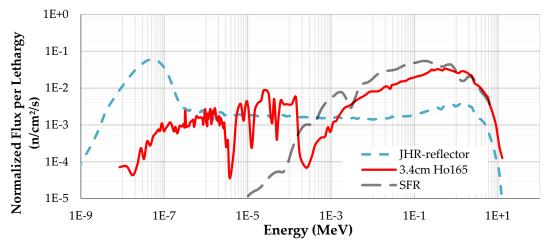


Figure 4-40: Effect of a $3.4 \text{ cm}^{165}\text{Ho}$ neutron screen on the neutron spectrum. The screen provided a neutron flux shifting at 0.355 MeV.

Investigating further the case of ¹⁶⁵Ho, the introduction of 1cm of fissile material has been considered. Loading fissile material in the facility is expected to enhance the fast component and the neutron flux within the irradiation space. The comparison of the spectra of the two cases, ¹⁶⁵Ho alone and ¹⁶⁵Ho with 1cm booster fuel, is illustrated in Figure 4-41 and Figure 4-42. The addition of the booster enhances the fast component in such extend that the scattering interactions of the fission neutrons with ¹⁶⁵Ho nuclei are inadequate to moderate them as in the case without fissile material. However, the combination of ¹⁶⁵Ho with fissile material provides higher neutron fluxes (~6 times) with a neutron distribution of reduced epithermal component.

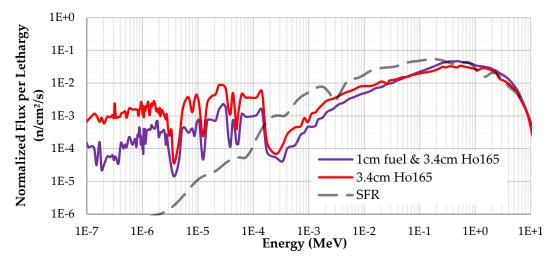


Figure 4-41: Comparing the effects of 3.4 cm ¹⁶⁵Ho with and without booster fuel (of 1cm) on the neutron spectrum. Log-Log Plot.

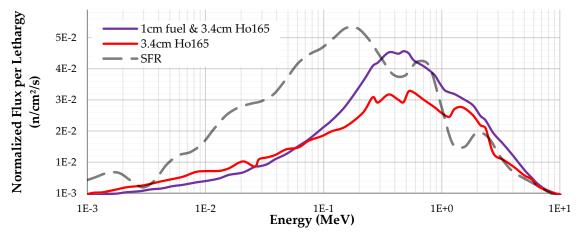


Figure 4-42: Comparing the effects of 3.4 cm ¹⁶⁵Ho with and without booster fuel (of 1cm) on the neutron spectrum with detail at high energies. Log-Lin Plot

4.3.2.2 Other Elements

After the successful output of the ¹⁶⁵Ho study, an investigation of other potential inelastic scatterers followed. A large set of numerical experiments with 57 different elements at their natural composition inserted at the irradiation facility was carried out. As in the case of ¹⁶⁵Ho a 3.4cm thick screen was considered. Only the scatterer material was introduced in the facility. It is worth stressing that a study with isotopes instead of natural elements might have been more appropriate, since the different isotopes of an element interact differently with neutrons. Such a study would require an huge amount of calculations and thus was not adopted. Moreover, the findings will indicate the existence of one or more isotopes with inelastic scattering property; after a successful result an isotopic study can be carried out in order to investigate which isotopes of the elements cause the tailoring. However, an isotope with a desirable characteristic may exist with very low abundance in the element and thus its effect will not be revealed. The number of tested elements was limited to 57, since in many cases the neutron cross section data were unavailable in JEFF-3-1 library. In addition, some elements were excluded due to reactor's safety issues (i.e. minor actinides). Finally, elements with low densities (gases) were excluded.

4.3.2.3 Results

This study intends to investigate whether the introduction of specific nuclides inside the irradiation facility would alter the existing thermal spectrum to one equivalent to that of a SFR; that is, the tailored spectrum should provide a neutron distribution similar to the SFR's while the energy where the maximum flux is obtained should occur at around 0.1-0.2MeV. At this point it should be recalled that in the existing thermal spectrum (JHR-reflector) the second peak (due to fissions) is occurred between 0.608MeV and 0.821MeV (Figure 1-1). In the text, the average value of the above energy group, i.e. 0.7145MeV, is referred to group.

In Table 4-7 the neutron distribution in different energy groups is tabulated for each element. The energy, where the maximum flux was calculated, is also reported. Many elements did not present absorbing capacity, and thus the maximum flux occurred at the thermal energy range, as happens in the reference spectrum. However, these elements might shift the maximum neutron flux as required. For this reason, in these cases the flux peak for energies above 0.01 MeV is reported. The results are presented in ascending order, starting from the lowest energy with maximum flux occurrence (flux peak) and ending to the highest one (last column). Shades of red have been used to highlight the elements achieving the best shifting. The energy of the maximum flux occurrence (flux peak) is denoted as $\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{\Phi}_{max})$.

Table 4-7: Neutron distribution with respect to the flux peak corresponding energy (for E>0.01 MeV)

Symbol	<0.01 eV (%)	0.1eV- 0.01eV (%)	1eV- 0.1eV (%)	10eV- 1eV (%)	100eV- 10eV (%)	1keV- 100eV (%)	10keV- 1keV (%)	100keV- 10keV (%)	1MeV- 100keV (%)	>1 MeV (%)	E(Φ _{max}) (MeV)
As	0.7	25.9	8.7	3.2	6.1	10.9	5.9	10.7	20.1	7.8	0.153
Ir	0	0.3	0	0	1.5	0.3	1.7	24.8	57.1	0.7	0.153
Lu	0	0.3	1.2	1.5	3.6	6.1	6.4	23.9	39.8	17.3	0.153
Os	0	0.1	1.5	1	1.2	0.2	4.5	25.6	53.3	12	0.153
Pt	0.1	6.3	4.7	3.3	3.4	1.2	5.6	19.7	43.9	12	0.153
Rb	4.9	51.7	8.7	1.9	3.8	5.4	3.7	5.9	11	2.9	0.153
Re	0	0.2	0.1	0.6	2.2	2.7	2.9	27.6	51.4	12.4	0.153
Rh	0.1	0.2	0	3.4	11.8	13.3	8.3	15.4	37.2	10.4	0.153
Ru	0.9	27.7	9	2.4	3.8	7.1	5.7	12.3	23.6	7.5	0.153
Si	8.8	61	7.3	1.2	2.5	4.4	3.1	3.5	5.5	2.8	0.153
T1	0	23.4	7.9	3.4	7.3	10.9	8.8	12	18.4	7.9	0.153
W	0	1.7	2.1	1	4.3	10.9	12.3	21.3	37.1	9.3	0.153
Ag	0	0.2	0.1	0.2	6	15.5	6.1	18.1	39.8	24.8	0.355
Cd	0	0.2	0	4.4	9.3	15.2	11.6	17.4	31.6	10.8	0.355
Но	0	0.4	0.8	1.2	4	2	7	23.3	44.5	16.7	0.355
Pd	0.1	11.2	6.2	4	4.9	11.2	8.1	15.1	30.4	8.8	0.355
Ta	0.2	1.9	2.3	1.1	4.6	7.6	6.1	20.2	43.7	12.3	0.355
Tb	0	7.4	5.8	3	5.3	2.6	5	18.3	38.6	14.1	0.355
A1	8	59.5	7.6	1.4	2.7	4.7	3.3	3.8	6	3	0.7145
<u>B</u>	0	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	6	23.3	46.6	22.9	0.7145
<u>Bi</u>	9.9	63.1	6.8	1	2.2	3.9	2.6	3.1	4.8	2.5	0.7145
<u>C</u>	10.1	64.4	6.9	1	2	3.5	2.6	3.2	4.2	2.1	0.7145
Ce	7.3	58.3	7.7	1.4	2.9	5	3.4	4.2	6.6	3.1	0.7145
Co	0	0.2	0.1	1.1	2.8	12.1	14.9	19.7	37	12.1	0.7145
<u>Cr</u>	0.6	22.8	8	3.3	7.5	14.1	7.5	10.8	17.8	7.6	0.7145
Cs	0.7	26.3	8.1	1.5	6.6	11.8	8.7	10.7	16.8	8.7	0.7145
Cu	0.3	14.1	6.5	3.5	8.5	13.9	9.4	12.9	23.1	7.9	0.7145
<u>Dy</u>	0	0.2	0	0.1	1.7	7 9	10.5	22.1	41.8	16.7	0.7145
Er	0	0.1	0.1	0.5	5.2	0.3	10	21.5 22.3	39.2	14.3	0.7145
Eu Fe	0.7	0.1 18.9	0.1 7	3.4	0.6 7.7	13.7	5 9.4	11.5	48.4	7.8	0.7145
Ga	1.8	33.5	8.8	2.9	5.7	7.7	7.2	9.6	16.1	6.7	0.7145
Gd	0.1	0.1	0.0	2.7	4.1	4.4	9.1	21.7	41.4	17.1	0.7145
Ge	2.6	40.7	8.8	2.4	5.1	7.8	6.2	7.9	13.4	5.2	0.7145
Hf	0	0.2	0.0	0.1	2.3	4.5	8.5	24.3	45.2	15	0.7145
Hg	0	0.2	0	2.2	7.4	13.9	11.8	19.4	33.6	11.4	0.7145
I	1.9	38	9.1	2.6	4.1	8.1	6.4	8.6	14.3	6.7	0.7145
——In	0	0.1	0	1.7	8.3	16	10.2	17.2	32.2	14.3	0.7145
Mg	9.6	62.6	7.1	1.1	2.3	4	2.7	3.2	5.1	2.5	0.7145
Mn	0	2.2	2.9	3.5	10.5	12.8	7	16.8	31.6	12.7	0.7145
Mo	1.3	32.4	8.7	2.9	5.2	9.2	6.5	10.1	18	5.6	0.7145
Nb	3.9	46.8	8.8	2	4.3	6.7	4.4	6.7	12.7	3.8	0.7145
Nd	0	0.6	1.2	3.4	10	13.5	12.4	17.5	29	12.2	0.7145
Ni	0.1	4.3	3.3	3.6	9.7	17.6	12.1	11.4	26.7	11.1	0.7145
						10					

P	9.2	61.4	7.2	1.2	2.4	4.2	2.9	3.5	5.3	2.7	0.7145
Pr	0.5	19	7.6	3.5	7.8	12	9.4	12.5	19.3	8.5	0.7145
Sb	1.5	33.5	8.9	1.5	4.1	9	6.7	10.3	17.4	7.2	0.7145
Sc	0	0.7	1.2	2.5	8.5	18.9	12	15.6	28.1	12.5	0.7145
Se	0.2	13.8	6.9	3.6	7.7	14.1	9.2	13.3	21.5	9.8	0.7145
Sn	6.9	57.7	7.8	1.4	2.9	4.9	3.5	4.5	7.2	3.2	0.7145
Sr	6.9	56.9	7.7	1.4	3.1	5.4	3.8	4.5	6.8	3.6	0.7145
Te	2	36.5	8.2	2.3	5.7	9.2	7	8.9	13.8	6.3	0.7145
Ti	0.3	16	6.8	3.5	8.7	15.7	11.8	7.7	20.7	8.8	0.7145
\mathbf{V}	0.2	13.9	6.6	3.6	9.2	16.9	7.9	9.6	22.1	9.8	0.7145
Y	5.4	52.6	8.3	1.8	3.6	6.5	4.4	5.3	8.3	3.9	0.7145
Zn	3.6	46.4	8.9	2.2	4.6	7.1	4.9	6.4	11.3	4.5	0.7145
Zr	8.6	61.1	7.2	1.2	2.6	4.2	2.9	3.6	6	2.6	0.7145

4.3.2.4 Interpretation of the Results

In Figure 4-42 the energy of the maximum flux occurrence (flux peak) is reported. The results can be classified into three categories:

- 1. $E(\Phi_{max})$ =0.153 MeV, which refers to the maximum obtained shifting (78% shifting of the maximum flux occurrence to the left)
- 2. $E(\Phi_{max})$ =0.355 MeV, which is the second best obtained shifting (50% shifting maximum flux occurrence to the left)
- 3. $E(\Phi_{max})=0.7145$ MeV, which refers to no shifting (0% shifting)

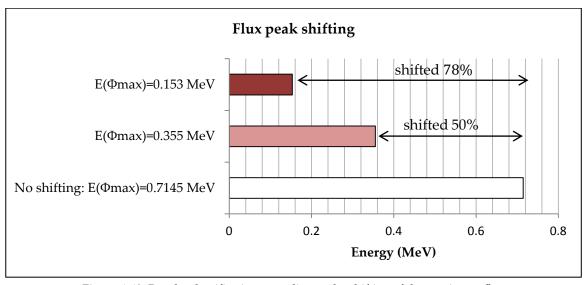


Figure 4-43: Results classification according to the shifting of the maximum flux

$E(\Phi_{\text{max}}) = 0.153 \, MeV$

In Table 4-8 the cases where a shifting of the flux maximum from 0.7145MeV (void JHR reflector) to 0.153MeV is obtained, are reported along with their neutron distribution at the entire energy range. The results can be classified according to the effect on the spectrum tailoring i.e. elements with and without intense effect. The reference case is included at the first row of Table 4-8. It should be highlighted that the flux peak for energies above 0.01 MeV is reported for the reference case (its maximum flux peak is obtained at thermal energy 0.04eV). The results are presented in ascending order, starting from the minimum flux occurrence (flux peak) at the energy range from 1MeV-100keV.

Table 4-8: Elements providing the more pronounced neutron spectrum shifting for $E(\Phi_{max})$ =0.153 MeV

Material	<0.01 eV	0.1eV- 0.01eV	1eV- 0.1eV	10eV- 100eV	100eV- 10eV	1keV- 100eV	10keV- 1keV	100keV- 10keV	1MeV- 100keV	>1 MeV	E(Фmax) (MeV)
Reference	10	63	7	1	2	3	2	3	4	2	0.755
Si	8.8	61	7.3	1.2	2.5	4.4	3.1	3.5	5.5	2.8	0.153
Rb	4.9	51.7	8.7	1.9	3.8	5.4	3.7	5.9	11	2.9	0.153
Tl	0	23.4	7.9	3.4	7.3	10.9	8.8	12	18.4	7.9	0.153
As	0.7	25.9	8.7	3.2	6.1	10.9	5.9	10.7	20.1	7.8	0.153
Ru	0.9	27.7	9	2.4	3.8	7.1	5.7	12.3	23.6	7.5	0.153
W	0	1.7	2.1	1	4.3	10.9	12.3	21.3	37.1	9.3	0.153
Rh	0.1	0.2	0	3.4	11.8	13.3	8.3	15.4	37.2	10.4	0.153
Lu	0	0.3	1.2	1.5	3.6	6.1	6.4	23.9	39.8	17.3	0.153
Pt	0.1	6.3	4.7	3.3	3.4	1.2	5.6	19.7	43.9	12	0.153
Re	0	0.2	0.1	0.6	2.2	2.7	2.9	27.6	51.4	12.4	0.153
Os	0	0.1	1.5	1	1.2	0.2	4.5	25.6	53.3	12	0.153
Ir	0	0.3	0	0	1.5	0.3	1.7	24.8	57.1	0.7	0.153

Elements without intense spectrum tailoring

The scattering effect at the desired energy range of 3.4 cm Ru, As, Tl and Rb neutron screens is illustrated in Figure 4-44. Although all these elements managed to shift the spectrum at high energies, they provided negligible absorbing capability. JHR reflector (black line) and SFR spectra are included for comparison. The case of Si is not included, since its introduction in the facility provided negligible tailoring (almost identical to JHR-reflector).

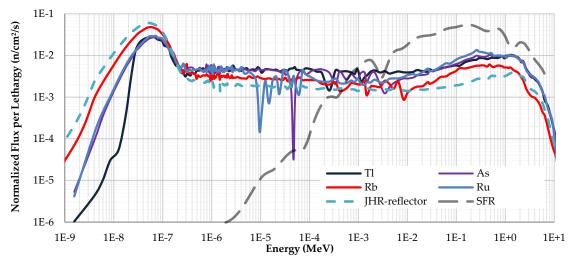


Figure 4-44: Effect of 3.4 cm Tl, As, Rb and Ru neutron screens on the neutron spectrum. All screens provided a neutron spectrum shifting at 0.153 MeV, but negligible thermal absorption capability.

Intense spectrum tailoring

From the results of the flux maximum shifting at 0.153MeV the following elements are standing out; Re, Rh, W, Pt, Lu, Ir and Os. The spectra that were produced after the introduction of 3.4cm of the above elements are presented in the following graphs. In Figure 4-45 the neutron flux spectra over the entire energy spectrum are depicted, while in Figure 4-46 the low energies have been excluded from the graph for a more comprehensive illustration. From all the above materials, the greatest shifting and shape is achieved with Ir, Os and Re neutron screens (Figure 4-47).

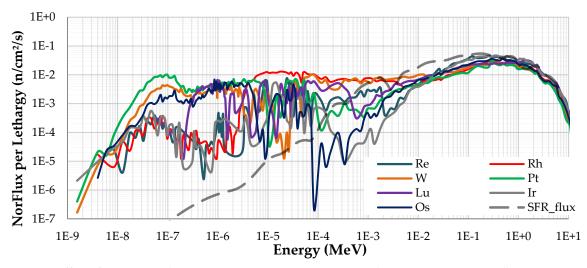


Figure 4-45: Effect of 3.4 cm Re, Rh, W, Pt, Lu, Ir, Os neutron screens on the neutron spectrum. All screens provide a neutron spectrum shifting at 0.153 MeV.

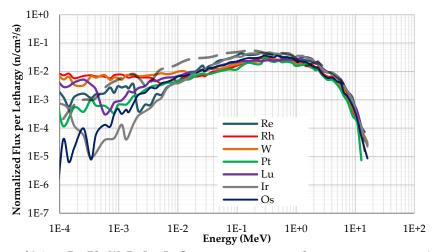


Figure 4-46: Effect of 3.4 cm Re, Rh, W, Pt, Lu, Ir, Os neutron screens on the neutron spectrum with detail at high energies. All screens provide a neutron spectrum shifting at 0.153 MeV.

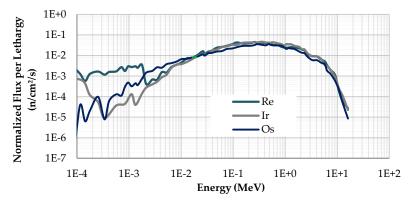


Figure 4-47: Effect of 3.4 cm Ir, Os and Re neutron screens on the neutron spectrum. The screens provided the most optimum neutron spectrum shifting at 0.153MeV

$E(\Phi_{\text{max}}) = 0.355 \, MeV$

The employment of 3.4 cm Ag, Cd, Ho, Pd, Ta and Tb neutron screens resulted in a shifting of the maximum flux at 0.355MeV. The provided neutron distribution after the implementation of these screens is reported in Table 4-9. From the results it can be derived that:

- The neutron spectrum provided by the screens of Ag, Cd and Ta cannot be considered ideal for a SFR spectrum simulation (Figure C-10).
- The effect of Ho screen on the spectrum is similar to that produced by the screens of Os, Ir and Re (Figure 4-48).
- With the Tb screen a neat spectrum, almost like that of Ho, was provided.
- The case of Pd should be highlighted, even though it did not give a broad shaped spectrum, due to the important reduction that its introduction caused in the fast area (8.8%).

The effects of Ho, Pd and Ta neutron screens on the spectrum are illustrated in Figure 4-49

Table 4-9: Elements	providing the more	pronounced neutron spectrus	m shifting for $E(\Phi_{max})=0.355 \text{ MeV}$

	<0.01	0.1eV-	1eV-	10eV-	100eV-	1keV-	10keV	100keV	1MeV-	>1	Е(Фтах)
Material	eV	0.01eV	0.1eV	100eV	10eV	100eV	-1keV	-10keV	100keV	MeV	(MeV)
Ag	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.2	6.0	15.5	6.1	18.1	39.8	24.8	0.355
Cd	0.0	0.2	0.0	4.4	9.3	15.2	11.6	17.4	31.6	10.8	0.355
Но	0.0	0.4	0.8	1.2	4.0	2.0	7.0	23.3	44.5	16.7	0.355
Pd	0.1	11.2	6.2	4.0	4.9	11.2	8.1	15.1	30.4	8.8	0.355
Ta	0.2	1.9	2.3	1.1	4.6	7.6	6.1	20.2	43.7	12.3	0.355
Tb	0.0	7.4	5.8	3.0	5.3	2.6	5.0	18.3	38.6	14.1	0.355

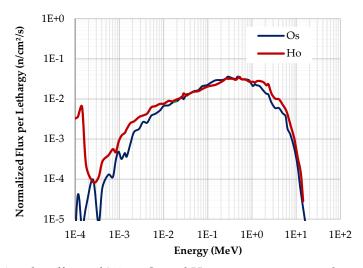


Figure 4-48: Comparing the effects of 3.4 cm Os and Ho neutron screens on the neutron spectrum with detail at high energies.

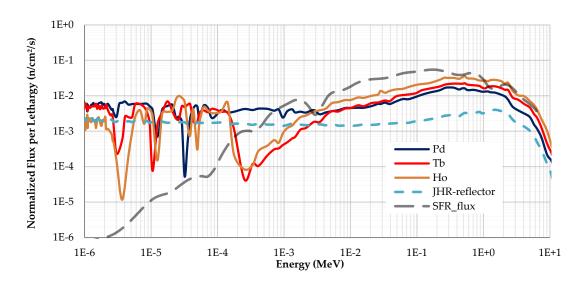


Figure 4-49: Effect of 3.4 cm Ho, Tb and Pd neutron screens on the neutron spectrum. The neutron spectrum shifting is obtained at 0.355 MeV. JHR-reflector and SFR spectra are included for comparison

4.3.2.5 General Conclusions

Trying to understand the relationship between the results and the physical properties of the used elements their representation on the periodic table was considered. In Figure 4-50 all examined materials are presented. Their effectiveness on the neutron spectrum is highlighted with shades of red:

- Dark red for the maximum shifting of the flux peak, that was noted at E=0.153MeV
- **Red** for the shifting of the flux maximum at E=0.355MeV
- **Light red** for the elements that although shifted the flux peak at E=0.153MeV, their absorbing capability at thermal energies was negligible (thus the provided spectrum was almost similar to that of JHR reflector).

A first conclusion emerging from the obtained results regards the location of these elements on the periodic table (Figure B-1). W, Re, Os, Ir and Pt are successive transition metals of the 6th period, while Rh (also transition metal) belongs to the immediately preceding period. On the contrary, Lu is lanthanide, but belongs also to the 6th period. In addition, all elements belong to the d-block. Observing the density trend of the periodic table (Table B-2) it can be seen that Os and Ir are the more dense elements with Pt, Re and W following (with less dense values). The fact that these elements are in a sequence on the periodic table with close density values, implies that their neutron number density will be similar as well. As for their inelastic cross sections, Os, Re, W and Ir have a similar inelastic scattering cross section with a maximum value (3b) occurring between 1MeV and 5 MeV. Pt, Lu and Rh present lower σ (~2MeV).

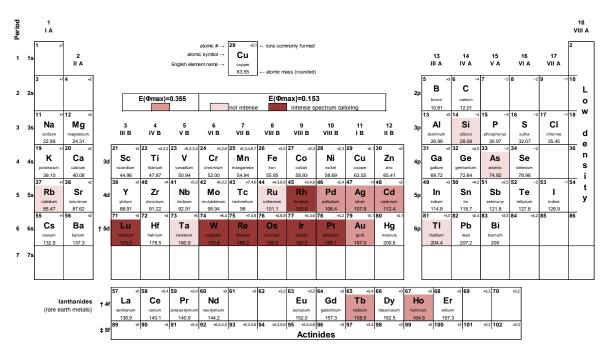


Figure 4-50: The tested elements: shades of red indicate enhance shifting effect with enhancing darkness.

As indicated by the results the best shifting and shape of the neutron distribution is achieved by the introduction of Ir, Os and Re. In Figure 4-51 the effects of Ir, Os and Re screens on the neutron spectrum are plotted. Their similarity is easily justified by their common inelastic σ and neutron number densities (Figure 4-52).

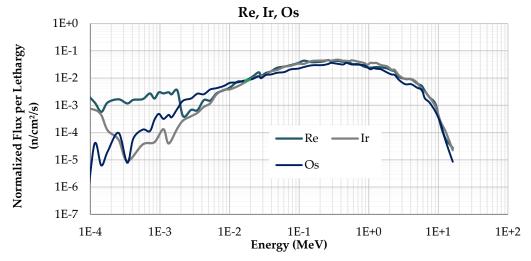


Figure 4-51: Effect of 3.4 cm Ir, Os and Re neutron screens on the neutron spectrum. The screens provided the optimum neutron spectrum shifting at 0.153MeV

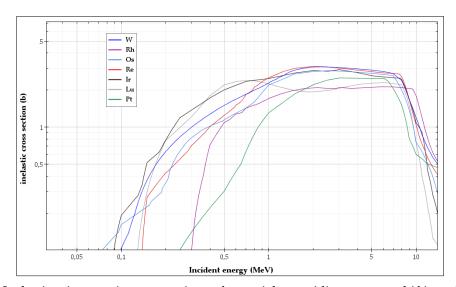


Figure 4-52: Inelastic microscopic cross sections of materials providing greatest shifting of the neutron spectrum

Comparing the inelastic cross sections of Os and Ho (Figure 4-48) and the resulted spectra after their introduction in the facility (Figure 4-53) it can be concluded that it is the density of Os (and subsequently its neutron number density) that provides a better shifting than that of Ho, since the inelastic σ of Ho is higher than that of Os.

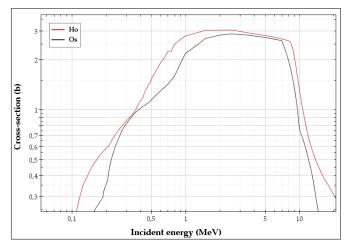


Figure 4-53: Inelastic microscopic cross sections of Os and Ho.

Seeing that the introduction of Ho and Tb produced similar spectra, and taking also into account the similarity of the spectra exhibited by the successive elements described before, it can be concluded that there is a necessity to investigate why Dy, which is between Ho and Tb, did not produce flux shifting. Since successive elements on the periodic table (Ho, Dy and Tb) present almost same neutron number densities, their difference should be due to their inelastic cross section. Actually it is the smaller value of the inelastic σ of Dy (Figure 4-54) that justifies the exclusion of Dy from the elements providing a flux shifting.

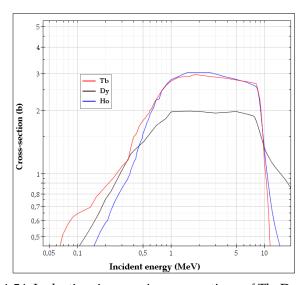


Figure 4-54: Inelastic microscopic cross sections of Tb, Dy and Ho.

In the framework of the same investigation the inelastic σ of Ta was compared with W and Re (Figure 4-55). The succession of these elements in the periodic table (almost same number densities) suggests that the introduction of Ta does not provide a spectrum shifting due to its inelastic σ . The lower σ of Ta in relation to that of W and Re in the desired energy range (1MeV to 5MeV) explains the Ta exclusion from the best scattering elements.

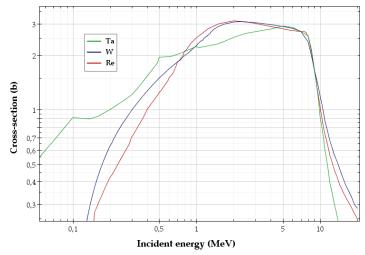


Figure 4-55: Inelastic microscopic cross sections of Ta, W and Re.

Taking into account the above remarks it can be concluded that the most critical parameters for effective inelastic scatterers comprise the density, inelastic σ and the energy ranges where inelastic scattering occurs.

4.3.2.6 Additional shifting

From the above results it can be concluded that elements with important inelastic scattering can be used for effective spectrum shifting. The cases of Os, Re and Ir stood out providing a spectrum with a neutron distribution that simulates that of SFR, i.e. presenting a symmetrical distribution with a maximum at 0.153MeV. However its left side (E < 0.1MeV) was not found to exactly simulate the SFR spectrum. An extra shifting to the left would give a more representative distribution. For this reason, materials with their inelastic cross section occurring more to the left were examined. The jeff-3-1 library was further examined for elements with an inelastic cross section at lower Energies (<~1MeV). 160Tb was found presenting a characteristic inelastic cross section (Figure 4-56) with a peak at 1MeV. 160Tb does not occur naturally but can be produced by γ irradiation of ¹⁵⁹Tb, which is the only isotope of Tb. Although the use of 160Tb may not be a feasible solution it was used at this study for academic reasons. The effect of a 3.4cm ¹⁶⁰Tb neutron screen on the spectrum is illustrated in Figure 4-57. The spectrum of Os is also included for comparison. In the case of 160Tb the neutron distribution is more dense to the left in relation to Os. The combination of Os and ¹⁶⁰Tb in one screen was examined in order to investigate if their combined characteristics could give a more representative of a SFR spectrum. A set of calculations regarding different ratios of ¹⁶⁰Tb to Os were performed. For more representative results all the available space of 4.4 cm (Figure 4-3) was utilized.

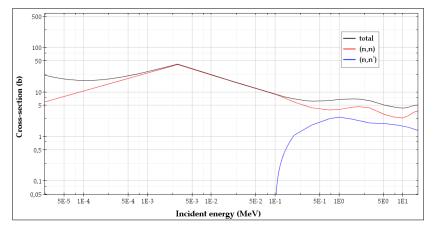


Figure 4-56: Total, elastic and inelastic microscopic neutron cross section of ¹⁶⁰Tb. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software

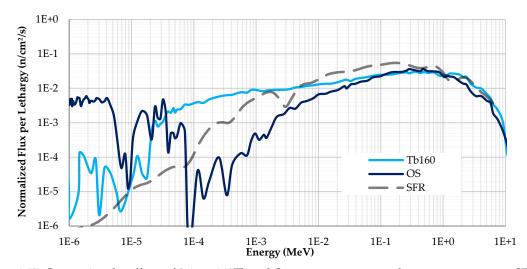


Figure 4-57: Comparing the effects of 3.4 cm 160Tb and Os neutron screens on the neutron spectrum. SFR is included for comparison

In Figure 4-58 the results of two different combinations are presented. The cases of single Os (0 ¹⁶⁰Tb : 1 Os) and SFR are included for comparison. From the results it can be suggested that in fact the insertion of ¹⁶⁰Tb shifts the spectrum to the left. In both cases of the combined neutron screens the neutron population of energies between 1keV and 100keV is increased in comparison to the case of the single Os. In the fast energy range a small increase can also be observed. Of course this is not desirable. However the increase at these energy groups caused the decrease between 100keV and 1MeV which was desirable. The ratio of 4:1 gives a more representative spectrum at the high epithermal energies, but presents a higher amount of fast neutrons. In general however it can be suggested that the ratio 4:1 is better than 2:1, since its total behavior is closer to the SFR's. Finally in both cases it can be observed that the distribution became more broadened to the left in relation to Os. A graphical representation of the results is given in Figure 4-59.

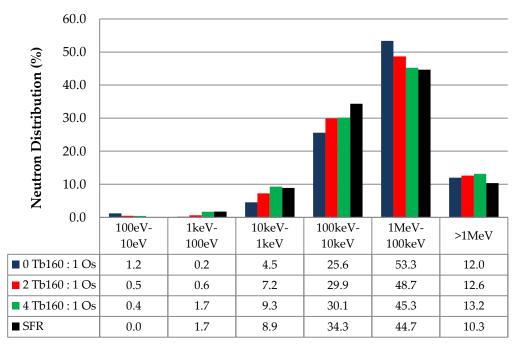


Figure 4-58: Neutron population distribution at high epithermal and fast energies for the different neutron screen combinations of Os and ¹⁶⁰Tb. SFR is included for comparison

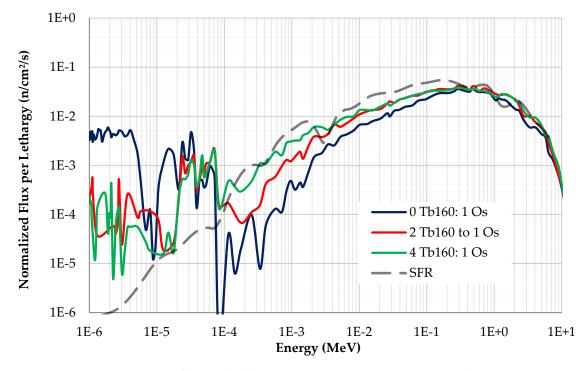


Figure 4-59: Comparing the effects of different neutron screen combinations of Os and ¹⁶⁰Tb on the neutron spectrum with detail at high energies. SFR is included for comparison

4.3.3 Concluding Remarks

The failure to simulate the SFR spectrum with neutron capture interactions (absorbers and booster fuels) led to the utilization of additional neutron interactions. The neutron energy boundaries of the reactor range between 1E-11 and 20 MeV, with the part from 1E-9 to 10 MeV to be of greatest importance. The worth noting neutron interactions within this energy range are: neutron capture (radiative capture and fission) and scattering, elastic and inelastic. Hence the study was focused on the scattering interactions and elements that present intense elastic and inelastic cross sections at the desired energy range (0.1-10MeV) were examined. The performance of a simple computational scattering experiment with a ⁴He sample/target suggested that the use of elements with elastic cross sections of "particular" shape in the energy area of interest (intense peak around 1MeV), could be utilized for the desired neutron spectrum tailoring. ⁴He is one of the rare elements that present only elastic interaction with neutrons and additionally its elastic cross section exhibits a peak at around 1MeV. From the obtained neutron flux profile after the irradiation of liquid ⁴He a flux depression was found at the energy area corresponding to the peak of the elastic cross section.

From the few elements found in the literature to exhibit the intense peak of ⁴He at the desired energy range (i.e. ³⁶S, ³⁷Cl, ⁴⁰Ar, ³⁹K, ⁴⁰K, ⁴⁸Ca, ¹³⁸Ba, ¹³⁹La and ¹⁹⁷Au) only ¹³⁹La and ¹⁹⁷Au provided a tailored shifted spectrum, with the effect of ¹³⁹La being rather weak. The intense effect of ¹⁹⁷Au on the spectrum was the result of its elastic in addition to its inelastic cross section that starts at 0.1MeV and increases at the high energies.

At a next step, the inelastic interactions were investigated as a method for spectrum tailoring. The low probability of inelastic reactions is a disadvantage that can be avoided with the utilization of proper materials in important quantities. Considering the introduction of an isotope presenting inelastic scattering at the desired energy like ¹⁶⁵Ho (its neutron inelastic scattering channel opens at 0.1MeV and its inelastic σ is around 3b at 1MeV), the fast flux peak of the reference spectrum was shifted to lower energies. The thickness of the ¹⁶⁵Ho screen was vital for the provided shifting of the spectrum. The small cross section of inelastic interaction imposed the necessity of a great thickness of the screen, since the thicker the screen the more evident the shifting provided. Moreover, sufficient thickness of ¹⁶⁵Ho causes a deeper flux depression around 0.2keV, acting as a natural divider of high and low intermediate neutrons (creating a clear neutron distribution constituted by high energy neutrons). The combination of ¹⁶⁵Ho with 1cm of fissile material had as a result a slight altering of the shape of the neutron distribution at higher energies, but higher (~6 times) neutron fluxes. Moreover, the neutron component was reduced at intermediate energies. A chart flow for the carried out ¹⁶⁵Ho calculations is presented in Figure 4-60.

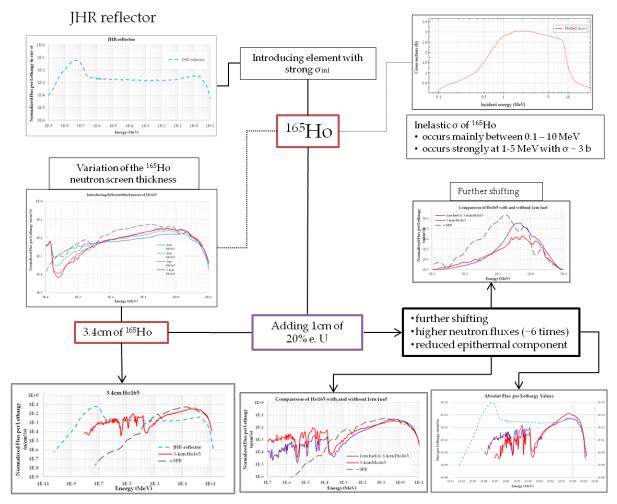


Figure 4-60: Flow chart of carried out 165Ho calculations

After the successful output of the 165 Ho study, an investigation of more potential inelastic scatterers followed. A large set of calculations with 57 different elements at their natural composition inserted at the irradiation facility was carried out. As in the case of 165 Ho a 3.4cm thick screen was considered in all cases. Figure 4-61 presents the elements of the periodic table that have been tested. Shades of red have been used to highlight the elements achieving the best shifting. Dark red was used for the maximum shifting of the flux peak, that was noted at E=0.153MeV, while red was used for the second best maximum shifting at E=0.355MeV. Light red was used for the elements that although shifted the flux peak at E=0.153MeV, however their absorbing capability at thermal energies was negligible (thus the provided spectrum was almost similar to the reference case of JHR reflector). The results indicate that those with important inelastic scattering introduced in the device can effectively provide a spectrum shifting. The factors which are important for an effective inelastic scatterer comprise the density and inelastic σ values of the scatterer material as well as the energy ranges where inelastic scattering occurs.

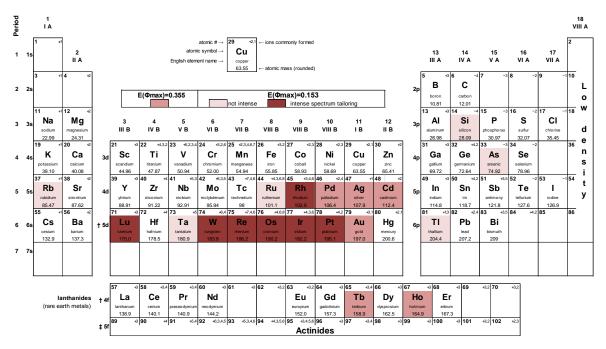


Figure 4-61: The tested elements: shades of red indicate enhance shifting effect with enhancing darkness.

In prospect to suggest a device capable of achieving the required spectrum modification all the above mentioned factors should be separately examined. The impact of osmium on the reference spectrum of JHR reflector is presented in Figure 4-62. Osmium (Os) was chosen indicatively as one of the seven elements the introduction of which maximized the shifting of the flux peak ($E(\Phi max)=0.153 MeV$). Complementary to the aforementioned results, an extra shifting to lower energies can be obtained when a material with inelastic cross section at low energies, like 160 Tb, is combined with the inelastic scatterers (Figure 4-62).

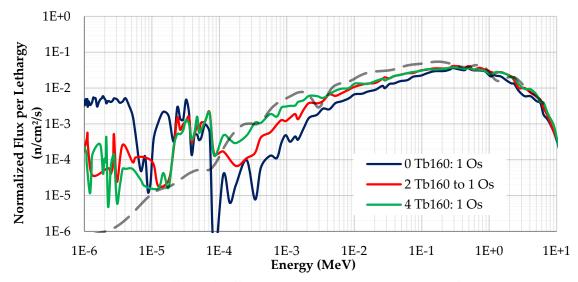


Figure 4-62: Comparing the effects of different neutron screen combinations of Os and ¹⁶⁰Tb on the neutron spectrum with detail at high energies. SFR is included for comparison

Chapter 5. Discussion & Outlook

5.1 Tentative design of the device

The findings of this work led to the following conclusions:

- Thermal neutron absorbers, even in very thick layers, can provide an important cutoff of the thermal neutron component. However, inserting absorbers in the device can serve to the achievement of a FR neutron spectrum, but not of a SFR.
- The introduction of fissile material in the device provides higher fast flux values, but does not help to reproduce an SFR spectrum.
- The utilization of dense materials characterized by strong inelastic scattering at the energy range around 1 MeV can alter a thermal neutron spectrum into a spectrum that provides a distribution similar to that prevailing in an SFR.

The final configuration of a device will consider the present results as well as the experiment specifications. Although only one of the metal materials presented in §4.3.2 can provide good approximation of the SFR spectrum, different combinations can be utilized to tune the neutron spectrum and address -to the optimum approach- the irradiation requirements of the experiment:

- 1. inelastic scatterer(s): As stated in §4.3.2.6 the utilization of more than one inelastic scatterer may provide an additional tuning of the final neutron distribution (i.e. shifting the maximum neutron flux to lower energies, increasing high epithermal neutron component).
- 2. **thermal absorber inelastic scatterer(s)**: A thermal absorber can be used at the final device for strong (stronger than that achieved by the utilization of the inelastic scatterer) reduction or total elimination of the thermal neutron component. Depending on the inelastic scatterer that will be used, the appropriate thermal absorber (material and thickness) can be determined. For example, the use of B and Eu does provide minimization of the intermediate neutrons. An absorber as thin as 1mm can provide significant reduction of the thermal neutron component.

3. fissile material - inelastic scatterer(s): The introduction of fissile material is serving when higher fast flux values (increased fluence) might be required by experiment specifications. However, the introduction of fissile material in the facility brings additional safety concerns which should be carefully examined prior to its utilization. It should be mentioned that the irradiation duration and flux level should be the result of a compromise in order to prevent the irradiated materials from being deteriorated.

The nuclear designs of a device -such as a neutron screen- rely on the results of neutron calculations. Neutron and photon flux spectra form the basis for the calculation of nuclear responses of interest (such as energy deposition, shielding, radiation damage) when combined with related nuclear data. The introduction of a neutron screen device in a reactor's irradiation facility demands the prior examination of the impact that it might have on the general reactor operation and safety.

Before the actual insertion of the device in the reactor, an extensive work emphasizing on safety and performance aspects must be carried out. The determination of the final device configuration is a multi-task project comprising various analyses. By focusing on the neutronic properties of different screening materials, the study included in this thesis constitutes the basis for all the subsequent analyses, which may regard the following subjects:

- reactivity effect
- impact of the device on neighboring experiments
- energy deposition on the screen
- thermo-physical properties
- coolant medium
- fabrication of the device
- post-irradiation services

Reactivity effect: The introduction of new devices in a thermal reactor environment might cause reactivity effect(s). For example, the utilization of a material with thermal neutron absorbing capability will provide a negative reactivity effect, since an amount of thermal neutrons is absorbed and thus the fission rate could be reduced. Additionally, the extraction of that material will again alter the reactivity of the reactor, since the thermal component will be enhanced. On the other hand introducing extra fissile material will result to positive reactivity effect, since more fast neutrons will be generated by fissions. However, the great importance of the location where the screen will be implemented should be underlined; inside the core the effect on reactivity is expected to be quite significant, while outside the active core a lighter impact might be expected.

In this work, all materials were considered introduced in a location within the reflector area of JHR. For this reason none among the used configurations produces a considerable reactivity effect. In Table 5-1 prime examples of $\Delta k/k$ computations are reported. The reactivity effect after the utilization of different materials (indicative cases) has been calculated. For the reference neutron multiplication factor k_{eff} two different configurations of the core have been considered: **case a:** only water is considered in the reflector (no irradiation volume) and **case b:** a void irradiation volume is considered in the reflector area (Figure 1-2). The introduction of a 3.4cm-thick layer of a scatterer such as 165 Ho or Ir results to negative reactivity worth, which does not exceed -0,04% $\Delta k/k$. On the contrary, the introduction of fissile material results in a positive reactivity worth of 0.18% $\Delta k/k$. In case that the fissile material is combined with 3.4cm thick 165 Ho the positive effect is reduced since the 165 Ho absorbs thermal and low epithermal neutrons (Table 5-1).

Table 5-1: Reactivity worth values after the introduction of different materials

	only water channel	void irradiation volume inside the water channel of the facility
	case a	case b
Neutron screens	$\%\Delta k/k$	%Δk/k
1cm of ¹⁰ B	- 0.03	- 0.02
1cm of ¹¹³ Cd	- 0.01	- 0.01
3.4cm of ¹⁶⁵ Ho	- 0.04	- 0.04
3.4cm of Ir	- 0.04	- 0.04
1cm of booster fuel	0.18	0.18
1cm of booster fuel with 3.4cm ¹⁶⁵ Ho	0.10	0.11

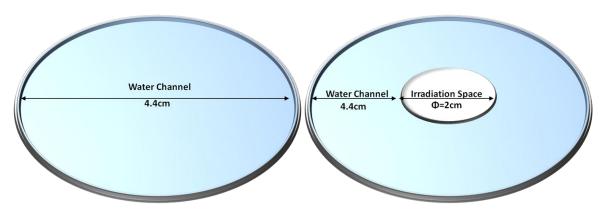


Figure 5-1: Two reference core configurations. Left: case a. Right: case b.

Impact of the device on the neighboring experiments: The introduction of the device in the reactor environment might interfere with the operation of neighboring experiments. For this reason extensive investigation of the impact on the neighboring experiments should be carried out prior to the neutron screen implementation.

Energy deposition on the screen: The heat generation by neutron and gamma rays due to their interactions with the materials of the screen should be carefully studied. Computational tools like TRIPOLI-4.8 can provide gamma flux and energy deposition estimators, however computations with tools developed to address explicitly parameters such as gamma heating should be preferred. Additionally to the calculations local measurements should be performed.

Thermo-physical properties: The final design of the device should take into account factors such as specific heat, thermal conductivity and thermal expansion of the components of the device. The results will indicate the tolerance (melting/boiling/mechanical stress within materials) after their exposure to irradiation. Moreover, the corrosion behavior of the materials after their exposure to a coolant medium should be examined. Preliminary thermal hydraulics calculations performed in the framework of this study indicate that the introduction of the suggested irradiation device inside the JHR facility does not raise safety issues.

Cooling of the device: The temperature distributions prevailing in the components of the device must be consistent with the JHR safety requirements. In general, in such type of implementations it is preferred that the temperature of the specimens is kept constant. For this reason structural materials that conduct heat can be utilized (i.e, aluminum, stainless steel). In addition, temperature control methods might be developed. The device studied in this work is surrounded by the primary coolant water of JHR. Calculations should be carried out in order to determine if the primary water channel is sufficient to provide the appropriate cooling of the final device. For additional cooling different methods exist.

Manufacturing of the device: After the selection of the candidate materials for the device, the fabrication method should be examined. The addition of structural materials is probably required. Aluminum and stainless steel are the most common materials used for structural reasons in reactor devices. This type of materials facilitate the temperature control of the device, due to their high thermal conductivity. Due to their almost-transparency to neutrons (very low neutron absorption cross section values) their implementation is consistent with the purpose of the device.

Post-irradiation services: A post-irradiation management should be planned to serve to the safe handling and storage of the device.

Appendix A. Theory

The projectile induced reactions involve three reaction mechanisms; direct reaction, compound-nucleus formation and pre-equilibrium effects. A short description of the first two mechanisms is given below (the latter is beyond the scope of this overview).

A.1 Compound-nucleus Reactions

After a collision of a particle with a target nucleus, they can become indistinguishable constituting a compound nucleus. Compound nucleus reaction can be treated as a two step process; the formation of the compound can be distinguished from its decomposition process, as the processes can be considered independent. In the first step, the energy of the projectile is shared among many nucleons of the target, creating a single excited nucleus called a compound nucleus. A number of collisions are taking place inside the nucleus until the incident energy is finally shared. In the second step the decomposition of the compound-nucleus takes place by numerous paths, called exit channels (Figure A-1). The decay is constrained by the conservation of mass-energy, charge, angular momentum, spin and total momentum.

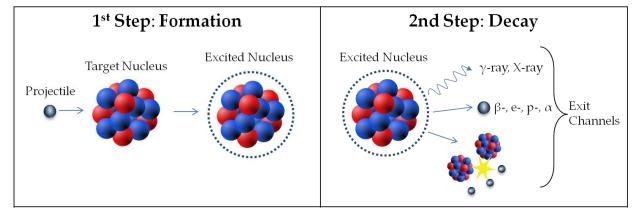


Figure A-1: Process of compound nucleus reaction (present work)

The Compound-nucleus mechanism works better for low incident energies (about few MeV), where the de Broglie wavelength (λ =hc/E, where h = Planck's constant = 6.57 × 10–34 J·s, c is the speed of light and E is the energy of the particle) is considerably larger than the typical nuclear scale and hence interacts with the whole nucleus [Kra87]. The projectile has a small probability of escaping from the nucleus. In addition this type of reaction works best for medium and heavy weight nuclei, where the nuclei is large enough to absorb the incident energy. The time of the decay is large (10⁻¹⁸ -10⁻¹⁵ s) in relation to the time required for a direct reaction (~10⁻²² s) or to the time required for a particle to traverse the nucleus. An important characteristic of the compound-nucleus reactions is the angular distribution of the products, which is nearly isotropic (symmetric about 90 degrees) [Kra87].

In many cases, after an addition of a neutron to the nucleus, the excitation energy of the compound-nucleus corresponds with one of the level energies (quantum states) and thus the probability of the realization of the interaction is large. These rapid variations of the possibility of an interaction are called resonances and are obtained at intermediate energies (1eV-1MeV). As mentioned earlier, a more detailed description of the formation of resonance reactions is beyond the scope of this thesis, a more detailed description is given in [Kra87]. However, what is important to be mentioned, is that as lighter the nuclei so to the higher energies will the resonances occur; in the case of the light nuclei ⁴He the only one resonance occurs around 1MeV, while in the case of ²³⁸U the lower resonance occurs at 6.67 eV (Figure A-2).

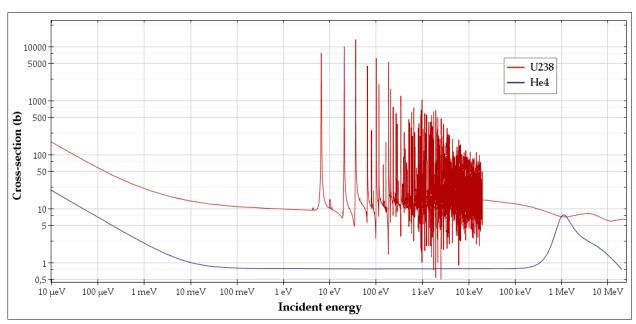


Figure A-2: Total microscopic neutron cross sections of ²³⁸U and ⁴He. In the case of the light nuclei ⁴He the only one resonance occurs around 1MeV, while in the case of ²³⁸U the lower resonance occurs at 6.6eV. Plot produced using JEFF-3.1.1 Library and JANIS software [Sop14]

A.2 Direct Reactions

Direct reactions, often called peripheral processes, have opposite properties from compound-nucleus reactions. These reactions occur rapidly (10⁻²² s) and are related to higher energies (larger than 5 MeV per atomic mass number of the projectile). The reason so is that as the energy of the incident particle is increased, its de Broglie wavelength is decreased, until it becomes more likely to interact with a nucleon-sized object, rather than with a nucleus-sized object. In other words, the incident particle will interact on the surface of the target nucleus rather than in the volume of the target nucleus. The ejectile particle takes a substantial part of the projectile momentum, having thus a high energy. The residual nucleus is left at relatively low excitation, where the nuclear states are discrete. The direct mechanism does not distinguish between low and high spin nuclide. In direct reactions, the angular distribution of the products is not isotropic, but rather strongly forward-peaked [Kra87].

A.3 Neutron Interactions

Interactions of neutrons with atom are limited to interactions with the nucleus (interactions with the atomic electrons are negligible) [Kra87] and are of the following two types (Figure A-3): neutron capture (absorption process) and scattering (non-absorption process). The absorption type can be divided extensively to the fission, radiative capture, charged particle interactions and neutron producing interactions. In the scattering type, the elastic and inelastic scattering are distinguished.

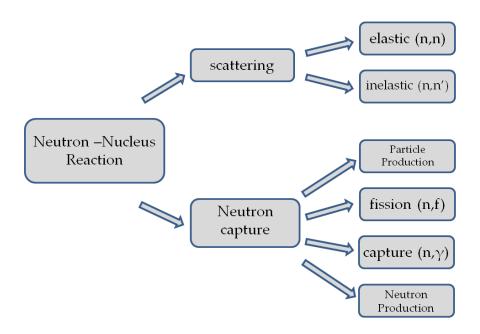


Figure A-3: Flow chart Neutron-Nucleus reactions chart flow (present work)

A.3.1 Neutron Capture

The neutron capture reaction is completely described in the frame of the compound nucleus mechanism [Mih06]. The exit channels (the decay modes of the excitation state) of the compound-nucleus are radiative capture, nucleons emission (neutron and charged particles) and fission. Among these channels, radiative capture (n, γ) is preferred, since γ -radiation is the most "inexpensive" way of the excited nuclei to return to its ground state. Radiative capture has no threshold for any target nucleus and is a significant reaction for reactor analysis, since is an important source of neutron leakage. The next most preferable decay mode is neutron emission. The emission of neutron is preferred from that of charged particles, which have to overcome the Coulomb barrier, that neutral neutrons do not [Mih06]. When the excited state of the compound nucleus is extremely high, fission reactions occur. The reaction is accompanied with emission of few neutrons (2-3 neutrons). A large amount of energy is released in the form of gamma radiation and fragment kinetic energy [DOE93]. It should be underlined that the fission reaction may have threshold energy, meaning that the cross section of this reaction is zero below this energy. Materials with fission reaction thresholds are called fertile, while the ones that can undergo fission at any energy level, fissile. For the last, even the energy of a thermal neutron is adequate to cause fission. Fissile materials can sustain a chain reaction with neutrons of any energy.

In general, the capture cross section follows 1/E law, meaning that as the energy E of neutron is decreased the possibility for the interaction increases [DOE93].

A.3.2 Scattering

Both elastic and inelastic scattering reactions are governed by both direct and compound nucleus mechanisms. Elastic has a major direct component (shape elastic scattering) and a small component described by the compound nucleus mechanism (compound elastic scattering). In inelastic scattering until 4MeV both reaction mechanisms take place although compound nucleus seems to play the dominant role for incident energies below high energies (~20MeV) [Mih06]. Depending on the mechanism through which the reaction takes place the angular distribution of the products varies significantly.

A.3.2.1 Inelastic Scattering

Inelastic scattering channel opens above a threshold energy related to the incident kinetic energy of the projectile, which should be adequate to excite the nucleus, overcome the binding energy and be reemitted [Lew08]. This threshold energy has been recorded around 10-100keV for heavy nuclei and few MeV for light nuclei [Lit12]. The energy difference from the excited to the ground state is released as γ -radiation. Inelastic scattering may be accompanied with more than one neutron. The reaction is written as X(n, n')Y. When more than one neutron are produced the reaction falls to neutron absorption category. The quantity of emitted neutrons depends on the incident neutron energy; higher neutron energies are required for double (n,2n'), triple (n,3n'), and so on, neutron emissions. At high (~MeV region) neutron energies, inelastic scatterings are dominant.

A.3.2.2 Elastic Scattering

In general, in absence of fission and of charged particles emission, below the inelastic threshold the only other opened reaction channels are the elastic scattering and the neutron capture. Elastic scattering and neutron capture are possible at all energy values of the incident projectile. The realization of other reactions is associated with threshold incident energies. The elastic scattering has a major direct component (shape elastic scattering) and a small component described by the compound nucleus mechanism (compound elastic scattering). Elastic scattering is dominant over a large energy range and decreases as the incident energy increases. Below the MeV region its dominance disappears [Lew08].

A.4 Kinematics

Let the neutron approaching a stationary target nucleus, with mass number A, with laboratory speed v_l and the laboratory recoil speed of the neutron be v_l' . In the Center of Mass System (CMS), the neutron and the target approach each other with speeds v_c and V_c and after their interaction leave with speeds v_c' and v_c' respectively. The previous mentioned parameters can be related with the following equations:

$$\vec{\mathbf{v}}_{\mathbf{c}} = \frac{\mathbf{A}}{\mathbf{A} + \mathbf{1}} \, \vec{\mathbf{v}}_{\mathbf{l}}$$
 eq. A1

$$ec{V}_c = -rac{1}{A+1} \ ec{v}_l$$
 eq. A2

$$\vec{v}_0 = \frac{1}{A+1} \vec{v}_l$$
 eq. A3

where \vec{v}_0 is the center of the mass velocity.

The relation of the above velocity vectors is illustrated in Figure A-4:

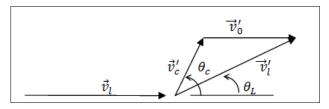


Figure A-4: Velocity Vectors [Dud76]

The scattering angle in the CMS is θ_c , while in the Laboratory θ_L . Applying the law of cosines:

$$(v_l')^2 = (v_c')^2 + (v_0)^2 + 2 v_0 v_c' \mu_c$$
 eq. A4

where $\mu_c = \cos \theta_c$.

Assuming that the excitation energy of the nucleus is Q, measured in the center of the mass system, conservation of energy in the CMS yields:

$$(v_1')^2 \, \frac{1}{2} m v_c^2 + \frac{1}{2} M V_c^2 = \frac{1}{2} m (v_c')^2 + \frac{1}{2} m (V_c')^2 + Q \qquad \qquad \text{eq. A5}$$

Momentum conservation in the CMS implies:

$$\vec{m}\vec{v}_c = \vec{M}\vec{V}_c$$
 eq. A6

$$\overrightarrow{mv_c} = \overrightarrow{Mv_c}$$
 eq. A7

Substitution of the above yields to:

$$|v_c'| = \sqrt{\frac{A^2}{(A+1)^2}v_l^2 - \frac{2Q}{m}\frac{A}{A+1}}$$
 eq. A8

Multiplication of eq. A4 by $\frac{m}{2}$, followed by recognition of yields to:

$$E_l' = \frac{A^2}{(A+1)^2} E_l - \frac{AQ}{A+1} + \frac{E_l}{(A+1)^2} + \frac{\mu_c}{A+1} \sqrt{\frac{4A^2}{(A+1)^2} E_l^2 - \frac{4E_lQA}{A+1}}$$
 eq. A9

where E_l , E'_l the initial and final laboratory kinetic energies.

If the scattering is elastic, Q=0, eq. 9 is simplified to [Lin72]:

$$E'_{l} = \frac{A^{2}}{(A+1)^{2}} E_{l} + \frac{E_{l}}{(A+1)^{2}} + \frac{\mu_{c}}{A+1} \sqrt{\frac{4A^{2}}{(A+1)^{2}} E_{l}^{2}}$$
eq. A10

$$E'_{l} = \frac{A^{2} + 1 + 2A \,\mu_{c}}{(A+1)^{2}} E_{l}$$
 eq. A11

From the above equation it is clear that in a head-on collision ($\theta_c = 0$) the outgoing energy of the neutron is conserved after the collision. On the contrary, when $\theta_c = 180^{\circ}$, the maximum energy loss occurs. In addition, for light nuclei the energy loss is maximized. For instance, if A=1, which matches Hydrogen case, the neutron gives all its energy to the target. The direction of scattering may range from 0 to 180°.

A.5 Neutron Moderations

The energy and the direction of a neutron travelling in a reactor environment can be changed during scattering with a nucleus. As stated above, inelastic scattering channel opens at high energies, thus the basic responsible for the scattering in a reactor environment is the elastic scattering reaction, which is major in the whole spectrum above ~1MeV. The neutron looses a part of its kinetic energy and slows down until it reaches a thermal equilibrium after the sequent collisions. Materials (nucleus) used as a medium for slowing down neutrons, are called moderators and are of specific interest at reactor physics, extensively used for many reactor applications, but most important to thermal reactors.

The quantity of ξ has been used in order to express the logarithmic decrease of a material's energy after a scattering. It is defined as follows:

$$\xi = \left(\log \frac{E_l}{E_l'}\right)_{\text{average}}$$
 eq. A12

For atoms with A> 5 the right term had been found to be equivalent to A.A. Harms, (1975):

$$\log \frac{E_1}{E_1'} = \frac{2}{A + \frac{2}{3}}$$
 eq. A13

The ideal moderators should have the large scattering cross section, small absorption cross section and large energy loss per collision. The most common used moderators are: water, heavy water, helium, beryllium, carbon, sodium, iron [DOE93].

A.6 The neutron Cross Sections

A.6.1 Microscopic Cross Section

The probability of a particular neutron reaction with a single nucleus is expressed with the term of neutron cross section [Rin91]. This probability varies with the different nuclei, with which the neutron will react, and also with the energy of the neutron and the energy of the target-nuclei. Thus, a thermal neutron (E<1eV) will be more favorably absorbed than a fast neutron (E>1MeV), which is more possible to react with scattering with the nuclei [DOE93]. In general, the neutron cross section expresses the effective area (Figure A-5) that a nuclei presents to the neutron. Due to the magnitude of the effective area of the interactions between the neutron and the nuclei, it has been established that the measurement of the microscopic neutron cross sections be in barns (b) units, where 1 barn= 10^{-24} cm² (surface units) [DOE93]. Noting, that the physical cross-sectional area of a heavy nucleus is about $2\cdot10^{-24}$ cm² [Rin91]. The microscopic neutron cross section is usually represented with the letter σ . For every neutron interaction with matter a corresponding symbol for the microscopic cross section is given (Figure A-6).

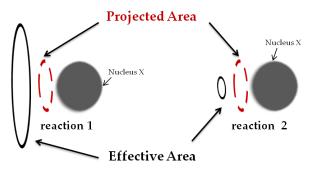


Figure A-5: The effective area for two different reactions with the same nucleus (present work)

A.6.2 Differential scattering cross section

The effective area surrounding the scattering center which the incident particle must hit in order to be scattered through a small solid angle, $d\Omega$, is called differential scattering cross section and is notated as $\frac{d\sigma}{d\Omega}$. The symbol $\frac{d\sigma}{d\Omega}$ is used for notation reasons and does not imply literally the derivative of σ with respect to " Ω ".

For scattering collisions one should take into account the angle (elastic & inelastic) and the energy dependence (inelastic) of the scattered neutrons. In Monte Carlo codes the scattering angle is sampled from angular distribution table with respect to the energy collision nuclide.

A.6.3 Macroscopic Neutron Cross Section

The microscopic cross section is limited to the microscopic interaction of a nucleus with the neutron. In a macroscopic level the interactions are carried out between the neutrons and a material. For this reason the macroscopic cross section is defined as follows (eq. A14), in order to represent the effective area (Figure A-6) of the amount of the nuclei (N) contained per unit volume in the material [DOE93].

$$\Sigma = N \cdot \sigma$$
 eq. A14

The units of Σ are: m^{-1} .

In cases where a material is consisted by a set of different elements, its macroscopic cross section is defined as the sum of the macroscopic cross sections of its parts.

$$\Sigma = \sum_{i=1}^{i} (\Sigma_i)$$
 eq. A15

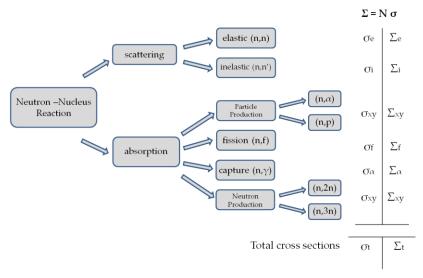


Figure A-6: Possible neutron interactions with nuclei with their relative cross sections (present work)

A.3 Energy Dependence of neutron cross sections

The behavior of neutron cross sections in general is as illustrated in Figure A-7. As described in A.3, depending on the neutron energy, different reactions take place. In a nuclear reactor the neutron energy boundaries range between 1E-11 – 20 MeV. At these energy ranges an average behavior of the neutron cross sections can be obtained. Their behavior is illustrated in Figure A-7. The elastic cross section is maintained constant in all the energies except for the MeV region, where it is gradually reduced. On the contrary, inelastic scattering is significant only at high energies. This is due to the fact that the incident neutron should have sufficient kinetic energy to place the target nucleus in its excited state. Most absorption cross sections including the fission cross section are inversely proportional to the neutron speed. Neutron emission occurs at high energies as shown in Figure A-7.

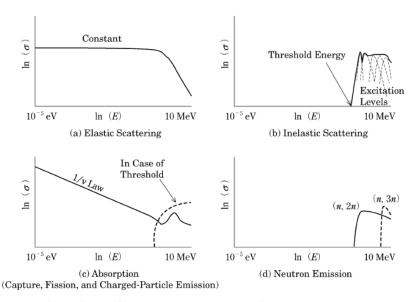


Figure A-7: Energy dependence of neutron cross sections at the energy range 1E-11 - 20 MeV [Oku14]

A.7 Neutron Flux

Inside a uniform material, free neutrons travel randomly to any direction. A convenient measure of their amount is the neutron flux, which is defined as the number of neutrons per unit volume multiplied by their velocity, v:

$$\Phi = n \cdot v \qquad \text{eq.A17}$$

Neutron flux units are neutrons per unit area per unit time $\left(\frac{\text{neutrons}}{\text{cm}^2 \cdot \text{s}}\right)$.

A.7.1 Lethargy

Lethargy (u) is a measure of neutron energy. It is defined as the logarithmic ratio of the maximum Energy (E_0) to the *Energy* (E) of the neutron as follows:

$$Lethargy = u \equiv ln\left(\frac{E_0}{E}\right) \qquad \qquad eq. \ A18$$

Differentiating the above the change in energy can be related to the change in lethargy:

$$du = \frac{-dE}{E}$$
 eq. A19

Small changes in lethargy can be written as:

$$\Delta u = u_1 - u_2 = \ln\left(\frac{E_2}{E_1}\right)$$
 eq. A20

It is common to represent the neutron spectrum with the utilization of the lethargy unit. The axis of neutron flux is replaced by the flux per unit lethargy. The neutron spectrum in terms of the lethargy variable is expressed as [Lew08]:

$$\Phi(u) = E \Phi(E)$$
 eq. A21

A.8 Thermal Reactor Spectrum

Each type of a reactor (fast, thermal, etc.) has a neutron energy spectrum, which is a unique characteristic of its design and its composition. The fission chain reaction in a thermal reactor is sustained by moderated fission neutrons, thermal neutrons, which trigger further fissions after their interaction with the reactor's fissile (233U, 235U, 239Pu, 241Pu) materials (characterized by a high neutron fission cross section at low energies). Thus the spectrum in a thermal neutron reactor is composed by a thermal component which corresponds to the neutrons (thermal) that have reached thermal equilibrium energy with the moderator medium, an epithermal region that is the intermediate state between fission energy produced and thermal neutrons, and finally a neutron energy group related to the fission-produced (fast) neutrons. The energy distribution of the spectrum is ranged between 1E-11 and 20 MeV, with the range

from 1E-9 to 10 MeV to correspond to the greatest fraction. In Figure A-8 a neutron spectrum representative to that of a thermal neutron spectrum is illustrated. It should be underlined, however, that this neutron distribution is not obtained at regions of fissile material; in these areas the spectrum is a fission (fast) spectrum.

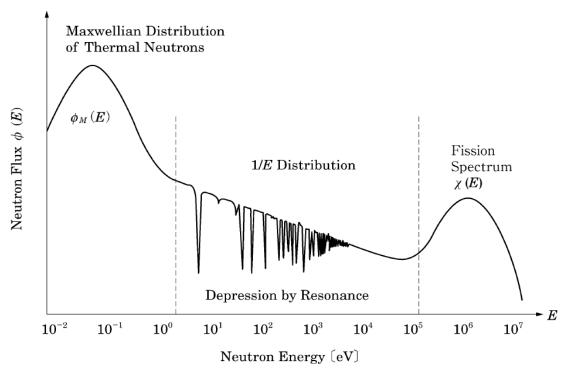


Figure A-8: Neutron energy spectrum of a typical thermal reactor [Oku14]

A.8.1 Thermal Region

The thermal region (E<0.625eV) is composed by neutrons, which, after elastic and inelastic collisions, are in thermal equilibrium with the moderator medium. The thermal equilibrium spectrum can be described by the Maxwellian distribution and the thermal neutron flux can be expressed as:

$$\Phi_M(E) = \frac{E}{(kT)^2} e^{-E/kT}$$
 eq. A22

where E is the energy in eV, k is Boltzmann constant and T is the temperature in K.

The center of the distribution is at 0.025 eV (E=kT, T=300 K). At the left is the up-scattering region (neutrons tend to gain energy after collisions with the thermally vibrating moderator) and the down-scattering region (neutrons lose energy after collisions until reaching thermal equilibrium with the moderator) [Oku14].

A.8.2 Epithermal Region

The epithermal region, or slowing-down region, is related to the energy states of neutrons between the two "extreme" cases of thermal and fast. In particular, it is the region where neutrons after interactions of scattering, have lost a part of their initial high energy (the fast neutrons are slowed down). In the intermediate range, the neutron flux is characterized by a dual behavior. The flux is inversely proportional to the energy value, $\Phi(E) \propto \frac{1}{E}$, since in this region neutrons lose a constant fraction of energy per collision, but it also presents intense fluctuations resulting from the resonance reactions occurred in these energies. These energies corresponding to resonances cause many sharp flux depressions (Figure A-9).

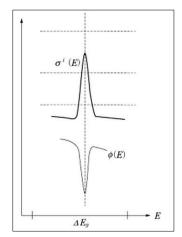


Figure A-9: Schematic representation of localized spatial flux depression caused by resonance [Oku14]

A.8.3 Fast Region

This region is consisted by neutrons with high energies (E> ~ 0.1MeV) and corresponds to the neutrons emitted from fissions. Prompt neutrons are born at energy ranges from 0.1MeV to 10MeV, with an average about 2 MeV, and although their energy values differ, they present a definite energy distribution. The energy distribution of neutrons produced in the fission process is known as the fission spectrum $\chi(E)$. The fast neutron flux dependence of energy can be expressed as:

$$\Phi(E) = \left(\frac{4}{\pi T^3}\right)^{1/2} E^{-1/2} e^{-E/T}$$
 eq. A23

where T is typically 1.35 MeV. The most probable energy is about 0.725MeV.

An illustration of a prompt fission neutron energy spectrum for thermal fission of ²³⁵U is given in Figure A-10.

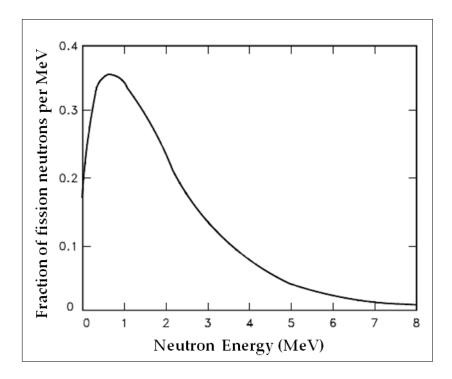


Figure A-10: Prompt Fission Neutron Energy Spectrum for Thermal Fission of ²³⁵U [DOE93]

Appendix B.

Physical Properties of materials

Table B-1: Melting Point, Boiling Point, Thermal Conductivity, Thermal Expansion, Block and Period of studied materials [Hyn15]

Material	Symbol	Melting Point °C	Boiling Point °C	Thermal Conductivity W/(m·K)	Thermal Expansion K ⁻¹	Block	Period
Aluminum	Al	660.32	2519	235	2.31E-05	р	3
Antimony	Sb	630.63	1587	24	0.000011	p	5
Argon	Ar	-189.3	-185.8	0.01772	N/A	p	3
Arsenic	As	817	614	50	N/A	р	4
Barium	Ва	727	1870	18	2.06E-05	s	6
Beryllium	Be	1287	2470	190	1.13E-05	S	2
Bismuth	Bi	271.3	1564	8	1.34E-05	p	6
Boron	В	2075	4000	27	6.E-06	p	2
Bromine	Br	-7.3	59	0.12	N/A	p	4
Cadmium	Cd	321.07	767	97	3.08E-05	d	5
Calcium	Ca	842	1484	200	2.23E-05	S	4
Carbon	С	3550.	4027	140	7.1E-06	p	2
Cerium	Ce	798	3360	11	6.3E-06	f	6
Cesium	Cs	28.44	671	36	N/A	s	6
Chlorine	Cl	-101.5	-34.04	0.0089	N/A	p	3
Chromium	Cr	1907	2671	94	4.9E-06	d	4
Cobalt	Co	1495	2927	100	0.000013	d	4
Copper	Cu	1084.62	2927	400	1.65E-05	d	4
Dysprosium	Dy	1412	2567	11	9.9E-06	f	6
Erbium	Er	1497	2868	15	1.22E-05	f	6
Europium	Eu	822	1527	14	0.000035	f	6
Gadolinium	Gd	1313	3250	11	9.4E-06	f	6
Gallium	Ga	29.76	2204	29	0.00012	p	4
Germanium	Ge	938.3	2820	60	6.E-06	p	4
Gold	Au	1064.18	2856	320	1.42E-05	d	6
Hafnium	Hf	2233	4603	23	5.9E-06	d	6
Helium	He	N/A	-268.93	0.1513	N/A	p	1
Holmium	Но	1474	2700	16	1.12E-05	f	6
Indium	In	156.6	2072	82	3.21E-05	p	5

Iridium	Ir	2466	4428	150	6.4E-06	d	6
Iron	Fe	1538	2861	80	1.18E-05	d	4
Krypton	Kr	-157.36	-153.22	0.00943	N/A	p	4
Lanthanum	La	920	3464	13	1.21E-05	f	6
Lithium	Li	180.54	1342	85	0.000046	s	2
Lutetium	Lu	1663	3402	16	9.9E-06	d	6
Magnesium	Mg	650	1090	160	8.2E-06	s	3
Manganese	Mn	1246	2061	7.8	2.17E-05	d	4
Molybdenum	Mo	2623	4639	139	4.8E-06	d	5
Neodymium	Nd	1021	3.1E+03	17	9.6E-06	f	6
Nickel	Ni	1455	2913	91	1.34E-05	d	4
Niobium	Nb	2477	4744	54	7.3E-06	d	5
Osmium	Os	3033	5012	88	5.1E-06	d	6
Phosphorus	P	44.2	280.5	0.236	N/A	р	3
Platinum	Pt	1768.3	3825	72	8.8E-06	d	6
Plutonium	Pu	640	3230	6	N/A	f	7
Potassium	K	63.38	759	100	N/A	s	4
Praseodymium	Pr	931	3290	13	6.7E-06	f	6
Rhenium	Re	3186	5596	48	6.2E-06	d	6
Rhodium	Rh	1964	3695	150	8.2E-06	d	5
Rubidium	Rb	39.31	688	58	N/A	s	5
Ruthenium	Ru	2334	4150	120	6.4E-06	d	5
Scandium	Sc	1541	2830	16	1.02E-05	d	4
Selenium	Se	221.	685	0.52	N/A	р	4
Silicon	Si	1414	2.9E+03	150	2.6E-06	р	3
Silver	Ag	961.78	2162	430	1.89E-05	d	5
Sodium	Na	97.72	883	140	0.000071	s	3
Strontium	Sr	777	1382	35	2.25E-05	s	5
Sulfur	S	115.21	444.72	0.205	N/A	р	3
Tantalum	Ta	3017	5458	57	6.3E-06	d	6
Tellurium	Te	449.51	988	3	N/A	р	5
Terbium	Tb	1356	3230	11	1.03E-05	f	6
Thallium	Tl	304	1473	46	2.99E-05	р	6
Tin	Sn	231.93	2602	67	0.000022	р	5
Titanium	Ti	1668	3287	22	8.6E-06	d	4
Tungsten	W	3422	5555	170	4.5E-06	d	6
Uranium	U	1135	3927	27	1.39E-05	f	7
Vanadium	V	1910	3407	31	8.4E-06	d	4
Yttrium	Y	1526	3345	17	1.06E-05	d	5
Zinc	Zn	419.53	907	120	3.02E-05	d	4
Zirconium	Zr	1855	4409	23	5.7E-06	d	5

Table B-2: Density and Atomic Weight of studied material [Wie13a,Wie13b]

Material	Symbol	Density (g/cm³)	Atomic Weight	Material	Symbol	Density (g/cm³)	Atomic Weight
Aluminum	Al	2.7	26.98154	Lutetium	Lu	9.841	174.967
Antimony	Sb	6.697	121.76	Magnesiu	Mg	1.738	24.305
Argon	Ar	1.784 g/l	39.948	Manganes	Mn	7.47	54.9380
Arsenic	As	5.727	74.9216	Molybden	Mo	10.28	95.94
Barium	Ва	3.51	137.327	Neodymiu	Nd	7.01	144.24
Beryllium	Be	1.848	9.01218	Nickel	Ni	8.908	58.6934
Bismuth	Bi	9.78	208.980	Niobium	Nb	8.57	92.9063
Boron	В	2.46	10.811	Osmium	Os	22.61	190.23
Bromine	Br	3.12	79.904	Phosphoru	P	1.823	30.9737
Cadmium	Cd	8.65	112.411	Platinum	Pt	21.09	195.078
Calcium	Ca	1.55	40.078	Plutonium	Pu	19.816	244
Carbon	С	2.26	12.0107	Potassium	K	0.856	39.0983
Cerium	Ce	6.689	140.116	Praseodym	Pr	6.64	140.907
Cesium	Cs	1.879	132.905	Rhenium	Re	21.02	186.207
Chlorine	Cl	3.214 g/l	35.453	Rhodium	Rh	12.45	102.905
Chromium	Cr	7.14	51.9961	Rubidium	Rb	1.532	85.4678
Cobalt	Co	8.9	58.9332	Rutheniu	Ru	12.37	101.07
Copper	Cu	8.92	63.546	Scandium	Sc	2.985	44.9559
Dysprosium	Dy	8.551	162.5	Selenium	Se	4.819	78.96
Erbium	Er	9.066	167.259	Silicon	Si	2.33	28.0855
Europium	Eu	5.244	151.964	Silver	Ag	10.49	107.868
Gadolinium	Gd	7.901	157.25	Sodium	Na	0.968	22.9897
Gallium	Ga	5.904	69.723	Strontium	Sr	2.63	87.62
Germanium	Ge	5.323	72.64	Sulfur	S	1.96	32.065
Gold	Au	19.3	196.966	Tantalum	Та	16.65	180.947
Hafnium	Hf	13.31	178.49	Tellurium	Te	6.24	127.6
Helium	He	0.1785 g/l	4.00260	Terbium	Tb	8.219	158.925
Holmium	Но	8.795	164.930	Thallium	Tl	11.85	204.383
Indium	In	7.31	114.818	Tin	Sn	7.31	118.71
Iodine	I	4.94	126.904	Titanium	Ti	4.507	47.867
Iridium	Ir	22.65	192.217	Tungsten	W	19.25	183.84
Iron	Fe	7.874	55.845	Uranium	U	19.05	238.028
Krypton	Kr	3.75 g/l	83.798	Vanadium	V	6.11	50.9415
Lanthanum	La	6.146	138.905	Yttrium	Y	4.472	88.9058
Lead	Pb	11.34	207.2	Zinc	Zn	7.14	65.409
Lithium	Li	0.535	6.941	Zirconium	Zr	6.511	91.224

Table B-3: Elements sorted by cross section (thermal neutron capture) [Mug73]

Symbol	σ _a (b)	Symbol	σ _a (b)	Symbol	σ _a (b)
Gd	49000	Yb	34.8	Ge	2.2
Sm	5922	Cs	29	K	2.1
Fm	5800	Sc	27.2	N	1.91
Eu	4600	Kr	25	Ва	1.3
Cf	2900	Xe	23.9	Y	1.28
Cd	2450	Tb	23.4	Sr	1.28
Pu	1017.3	Ta	20.6	Nb	1.15
Dy	920	Tc	20	Zn	1.11
В	767	W	18.3	Pt	0.96
Bk	710	Os	15	Rn	0.72
Ac	515	Mn	13.3	Ar	0.675
Ir	425	Ra	12.8	Sn	0.626
Hg	374	Se	11.7	Ce	0.6
Pa	200.6	Pr	11.5	S	0.53
In	194	La	8.98	Na	0.53
Np	180	U	7.57	Ca	0.43
Pm	168.4	Th	7.37	Rb	0.38
Es	160	Pd	6.9	Н	0.3326
Er	160	Br	6.8	Al	0.232
Rh	144.8	I	6.2	Zr	0.184
Hf	104	Ti	6.09	P	0.172
Tm	100	V	5.08	Pb	0.171
Au	98.7	Sb	4.91	Si	0.171
Re	89.7	Te	4.7	Mg	0.063
Lu	84	Ni	4.49	Ne	0.04
Cm	79	As	4.3	Bi	0.034
Am	75.3	Cu	3.78	Po	0.03
Li	70.5	Tl	3.43	F	0.0096
Но	65	Cr	3.1	Ве	0.0092
Ag	63.6	Ga	2.9	Не	0.007
Nd	49	Mo	2.6	С	0.0035
Со	37.2	Ru	2.56	О	0.00019
Cl	35.5	Fe	2.56		

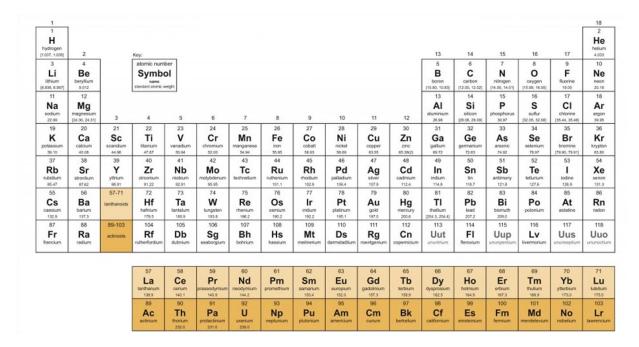


Figure B-1: Periodic Table of the elements [IUPAC]

Appendix C.

Complementary Figures

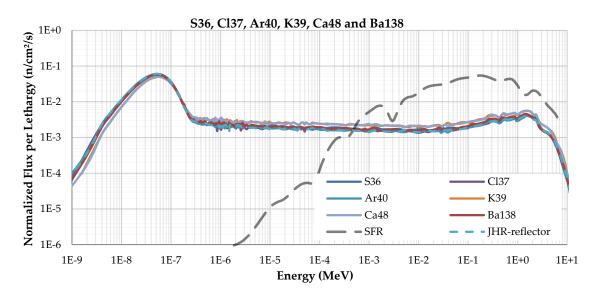


Figure C-1: Effect of 3 cm ³⁶S, ³⁷Cl, ⁴⁰Ar, ³⁹K, ⁴⁸Ca and ¹³⁸Ba neutron screens on the neutron spectrum. JHR-reflector and SFR spectra are included for comparison.

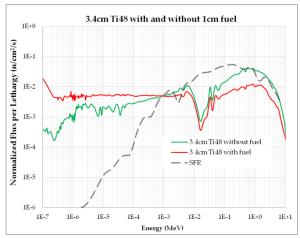


Figure C-2: Comparing the effect of a 3.4 cm ⁴⁸Ti neutron screen with and without booster fuel

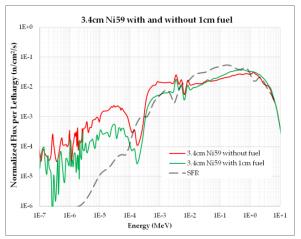


Figure C-3: Comparing the effect of a 3.4 cm ⁵⁹Ni neutron screen with and without booster fuel

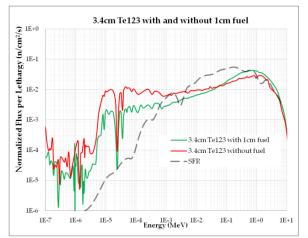


Figure C-4: Comparing the effect of a 3.4 cm ¹²³Te neutron screen with and without booster fuel

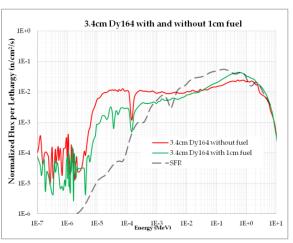


Figure C-5: Comparing the effect of a 3.4 cm ¹⁶⁴Dy neutron screen with and without booster fuel

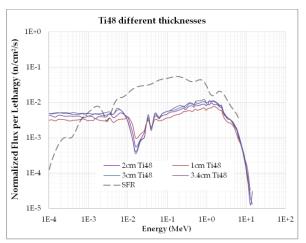


Figure C-6:Effect of ⁴⁸Ti neutron screens of different thicknesses on the neutron spectrum.

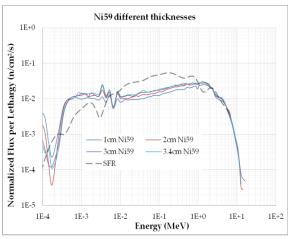


Figure C-7: Effect of ⁵⁹Ni neutron screens of different thicknesses on the neutron spectrum.

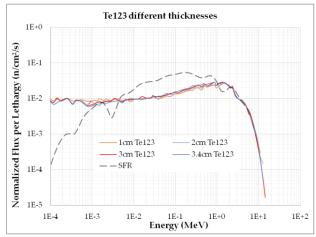


Figure C-8: Effect of ¹²³Te neutron screens of different

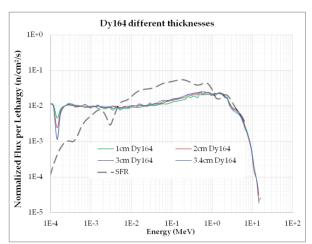


Figure C-9: Effect of ¹⁶⁴Dy neutron screens of different

thicknesses on the neutron spectrum.

thicknesses on the neutron spectrum.

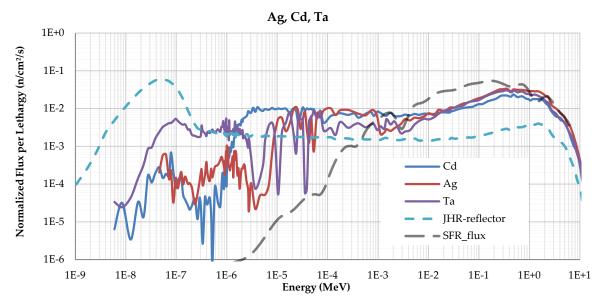


Figure C-10: Effect of 3.4 cm Ag, Cd and Ta neutron screens on the neutron spectrum. The neutron spectrum shifting is obtained at 0.355 MeV. JHR-reflector and SFR spectra are included for comparison.

Appendix D

Εκτενής Περίληψη

Η συγγραφή της παρούσας διδακτορικής διατριβής έχει γίνει στην αγγλική γλώσσα και συνοδεύεται από εκτενή περίληψη στην ελληνική γλώσσα. Η εκτενής περίληψη περιλαμβάνει τα κυριότερα σημεία κάθε κεφαλαίου και δεν πρέπει να θεωρηθεί ότι αντικαθιστά το αγγλικό κείμενο. Οι βιβλιογραφικές παραπομπές έχουν διατηρηθεί στην αγγλική γλώσσα. Έννοιες που αποδίδονται μόνο στην αγγλική γλώσσα μεταφράστηκαν κατά την κρίση της συγγραφέως και για αυτό το λόγο δίνεται ο αντίστοιχος αγγλικός όρος σε παρένθεση.

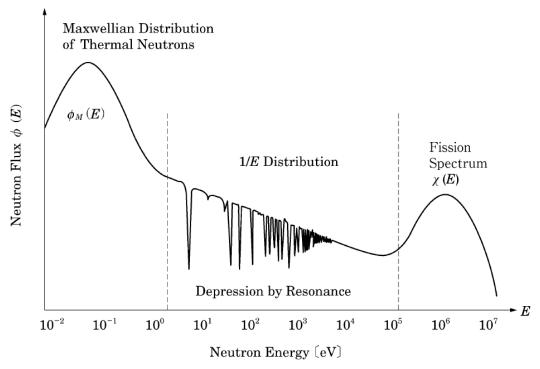
Κεφάλαιο 1

Εισαγωγή

1.1 Κίνητοα και στόχοι

Η εισαγωγή σε λειτουργία νέων τύπων 19 αντιδραστήρων απαιτεί την προκαταρκτική εξέταση της συμπεριφοράς των δομικών τους υλικών σε αντίστοιχες νετρονικές συνθήκες (αντιπροσωπευτικές εκείνων που αναμένεται να επικρατήσουν κατά τη λειτουργία τους) [OECD11, IAEA12a]. Ανάλογα με το υλικό, οι απαιτήσεις της δοκιμαστικής ακτινοβόλησης μπορούν να ποικίλουν [Υνο14]. Κατά κύριο λόγο επικεντρώνονται στην επίτευξη είτε επαρκώς υψηλής ροής ταχέων νετρονίων (π.χ. για χάλυβες) είτε υψηλού λόγου ροής ταχέων προς θερμικά νετρόνια (π.χ. για τα πυρηνικά καύσιμα, υλικά (ανα)παραγωγής τριτίου και γάλυβες), ο οποίος πρέπει να είναι τυπικός ενός ταγέος αντιδραστήρα [Kel14]. Λόγω της περιορισμένης διαθεσιμότητας ταχέων ερευνητικών αντιδραστήρων, ο έλεγχος των μελλοντικών τους υλικών πραγματοποιείται κυρίως σε θερμικούς ερευνητικούς αντιδραστήρες (Material Testing Reactors, MTR), στους οποίους επικρατεί ενεργειακό φάσμα νετρονίων με δύο κορυφές, μία στο 0.1eV και άλλη μία στο 1MeV (Σχήμα 1) [Yan12,Oku14]. Καθώς η συνιστώσα θερμικών νετρονίων σε έναν ΜΤΑ είναι 1-2 τάξεις μεγέθους μεγαλύτερη σε σύγκριση με αυτή που επικρατεί στους ταχείς αντιδραστήρες, οι κατάλληλες νετρονικές συνθήκες μπορούν να επιτευχθούν στους ΜΤΑ με προσαρμογή του επικρατούντος φάσματος νετρονίων, με κατάλληλη δηλαδή, τροποποίηση των ρυθμών αντιδράσεων [Chr14]. Για την προσαρμογή του φάσματος μπορεί να γίνει χρήση κατάλληλων νετρονικών διατάξεων που επιτρέπουν την αφαίρεση της θερμικής συνιστώσας ή την αύξηση της αναλογίας ταχέων/θερμικών νετρονίων μέσα στον ΜΤΚ. Αυτό επιτυγχάνεται είτε με την αξιοποίηση υλικών με μεγάλη ικανότητα απορρόφησης θερμικών νετρονίων είτε με την εισαγωγή σχάσιμου υλικού που ενισχύει τη συνιστώσα των ταχέων νετρονίων.

¹⁹ αντιδραστήρες ταχέων νετρονίων υγρού-μετάλλου (LMFBR, Liquid Metal Cooled Fast Breeder Reactor), αεριόψυκτοι αντιδραστήρες (GCFR, Gas Cooled Fast Reactor), αντιδραστήρες ελαφρού ύδατος (LWBR, Light Water Breeder Reactors), συστήματα ADS (Accelerator Driven Systems) [OECD13, Loc13, Deb04, Poe15, Aot14, OECD09, Ale16, IAEA15, Rae16]



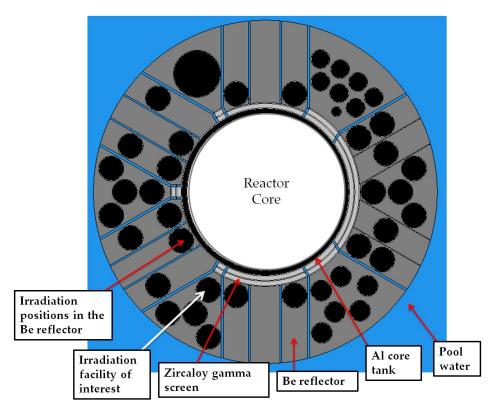
Σχήμα 1: Τυπικό ενεργειακό νετρονικό φάσμα ενός θερμικού αντιδραστήρα [Oku14]

Η παρούσα διατριβή πραγματεύεται τη δημιουργία μίας διάταξης που θα επιτρέπει τη μετατροπή του νετρονικού φάσματος που επικρατεί στο θερμικό ερευνητικό αντιδραστήρα JHR [Par15,Big15] σε φάσμα τυπικό ενός SFR. Μεταξύ των σημαντικότερων στόχων του JHR είναι η έρευνα και η μελέτη της συμπεριφοράς των υλικών ή καυσίμων υπό ακτινοβόληση για τις τρέχουσες και τις μελλοντικές εγκαταστάσεις παραγωγής πυρηνικής ενέργειας. Ως εκ τούτου, απαιτείται η ανάπτυξη διατάξεων που θα παρέχουν αντιπροσωπευτικές συνθήκες ακτινοβόλησης των καυσίμων και των δομικών υλικών τους. Στο πλαίσιο αυτό, το έργο της παρούσας διατριβής επικεντρώθηκε στη διερεύνηση των μεθόδων με τις οποίες η κατανομή του πληθυσμού νετρονίων που διανέμεται στον ανακλαστή του JHR μπορεί να αντιστραφεί από τις χαμηλές στις υψηλές ενέργειες με την τελική κατανομή των νετρονίων να είναι ισοδύναμη με εκείνη ενός SFR.

1.2 Ο αντιδοαστήρας Jules Horowitz (JHR, Jules Horowitz Reactor)

Ο JHR είναι ένας τύπου πισίνας ερευνητικός αντιδραστήρας MTR, θερμικής ισχύος 100MW και βρίσκεται υπό κατασκευή στο Cadarache της νότιας Γαλλίας [Big16, Col15]. Ο JHR έχει σχεδιαστεί για να παρέχει αρκετά υψηλές τιμές ροής νετρονίων (πάνω από το μέγιστο που διατίθενται σήμερα στην Ευρώπη). Η θερμική ροή αναμένεται να φτάνει την τιμή των $5.2 \cdot 10^{14}$ n/cm2/s ενώ η ροή ταχέων νετρονίων (εδώ E> 0.9MeV) τα $5.2 \cdot 10^{14}$ n/cm2/s. Ο αντιδραστήρας θα προσφέρει σύγχρονες πειραματικές δυνατότητες ακτινοβόλησης για τη μελέτη υλικών και

τη συμπεριφορά νέων τύπων πυρηνικού καυσίμου. Πρόκειται για μία ευέλικτη πειραματική υποδομή για την κάλυψη των βιομηχανικών αλλά και ερευνητικών αναγκών που σχετίζονται με τους Πυρηνικούς Σταθμούς Παραγωγής Ενέργειας (Nuclear Power Plants - NPPs) 2ης, 3ης και 4ης γενιάς, αλλά και με διαφορετικές τεχνολογίες αντιδραστήρων [Par15]. Για την παρούσα εργασία, ο JHR προσομοιώθηκε με το στοχαστικό νετρονικό κώδικα TRIPOLI-4.8 [Bru15, TRIPOLI4] με τον οποιο πραγματοποιήθηκαν και όλοι οι απαραίττητοι υπολογισμοί. Στα πλαίσια της μελέτης πραγματοποιήθηκε σειρά υπολογισμών που σχετίζονται με την εισαγωγή των υλικών στην περιοχή του ανακλαστή του JHR. Η επιλεγείσα θέση ακτινοβόλησης και το μοντέλο του JHR απεικονίζονται στο Σχήμα 2.



Σχήμα 2: Αναπαράσταση του μοντέλου του JHR (εγκάρσια τομή). Το λευκό βέλος δείχνει τη θέση ακτινοβόλησης στην περιοχή του ανακλαστή του JHR που επελέγη για την πραγματοποίηση των υπολογισμών. Το μοντέλο παρήχθη με τον TRIPOLI-4.8.

1.3 Αντιδοαστήρας ταχέων νετοονίων - υγοού νατοίου (Sodium cooled Fast Reactor - SFR)

Οι SFRs εντάσσονται στους αντιδραστήρες ταχέων νετρονίων - υγρού μετάλλου (Liquid Metal Fast Reactors - LMFR). Αυτοί οι τύποι αντιδραστήρων χαρακτηρίζονται από ανυπαρξία επιβραδυντή (αφού επιδιώκεται η αποφυγή της επιβράδυνσης των νετρονίων) και χρησιμοποιούν ως ψυκτικό μέσο υγρά μέταλλα, όπως νάτριο (Na), μόλυβδο (Pb), βισμούθιο (Bi) και κράμα Pb-Bi [DOE93]. Τα παραπάνω υλικά επιλέγονται ως ψυκτικά με βάση τόσο τις

φυσικές τους ιδιότητες (όπως υψηλή πυκνότητα, υψηλό σημείο ζέσεως, υψηλή θερμική αγωγιμότητα, υψηλή θερμοχωρητικότητα, κ.ά.) όσο και τις νετρονικές τους ιδιότητες [IAEA12c, Laz14]. Η μη ύπαρξη επιβραδυντή επιτρέπει τη δόμηση μίας πυκνής και μκρών διαστάσεων καρδιάς του αντιδραστήρα [Laf10], αλλά συνεπάγεται την αναγκαιότητα ψυκτικού μέσου με αντίστοιχη ικανότητα απαγωγής της θερμότητας. Το υψηλό σημείο βρασμού των υγρών μετάλλων επιτρέπει τη χρήση τους σε υψηλές θερμοκρασίες χωρίς να απαιτείται υψηλή πίεση του κυκλώματος. Μετά τις δοκιμές διαφόρων εναλλακτικών ψυκτικών, το Να επελέγη ως το κύριο ψυκτικό μέσο στην πλειονότητα των ταχέων αντιδραστήρων που έχουν κατασκευαστεί μέχρι σήμερα καθώς [Aot14,Del13,Sun12]:

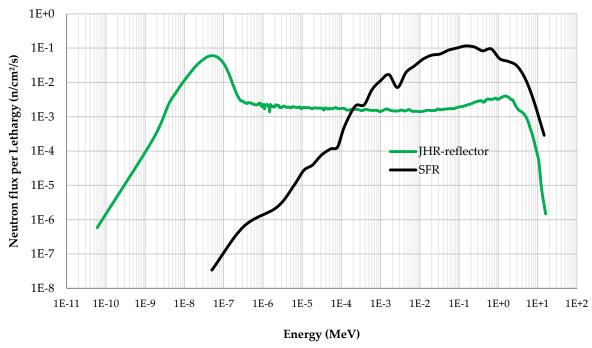
- (α) ως μέταλλο έχει καλές ιδιότητες μεταφοράς θερμότητας,
- (β) είναι υγρό σε σχετικά χαμηλές θερμοκρασίες και
- (γ) επιτρέπει τη λειτουργία του κυκλώματος ψύξης σε χαμηλές πιέσεις.

Η παρουσία του Να επηρεάζει το φάσμα των ταχέων νετρονίων με την κατανομή να μετατοπίζεται σε χαμηλότερες ενέργειες (~200 keV) σε σχέση με άλλα φάσματα αντιδραστήρων ταχέων νετρονίων. Η μετατόπιση του μέγιστου της ροής προς χαμηλότερες ενέργειες προκαλείται τόσο από την ανελαστική όσο και από την ελαστική ενεργό διατομή σκέδασης του νατρίου. Όπως αναφέρεται στη βιβλιογραφία [Nim59] το Νάτριο υποβαθμίζει την ταχεία συνιστώσα του νετρονικού ενεργειακού φάσματος λόγω ανελαστικής σκέδασης ενώ αναβαθμίζει την θερμική συνιστώσα λόγω ελαστικών σκεδάσεων

1.4 Σύγκοιση θεομικού (JHR) - ταχέος (SFR) φάσματος

Για τους σκοπούς της παρούσας διατριβής, χρησιμοποιήθηκε ως φάσμα αναφοράς ενός SFR το νετρονικό φάσμα του αντιδραστήρα Phenix [Gui05, IAEA07]. Ο Phenix ήταν ένας SFR τύπου πισίνας, που λειτουργούσε σε θερμική ισχύ 565 MW [Che12]. Η περιγραφή των κύριων χαρακτηριστικών του αντιδραστήρα μπορεί να βρεθεί στο Che12. Τα δύο διαφορετικά φάσματα (JHR-ανακλαστής και SFR) απεικονίζονται στο Σχήμα 3. Το φάσμα του JHR κατασκευάστηκε με τον TRIPOLI-4,8, ενώ το φάσμα SFR κατασκευάστηκε από τα νετρονικά στοιχεία του Phenix. Η ενεργειακή νετρονική κατανομή του JHR-ανακλαστή παρουσιάζει δύο κορυφές (Σχήμα 3) και είναι τυπική ενός θερμικού αντιδραστήρα. Η πρώτη κορυφή παρουσιάζεται στις χαμηλές ενέργειες (<0.1eV) λόγω της θερμοποίησης των νετρονίων που προκαλεί η παρουσία του νερού (επιβραδυντής νετρονίων) και η δεύτερη στις υψηλές ενέργειες (~ 1 MeV), που αντιστοιχεί στην ενεργειακή κατανομή που χαρακτηρίζει τα νετρόνια της σχάσης. Στις ενδιάμεσες ενέργειες (1eV έως 0.1MeV) το φάσμα των νετρονίων μπορεί να προσεγγιστεί με μία συνάρτηση της μορφής 1/E, όπου Ε η ενέργεια των νετρονίων [DOE93].

Αντιθέτως, ο SFR περιλαμβάνει έναν ασήμαντο αριθμό νετρονίων στο θερμικό ενεργειακό εύρος του φάσματος. Το μεγαλύτερο ποσοστό των νετρονίων είναι συμπυκνωμένο σε ενέργειες μεταξύ 10^3 και 10^6 eV. Ακόμα, το μέγιστο του φάσματος σχάσης (\sim 0.7 MeV) μετατοπίζεται σε χαμηλότερες ενέργειες (~ 200 keV), λόγω των ελαστικών και ανελαστικών αλληλεπιδράσεων των νετρονίων με τα άτομα του νατρίου αλλά και με άλλα δομικά υλικά. Η διαφορά μεταξύ του φάσματος του JHR-ανακλαστή και του φάσματος SFR απεικονίζεται στο Σχήμα 3 και όπως φαίνεται για να επιτευχθεί ο στόχος της προσαρμογής του φάσματος είναι απαραίτητη η αντιστροφή του πληθυσμού νετρονίων από την περιοχή των χαμηλών ενεργειών στην περιοχή των υψηλών ενεργειών. Το αντικείμενο της παρούσας διατριβής είναι η διερεύνηση των μεθόδων, με τις οποίες μπορεί να επιτευχθεί η εν λόγω προσαρμογή/αντιστροφή. Οι μέθοδοι περιλαμβάνουν τη χρήση απορροφητών θερμικών νετρονίων, σχάσιμων πυρήνων και υλικών που χαρακτηρίζονται από υψηλή ικανότητα σκέδασης. Ο τελικός στόχος είναι η πρόταση μίας δοκιμαστικής διάταξης που με την εγκατάστασή της στον ανακλαστή του JHR θα μετατρέπει το ισχύον εκεί επικρατούν νετρονικό φάσμα σε φάσμα τυπικό ενός SFR.



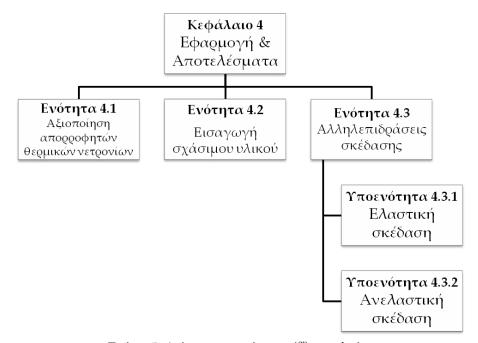
Σχήμα 3: Σύγκριση θερμικού (JHR) και ταχέος (SFR) φάσματος. Το νετρονικό φάσμα που επικρατεί στη θέση ακτινοβόλησης του JHR-ανακλαστή κατασκευάστηκε με τον TRIPOLI-4.8. Το νετρονικό φάσμα SFR κατασκευάστηκε από τα νετρονικά δεδομένα του πρωτότυπου SFR, Phenix.

1.5 Διάρθοωση της Διατοιβής

Η διατριβή χωρίζεται σε πέντε κεφάλαια (Σχήμα 4). Στο πρώτο κεφάλαιο παρέχεται η εισαγωγή στο αντικείμενο και ο σκοπός της εργασίας. Στο δεύτερο κεφάλαιο γίνεται ανασκόπηση της υπάρχουσας (ήδη σε χρήση, υπό ανάπτυξη ή προτεινόμενης) τεχνολογίας νετρονικών πετασμάτων. Το περιεχόμενό του αντιστοιχεί σε υπάρχουσα δημοσίευση [CHR14]. τρίτο κεφάλαιο περιγράφονται τα υπολογιστικά εργαλεία, χρησιμοποιούνται για τις προσομοιώσεις, μαζί με τους σημαντικότερους παράγοντες που διασφαλίζουν την ορθότητα και την ακρίβεια των τελικών αποτελεσμάτων, τα οποία παρουσιάζονται στο κεφάλαιο 4. Το τέταρτο κεφάλαιο χωρίζεται σε τέσσερις βασικές ενότητες (Σχήμα 5), καθεμία από τις οποίες παρουσιάζει τα αποτελέσματα που αφορούν μία από τις αλληλεπιδράσεις νετρονίων που αξιοποιούνται για την προσαρμογή του φάσματος. Ως τελευταίο σημείο, τα κύρια συμπεράσματα, καθώς και η πρόβλεψη ια μελλοντικές εργασίες αναφέρονται στο κεφάλαιο 5.



Σχήμα 4: Διάγραμμα ροής της διατριβής



Σχήμα 5: Διάγραμμα ροής του 4° κεφαλαίου

Κεφάλαιο 2

Βιβλιογοαφική ανασκόπηση

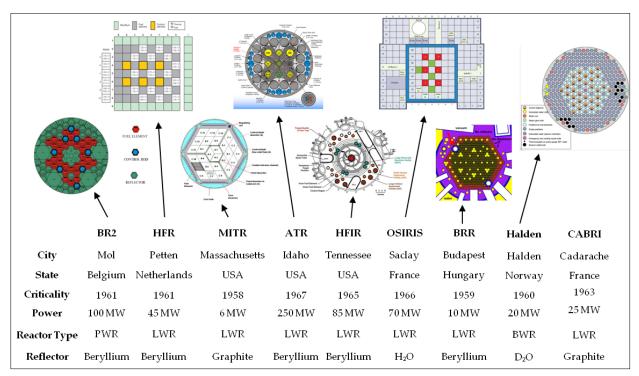
Στο πλαίσιο της πιστοποίησης υλικών 4ης Γενιάς αντιδραστήρων είναι απαραίτητη η χρήση νετρονικών πετασμάτων [Kel14], καθώς συμβάλλουν στη δημιουργία επιθυμητών ειδικών συνθηκών ακτινοβόλησης που δεν μπορούν να επιτευχθούν κατά τη διάρκεια της κανονικής λειτουργίας του αντιδραστήρα για τεχνολογικούς ή οικονομικούς λόγους. Ο όρος νετρονικό πέτασμα -που χρησιμοποιείται ευρέως στην παρούσα εκτενή περίληψη αναφέρεται στη συσκευή, το μοντέλο, το σύστημα ή την τεχνολογία που εφαρμόζεται στο εσωτερικό του αντιδραστήρα για την τοπική προσαρμογή του νετρονικού φάσματος. Με τη χρήση πετασμάτων παρέχεται η δυνατότητα προσομοίωσης των χαρακτηριστικών ροής ταχέων νετρονίων καθώς ακόμα και συνθηκών ακτινοβόλησης μεταβλητής ισχύος σε θερμικούς ερευνητικούς αντιδραστήρες (Material Testing Reactors, MTR). Για την προσαρμογή του φάσματος σε έναν MTR δύο μέθοδοι εφαρμόζονται έως σήμερα:

- 1) μείωση της θερμικής συνιστώσας χρησιμοποιώντας υλικά-απορροφητές θερμικών νετρονίων ή/και
- 2) αύξηση του λόγου ταχέων/θερμικών νετρονίων εισάγοντας σχάσιμο υλικό.

Ο σκοπός αυτού του κεφαλαίου είναι η ανασκόπηση της βιβλιογραφίας σχετικά με την υπάρχουσα τεχνολογία νετρονικών πετασμάτων, που αναπτύχθηκαν για την αντιμετώπιση της έλλειψης επαρκούς αριθμού ταχέων ερευνητικών αντιδραστήρων. Ένα νετρονικό πέτασμα / απορροφητής θερμικών νετρονίων επιτυγχάνει να προσομοιώσει το περιβάλλον ταχέων νετρονίων, αποκόπτοντας τη θερμική συνιστώσα του φάσματος των νετρονίων. Ο απορροφητής είναι σχεδόν διαφανής στα ταχέα - και πολύ λιγότερο στα επιθερμικά - νετρόνια. Προκειμένου να ενισχυθεί περαιτέρω το νετρονικό φάσμα στις υψηλές ενέργειες (να αναπαραχθούν δηλαδή οι συνθήκες ακτινοβόλησης που επικρατούν στο περιβάλλον ενός SFR), συνδυάζονται στις διατάξεις σχάσιμο υλικό και βρόγχοι (loops) ψυκτικού. Στη βιβλιογραφία αναφέρονται ακόμα περιπτώσεις όπου νετρονικές διατάξεις θερμικών χρησιμοποιούνται για την αναπαραγωγή πειραματικών απορροφητών μεταβαλλόμενης ισχύος. Μεταβάλλοντας τη συγκέντρωση του απορροφητή, επιτυγχάνεται παροδική μεταβολή της εναποτιθέμενης ισχύος επί του ακτινοβολούμενου δείγματος. Η χρήση πετασμάτων μεταβλητής συγκέντρωσης είναι απαραίτητη προκειμένου – για παράδειγμα - να ελεγχθεί η συμπεριφορά του καυσίμου όταν εκτίθεται σε ξαφνικές διακυμάνσεις ισχύος.

Το 2° κεφάλαιο χωρίζεται σε δύο τμήματα, ανάλογα με τη μορφή του απορροφητικού υλικού που χρησιμοποιείται: νετρονικά πετάσματα στερεών (ενότητα §2.1) και ρευστά υλικά για πειράματα μεταβαλλόμενης ισχύος (ενότητα §2.2). Παρόλο που τα στερεά υλικά μπορούν να προκαλέσουν μεγαλύτερες διακυμάνσεις της ισχύος εντός της διάταξης -καθώς έχουν μεγαλύτερη πυκνότητα- δεν προτιμούνται στα πειράματα μεταβαλλόμενης ισχύος, καθώς η χρήση τους είναι πολύπλοκη, ενώ στην περίπτωση ρευστών υλικών αρκεί μόνο η μεταβολή της πίεσης ή / και της συγκέντρωσής τους.

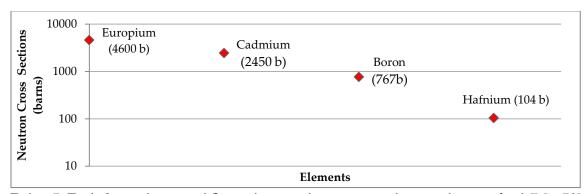
Στο κεφάλαιο αυτό παρουσιάζονται αρκετά επιτυχημένα παραδείγματα νετρονικών διατάξεων. Το Σχήμα 2-1 απεικονίζει τους MTRs όπου εφαρμόστηκε τεχνολογία νετρονικών πετασμάτων και που παρουσιάζονται σε αυτό το κεφάλαιο. Στην παρούσα εκτενή περίληψη πραγματοποιείται μία σύνοψη των υλικών που έχουν χρησιμοποιηθεί στους διάφορους MTRs για τη δημιουργία των επιθυμητών ειδικών συνθηκών ακτινοβόλησης. Ακόμα, παρατίθενται κάποια αντιπροσωπευτικά παραδείγματα των τεχνολογιών που έχουν υιοθετηθεί ή σχεδιαστεί για την τροποποίηση του φάσματος (στο κυρίως κείμενο της διατριβής στην αγγλική γλώσσα παρατίθεται εύρος παραδειγμάτων). Για τη διευκόλυνση της ανάγνωσης διατηρείται η αντιστοιχία της αρίθμησης που υιοθετείται στο κυρίως κείμενο.



Σχήμα 6: Οι MTRs όπου εφαρμόστηκε τεχνολογία των νετρονικών πετασμάτων και που παρουσιάζονται σε αυτό το κεφάλαιο

2.1 Νετρονικές διατάξεις στερεών υλικών

Στην ενότητα §2.1, παρουσιάζονται νετρονικά πετάσματα στερεών υλικών θωράκισης θερμικών νετρονίων. Οι περιπτώσεις που αναφέρονται είτε έχουν ήδη εφαρμοστεί με επιτυχία στους αντίστοιχους ερευνητικούς αντιδραστήρες είτε είναι ακόμα υπό ανάπτυξη ή μελέτη. Αναφέρονται τέσσερα στερεά υλικά απορρόφησης θερμικών νετρονίων: Βόριο (Β), Κάδμιο (Cd), Άφνιο (Hf) και Ευρώπιο (Εu). Αυτά τα υλικά έχουν μεγάλη ενεργός διατομή απορρόφησης θερμικών νετρονίων (Σχήμα 7) και χρησιμοποιούνται ευρέως στους πυρηνικούς αντιδραστήρες σε διάφορες εφαρμογές. Σε κάθε περίπτωση, η επιλογή του κατάλληλου υλικού εξαρτάται από τις απαιτήσεις του πειράματος, το διαθέσιμο χώρο για την εισαγωγή του πετάσματος, τα θέματα ασφάλειας που μπορεί να συνοδεύουν τη χρήση τους αλλά και τη συμβατότητα υλικών (Πίνακας 1).



Σχήμα 7: Τιμές θερμικής ενεργού διατομής απορρόφησης νετρονίων για τέσσερα υλικά [Mug73]

Πίνακας 1: Φυσικές Ιδιότητες, Κόστος, Τοξικότητα και Τύπος Αντίδρασης των θερμικών
απορροφητών που χρησιμοποιήθηκαν για μετατροπή του νετρονικού φάσματος [Hyn15,CPP16]

Name	Sym	density (g/cm³)	Melting Point (°C)	Boiling Point (°C)	Prices per 100 g (\$)	Toxicity	Reaction Type
Europium	Eu	5.244	822	1527	1350	middly toxic	n,γ
Cadmium	Cd	8.56	321	767	46	highly toxic	n,γ
Boron	В	10.811	2075	4000	1114	non toxic	n,α
Hafnium	Hf	13.31	2233	4603	120	non toxic	n,γ

Καθώς στην αντίστοιχη ενότητα του κυρίως κειμένου στην αγγλική γλώσσα παρατίθεται εύρος περιπτώσεων, στην παρούσα ενότητα (για λόγους οικονομίας) παρουσιάζονται ενδεικτικά χαρακτηριστικά παραδείγματα διατάξεων που σχεδιάστηκαν για να παρέχουν τυπικές συνθήκες ακτινοβόλησης ταχέος αντιδραστήρα.

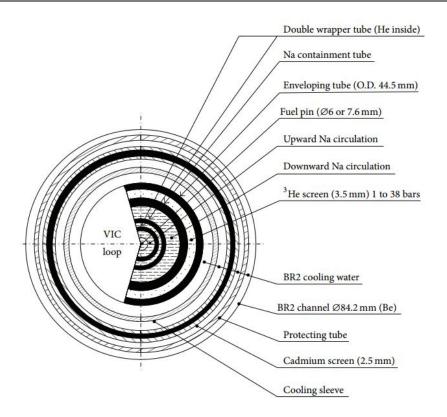
2.1.1 Νετοονικά Πετάσματα Καδμίου

Το Κάδμιο (Cd), είναι ένα υλικό που χρησιμοποιείται ευρέως για το φιλτράρισμα θερμικών νετρονίων, λόγω της μεγάλης του ικανότητας σύλληψης θερμικών νετρονίων. Χρησιμοποιείται αρκετά σε νετρονικές διατάξεις καθώς η κοινότητα των αντιδραστήρων είναι εξοικειωμένη με τις μηχανικές του ιδιότητες και άλλα τεχνολογικά θέματα. Ωστόσο, η κατασκευή πετάσματος Cd είναι πολύπλοκη από μηχανικής απόψεως, λόγω του χαμηλού σημείου τήξης και της μεγάλης θερμικής διαστολής του. Καθώς χαρακτηρίζεται από υψηλή ενεργό διατομή απορρόφησης θερμικών νετρονίων, ακόμα και ένα πολύ λεπτό πέτασμα είναι αρκετό να προσαρμόσει την κατανομή των νετρονίων στις περισσότερες περιπτώσεις. Το ισότοπο ¹¹³Cd, αποτελεί μόνο το 12% του φυσικού Cd, αλλά είναι αυτό που προσδίδει στο φυσικό στοιχείο την ικανότητα απορρόφησης θερμικών νετρονίων [Wie13b]. Όταν το 113Cd εκτεθεί σε υψηλές τιμές ροής νετρονίων εξαντλείται σχετικά σύντομα, με επακόλουθο να απαιτείται η συχνή αντικατάστασή του ή η χρήση επιπλέον υλικού, προκειμένου να αποφευχθεί απροσδόκητη αύξηση της ροής νετρονίων στα προς ακτινοβόληση δείγματα. Πετάσματα Cd χρησιμοποιούνται εδώ και πολλά χρόνια. Για παράδειγμα, στον αντιδραστήρα BR2 (Belgian Reactor 2) οι περισσότερες από τις ακτινοβολήσεις από τη δεκαετία του 1960 μέχρι τα τέλη του 1980 -που διεξήχθησαν στο πλαίσιο του προγράμματος ανάπτυξης ταχέων αντιδραστήρων- χρησιμοποιούσαν πέτασμα Cd [Rae00].

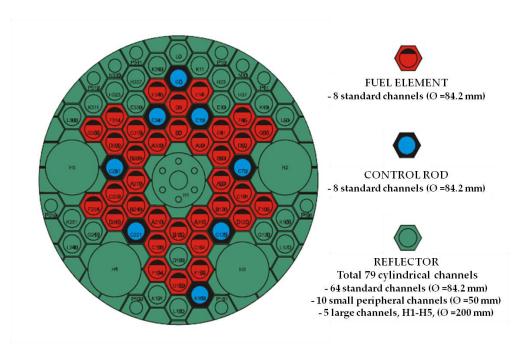
Νετρονικό πέτασμα Καδμίου στον αντιδραστήρα ΒR2

Για τη δημιουργία ειδικών συνθηκών ακτινοβόλησης μίας ράβδου καυσίμου ταχέος αντιδραστήρα χρησιμοποιήθηκε στον πυρήνα του BR2 στο SCK·CEN (Belgium) ένα πέτασμα Cd πάχους 0.25cm. Στο Σχήμα 8 φαίνεται η διάταξη, η οποία ονομάστηκε VIC (Variable Irradiation Conditions) και εγκαταστάθηκε σε ένα πρότυπο κανάλι εύρους 84.2mm, του BR2 (Σχήμα 9), προκειμένου να μελετηθεί η συμπεριφορά του δείγματος υπό μεταβατικές συνθήκες λειτουργίας τυπικές ενός LMFBR. Η ράβδος περιβάλλεται από ένα μεγάλο βρόγχο νατρίου (Na), που δρα ως ψυκτικό μέσο, ενώ το βρόγχο νατρίου περιβάλλει αέριο Ήλιο (³He) σε μεταβλητή πίεση. Το ³He χαρακτηρίζεται από μεγάλη ενεργό διατομή απορρόφησης θερμικών νετρονίων και μέσω της μεταβολής της πίεσης του, επιτρέπεται η δημιουργία μεταβλητών συνθηκών ισχύος, ενώ το πέτασμα Cd χρησιμεύει για τη δημιουργία περιβάλλοντος ταχέων νετρονίων, καθώς φιλτράρει τα θερμικά νετρόνια.

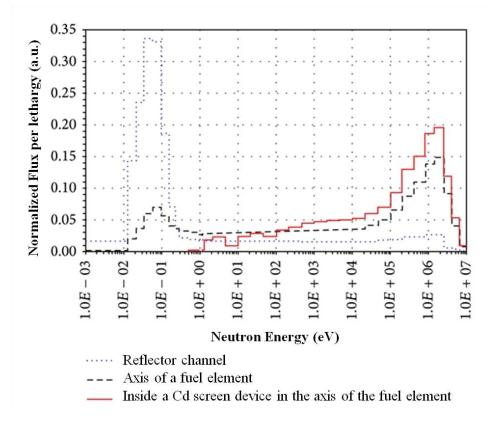
Το Σχήμα 10 απεικονίζει το νετρονικό φάσμα αξονικά της ράβδου καυσίμου με (κόκκινη καμπύλη) και χωρίς (διακεκομμένη καμπύλη) πέτασμα Cd. Η εφαρμογή του πετάσματος Cd έχει ως αποτέλεσμα την αποκοπή της θερμικής συνιστώσας του νετρονικού φάσματος, ενώ έχει σχεδόν μηδαμινή επίπτωση στη ροή υψηλών ενεργειών, επιτρέποντας έτσι τη δημιουργία ενός περιβάλλοντος ταχέος αντιδραστήρα στο εσωτερικό στην περιοχή των δειγμάτων. Προκειμένου να καταστεί δυνατή μια εκ νέου θερμοποίηση (έτσι ώστε η συμπίεση/αποσυμπίεση του αέριου ³He να δημιουργεί μεταβλητές συνθήκες ισχύος), δακτύλιοι νερού παρεμβάλλονται μεταξύ του αέριου ³He και του πετάσματος Cd. Σημειώνεται ότι για το πείραμα, η θερμική συνιστώσα της ροής νετρονίων θα έπρεπε να είναι αρκετά χαμηλή, ώστε να είναι τυπική ενός ταχέος αντιδραστήρα. Το πείραμα αυτό εξετάζεται και στην ενότητα 2.2.



Σχήμα 8: Αναπαράσταση της VIC διάταξης (εγκάρσια τομή) [Eyn09a]



Σχήμα 9: Αναπαράσταση της καρδιάς του BR2 με μία τυπική φόρτιση (εγκάρσια τομή) [Rae00]



Σχήμα 10: Επίδραση του νετρονικού πετάσματος Cd πάχους 0.25 cm, στο νετρονικό φάσμα αξονικά της ράβδου καυσίμου. Το φάσμα που επικρατεί στον ανακλαστή του BR2 απεικονίζεται επίσης για λόγους σύγκρισης [Rae00]

2.1.2 Νετρονικά Πετάσματα Αφνίου

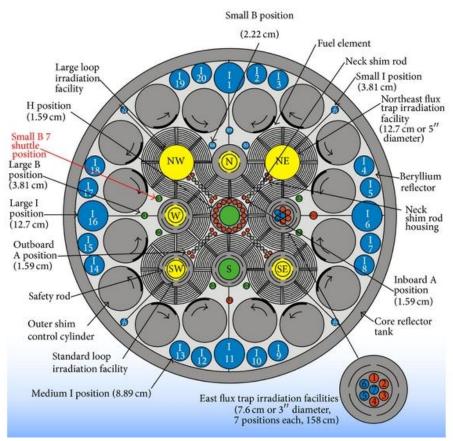
Το Άφνιο (Ηf) χρησιμοποιείται ευρέως σε πυρηνικούς αντιδραστήρες [IAEA08]. Έχει εξαιρετικές μηχανικές ιδιότητες, είναι εξαιρετικά ανθεκτικό στη διάβρωση και ως εκ τούτου μπορεί να χρησιμοποιηθεί χωρίς περίβλημα/επένδυση. Ένα άλλο πλεονέκτημα είναι το υψηλό σημείο τήξης του. Η ενεργός διατομή απορρόφησης θερμικών νετρονίων του Ηf δεν είναι τόσο υψηλή όσο εκείνη των άλλων απορροφητών (Σχήμα 7) που παρουσιάζονται σε αυτή την ενότητα, όμως το Hf κατά την ακτινοβόλησή του μεταστοιχειώνεται σε ισότοπα Hf που είναι επίσης απορρόφητές, επιτρέποντας - καθώς εξαντλείται αργά- την παράταση της ακτινοβόλησης.

Νετρονικό πέτασμα Αφνίου στον αντιδραστήρα ΑΤR, INL

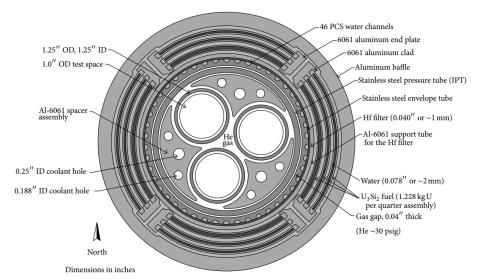
Στα πλαίσια ανάπτυξης των δυνατοτήτων ακτινοβόλησης σε περιβάλλον ταχέων νετρονίων στον ATR (Advanced Test Reactor, Idaho National Laboratory, USA) (Σχήμα 11), προτάθηκε μία διάταξη (Σχήμα 12) ενισχυμένης ροής υψηλών ενεργειών (BFFL, Boosted Fast Flux Loop) [Lon07]. Το επιθυμητό αποτέλεσμα ήταν μια κατανομή νετρονίων με το λόγο της ροής ταχέων (E>0.1MeV) / θερμικών (E<0.625eV) νετρονίων να υπερβαίνει το 15. Η διάταξη BFFL σχεδιάστηκε για να φιλοξενηθεί σε ένα πειραματικό βρόγχο αερίου (GTL, Gas Test Loop) σε

μία από τις θέσεις-λωβούς (Σχήμα 12) του ΑΤR. Για την ενίσχυση της ροής ταχέων νετρονίων η διάταξη BFFL συνδυάζει σχάσιμο υλικό, όπως πυριτιούχο ουράνιο (U₃Si₂), με φίλτρο Hf για την απορρόφηση των θερμικών νετρονίων. Το Hf «συνδυάστηκε» με αλουμίνιο (Al), ώστε η παραγόμενη θερμότητα να μπορεί να απομακρυνθεί με αγωγιμότητα (υψηλή θερμική αγωγιμότητα του Al) και να μεταφερθεί από το πείραμα σε ένα κανάλι ψύξης πεπιεσμένου ύδατος [Gui10]. Τα μέσα ψύξης της διάταξης περιλαμβάνουν το πρωτεύον κανάλι ελαφρού ύδατος του ATR, αέριο Ήλιο (He) και Νάτριο (Na). Το He επιλέχθηκε ως ψυκτικό μέσο καθώς είναι αδρανές, μονοφασικό, και δεν μεταβάλλει την αντιδραστικότητα της καρδιάς του αντιδραστήρα.

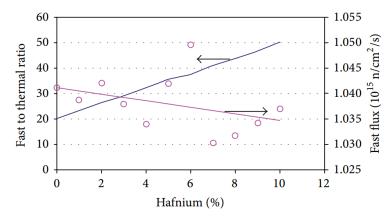
Η επίδραση της συγκέντρωσης του Hf στο λόγο ροής ταχέων / θερμικών νετρονίων, υπολογίστηκε με το στοχαστικό κώδικα MCNP (Σχήμα 13, Σχήμα 14). Όσο μεγαλύτερη είναι η παρουσία του Hf στο πέτασμα, τόσο μεγαλύτερη μείωση των θερμικών νετρονίων παρατηρείται (Σχήμα 13). Στο Σχήμα 14 απεικονίζονται οι μέσοι ρυθμοί θέρμανσης του πετάσματος Hf-Al σε συνάρτηση με τη συγκέντρωση Hf στον απορροφητή. Ο ρυθμός θέρμανσης εμφανίζει κορεσμό περίπου στο 6% έως 7%, που αντιστοιχεί στη βέλτιστη συγκέντρωση του Hf στο πέτασμα [Lon07]. Όπως αναφέρεται στον McD09, συγκέντρωση της τάξης του 6.5% ή μεγαλύτερης Hf στο πέτασμα είναι ικανή για να δημιουργηθούν συνθήκες ακτινοβόλησης με λόγο ροής ταχέων / θερμικών νετρονίων μεγαλύτερο από 40.



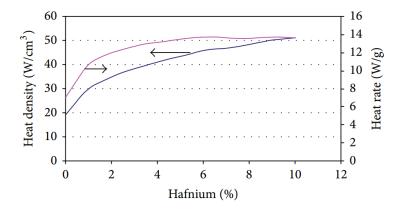
Σχήμα 11: Σχηματική αναπαράσταση του πυρήνα του ΑΤR (εγκάρσια τομή) [Mar05]



Σχήμα 12: Σχηματική αναπαράσταση της GTL διάταξης (εγκάρσια τομή) [Par05]



Σχήμα 13: Λόγος ταχέων/θερμικών νετρονίων (μπλε καμπύλη) και Ροή νετρονίων υψηλών ενεργειών (μοβ καμπύλη) συναρτήσει της περιεκτικότητας Ηf στο πέτασμα. Οι κύκλοι αντιστοιχούν σε πειραματικές μετρήσεις της ροής στις υψηλές ενέργειες [Lon07].



Σχήμα 14: Μέσος ρυθμός θέρμανσης (μωβ καμπύλη) και μέση πυκνότητα ισχύος (μπλε καμπύλη) του πετάσματος Hf-Al στα 40 εκατοστά καθ' ύψος γύρω από το κέντρο πυρήνα [Lon07].

2.1.3 Νετφονικά Πετάσματα Βοφίου

Το Βόριο (Β) και οι ενώσεις του βρίσκουν εκτεταμένη εφαρμογή στους πυρηνικούς αντιδραστήρες [IAEA08]. Το φυσικό Βόριο αποτελείται από περίπου 20% ¹⁰B και 80% ¹¹B [Wie13b,Wie13b]. Η εξαιρετικά υψηλή ενεργό διατομή απορρόφησης του ¹⁰B (Σχήμα 7) μαζί με χαμηλή περιεκτικότητά του στο φυσικό υλικό, έχει ως αποτέλεσμα τη γρήγορη εξάντληση του Βορίου. Ωστόσο, η εξάντληση μπορεί να καθυστερήσει με εμπλουτισμό του πετάσματος με ¹⁰B. Ένας παράγοντας που πρέπει να ληφθεί υπόψη όταν χρησιμοποιείται Β είναι η εμφάνιση διόγκωσης (swelling) [Zha15], στο υλικό λόγω της παραγωγής ηλίου μετά την ακτινοβόληση του με ταχέα νετρόνια (eq 2.1 - 2.2) [Mon12].

2.1.4 Νετφονικά Πετάσματα Ευφωπίου

Το Ευρώπιο (Εu) είναι ένα υλικό με εξαιρετικά υψηλή ενεργό διατομή απορρόφησης θερμικών νετρονίων (Σχήμα 7). Το Εu δεν χαίρει μεγάλης βιομηχανικής χρήσης λόγω του υπερβολικά υψηλού κόστους του (Πίνακας 1) σε σύγκριση με τα B, Cd και Hf, τα οποία χρησιμοποιούνται κατά κόρον στους πυρηνικούς αντιδραστήρες. Σε πυρηνικούς αντιδραστήρες το Εu χρησιμοποιείται κυρίως ως απορροφητικό υλικό στις ράβδους ελέγχου. Στην ενότητα §2.1.4 του κυρίως κειμένου στην αγγλική γλώσσα παρουσιάζεται μόνο μία περίπτωση νετρονικού πετάσματος Εu και πιο συγκεκριμένα οξειδίου του ευρωπίου, Eu₂O₃.

2.1.5 Συμπεράσματα της ενότητας

Ο σκοπός της χρήσης των εξετασθένων υλικών είναι η δημιουργία ενός νετρονικού περιβάλλοντος όσο το δυνατόν περισσότερο απαλλαγμένου από θερμικά και επιθερμικά νετρόνια, προκειμένου να αναπαραχθεί το φάσμα ταχέος αντιδραστήρα, το οποίο έχει αμελητέα παρουσία νετρονίων με ενέργειες κάτω από ~10eV. Στην §2.1, τέσσερα στερεά υλικά παρουσιάστηκαν: Βόριο (Β), Κάδμιο (Cd), Άφνιο (Hf) και Ευρώπιο (Εu).

Η επιλογή του υλικού διαφοροποιείται ανάλογα τον αντιδραστήρα και τις απαιτούμενες συνθήκες ακτινοβόλησης. Πριν τη χρήση κάποιου από τα αναφερθέντα νετρονικά πετάσματα πρέπει να ληφθούν υπόψιν τα τεχνικά προβλήματα που μπορεί να συνοδεύουν την εισαγωγή του στο νετρονικό περιβάλλον αντιδραστήρα. Από άποψη ασφαλείας, το Άφνιο παρουσιάζει τις καλύτερες μηχανικές ιδιότητες από τα υπόλοιπα υλικά. Το οξείδιο του Ευρωπίου (Ευ2O3) αντιδρά άμεσα με το νερό και το Β γίνεται ιδιαίτερα διαβρωτικό σε υψηλές θερμοκρασίες. Αντιθέτως, το Hf και το Cd είναι αμφότερα ανθεκτικά στη διάβρωση. Αναφορικά με τις φυσικές τους ιδιότητες, το Cd έχει τα μειονεκτήματα της χαμηλής τήξης και του χαμηλού σημείου ζέσεως. Ακόμα, η ακτινοβόληση του Βορίου με νετρόνια υψηλών ενεργειών έχει ως επακόλουθο την παραγωγή Ηλίου, προκαλώντας διόγκωση στο υλικό.

Το γεγονός ότι τα προϊόντα ενεργοποίησης Ευ και Ης έχουν υψηλές ενεργές διατομές, καθυστερεί την εξάντληση των αντίστοιχων πετασμάτων, επεκτείνοντας έτσι τον χρόνο λειτουργίας του πετάσματος νετρονίων. Ωστόσο, η εκπομπή γάμμα ακτινοβολίας που μπορεί να προκύψει τόσο από τα Ευ και Ηf όσο και από τα προϊόντα τους μπορεί να οδηγήσει σε ανεπιθύμητη αύξηση της εναποτιθέμενης ισχύος στο δείγμα. Αντιθέτως, το Βόριο και το Κάδμιο έχουν μόνο ένα ισότοπο με μεγάλη ενεργό διατομή - και σε χαμηλή ποσότητα. Ως εκ τούτου, νετρονικά πετάσματα B και Cd απαιτούν συχνή αντικατάσταση, προκειμένου να αποφευχθεί μια απότομη αύξηση ισχύος του αντιδραστήρα, η οποία θα επηρεάσει την ακτινοβόληση του δείγματος. Για την αντιστάθμιση της σύντομης εξάντλησης, επιδιώκεται η αύξηση της μάζας του απορροφητή στο πέτασμα. Αυτό επιτυγχάνεται είτε με την αύξηση του όγκου του υλικού ή μέσω εμπλουτισμού του με το απορροφητικό ισότοπο του, όπως για παράδειγμα με εμπλουτισμό ¹⁰Β (σαφώς το κόστος της διάταξης αυξάνεται αναλόγως). Από την άλλη πλευρά, η μικροσκοπική ενεργός διατομή απορρόφησης του Ηf είναι η μικρότερη από τα τέσσερα υλικά, επομένως απαιτείται μεγαλύτερο πάχος στην περίπτωση χρήσης του, σε σύγκριση με τις αναγκαίες ποσότητες των υπολοίπων. Σε γενικές γραμμές, λίγα χιλιοστά πάχους είναι επαρκή για να παρέχουν απορροφητικότητα.

Η ικανότητα σύλληψης επιθερμικών νετρονίων από τους απορροφητές επιτυγχάνει πιο αντιπροσωπευτική προσομοίωση ενός φάσματος ταχέων νετρονίων. Από τα τέσσερα εξετασθέντα υλικά, το Β έχει την υψηλότερη μικροσκοπική ενεργό διατομή - και παρουσιάζει επίσης ομαλή συμπεριφορά - στην περιοχή των επιθερμικών νετρονίων. Το Ει και τα ισότοπά του έχουν επίσης πολύ σημαντική μικροσκοπική ενεργό διατομή στην περιοχή αυτή (της τάξης των 10^4 barns), αλλά σε αντίθεση με το Βόριο, παρουσιάζει πολλές διακυμάνσεις. Το Άφνιο και τα ισότοπά του παρουσιάζουν επίσης υψηλή σύλληψη νετρονίων στην περιοχή των επιθερμικών νετρονίων με πολλές αιχμές εκλεκτικής απορρόφησης (της τάξης των 10^3 - 10^5 barns). Τέλος, το Cd έχει τη χαμηλότερη μικροσκοπική ενεργό διατομή (της τάξης των 10^3 - 10^4 barns).

2.2 Νετρονικές διατάξεις ρευστών υλικών για πειράματα μεταβαλλόμενης ισχύος

Στην ενότητα §2.2, παρουσιάζονται νετρονικά πετάσματα που χρησιμοποιούν απορροφητή θερμικών νετρονίων μεταβλητής συγκέντρωσης (αέρια ή υγρή φάση). Η χρήση του ρευστού υλικού καλύπτει την ανάγκη μεταβλητής απορροφητικότητας η οποία με τη σειρά της επιδρά στην αυξομείωση της ισχύος στον όγκο του ακτινοβολούμενου δείγματος καυσίμου σε χρόνο λίγων μόλις δευτερολέπτων. Η μεταβολή ισχύος επιτυγχάνεται μέσα από τη διακύμανση του απορροφητικού περιεχομένου στο πέτασμα, όπως μεταβολή του πάχους, μεταβολή της πίεσης (π.χ. ³He) ή μεταβολή της συγκέντρωσης του απορροφητή (π.χ. εμπλουτισμός ¹⁰B σε ενώσεις Βορίου) της διάταξης που περιβάλλει το καύσιμο. Η κατανόηση και η ακριβής πρόβλεψη της αντίδρασης/απόκρισης των ράβδων πυρηνικού καυσίμου στην αύξηση της θερμικής ισχύος είναι πρωταρχικής σημασίας για την αξιολόγηση των επιδόσεων τους υπό κανονικές και υπό μεταβατικές συνθήκες [Hor99]. Τρεις διαφορετικοί τύποι μεταβλητών νετρονικών πετασμάτων αναφέρθηκαν σε αυτήν την ενότητα: αέρια ³He, υγρό βορικό οξύ (H₃BO₃) και αέριο τριφθοριούχο βόριο (BF₃). Η χρήση αερίων BF₃ και ³He πετασμάτων έχει εγκαταλειφθεί στην πλειονότητα των αντιδραστήρων, δεδομένου ότι τα δύο αέρια παρουσιάζουν χαρακτηριστικά

που μπορούν να θέσουν σε κίνδυνο την ασφάλεια της διάταξης. Το αέριο 3 He έχει αντικατασταθεί από υγρό H_3BO_3 .

Οι παράμετροι που μπορούν να ενισχύσουν το εύρος της διακύμανσης της ισχύος (λόγος μεταξύ της χαμηλότερης και της υψηλότερης επιτεύξιμης ισχύος) περιλαμβάνουν τη θέση στην οποία τοποθετείται η διάταξη στον αντιδραστήρα, η απόσταση μεταξύ της διάταξης και του δείγματος, το υλικό και ο τύπος του απορροφητή που χρησιμοποιείται, και η φάση λειτουργίας του αντιδραστήρα. Ακόμα μεγαλύτερες ενισχύσεις στο πλάτος διακύμανσης της ισχύος μπορούν να επιτευχθούν με συνδυασμό της διάταξης με διακύμανση της ισχύος του αντιδραστήρα, π.χ. διακοπή λειτουργίας. Στην παρούσα ενότητα, οι νετρονικές διατάξεις ρευστών υλικών ταξινομούνται ανά υλικό και χωρίζονται σε υποενότητες, ανάλογα με το αν έχουν ήδη υλοποιηθεί ή είναι υπό ανάπτυξη ή μελέτη.

2.2.1 Ήλιο-3 σε πειράματα μεταβλητής ισχύος

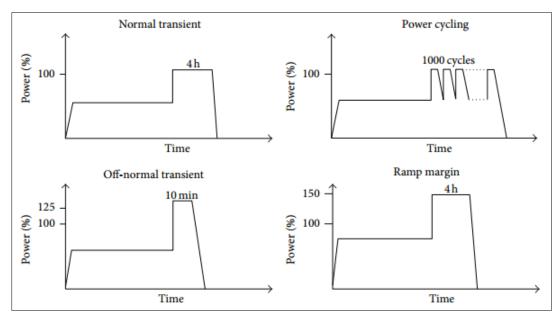
Το ήλιο-3 (³He) είναι τεχνητό ισότοπο του φυσικού He και χρησιμοποιείται συχνά σε πυρηνικούς αντιδραστήρες, καθώς χαρακτηρίζεται από μεγάλη ενεργό διατομή απορρόφησης θερμικών νετρονίων [ENDF]. Τα περισσότερα πειράματα μεταβλητής ισχύος με αέριο ³He έχουν σήμερα εγκαταλειφθεί, λόγω των ζητημάτων ασφάλειας που προέκυπταν από την παραγωγή τριτίου μέσω της ενεργοποίησης του. Το πρώτο πείραμα με μεταβλητό αέριο ³He έγινε το 1977 [Mou07].

Ήλιο-3 για πειράματα μεταβλητής ισχύος στον αντιδραστήρα BR2

Στην §2.1.1 της παρούσας περίληψης παρατέθηκε ένα παράδειγμα διάταξης (Σχήμα 8) που χρησιμοποιείται για πειράματα μεταβλητής ισχύος στον αντιδραστήρα BR2 (Σχήμα 9). Μέσω της συμπίεσης/αποσυμπίεσης του αέριου 3He δημιουργούνται συνθήκες ακτινοβόλησης μεταβλητής ισχύος. Όταν στη διάταξη εξαιρείται το πέτασμα Cd, επιτυγχάνεται λόγος μεταξύ χαμηλότερης και της υψηλότερης επιτεύξιμης ισχύος εντός του πειράματος ίσος με 5, ενώ όταν χρησιμοποιείται το πέτασμα ο λόγος μειώνεται στο 1.25 [Eyn09a].

Ήλιο-3 για πειράματα μεταβλητής ισχύος στον αντιδραστήρα Halden

Ενώ, όπως ανφέρθηκε προηγουμένως, τα περισσότερα πειράματα μεταβλητής ισχύος (power transient) με αέριο ³He έχουν σήμερα εγκαταλειφθεί, στον αντιδραστήρα Halden [Vol15,Vit01] πραγματοποιούνται ακόμα πειράματα μεταβλητής ισχύος με αέριο ³He για τη μελέτη της συμπεριφοράς των ράβδων καυσίμου. Προκειμένου η εκτέλεση του πειράματος να μην επηρεάζει το το περιβάλλον του αντιδραστήρα, η διάταξη περιβάλλεται από κράμα ζιρκονίου. Με την μεταβολή της πίεσης του ³He επιτυγχάνεται λόγος μεταξύ χαμηλότερης και της υψηλότερης ισχύος εντός του πειράματος ίσος με 4, ενώ ο ρυθμός της μεταβολής κυμαίνεται μεταξύ 100 και 200 W/(cm·min). Στο Σχήμα 15 παρουσιάζονται τέσσερεις ενδεικτικές περιπτώσεις μεταβολής της ισχύος εντός του πειράματος.



Σχήμα 15: Τέσσερα ενδεικτικά πειράματα μεταβλητής ισχύος στον αντιδραστήρα Halden [IAEA13b]

2.2.2 Βόριο σε πειράματα μεταβλητής ισχύος

Στη βιβλιογραφία αναφέρονται επίσης δύο περιπτώσεις χρήσης Βορίου για την πραγματοποίηση πειραμάτων μεταβλητής ισχύος: BF3 και H3BO3. Ωστόσο, η χρήση αερίου BF3 έχει εγκαταλειφθεί, καθώς το BF3 μπορεί δυνητικά να σχηματίσει F2 που είναι δηλητηριώδες και διαβρωτικό αέριο αλλά και της σχετικά χαμηλής ενεργούς διατομής απορρόφησης σε θερμικά νετρόνια που απαιτούσε μεγάλη συμπίεση του.

2.2.3. Σχόλια/Συμπερασματικά Σχόλια/Συμπεράσματα/Σύνοψη υλικών

Στην §2.2 του κυρίως κειμένου στην αγγλική γλώσσα παρουσιάζονται τα υλικά που χρησιμοποιούνται για τη δημιουργία συνθηκών ακτινοβόλησης μεταβλητής ισχύος. Συγκεκριμένα, αναφέρονται δύο διαφορετικά στοιχεία, το Ήλιο και το Βόριο, και πιο συγκεκριμένα αέριο Ήλιο-3 (³He), τριφθοριούχο Βόριο (BF₃) και βορικό οξύ (H₃BO₃). Η χρήση υλικών όπως BF3 και H3BO3 αποσκοπούσε στην αντικατάσταση του ευρέως χρησιμοποιούμενου ³He για λόγους ασφαλείας, αφού το ³He παράγει τρίτιο μέσω νετρονικής σύλληψης. Η χρήση BF3 προκαλεί επίσης ανησυγίες για την ασφάλεια, καθώς το BF3 μπορεί δυνητικά να σχηματίσει F_2 που είναι δηλητηριώδες και διαβρωτικό αέριο. Σε σύγκριση με τα προηγούμενα υλικά, το Η₃ΒΟ₃ μπορεί να θεωρηθεί ασφαλής υποψήφιος για την εκτέλεση πειραμάτων μεταβλητής ισχύος, δεδομένου ότι δεν είναι διαβρωτικό και δεν παράγει δραστικά υποπροϊόντα.Το ³He έχει εξαιρετικά υψηλή ενεργό διατομή απορρόφησης νετρονίων. Για το λόγο αυτό η αντικατάστασή του με ενώσεις Βορίου, πολύ χαμηλότερης ενεργούς διατομή απορρόφησης, δεν μπορεί να παρέχει την ίδια διακύμανση ισχύος. Αυτό μπορεί να αντισταθμιστεί είτε με αύξηση της πίεσης ή με εμπλουτισμό των ενώσεων Βορίου σε ¹⁰Β. Στις περιπτώσεις που απαιτούνται υψηλότερες διαφορές των ακραίων τιμών ισχύος, οι διατάξεις μπορούν να συνδυαστούν με διακυμάνσεις της ισχύος του αντιδραστήρα ή με συστήματα μετατόπισης (RODEO).

Κεφάλαιο 3

Ποοσομοιώσεις Monte Carlo

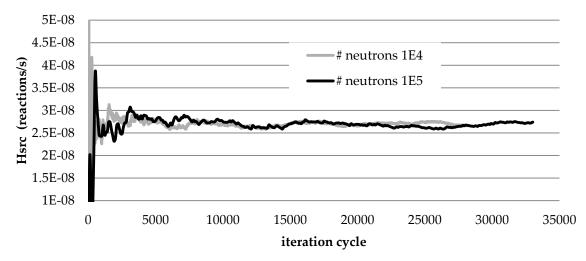
Το τρίτο κεφάλαιο επικεντρώνεται στις προσομοιώσεις Monte Carlo και συγκεκριμένα στο χρησιμοποιηθέν υπολογιστικό εργαλείο, το στοχαστικό κώδικα TRIPOLI-4.8 [Bru15], με τον οποίο πραγματοποιήθηκαν οι νετρονικοί υπολογισμοί της παρούσας διατριβής. Πρόκειται για νετρονικό κώδικα που έχει αναπτυχθεί για προσομοιώσεις πυρηνικών διαδικασιών και διεργασιών πυρηνικών αντιδραστήρων.

Η στατιστική φύση του κώδικα σε συνδυασμό με την ιδιαίτερα πολύπλοκη γεωμετρία του μοντέλου του JHR (Σχήμα 2) καθιστούν τον απαιτούμενο υπολογιστικό χρόνο αρκετά μεγάλο και σε πολλές περιπτώσεις απαγορευτικό. Προκειμένου να εκτελεστούν ταχύτερα οι υπολογισμοί, εκτελέστηκαν παράλληλα σε cluster υπολογιστών που διατίθεται στο ΕΚΕΦΕ «Δημόκριτος» (Thales cluster). Ακόμα, έπρεπε να γίνει ο απαραίτητος συμβιβασμός μεταξύ επιλεγείσας στατιστικής (αριθμός νετρονίων και αριθμός επαναλήψεων του υπολογισμού) και ακρίβειας. Οι κύριοι παράγοντες που εξασφαλίζουν την ακρίβεια και την αξιοπιστία του τελικού αποτελέσματος περιγράφονται στο ακόλουθο τρίπτυχο:

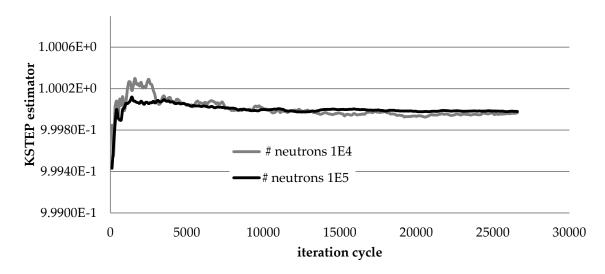
- Οι πηγές νετρονίων του συστήματος (σχάσεις) πρέπει να συγκλίνουν επαρκώς, επομένως, θα πρέπει να επιλεγεί ένας επαρκής αριθμός επαναλήψεων, Μ.
- Σε κάθε επανάληψη πρέπει να επιλεγεί ένας επαρκής αριθμός νετρονίων, N, προκειμένου να μειωθεί το στατιστικό σφάλμα στον συντελεστή πολλαπλασισμού k_{eff}.
- Πρέπει να γίνεται έγκαιρη αναγνώριση των σφαλμάτων του συντελεστή πολλαπλασιασμού, k_{eff}, και των υπολογισμών των ρυθμών αντιδράσεων (ή ροής), που μπορεί να προκύψουν.

Η επιλογή της πιο αποτελεσματικής (από την άποψη αξιοπιστίας και χρόνου του υπολογισμού) στατιστικής - συνδυασμός αριθμού νετρονίων, Ν, και αριθμού επαναλήψεων, Μ - προέκυψε από την πραγματοποίηση ευάριθμων υπολογισμών. Προκειμένου να διασφαλιστεί ότι ο αριθμός των πηγών νετρονίων (σχάσεις) στη στατιστική δεν έχει υποβαθμιστεί, υπολογίστηκε η τιμή του αδιάστατου μεγέθους της κατανομής της σχάσιμης πηγής, που παρέχεται από τον κώδικα και αναφέρεται ως εντροπία Shannon, H_{src} [Duf06, Bro09]. Μετά την επεξεργασία των αποτελεσμάτων προέκυψε ότι η στατιστική N=10⁴ και M=10⁴ είναι επαρκής ώστε να διασφαλίζεται η σύγκλιση των H_{src} και k_{eff} (Σχήμα 16, Σχήμα 17) και το στατιστικό σφάλμα του k_{eff} να είναι εντός επιτρεπτών ορίων. Όμως, παρά το γεγονός ότι η στατιστική αυτή προκύπτει από επαρκή αριθμό επαναλήψεων και επαρκές πλήθος νετρονίων, σε πολλές περιπτώσεις παρατηρήθηκε έντονη διακύμανση στα τελικά αποτελέσματα, που προέρχεται από τις έντονες διακυμάνσεις στα δεδομένα μικροσκοπικών διατομών στην περιοχή των αιχμών εκλεκτικής απορρόφησης [ENDF].

Για το λόγο αυτό, στους υπολογισμούς που επικεντρώνονταν στην απορροφητική ικανότητα των υλικών στην περιοχή των θερμικών ενεργειών, επιλέχθηκε μεγαλύτερη στατιστική ($N=10^5$ και $M=10^5$). Με αυτή τη στατιστική, τα σφάλματα των ρυθμών αντιδράσεων κυμαίνονται κατά κύριο λόγο κάτω του 10% (παρατηρούνται όμως και περιπτώσεις με σχετικό σφάλμα της τάξης του 20%) στην περιοχή των αιχμών συντονισμού.



Σχήμα 16: Μεταβολή της Εντροπίας Shannon, $\pmb{H_{src}}$,συναρτήσει του αριθμού επαναλήψεων για δεδομένες στατιστικές



Σχήμα 17: Μεταβολή του συντελεστή πολλαπλασιασμού, $\mathbf{k}_{\mathrm{eff}}$, συναρτήσει του αριθμού επαναλήψεων για δεδομένες στατιστικές

Κεφάλαιο 4

Εφαρμογή & Αποτελέσματα

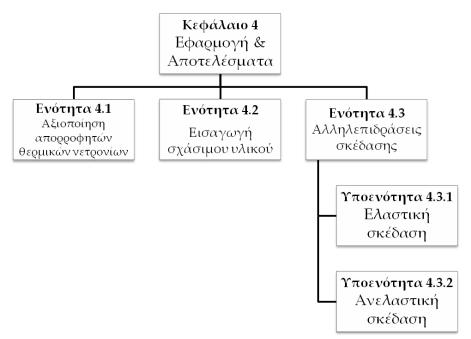
Στο κεφάλαιο αυτό παρουσιάζονται οι μέθοδοι που διερευνήθηκαν για την προσαρμογή του νετρονικού φάσματος που επικρατεί στην περιοχή του ανακλαστή του JHR (JHR-ανακλαστής) (Σχήμα 2). Το κεφάλαιο χωρίζεται σε τέσσερις βασικές ενότητες που παρουσιάζουν τα αποτελέσματα που προέκυψαν κατά την εξέταση της εισαγωγής διαφόρων νετρονικών πετασμάτων μέσα στον ανακλαστή του JHR.

Τα όρια της ενέργειας των νετρονίων σε έναν θερμικό αντιδραστήρα κυμαίνονται μεταξύ $1 \cdot 10^{-11}$ και 20 MeV, με το ενεργειακό εύρος $1 \cdot 10^{-9}$ - 10 MeV να έχει τη μεγαλύτερη σημασία. Οι σημαντικές αλληλεπιδράσεις νετρονίων που λαμβάνουν χώρα σε αυτό το ενεργειακό εύρος είναι: σύλληψη νετρονίων (ραδιενεργός σύλληψη και σχάση) και σκέδαση, ελαστική και ανελαστική (§A.3). Οι μέθοδοι προσαρμογής του φάσματος βασίζονται στην αξιοποίηση των αλληλεπιδράσεων νετρονίων. Όπως αναφέρθηκε στην βιβλιογραφική ανασκόπηση της υπάρχουσας σχετικής τεχνολογίας (§2.1), δύο μέθοδοι χρησιμοποιούνται για τη μετατροπή του θερμικού φάσματος σε φάσμα ταχέων νετρονίων:

- 1. χρήση απορροφητών που περιορίζουν ή εξαλείφουν τη συνιστώσα θερμικών νετρονίων και
- 2. εισαγωγή σχάσιμου υλικού στο εσωτερικό της συσκευής, ενισχύοντας έτσι την ταχεία συνιστώσα του φάσματος νετρονίων.

Και οι δύο μέθοδοι βασίζονται στις αλληλεπιδράσεις νετρονικής σύλληψης. Σ' αυτό το πλαίσιο, στην ενότητα §4.1 διερευνήθηκε αρχικά η εισαγωγή θερμικών απορροφητών στην εγκατάσταση ακτινοβόλησης του ανακλαστή του JHR. Η διαδικασία περιλάμβανε εκτεταμένη έρευνα θερμικών απορροφητών για τον καθορισμό των πιο αποδοτικών. Στην ενότητα §4.2, εξετάστηκε η επίδραση της εισαγωγής σχάσιμου υλικού στο φάσμα των νετρονίων. Ακολουθώντας τα παραπάνω βήματα, η μελέτη επικεντρώθηκε σε αλληλεπιδράσεις σκέδασης (§4.3) και πιο συγκεκριμένα, στην εύρεση υλικών που χαρακτηρίζονται από έντονη ελαστική (§4.3.1) και ανελαστική (§4.3.2) ενεργό διατομή σκέδασης στο επιθυμητό εύρος ενέργειας, δηλαδή μεταξύ 0.1 και 10 MeV. Αξίζει να υπογραμμιστεί ότι παρόμοια προσέγγιση του προβλήματος (αξιοποίηση των αλληλεπιδράσεων σκέδασης για την προσαρμογή του φάσματος) δεν έχει εντοπιστεί στο βιβλιογραφία. Η ροή του κεφαλαίου 4 απεικονίζεται στο Σχήμα 18.

Στα πλαίσια της παρούσας εκτενούς περίληψης, στις επόμενες ενότητες (που αντιστοιχούν στις ενότητες του κυρίως κειμένου στην αγγλική γλώσσα) συνοψίζονται τα βασικά σημεία μαζί με τα κύρια αποτελέσματα.



Σχήμα 18: Διάγραμμα ροής του 4ου κεφαλαίου

4.1 Αξιοποίηση απορροφητών θερμικών νετρονίων

Σύμφωνα με τη βιβλιογραφία (§2.1), η πιο κοινή μέθοδος, με την οποία ένα θερμικό φάσμα μπορεί να προσαρμοστεί σε ένα φάσμα ταχέος αντιδραστήρα, είναι η χρήση υλικών που παρουσιάζουν υψηλή ικανότητα σύλληψης νετρονίων στις θερμικές ενέργειες (<1eV). Στην παρούσα περίληψη, τα υλικά αυτά αναφέρονται ως «θερμικοί απορροφητές» ή απλώς «απορροφητές». Με την εγκατάσταση απορροφητών, η θερμική συνιστώσα του φάσματος περιορίζεται και ως εκ τούτου τα υπόλοιπα νετρόνια κατανέμονται κυρίως στις υψηλές και επιθερμικές ενέργειες. Για την πλήρη εξάλειψη του θερμικού νετρονικού στοιχείου, μπορούν να αξιοποιηθούν απορροφητές που χαρακτηρίζονται από πολύ υψηλή ικανότητα σύλληψης νετρονίων.

Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο, πραγματοποιήθηκε μία εκτεταμένη μελέτη των απορροφητών θερμικών νετρονίων και των επιπτώσεών τους στο θερμικό φάσμα αναφοράς (JHR ανακλαστή). Η διαδικασία περιελάμβανε μια ολοκληρωμένη έρευνα με όλα τα δυνητικά υποψήφια υλικά, προκειμένου να καθοριστούν τα πλέον αποτελεσματικά και κατάλληλα. Στον Πίνακα 2Πίνακας 2 παρατίθενται τα στοιχεία με τη μεγαλύτερη μικροσκοπική ενεργό διατομή απορρόφησης, σα, όπως αναφέρονται στη βιβλιογραφία. Η τελευταία στήλη του Πίνακα 2Πίνακας 2 περιέχει ένα σύντομο σχόλιο σχετικά με τα πιθανά μειονεκτήματα των υλικών, υποδεικνύοντας εάν το καθένα από αυτά είναι κατάλληλο ή όχι για χρήση. Όπως φαίνεται ανάμεσα στα υλικά του Πίνακα 2Πίνακας 2 βρίσκονται οι εξής ακτινίδες: Fm, Cf, Pu, Bk, Ac, Pa, Np και Es. Καθώς πρόκειται για σχάσιμα υλικά (ή υλικά που μπορούν να υποστούν σχάση) πρέπει να αποκλειστούν από τη λίστα των υποψηφίων απορροφητών καθώς θέτουν θέματα ασφαλείας. Ακόμα, οι σπάνιες γαίες Pm και Rh δεν επιλέχθηκαν να συμπεριληφθούν σε περαιτέρω μελέτη, καθώς το Pm δε συναντάται στη φύση (μπορεί να προκύψει ως προϊόν σχάσης του U), ενώ το Rh είναι ιδιαίτερα ακριβό. Τέλος, οι φυσικές ιδιότητες του Hg (υψηλή τοξικότητα, υψηλή πίεση ατμών ακόμη και σε θερμοκρασία δωματίου, χαμηλό σημείο βρασμού, παραγωγή επιβλαβών αερίων κατά τη θέρμανση, σχετικά χαμηλή θερμική αγωγιμότητα) δεν επιτρέπουν τη χρήση του στο εσωτερικό του αντιδραστήρα.

Με βάση τα παραπάνω, η έρευνα επικεντρώθηκε στα ακόλουθα στοιχεία: Gd, Eu, Cd, Dy, B, Ir, Er και Hf. Δεδομένου ότι η απορροφητική ικανότητα του στοιχείου προκύπτει από τη ικανότητα απορρόφησης των ισοτόπων του, αναζητήθηκαν τα ισότοπα που είναι υπεύθυνα για τη μεγάλη ενεργό διατομή απορρόφησης τους (Πίνακας 3). Στον Πίνακα 3 χρησιμοποιείται ο εξής χαρακτηρισμός της ενεργού διατομής απορρόφησης, $σ_a$, των ισοτόπων:

- εξαιρετικά υψηλή $(\sigma_a > 10^6 b)$,
- υψηλή $(10^6 b > \sigma_a > 10^5 b)$,
- μέτρια $(10^5 b > \sigma_a > 10^4 b)$ και
- χαμηλή $(10^4 b > \sigma_a > 10^3 b)$.

Οι τιμές των σ_a ελήφθησαν από τη βιβλιοθήκη JEFF-3.1.1 [Jac08, ENDF].

Πίνακας 2 Στοιχεία με τη μεγαλύτερη ενεργό διατομή απορρόφησης θερμικών νετρονίων [Mug73]

A/A	σ _α (barns)	Name	Sym	Atomic number	Reasons to reject
1	49000	Gadolinium	Gd	64	-
2	5922	Samarium	Sm	62	Poison
3	5800	Fermium	Fm	100	Large Z
4	4600	Europium	Eu	63	-
5	2900	Californium	Cf	98	Large Z
6	2450	Cadmium	Cd	48	-
7	1017.3	Plutonium	Pu	94	Large Z
8	920	Dysprosium	Dy	66	-
9	767	Boron	В	5	-
10	710	Berkelium	Bk	97	Large Z
11	515	Actinium	Ac	89	Large Z
12	425	Iridium	Ir	77	-
13	374	Mercury	Hg	80	Bad properties
14	200.6	Protactinium	Pa	91	Large Z
15	194	Indium	In	49	-
16	180	Neptunium	Np	93	Large Z
17	168.4	Promethium	Pm	61	Rare
18	160	Einsteinium	Es	99	Large Z
19	160	Erbium	Er	68	-
20	144.8	Rhodium	Rh	45	Rare
21	104	Hafnium	Hf	72	-

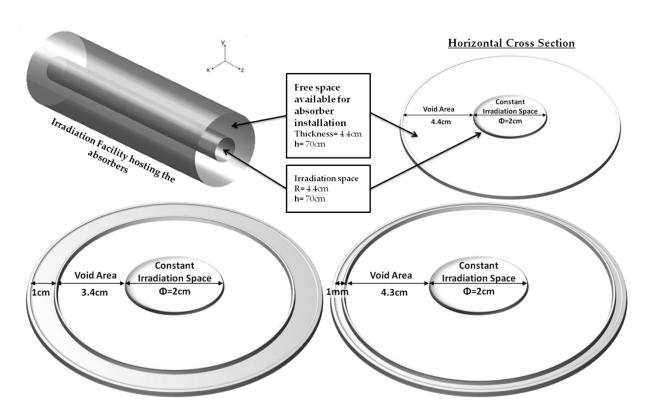
Πίνακας 3: Στοιχεία με μεγάλη ενεργό διατομή απορρόφησης θερμικών νετρονίων [ENDF, Hyn15, Wie13a, Wie13b]

(b)		-	1	Density g/cm ³			 Sotopes	in mixture %	Isotope absorbing capability*		
		Symbol	Atomic No.	Α	T _{melt}	T_{boil}		70		н м	L
							^{152}G	0.2		X	
							¹⁵⁴ G	2.18			X
							155 G	14.8	x		
49000	Gadolinium	Gd	64	7.9	1313	3250	156G	20.47			
							¹⁵⁷ G	15.65	x		
							¹⁵⁸ G	24.84			
							^{160}G	21.86			
4.500		_		·	000	1.505	¹⁵¹ E	47.8	3	K	
4600	Europium	Eu	63	5.24	822	1527	153E	52.92		X	
							106	1.25			
							108C	0.89			
							¹¹⁰ C	12.49			
				8. 65			¹¹¹ C	12.8			
2450	Cadmium	Cd	48		321	767	¹¹² C	24.13			
							113 _C	12.22			
							¹¹⁴ C	28.73			
							¹¹⁶ C	7.49			
							156D	0.06			X
							158 D	0.1			X
							^{160}D	2.34			X
920	Dysprosium	Dy	66	8.55	1412	2567	161 D	18.91		X	
/_0							$^{162}\mathrm{D}$	25.51		X	
							¹⁶³ D	24.9			X
							$^{164}{ m D}$	28.18	3	K	
							¹⁰ B	19.9	y	K	
767	Boron	В	5	2.46	2075	4000	¹¹ B	80.1			
							191 _{Tm}	37.3		X	
425	Iridium	Ir	77	22.56	2466	4428	193 I r	62.7			X
							¹¹³ In	4.29			
194	Indium	In	49	7.31	157	2072	115 In	95.71		X	
							¹⁶² Er	0.14			
							¹⁶⁴ Er	1.61			
							¹⁶⁶ Er	33.61			
160	Erbium	Er	68	9.066	1497	2868	167Er	22.93		x	
							¹⁶⁸ Er	26.78			
							170Er	14.93			
	Hafnium		f 72	13.31		4603	174H	0.16		x	
		afnium Hf			2233		п ¹⁷⁶ Н	5.26			
							н ¹⁷⁷ Н			x	
104							178H	18.6			X
104											Δ
104							179H	27.28 13.62			X

Isotope absorbing capability* :E--extreme, H--high, M--medium, L--low

Η μελέτη κατέληξε στο παρακάτω σύνολο ισοτόπων-θερμικών απορροφητών: ¹⁵⁵Gd και ¹⁵⁷Gd, Gd, ¹⁵¹Eu, Eu, ¹¹³Cd, ¹⁶⁴Dy, Dy, ¹⁹¹Ir, ¹¹⁵In, ¹⁶⁷Er, ¹⁷⁷Hf και Hf. Αν και στη πλειοψηφία τους τα εξεταζόμενα υλικά είναι γνωστά σε ικανοποιητικό βαθμό καθώς πρόκειται για υλικά που χρησιμοποιούνται ευρέως στην τεχνολογία των πυρηνικών αντιδραστήρων, η κατάταξή τους από την άποψη της ικανότητας νετρονικής απορρόφησης δεν είναι καλά ορισμένη. Για αυτό το λόγο, το αποτέλεσμα της παραπάνω έρευνας είναι ζωτικής σημασίας στα πλαίσια του σχεδιασμού μίας τελικής συσκευής, καθώς το πάχος του απορροφητή απαιτείται να διατηρηθεί όσο το δυνατόν μικρότερο για οικονομία χώρου. Εκτός από τη διαθεσιμότητα χώρου στην εγκατάσταση, περιορισμούς σχετικά με το πάχος του απορροφητή θέτει και η παραγωγή θερμότητας (προερχόμενη κυρίως από γάμμα-ακτινοβολία αλλά και από νετρονικές αλληλεπιδράσεις) στον απορροφητή.

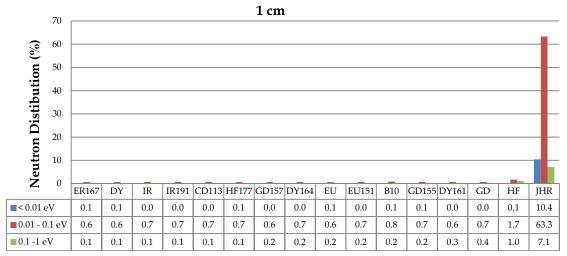
Προκειμένου να μελετηθεί η επίδραση των απορροφητών στο φάσμα αναφοράς (JHR ανακλαστής), διάφορες σειρές υπολογισμών πραγματοποιήθηκαν. Οι απορροφητές ορίστηκαν κυλινδρικού σχήματος, ενώ θεωρήθηκαν δύο διαφορετικά πάχη, 1cm και 1mm (Σχήμα 19).



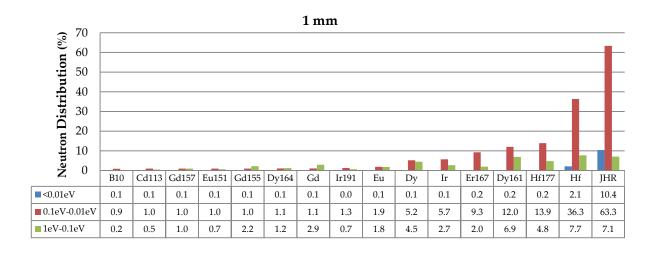
Σχήμα 19: Σχηματική αναπαράσταση της διάταξης των απορροφητών πάχους 1cm και 1mm.

Στα επόμενα σχήματα απεικονίζεται ο πληθυσμός θερμικών νετρονίων μετά τη χρήση νετρονικών πετασμάτων πάχους 1cm (Σχήμα 20) και 1mm (Σχήμα 21). Διαπστώνεται ότι όλα τα υλικά που εξετάστηκαν ήταν ικανά να παρέχουν ισχυρή μείωση της συνιστώσας των θερμικών νετρονίων, ακόμη και όταν το πάχος τους ορίστηκε στο 1mm (Σχήμα 22).

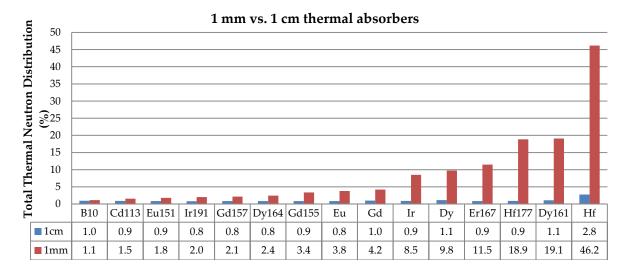
Στις περισσότερες περιπτώσεις, το φάσμα νετρονίων συνοδεύεται από μια ισχυρή συνιστώσα χαμηλών επιθερμικών νετρονίων. Ωστόσο, χρησιμοποιώντας νετρονικά πετάσματα ¹⁰B, ¹⁵¹Eu και Eu (υλικά με μεγάλη ενεργό διατομή απορρόφησης στις επιθερμικές ενέργειες), προκύπτει μία κατανομή νετρονίων σχεδόν απαλλαγμένη όχι μόνο από θερμικά αλλά και από επιθερμικά νετρόνια χαμηλών ενεργειών (Σχήμα 23).



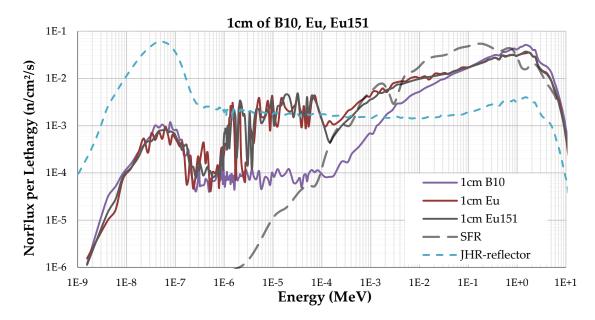
Σχήμα 20: Πληθυσμός θερμικών νετρονίων μετά τη χρήση νετρονικών πετασμάτων πάχους 1cm



Σχήμα 21: Πληθυσμός θερμικών νετρονίων μετά τη χρήση νετρονικών πετασμάτων πάχους 1mm



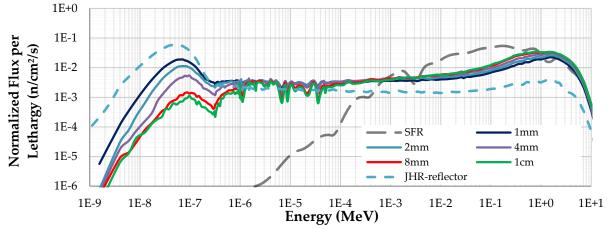
Σχήμα 22: Πληθυσμός θερμικών νετρονίων μετά τη χρήση νετρονικών πετασμάτων πάχους 1cm (μπλε) και 1mm (κόκκινο)



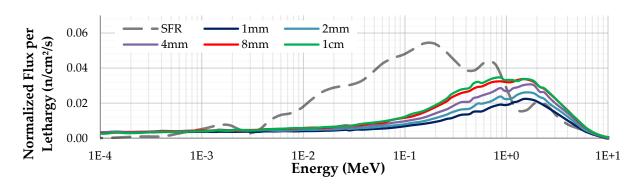
Σχήμα 23: Επίδραση των νετρονικών πετασμάτων 10 B, 151 Eu και Eu, πάχους 1cm, στο φάσμα αναφοράς (JHR-reflector).

4.2 Εισαγωγή ενισχυτικού σχάσιμου υλικού

Ακολουθώντας τις μεθόδους που αναφέρονται στη βιβλιογραφία, διερευνήθηκε η προσθήκη καυσίμου (ουράνιο 20% εμπλουτισμένο σε ²³⁵U) εντός του ανακλαστή του JHR. Συγκεκριμένα, μελετήθηκε η μεταβολή της νετρονικής κατανομής μετά την εισαγωγή σχάσιμου υλικού αυξανομένου πάχους (0.1mm έως 1cm). Όπως ήταν αναμενόμενο, η αύξηση της πυκνότητας των σχάσιμων πυρήνων ενίσχυσε την συνιστώσα του ταχέος φάσματος, η οποία έχει τη μορφή του φάσματος της σχάσης, με πιθανότερη ενέργεια νετρονίων ~0.7 MeV²⁰ (Σχήμα 24. Ακόμα, καθώς καταναλώνονται θερμικά νετρόνια για τις αλληλεπιδράσεις της σχάσης, το ποσοστό των θερμικών νετρονίων μειώνεται ανάλογα με την πυκνότητα (μεταβολή πάχους) του σχάσιμου υλικού. Ταυτόχρονα, το μέγιστο της ροής των ταχέων νετρονίων μετατοπίζεται διαδοχικά σε χαμηλότερες ενέργειες (Σχήμα 25). Ωστόσο, ακόμη και στην περίπτωση εισαγωγής σχάσιμου υλικού πάχους 1cm (ακραία περίπτωση), η προκύπτουσα νετρονική κατανομή απέτυχε να αναπαράξει το φάσμα ενός SFR.



Σχήμα 24: Επίδραση του σχάσιμου υλικού μεταβλητού πάχους (0.1, 0.2, 0.4, 0.8 και 1 cm) στο φάσμα αναφοράς (JHR-reflector). Λογαριθμική κλίμακα

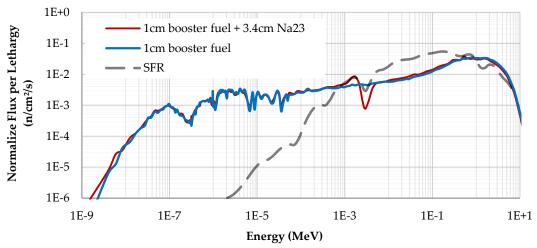


Σχήμα 25: Επίδραση του σχάσιμου υλικού μεταβλητού πάχους (0.1 , 0.2, 0.4, 0.8 και 1 cm) στο φάσμα αναφοράς (JHR-reflector).

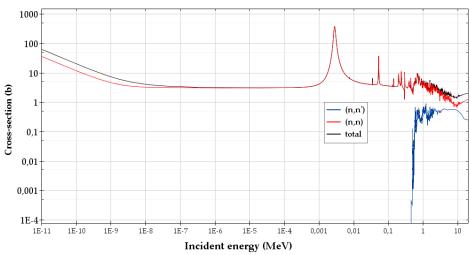
 $^{^{20}}$ Η πιθανότερη ενέργεια των νετρονίων της σχάσης είναι 0.75 MeV περίπου και η μέση τιμή της ενέργειας των νετρονίων της σχάσης είναι 2 MeV περίπου [Lew08]

Η παρουσία του 23 Nα στους SFR είναι κύριος παράγοντας πού προκαλεί τη μετατόπιση του μέγιστου της ροής σε χαμηλότερες ενέργειες (~ 200 keV) σε σχέση με τα φάσματα άλλων FRs (~0.75 MeV).

Η αντικατάσταση του κενού χώρου με ²³Na στο εσωτερικό της εγκατάστασης είχε ως μόνο αποτέλεσμα την πτώση της νετρονικής ροής στην ενέργεια των ~3keV (Σχήμα 26), όπου βρίσκεται η αντίστοιχη ελαστική σκέδαση συντονισμού του ²³Na (Σχήμα 27). Προφανώς, η ποσότητα του ²³Na, παρότι σημαντική σε σχέση με το σχάσιμο υλικό (3.4 cm ²³Na έναντι 1cm σχάσιμου υλικού) δεν ήταν επαρκής για την προσομοίωση ενός περιβάλλοντος SFR, μέσω των ελαστικών και ανελαστικών αλληλεπιδράσεων του ²³Na με τα νετρόνια.



Σχήμα 26: Επίδραση της εισαγωγής ²³Na (κόκκινη καμπύλη) στο φάσμα αναφοράς (JHR-reflector).



Σχήμα 27: Ολική, ελαστική και ανελαστική μικροσκοπική ενεργός διατομή σκέδασης του ²³Na.

4.3 Αλληλεπιδράσεις σκέδασης

Η προσαρμογή του φάσματος μπορεί να επιτευχθεί με την ενίσχυση του λόγου ταχέων/θερμικών νετρονίων. Αυτό πραγματοποιείταιείτε με την εισαγωγή υλικών που απορροφούν αποτελεσματικά τα θερμικά νετρόνια ή με την προσθήκη σχάσιμου υλικού, ενισχύοντας έτσι την συνιστώσα των ταχέων νετρονίων. Οι τεχνικές αυτές μελετήθηκαν ξεχωριστά στις ενότητες §4.1 και §4.2. Τα αποτελέσματα έδειξαν ότι παρόλο που αυτές οι τεχνικές μπορούν να χρησιμοποιηθούν για τη μετατροπή ενός θερμικού φάσματος σε φάσμα ταχέων νετρονίων, αποτυγχάνουν στην προσομοίωση ενός SFR φάσματος. Με αυτό το δεδομένο, η εργασία οδηγήθηκε στην προσαρμογή του φάσματος κάνοντας χρήση των στοιχείων που χαρακτηρίζονται από έντονη ελαστική (§4.3.1) και ανελαστική (§4.3.2) μικροσκοπική ενεργό διατομή σκέδασης στο επιθυμητό εύρος ενέργειας: 0.1-10 MeV.

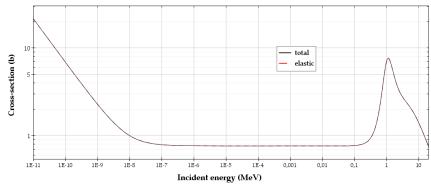
4.3.1 Ελαστική σκέδαση

Προκειμένου να εξεταστεί η δυνατότητα προσαρμογής του φάσματος με τη βοήθεια της ελαστικής αλληλεπίδρασης, διεξήχθη υπολογιστική μελέτη ενός απλού πειράματος σκέδασης κατά το οποίο ένας στόχος ⁴He ακτινοβολείται από μία ισοτροπική σημειακή πηγή νετρονίων με γραμμική κατανομή ενέργειας μεταξύ 1·10⁻¹¹ και 20 MeV²¹. Η προσομοίωση και ο υπολογισμός της κατανομής της ροής νετρονίων που διαπερνούν το στόχο πραγματοποιήθηκε με το στογαστικό κώδικα TRIPOLI-4.8. Το ⁴He είναι ένα από τα πολύ λίγα στοιχεία που αλληλεπιδρούν με τα νετρόνια μόνο με ελαστική σκέδαση (Σχήμα 28), καθώς το σωματίδιο άλφα έχει πολύ ισχυρούς δεσμούς εξωτερικής στιβάδας, με αποτέλεσμα να μην παρουσιάζει διεγερμένες καταστάσεις κάτω από τα 20 MeV [Mor69]. Επιπλέον, η ελαστική ενεργός διατομή του εμφανίζει μια κορυφή στο 1 MeV περίπου (Σχήμα 28). Με αυτά τα δεδομένα, διερευνήθηκε η επίδραση της παρεμβολής του ⁴He στο φάσμα αναφοράς. Δεδομένου ότι η πυκνότητα του ⁴He είναι εξαιρετικά χαμηλή (0.1786 g/l), επιλέχθηκε για το πείραμα η πυκνότητα του υγρού ⁴He (3 τάξεις μεγέθους πυκνότερο). Στο Σχήμα 29 απεικονίζεται το προφίλ της ροής νετρονίων μετά την ακτινοβόληση του υγρού ⁴Ηε σε όλο το εύρος ενεργειών (συμπεριλαμβάνονται και τα αποτελέσματα από το αέριο ⁴He). Το φάσμα νετρονίων είναι κανονικοποιημένο. Στο ενεργειακό τμήμα που αντιστοιχεί στην κορυφή της ελαστικής σκέδασης του ⁴He παρατηρείται αντίστοιχη πτώση της ροής. Επιπλέον, σε πολύ χαμηλές ενέργειες (<1 E-7 MeV), όπου η ενεργός διατομή σκέδασης του ⁴He είναι υψηλή, παρατηρείται αντίστοιχη μείωση (Σχήμα 29). Υπογραμμίζεται ότι οι διακυμάνσεις στο φάσμα οφείλονται σε στατιστικές αβεβαιότητες.

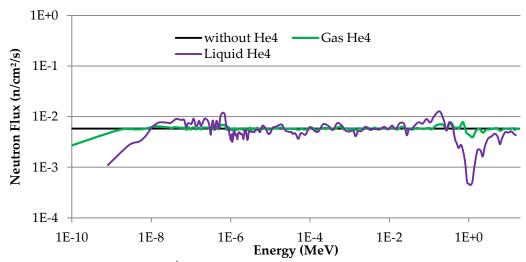
 Ω ς επόμενο βήμα, πραγματοποιήθηκε η εισαγωγή υγρού ⁴He, πάχους 3cm, στην περιοχή ακτινοβόλησης του JHR ανακλαστή. Η επίδρασή του υγρού ⁴He στο φάσμα του JHR-ανακλαστή περιορίστηκε στο ενεργειακό τμήμα που αντιστοιχεί στην κορυφή της ελαστικής σκέδασης του ⁴He (Σχήμα 30).

-

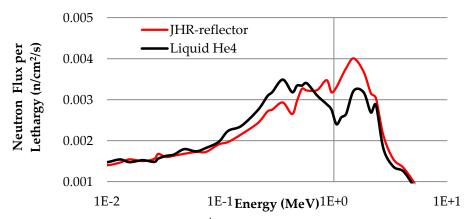
 $^{^{21}}$ Αυτό το εύρος ενεργειών αντιστοιχεί στα ενεργειακά όρια των θερμικών αντιδραστήρων



Σχήμα 28: Ολική και ελαστική μικροσκοπική ενεργός διατομή του ⁴He

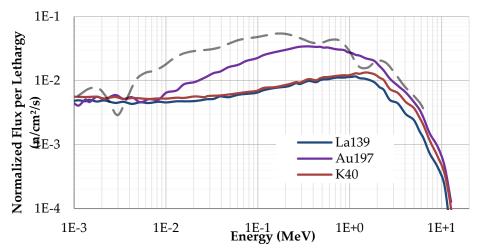


Σχήμα 29: Επίδραση του αέριου 4 Ηε στο φάσμα αναφοράς (σημειακή πηγή νετρονίων με γραμμική κατανομή ενέργειας μεταξύ $1\cdot 10^{11}$ και 20 MeV)

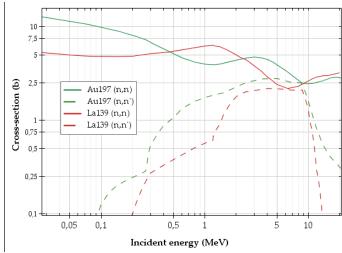


Σχήμα 30: Επίδραση του υγρού ⁴He στο φάσμα αναφοράς (JHR reflector).

Τα αποτελέσματα των προηγουμένων υπολογισμών υπέδειξαν ότι υλικά που παρουσιάζουν έντονες ελαστικές ενεργές διατομές στο ενεργειακό εύρος ενδιαφέροντος, δηλαδή έντονη κορυφή γύρω από το 1MeV, θα μπορούσαν να χρησιμοποιηθούν για την επιθυμητή προσαρμογή του φάσματος νετρονίων. Τα στοιχεία που βρέθηκαν στη βιβλιογραφία να χαρακτηρίζονται από ελαστική σκέδαση, παρόμοια με αυτή του ⁴He, στο επιθυμητό εύρος ενέργειας είναι: ³⁶S, ³⁷Cl, ⁴⁰Ar, ³⁹K, ⁴⁰K, ⁴⁸Ca, ¹³⁸Ba, ¹³⁹La και ¹⁹⁷Au. Από αυτά μόνο τα ισότοπα ¹³⁹La και ¹⁹⁷Au προκάλεσαν προσαρμογή του φάσματος, με το αποτέλεσμα του ¹³⁹La να είναι μάλλον αμελητέο (Σχήμα 31). Αξίζει να σημειωθεί ότι η έντονη επίδραση της παρεμβολής του ισοτόπου ¹⁹⁷Au στο φάσμα ήταν αποτέλεσμα όχι μόνο της ελαστικής αλλά και της ανελαστικής σκέδασης με κατώφλι ενέργειας της τάξης του 0.1MeV (Σχήμα 32). Στο αποτέλεσμα συνέβαλε ακόμα και η πυκνότητα του ¹⁹⁷Au (3 φορές μεγαλύτερη από αυτή του ¹³⁹La), καθώς και τα δύο ισότοπα, ¹³⁹La και ¹⁹⁷Au, έχουν αρκετά παραπλήσιες τιμές ελαστικής και ανελαστικής μικροσκοπικής ενεργού διατομής σκέδασης (Σχήμα 32).



Σχήμα 31: Επίδραση των νετρονικών πετασμάτων 197 Au, 139 La και 40 K, πάχους 3cm, στο φάσμα αναφοράς (JHR-reflector).



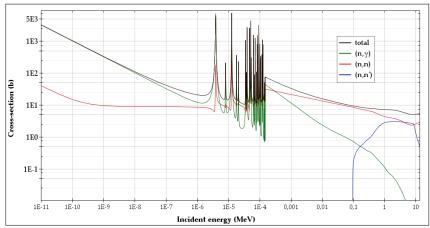
Σχήμα 32: Ελαστική και ανελαστική μικροσκοπική ενεργός διατομή σκέδασης των ¹⁹⁷ Au και ¹³⁹ La.

4.3.2 Ανελαστική σκέδαση

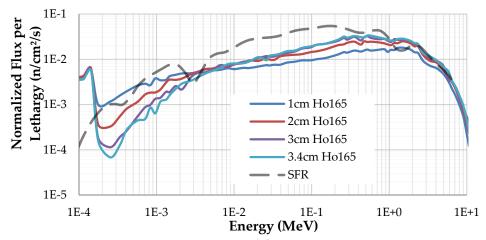
Στην παρούσα ενότητα - και σε συνέχεια της ενότητας §4.3.1 - διερευνήθηκε η δυνατότητα προσαρμογής του φάσματος αξιοποιώντας υλικά που χαρακτηρίζονται από έντονες ανελαστικές αλληλεπιδράσεις στο επιθυμητό εύρος ενέργειας (0.1-10 MeV). Το γεγονός ότι οι ανελαστικές σκεδάσεις είναι λιγότερο πιθανές αλληλεπιδράσεις (μέγιστη τιμή ενεργού διατομής ανελαστικής σκέδασης ~ 5b, ενώ για τα περισσότερα νουκλίδια ~1b) είναι ένα μειονέκτημα που μπορεί να αντισταθμιστεί με την εισαγωγή υλικών σε σημαντικές ποσότητες.

Η εισαγωγή ενός ισοτόπου που παρουσιάζει ανελαστική σκέδαση στην επιθυμητή ενέργεια, όπως αυτό του ¹⁶⁵Ho, στην περιοχή ακτινοβόλησης του JHR-ανακλαστή, είχε ως αποτέλεσμα την δημιουργία ενός φάσματος ταχέος αντιδραστήρα με το μέγιστο της κατανομής των νετρονίων να είναι μετατοπισμένο προς χαμηλότερες ενέργειες. Το κανάλι ανελαστικής σκέδασης νετρονίων του ¹⁶⁵Ho ανοίγει στα 0.1 MeV και η τιμή της ανελαστικής ενεργού διατομής του στο 1 MeV είναι ~3b (Σχήμα 33).

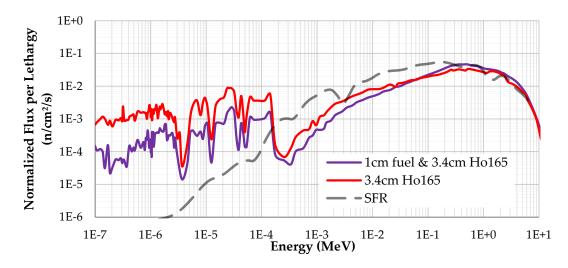
Δοκιμάζοντας διαφορετικά πάχη ¹⁶⁵Ho (1cm, 2cm, 3cm and 3.4cm) στο νετρονικό πέτασμα, βρέθηκε ότι η εισαγωγή ¹⁶⁵Ho, πάχους 3.4 cm, ήταν σε θέση να μετατοπίσει την κορυφή του φάσματος αναφοράς στις υψηλές ενέργειες από το 1MeV στο 0.355 (Σχήμα 34). Θα πρέπει να τονιστεί ότι στο τελικό αποτέλεσμα συμβάλλουν και οι δύο αλληλεπιδράσεις σκέδασης του ¹⁶⁵Ho, ελαστική και ανελαστική. Επιπλέον, η περιοχή συντονισμού του ¹⁶⁵Ho που παρατηρείται γύρω στα 100 eV (Σχήμα 33), προκαλεί αντίστοιχη πτώση της ροής στο φάσμα των νετρονίων, διαμορφώνοντας έτσι μία καμπύλη κατανομής νετρονίων που προσεγγίζει σε αρκετά αποδεκτό βαθμό την επιθυμητή κατανομή του SFR. Ωστόσο, κάτω από τα 100 eV, παρατηρείται μια έντονη (ανεπιθύμητη) παρουσία επιθερμικών νετρονίων. Σε συνέχεια των παραπάνω μελετήθηκε η προσθήκη σχάσιμου υλικού στη διάταξη. Ο συνδυασμός του ¹⁶⁵Ho με 1cm σχάσιμου υλικού είχε ως αποτέλεσμα μια ελαφρά αλλοίωση της μορφής της κατανομής νετρονίων στις υψηλότερες ενέργειες (Σχήμα 35). Επιπλέον, παρατηρείται μείωση της συνιστώσας των επιθερμικών νετρονίων.



Σχήμα 33: Ελαστική και ανελαστική μικροσκοπική ενεργός διατομή σκέδασης $^{165} \text{Ho}$

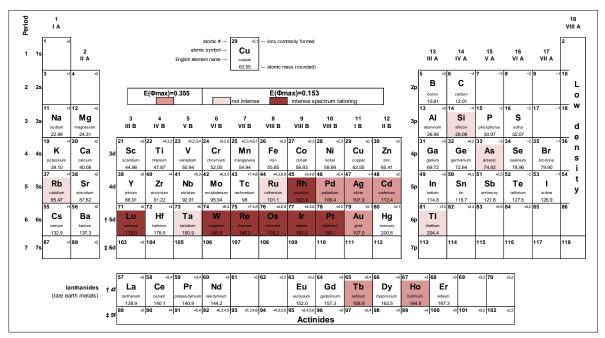


Σχήμα 34: Επίδραση των νετρονικών πετασμάτων ¹⁶⁵Ηο διαφορετικού πάχους (1, 2, 3, 3.4cm) στο φάσμα αναφοράς (JHR-reflector).



Σχήμα 35: Σύγκριση της επίδρασης του νετρονικού πετάσματος 165 Ho, πάχους 3.4cm, στο φάσμα αναφοράς (JHR-reflector) με (μωβ καμπύλη) και χωρίς σχάσιμο υλικό 1cm (κόκκινη καμπύλη).

επιτυχές Μετά αποτέλεσμα αξιοποίησης νετρονικού πετάσματος το της πραγματοποιήθηκε διερεύνηση περαιτέρω δυνητικών ανελαστικών σκεδαστών. Πραγματοποιήθηκε μεγάλος αριθμός υπολογισμών με 57 διαφορετικά στοιχεία (στη φυσική τους σύνθεση). Όπως και στην περίπτωση του 165 Ηο, όλα τα πετάσματα θεωρήθηκαν πάχους 3.4cm. Το Σχήμα 36 παρουσιάζει τα στοιχεία του περιοδικού πίνακα που δοκιμάστηκαν στο πλαίσιο της διερεύνησης. Οι αποχρώσεις του κόκκινου έχουν χρησιμοποιηθεί για να αναδείξουν τα στοιχεία με τα οποία επετεύχθη το καλύτερο αποτέλεσμα. Με σκούρο κόκκινο σημειώνονται τα υλικά που παρείχαν τη μεγαλύτερη μετατόπιση του μέγιστου της ροής στα 0.153 MeV (από τα 0.755 MeV όπου παρατηρείται το μέγιστο της ροής στο φάσμα αναφοράς), ενώ κόκκινο χρησιμοποιείται για τα υλικά με τα οποία το μέγιστο μετατοπίστηκε στα 0.355 MeV (αμέσως επόμενη καλύτερη περίπτωση). Το ανοιχτό κόκκινο αφορά στα υλικά που ενώ μετατόπισαν το μέγιστο της ροής στα 0.153 MeV, η συνολική τους επίδραση στο φάσμα ήταν αμελητέα. Στο Σχήμα 37 απεικονίζεται η επίδραση των νετρονικών πετασμάτων Ir, Os και Re πάχους 3.4 cm, στο φάσμα αναφοράς (JHR-ανακλαστής) με τα οποία πραγματοποιήθηκε η μέγιστη μετατόπιση του μέγιστου της ροής προς τις χαμηλότερες ενέργειες ($E(\Phi_{\text{max}}) = 0.153 \text{ MeV}$) και η βέλτιστη προσαρμογή του φάσματος.

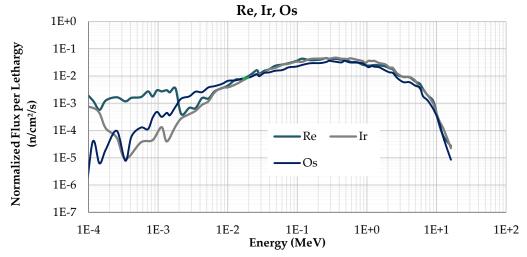


Σχήμα 36: Τα υλικά που μελετήθηκαν: αποχρώσεις του κόκκινου χρησιμοποιούνται για να υποδείξουν τα υλικά με τα οποία επετεύχθη το καλύτερο αποτέλεσμα. Σκούρο κόκκινο χρησιμοποιείται για τα υλικά με τα οποία το μέγιστο μετατοπίστηκε στα 0.153MeV, ενώ κόκκινο χρησιμοποιείται για τα υλικά με τα οποία το μέγιστο μετατοπίστηκε στα 0.355MeV (αμέσως επόμενη καλύτερη περίπτωση). Το ανοιχτό κόκκινο αφορά στα υλικά που ενώ μετατόπισαν το μέγιστο της ροής στα 0.153MeV, η συνολική τους επίδραση στο φάσμα ήταν αμελητέα.

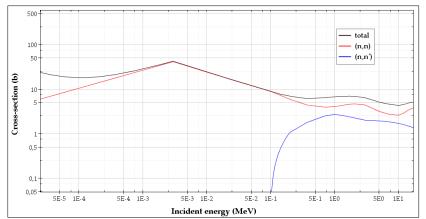
Από τα αποτελέσματα συμπεραίνεται ότι η εφαρμογή υλικών με σημαντική ανελαστική σκέδαση μπορεί να παρέχει αποτελεσματική μετατόπιση του νετρονικού φάσματος. Οι παράγοντες που συμβάλλουν στο αποτέλεσμα περιλαμβάνουν την πυκνότητα και τις τιμές της ενεργού διατομής ανελαστικής σκέδασης, σ_i, του υλικού καθώς και τις ενεργειακές περιοχές στις οποίες λαμβάνει χώρα η ανελαστική σκέδαση. Σε ενδεχόμενη πρόταση συσκευής ικανής να επιτύχει την απαιτούμενη τροποποίηση του φάσματος, όλοι οι παραπάνω παράγοντες θα πρέπει να εξετάζονται χωριστά.

Συμπληρωματικά προς τα προαναφερθέντα αποτελέσματα, διερευνήθηκε η δυνατότητα επιπλέον μετατόπισης του μέγιστου της ροής σε χαμηλότερες ενέργειες. Για την εύρεση στοιχείων με χαρακτηριστική ανελαστική ενεργό διατομή σε χαμηλότερες ενέργειες (<1MeV

περίπου), εξετάστηκε περαιτέρω η βιβλιοθήκη JEFF-3.1. Στο Σχήμα 39 παρουσιάζονται τρεις περιπτώσεις συνδυασμού υλικών ¹⁶⁰Tb και Os. Διαπιστώνεται ότι ο συνδυασμός υλικών που χαρακτηρίζονται από διαφορετικές ανελαστικές σκεδάσεις με διαφορετικά κατώφλια ενέργειας μπορεί να προκαλέσει περαιτέρω μετατόπιση του μέγιστου της ροής προς τις χαμηλότερες ενέργειες. Το κανάλι ανελαστικής σκέδασης του ισοτόπου ¹⁶⁰Tb ανοίγει στα 0.1MeV και παρουσιάζει χαρακτηριστική ανελαστική ενεργό διατομή σκέδασης μεγαλύτερη του 1b στα ~0.5 MeV (Σχήμα 38). Το ισότοπο ¹⁶⁰Tb δεν απαντάται φυσικά²² αλλά μπορεί να παραχθεί με γάμμα ακτινοβόληση του ¹⁵⁹Tb, το οποίο είναι το μοναδικό ισότοπο του Tb.



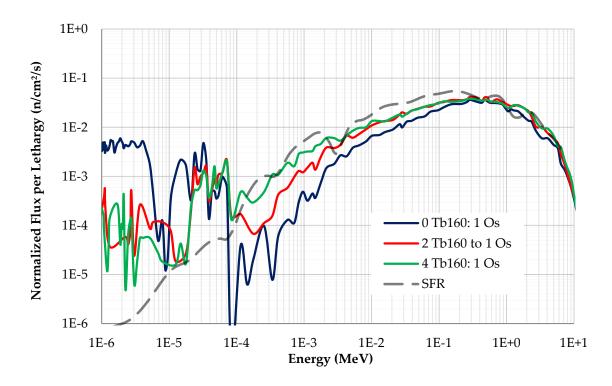
Σχήμα 37: Επίδραση των νετρονικών πετασμάτων Ir, Os και Re πάχους 3.4cm, στο φάσμα αναφοράς (JHR-reflector). Τα υλικά αυτά πέτυχαν τη βέλτιστη προσαρμογή του μέγιστου της ροής στα 0.153MeV



Σχήμα 38: Ολική, ελαστική και ανελαστική μικροσκοπική ενεργός διατομή του ¹⁶⁰Tb

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 $^{^{22}}$ Αν και η χρήση των 160 Τb μπορεί να μην είναι εφικτή, χρησιμοποιήθηκε σε αυτή τη μελέτη για ακαδημαϊκούς λόγους.



Σχήμα 39: Περαιτέρω μετατόπιση του μέγιστου της ροής προς χαμηλότερες ενέργειες με τη χρήση συνδυασμού ανελαστικών σκεδαστών (160 Tb και Os)

Κεφάλαιο 5

Επίλογος

5.1 Ενδεικτικός σχεδιασμός της συσκευής

Τα ευρήματα αυτής της εργασίας οδήγησαν στα ακόλουθα συμπεράσματα:

- Οι απορροφητές θερμικών νετρονίων, ακόμη και με πολύ μικρό πάχος (π.χ. 1mm), μπορούν να πετύχουν σημαντική αποκοπή της συνιστώσας των θερμικών νετρονίων. Εντούτοις, μπορούν να χρησιμεύσουν για την επίτευξη ενός φάσματος νετρονίων FR, αλλά όχι ενός SFR.
- Η προσθήκη σχάσιμου υλικού ενισχύει το φάσμα στις υψηλές ενέργειες και αυξάνει τις τιμές της ροής, αλλά δεν βοηθά να αναπαραχθεί ένα φάσμα SFR.
- Με τη χρήση πυκνών υλικών που χαρακτηρίζονται από ισχυρή ανελαστική σκέδαση σε ενέργειες ~1 MeV, μπορεί να τροποποιηθεί ένα θερμικό φάσμα νετρονίων και να προσεγγίσει σε πολύ ικανοποιητικό βαθμό το τυπικό φάσμα ενός SFR.

Στην τελική διαμόρφωση της συσκευής που θα αξιοποιεί τα παρόντα αποτελέσματα, θα πρέπει να ληφθούν υπόψη οι προδιαγραφές του πειράματος. Παρά το γεγονός ότι μόνο η εισαγωγή ενός από τα μέταλλα, που παρουσιάστηκαν στην παράγραφο 4.3.2, αρκεί για την προσομοίωση ενός SFR φάσματος, διαφορετικοί συνδυασμοί μπορούν να ικανοποιήσουν - στο βέλτιστο βαθμό - τις απαιτήσεις ακτινοβόλησης του πειράματος:

- 1. ανελαστικός σκεδαστής/ές: Όπως αναφέρεται στην §4.3.2.6, η αξιοποίηση περισσότερων του ενός ανελαστικών σκεδαστών μπορεί να παρέχει μια επιπλέον ρύθμιση της τελικής νετρονικής κατανομής και πιο συγκεκριμένα, τη μετατόπιση της μέγιστης ροής νετρονίων σε χαμηλότερες ενέργειες, αυξάνοντας έτσι τη συνιστώσα νετρονίων υψηλών επιθερμικών ενεργειών.
- 2. θερμικός απορροφητής ανελαστικός σκεδαστής/ές: Ένας θερμικός απορροφητής μπορεί να χρησιμοποιηθεί στην τελική συσκευή ώστε να μειωθεί ή να εξαλειφθεί πλήρως η συνιστώσα των θερμικών νετρονίων. Ανάλογα με τον σκεδαστή, θα προσδιοριστεί ο κατάλληλος θερμικός απορροφητής (υλικό και πάχος). Για παράδειγμα, η χρήση των Β και Ευ επιτρέπει την ελαχιστοποίηση των επιθερμικών νετρονίων χαμηλών ενεργειών. Το πάχος του απορροφητή μπορεί να ποικίλει (δεδομένου ότι ακόμη και 1mm είναι αρκετό για να επιφέρει σημαντική μείωση της συνιστώσας των θερμικών νετρονίων) και να προσδιορίζεται κύρια σε συνάρτηση με τον επιθυμητό χρόνο εξάντλησης του υλικού του πετάσματος

- 3. σχάσιμο υλικό- ανελαστικός σκεδαστής/ές: Η προσθήκη σχάσιμου υλικού εξυπηρετεί όταν απαιτούνται (από τις προδιαγραφές του πειράματος) υψηλές τιμές ροής ταχέων νετρονίων. Ωστόσο, η χρήση του συνοδεύεται με πρόσθετα θέματα ασφαλείας που πρέπει να εξεταστούν προσεκτικά²³.
- 4. θερμικός απορροφητής σχάσιμο υλικό ανελαστικός σκεδαστής/ές: Συνδυασμός όλων των παραπάνω.

Ο σχεδιασμός της διάταξης βασίζεται σε αποτελέσματα νετρονικών υπολογισμών. Τα φάσματα των νετρονίων και φωτονίων αποτελούν τη βάση για τον υπολογισμό των πυρηνικών αντιδράσεων ενδιαφέροντος (όπως εναπόθεση ενέργειας, θωράκιση, βλάβες λόγω ακτινοβολίας). Η εισαγωγή μιας διάταξης σε θέσεις ακτινοβόλησης ενός αντιδραστήρα απαιτεί την προκαταρκτική εξέταση των επιπτώσεων που μπορεί να επιφέρει στην εν γένει λειτουργία του αλλά και στην ασφάλεια του.

Πριν από την πραγματική εισαγωγή της διάταξης στον αντιδραστήρα, πρέπει να πραγματοποιηθεί μία εκτεταμένη ενδελεχής έρευνα με έμφαση στην ασφάλεια και την απόδοση. Ο καθορισμός της τελικής διαμόρφωσης της διάταξης απαιτεί τη συνέργεια διάφορων γνωστικών αντικειμένων και ειδικοτήτων. Εστιάζοντας στη θεωρητική μελέτη για τον προσδιορισμό των βέλτιστων υλικών για τη κατασκευή ενός νετρονικού πετάσματος, τα αποτελέσματα αυτής της διατριβής αποτελούν τη βάση για όλες τις μετέπειτα αναλύσεις, οι οποίες αφορούν στα ακόλουθα ζητήματα:

- εισαγωγή αντιδραστικότητας
- επιπτώσεις της συσκευής σε γειτονικά πειράματα
- εναπόθεση ενέργειας στη διάταξη
- θερμο-φυσικές ιδιότητες
- ψυκτικό μέσο και κύκλωμα
- κατασκευή της διάταξης
- υπηρεσίες μετά την ακτινοβόληση

Εισαγωγή αντιδραστικότητας: Η εισαγωγή διατάξεων σε ένα περιβάλλον θερμικού αντιδραστήρα μπορεί να έχει σημαντική επίδραση στην αντιδραστικότητα του αντιδραστήρα. Για παράδειγμα, η αύξηση της πυκνότητας του σχάσιμου υλικού επιφέρει πλεονάζουσα αντιδραστικότητα. Αντίθετα, η εισαγωγή απορροφητών έχει ως αποτέλεσμα τη μείωση της αντιδραστικότητας, καθώς ο ρυθμός παραγωγής ταχέων νετρονίων μειώνεται (συνακόλουθα, η εξαγωγή τους θα αυξήσει την αντιδραστικότητα, αφού θα επιτρέψει την ενίσχυση της θερμικής συνιστώσας).

²³ Θα πρέπει να αναφερθεί ότι η διάρκεια της ακτινοβολίας και οι τιμές της ροής θα πρέπει να ρυθμιστούν κατάλληλα προκειμένου να μην υποστούν βλάβες τα προς ακτινοβόληση δείγματα.

Ωστόσο, μεγάλη σημασία έχει η ακριβής θέση εγκατάστασης της διάταξης: μέσα στον πυρήνα η επίδραση της αντιδραστικότητας αναμένεται να είναι αρκετά σημαντική, ενώ εκτός του ενεργού πυρήνα, αμελητέα. Στην παρούσα εργασία, θεωρήθηκε η εισαγωγή των υλικών σε θέση ακτινοβόλησης στην περιοχή του ανακλαστή του JHR και οι μεταβολές της αντιδραστικότητας ήταν μικρές (και εντός των ορίων ασφαλείας). Στην ενότητα §5.1 του κυρίως κειμένου στην αγγλική γλώσσα παραρουσιάζονται οι αντίστοιχοι υπολογισμοί του συντελεστή πολλαπλασιαμού νετρονίων για ενδεικτικές περιπτώσεις.

Επιπτώσεις της συσκευής στα γειτονικά πειράματα: Μία από τις παραμέτρους που πρέπει να ληφθούν υπόψιν πριν από την εισαγωγή μίας διάταξης σε περιβάλλον αντιδραστήρα είναι η επίδραση που δύναται να προκαλέσει στα γειτονικά πειράματα, καθώς ενδέχεται να επιδράσει ανασταλτικά στη λειτουργία τους.

Υπολογισμός εναπόθεσης ενέργειας: Η παραγωγή θερμότητας στα υλικά της διάταξης, λόγω των νετρονικών αλληλεπιδράσεων και της γάμμα ακτινοβολίας (η σημαντικότερη πηγή ενέργειας) θα πρέπει να μελετηθεί προσεκτικά. Υπολογιστικά εργαλεία όπως ο TRIPOLI-4.8 μπορούν να παρέχουν υπολογισμούς της ροής φωτονίων όχι όμως με τη μέγιστη ακρίβεια. Για αυτό το λόγο προτείνεται να χρησιμοποιούνται τα υπολογιστικά εργαλεία που έχουν αναπτυχθεί ρητά για την αντιμετώπιση παραμέτρων, όπως η θέρμανση από γάμμα ακτινοβολία. Συμπληρωματικά με τους υπολογισμούς απαιτείται η διενέργεια τοπικών μετρήσεων της ροής.

Θερμο-φυσικές ιδιότητες: Για τον τελικό σχεδιασμό της διάταξης θα πρέπει να ληφθούν υπόψη παράγοντες όπως η ειδική θερμότητα, θερμική αγωγιμότητα και θερμική διαστολή των υλικών της συσκευής. Τα αποτελέσματα θα υποδείξουν τη συμπεριφορά των υλικών κατά την έκθεσή τους σε ακτινοβολία. Επιπλέον, θα πρέπει να εξεταστεί η πιθανότητα διάβρωσης των υλικών μετά την έκθεσή τους σε συγκεκριμένο ψυκτικό μέσο. Προκαταρκτικοί θερμοϋδραυλικοί υπολογισμοί που πραγματοποιήθηκαν στο πλαίσιο αυτής της μελέτης έδειξαν ότι η εισαγωγή της προτεινόμενης διάταξης στο εσωτερικό του ανακλαστή του JHR δεν εγείρει θέματα ασφάλειας.

Ψύξη της συσκευής: Οι κατανομές θερμοκρασίας που επικρατούν στα υλικά της συσκευής πρέπει είναι συνεπείς με τις απαιτήσεις ασφαλείας του JHR. Σε γενικές γραμμές, σε τέτοιου είδους εφαρμογές, προτιμάται η θερμοκρασία των δειγμάτων να διατηρείται σταθερή. Για το λόγο αυτό μπορούν να χρησιμοποιηθούν δομικά υλικά που απάγουν θερμότητα, όπως το αλουμίνιο και ο ανοξείδωτος χάλυβας. Όπως έχει αναφερθεί νωρίτερα, η θέση που επιλέχθηκε για την εισαγωγή της διάταξης βρίσκεται στον ανακλαστή του JHR, όπου και διαρρέεται από το πρωτεύον κύκλωμα νερού του αντιδραστήρα. Προκειμένου να καθοριστεί εάν το πρωτεύον κανάλι του νερού είναι επαρκές για να παρέχει την κατάλληλη ψύξη της τελικής συσκευής,

πρέπει να πραγματοποιηθούν αντίστοιχοι υπολογισμοί. Σε περίπτωση που απαιτείται πρόσθετη ψύξη υφίστανται επιπλέον μέθοδοι (π.χ, ψυκτικός βρόγχος νατρίου, ηλίου κτλ.).

Κατασκευή της διάταξης: Μετά την επιλογή των υποψήφιων υλικών, πρέπει να εξεταστεί η μέθοδος κατασκευής. Η προσθήκη δομικών υλικών μάλλον αναγκαία. Το αλουμίνιο και ο ανοξείδωτος χάλυβας είναι τα πιο συνηθισμένα υλικά που χρησιμοποιούνται για κατασκευαστικούς λόγους σε πειραματικές διατάξεις αντιδραστήρων. Επίσης αυτό το είδος υλικών διευκολύνει τον έλεγχο της θερμοκρασίας της συσκευής, λόγω της υψηλής θερμικής αγωγιμότητας τους. Λόγω της σχεδόν διαφάνειάς τους σε νετρόνια (πολύ χαμηλές τιμές ενεργού διατομής αντιδράσεων νετρονίων) η εφαρμογή τους δεν παραβιάζει το σκοπό της διάταξης.

Υπηρεσίες μετά την ακτινοβόληση: Για την ασφαλή εγκατάσταση, τον ασφαλή χειρισμό καθώς και για τη τελική αποδόμηση/αποθήκευση της διάταξης μετά την ακτινοβόληση, θα πρέπει να εξασφαλιστούν αντίστοιχες άδειες από τη Ρυθμιστική Αρχή του Αντιδραστήρα (Regulatory Body).

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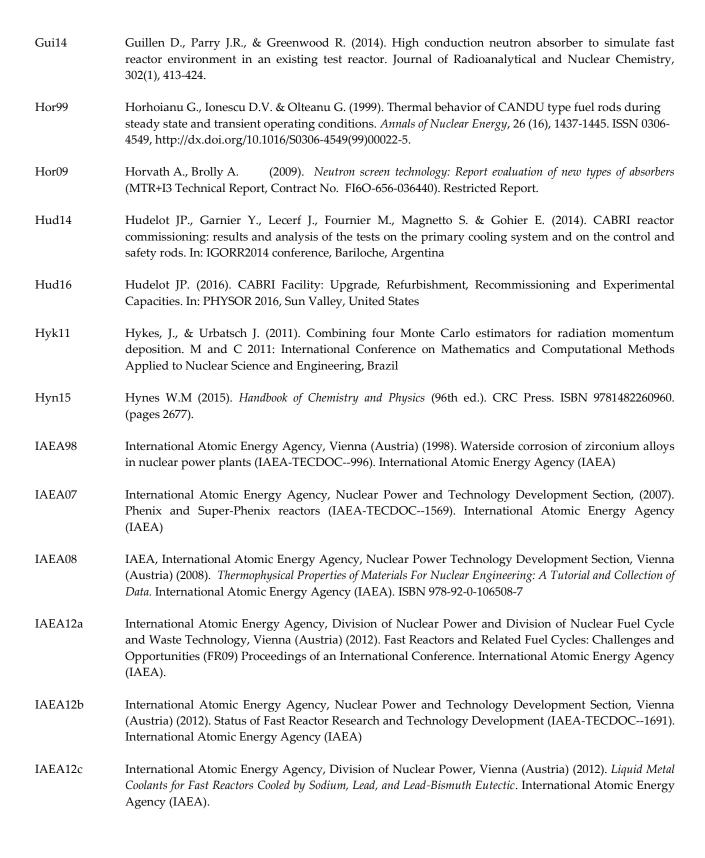
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