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Vinylester and Polyester 3D Printing

Authors
Vlastimil Kunc
Christopher Hershey
John Lindahl
Stian Romberg
Steve Voeks
Mark Adams

Date Published:
October 24, 2019

Prepared by
OAK RIDGE NATIONAL LABORATORY
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831-6283
managed by
UT-BATTELLE, LLC
for the
US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
under contract DE-AC05-00OR22725

Approved For Public Release
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This CRADA NFE-17-06792 was conducted as a Technical Collaboration project within the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) Manufacturing Demonstration Facility (MDF) sponsored by the US Department of Energy Advanced Manufacturing Office (CPS Agreement Number 24761). Opportunities for MDF technical collaborations are listed in the announcement “Manufacturing Demonstration Facility Technology Collaborations for US Manufacturers in Advanced Manufacturing and Materials Technologies” posted at http://web.ornl.gov/sci/manufacturing/docs/FBO-ORNL-MDF-2013-2.pdf. The goal of technical collaborations is to engage industry partners to participate in short-term, collaborative projects within the Manufacturing Demonstration Facility (MDF) to assess applicability and of new energy efficient manufacturing technologies. Research sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Advanced Manufacturing Office, under contract DE-AC05-00OR22725 with UT-Battelle, LLC.
ABSTRACT

In Phase 2 of the technical collaboration between Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and Polynt Composites USA, a vinyl ester composite material for extrusion deposition additive manufacturing (AM) of thermoset materials was developed, characterized, and functionality demonstrated. Through this work modeling capability was developed to determine the desired in use material characteristics and refined process parameters. Coupon level testing was performed to validate the end use functionality of printed structures. Finally, the material was printed to evaluate its performance in composites tooling applications. This combined effort led to a commercial product, PRD-1520, for Polynt Composites USA specifically designed for large-scale extrusion deposition additive manufacturing of thermoset materials.

1. PROJECT TITLE

This Phase 2 technical collaboration project (MDF-TC-2017-119) began on October 23, 2018 and was completed on September 17, 2019. The collaboration partner Polynt Composites USA is a large business. ORNL and Polynt developed a vinylester composite resin for large scale extrusion 3D printing that is now a commercially available product.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Polynt Composites USA Inc. is a leading supplier of gel coats, composite resins, and industrial cleaners in the United States. Polynt resins have been optimized to be processed using various application technologies such as hand lay-up, spray-up, casting, pultrusion, filament winding, sheet molding compound (SMC), bulk molding compound (BMC), infusion, injection, resin transfer molding (RTM), etc. This Phase 2 technical collaboration focused on refining and demonstrating the capabilities of the vinylester material developed in Phase 1.

1.2 TECHNICAL RESULTS

Phase 2 of this project focused on the development of a commercially available product for large-scale reactive polymer additive manufacturing. A standard test process and geometry were developed to determine the desired cure kinetics and processing parameters. A demonstration article was manufactured to prove the technology, and the demonstration article was shown in the CAMX 2019 Demo Zone. The project concluded with a public material launch on September 17, 2019.

1.2.1 Material Development

In Phase 1 of the project, over 20 different formulated systems and 3 different peroxides were tested for their printing viability. Out of these options, 1 material system and 1 organic peroxide were chosen, PRD-1520 and CHP Peroxide. Throughout Phase 2, Polynt worked to refine and optimize the rheological and filler packages within the PRD-1520 to provide the optimal printing and post-deposition mechanical properties. Process parameters were optimized by the development of a standard test print geometry specifically designed for reactive polymer printing at ORNL (Fig. 1).
This test consisted of an H-bar geometry to simulate a semi-infinite thin wall. An IR camera was used to capture the temperature profile at the wall during printing. The optical camera was used to measure any sagging or deviation from the as-deposited shape during the curing process. A layer time sweep of the standard test geometry illustrated the challenges associated with this new large-scale printing technique. Three distinct failure modes were identified, including viscoelastic collapse, exotherm-induced collapse, and printhead collision due to warpage. Information from both cameras provided insight to avoiding exotherm-induced collapse, which is unique to printing exothermic materials. The maximum temperature experienced by each layer and the time to reach that temperature are key parameters causing this type of failure. These findings informed the selection of a successful layer time and guided the implementation of material alterations to expand the range of successful layer times. In addition, a finite difference numerical model was generated using an adiabatic temperature rise, a probe of the resin temperature sensitivity, and several different temperature ramp rate tests. Excellent agreement was found between the model and the experiments, providing a new tool to evaluate the printability of new materials with a few rheological tests. While multiple parameters such as gantry speed, deposited bead size, layer height, etc. were tested, the best results were shown with these processing parameter sets in Table 1.

### Table 1. Processing parameters for PRD-1520

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gantry Speed (in/s)</th>
<th>Layer Height (in)</th>
<th>Bead Width (in)</th>
<th>Flow Rate (lb/hr)</th>
<th>Minimum Layer Time (min)</th>
<th>Nozzle Diameter (in)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.275</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1.2.2 Testing and Demonstration

Standard composite testing methods were used to characterize the final developed formula for PRD-1520. Two primary directions were tested from the printed H-bar geometry, in the deposition direction (X-axis) and the direction normal to the build plane (Z-axis). The PRD-1520 material showed excellent property retention in both directions when compared to standard large-scale printed thermoplastic material. Figure 2 shows the properties for the printed material from the supplier’s technical data sheet for the PRD-1520 material.
### Properties - Cured

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>X-axis</th>
<th>Z-axis</th>
<th>% Retention</th>
<th>Test Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tensile Strength</td>
<td>psi</td>
<td>6940</td>
<td>3465</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>ASTM D 638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensile Modulus</td>
<td>psi</td>
<td>606,000</td>
<td>570,000</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>ASTM D 638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensile Elongation</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>ASTM D 638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexure Strength</td>
<td>psi</td>
<td>9,920</td>
<td>6,330</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>ASTM D 790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexure Modulus</td>
<td>psi</td>
<td>560,000</td>
<td>475,000</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>ASTM D 790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compressive strength</td>
<td>psi</td>
<td>375,230</td>
<td>312,026</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>ASTM D 695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heat Deflection Temperature³</td>
<td>°C/F</td>
<td>94/201</td>
<td>94/201</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>ASTM D 648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass transition temp, Tg⁷</td>
<td>°C/F</td>
<td>107/225</td>
<td>106/223</td>
<td>99.1</td>
<td>ASTM D 5279</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) Physical properties were determined using internal Polynt test methods that are similar to those listed above.
5) Data collected on parts printed with MVP RAN 2.5% CHP Peroxide, Post cured for 2 hrs. each at 85, 121, 150 °C
6) By DMA on TA RSA-3
7) By DMA on TA Q800
8) By TMA on TA Q400 analyzer, 30-97°C.

**Fig. 2. Properties of cured printed PRD-1520**

Other properties to note are for the uncured resin. The viscosity of PRD-1520 ranges from 2.5-3.0 million cP's, and the gel time for this material when used with the desired peroxide for printing, CHP, is 20-25 minutes. Ranges for both values are given due to their dependence on the ambient temperature during printing.

Polynt and ORNL demonstrated this technology in the Demo Zone at CAMX 2019. This is the largest composites conference in the United States, thus the best possible audience to showcase this new material and technology. A silicone bag vacuum assisted resin transfer molding (VARTM) mold to make a carbon fiber kayak paddle was the chosen demonstration article. The mold was printed using PRD-1520 in under 3 hours. After printing the mold and aligning it within the router for placing relocating fiducials, a high build coating was sprayed onto the mold at an outside shop. The mold was then brought back to ORNL for machining. Once machining was complete the mold was gel coated and polished. A wax pattern was then used to mimic the paddle shape, and a silicone bag was sprayed onto the surface of the mold. Finally, the mold and bag were used to infuse dry carbon fibers with resin to create the kayak paddle. The entire workflow can be seen in Figure 3.
Fig. 3. (a) PRD-1520 printed mold, (b) High build coating and machining, (c) Finished mold for gel coat, (d) Gel coated and polished mold, (e) Sprayed silicon bag, (d) Carbon fiber kayak paddle

1.3 IMPACTS

This project successfully led to the development and public launch on September 17, 2019 of a vinyl ester resin system specifically designed around large-scale extrusion deposition additive manufacturing of thermoset materials (Fig. 4). This material requires no energy input in the form of heat to process or cure. This reduces the required energy needed to build molds with additive manufacturing. Polynt now offers this material for purchase and is the first company to now have an off the shelf product for this process.

Fig. 4. (left) ORNL management, Polynt, and Magnum Venus Products Development team at launch, (Right) Conference room prior to launch of material.

1.3.1 Subject Inventions
1.3.2 Publications


1.4 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this project was successful in meeting all the requirements that would lead to final product for Polyt. The material was characterized and used to demonstrate an application in composites tooling. Polyt’s capabilities in material formulation and synthesis coupled with ORNL’s additive manufacturing expertise were critical to the success of this project. The next steps for this technology would center around testing and demonstration the feasibility of using this material in different tooling applications such as reaction injection molding, thermoforming, and fixturing. Polyt now plans to work with ORNL in the future for the development of more material systems for large-scale extrusion deposition additive manufacturing of thermoset materials.
2. POLYNT COMPOSITES USA BACKGROUND

Polynt Composites USA, Inc. is one of the leading companies in the production and sale of unsaturated polyester resin, urethane ester, and vinyl ester, which are produced under DISTITRON® and other trade names. Polynt is a leading supplier of gel coats, composite resins, and industrial cleaners in the United States. Polynt resins have been optimized to be processed using various application technologies such as hand lay-up, spray-up, casting, pultrusion, filament winding, sheet molding compounds-bulk molding compounds, infusion, injection, resin transfer molding, etc.