

**Fluid Mixture
Separation Technologies
for Cost Reduction and
Process Improvement**

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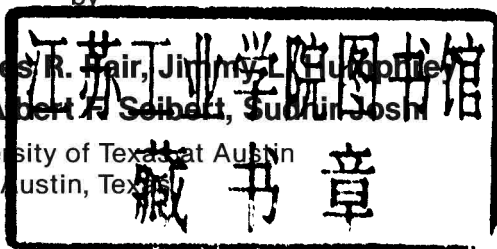
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FLUID MIXTURE SEPARATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR COST REDUCTION AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

by

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Austin, Texas



NOYES PUBLICATIONS

Park Ridge, New Jersey, U.S.A.

Copyright © 1986 by Noyes Publications
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 86-5207
ISBN: 0-8155-1081-0
Printed in the United States

Published in the United States of America by
Noyes Publications
Mill Road, Park Ridge, New Jersey 07656

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

**Fluid mixture separation technologies for cost
reduction and process improvement.**

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

**1. Separation (Technology) 2. Mixtures. I. Bravo,
Jose L.**

TP156.S45F48 1986 669.2'842 86-5207

ISBN 0-8155-1081-0

**FLUID MIXTURE SEPARATION TECHNOLOGIES
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Foreword

This book presents an assessment and evaluation of fluid mixture separation technologies in the oil and gas, chemical, and paper industries. These technologies are also pertinent for other industries. Significant cost reductions and the potential for process improvement are possible with the adoption of selected separation technologies as replacements for currently employed practices. Areas for further research and development are specified also.

Significant energy savings are possible if these technologies are implemented. In addition, the technologies may offer benefits such as lower operating temperatures (and less product decomposition), increased throughputs, better turn-down capabilities, increased process reliability, and improved process safety.

The processes evaluated and assessed for fluid mixture separation are distillation with high-efficiency mass transfer devices, membrane separations, adsorption/desorption, extraction, and crystallization. The evaluations include a review of concepts and theory, the state of the art, potential applications, and research suggestions. This book should prove to be an excellent overview of these replacement technologies.

The information in the book is from *Assessment of Potential Energy Savings in Fluid Separation Technologies: Technology Review and Recommended Research Areas*; prepared by Jose L. Bravo, James R. Fair, Jimmy L. Humphrey, Chris L. Martin, Albert F. Seibert, and Sudhir Joshi of the University of Texas at Austin; for the U.S. Department of Energy; December 1984.

The table of contents is organized in such a way as to serve as a subject index and provides easy access to the information contained in the book.

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Acknowledgements

This project was totally supported by the United States Department of Energy (DOE) through the Office of Industrial Programming (OIP). Special thanks go to Mr. Robert G. Massey of OIP for his extensive support and guidance. We also appreciate the contributions by Mr. Ernest Loeb at OIP. The project was managed from the Idaho Operations Office by Mr. Donald M. LaRue and Mr. Dave Blanchfield; it was monitored by EG&G Idaho through Mr. Steve Priebe. We wish to thank them and acknowledge their assistance as well as their sound technical contributions. Finally, we wish to thank the editing, typing, accounting, and general support personnel of the Center for Energy Studies at The University of Texas at Austin for their contributions.

NOTICE

The material in this book was prepared as an account of work sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy. Publication does not signify that the contents necessarily reflect the views and policies of the contracting agency or the publisher, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.

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Executive Summary

The main objective of the Assessment of Potential Energy Savings in Fluid Separation Technologies was to review and evaluate fluid mixtures separation technologies in the oil and gas, chemical, and paper industries that would show significant energy savings if implemented in place of current practices. As a result of such review and evaluation, several separation technologies were identified as having the best potential for short- to medium-term application. These technologies are shown in Table ES-1. Finally, a number of research areas in these technologies were identified. Developments in these areas would in turn improve the potential of the technology for industry. Table ES-2 shows general research areas that have to be addressed to improve the applicability of the five technologies discussed in this report. A detailed analysis of these areas as they apply to each individual technology comprises the bulk of the report.

An evaluation procedure was devised for this project to aid in the identification of fluid mixture separation technologies that showed the most potential for application. The methodology followed for this evaluation, as well as the screening criteria and grading characteristics used, is described in detail in the Project Overview section of the report.

The evaluation process was undertaken by a team of six chemical engineers with diverse backgrounds and experience. All decisions concerning the application of screening criteria and the selection of the grading characteristics and corresponding weight factors were arrived at by a consensus of all the members of the evaluation team. The grading of each technology was done individually by each member of the team. The total scores produced by individuals differed, as was expected, from one another, but the ranking order of the technologies was almost identical from one team member to another. Averaging of the total scores produced a ranking that agreed with the individual rankings.

At this point in the project, a decision was made to study in more detail the highest ranking technologies. The ones selected for further study were the seven with the highest scores plus liquid/liquid extraction. To avoid duplication, these technologies were condensed into five: distillation with high-efficiency mass transfer devices, membrane separations (including gas and liquid permeation as well as pervaporation), adsorption, extraction (including liquid/liquid and supercritical extraction), and crystallization.

The current energy use of the last four technologies was estimated. The results of this baseline assessment show that at present more than 95% of the energy used in the oil, chemical, and paper industries for separation processes is expended in distillation. All the other technologies combined account for less than 5%. The most important applications of these alternative technologies are summarized in Table ES-3.

The next step in the project was to review the state of the art of research for each of the five areas of technology chosen. This was done

to determine what research frontiers are of importance in a particular technology and which topics should be addressed if the technology is to have an improved probability of application with the inherent energy savings. Tables ES-4 through ES-8 summarize the most important research areas for each of these technologies.

As a corollary to this project, it can be concluded that two avenues exist for the reduction of energy consumption in separation processes at a national level: improvements on the energy efficiency in distillation and the replacement of distillation with less energy-intensive technologies.

It should also be recognized that industry would be much more interested in adopting energy saving technologies if such techniques provided other benefits in addition to a reduction in energy use. Such benefits might include lower operating temperatures (and less product decomposition), increased throughputs, better turn-down capabilities, increased process reliability, and improved process safety. In many cases, energy savings alone would not make a process modification attractive to industry. Nevertheless, if energy savings are accompanied by one or more of these other features, the chances of implementing the less energy-intensive separation technology are greatly enhanced.

Table ES-1

FLUID MIXTURE SEPARATION TECHNOLOGIES WITH BEST POTENTIAL FOR
SHORT- TO MEDIUM-TERM APPLICATION

Distillation with high-efficiency mass transfer devices

Membrane separations (gas and liquid mixtures)

Adsorption

Extraction (liquid/liquid and supercritical)

Crystallization

Table ES-2

GENERAL RESEARCH AREAS IN FLUID MIXTURE
SEPARATION TECHNOLOGIES

-
-
- Generalized theory development
 - Expansion of data base
 - Development of mass, heat, and momentum transfer models
 - Study of physicochemical effects at phase boundaries
 - Screening and testing for new applications
 - Development of process design and scale-up techniques
-

Table ES-3
VARIOUS SEPARATION TECHNOLOGIES AND THEIR ENERGY CONSUMPTION

Technology	Most Common Applications	Yearly Consumption (quads)
Adsorption	n-paraffins p-xylene	0.0018 0.0113 ^a
Liquid/liquid extraction	BTX lube oil refining	0.049 ^b 0.021 ^b
Crystallization	p-xylene lube oil dewaxing	0.0468 ^a 0.007
Supercritical extraction	ROSE®	0.0011
Gas permeation	H ₂ /NH ₃ H ₂ /refinery gas	0.00026 potential 0.00001 potential
Liquid permeation	desalination	0.02 ^c
Total		0.158 quads/yr

^a Includes energy used in isomerization.

^b Most of this energy is used in separating solvents and solutes by distillation.

^c Worldwide.

Table ES-4

DISTILLATION WITH HIGH-EFFICIENCY MASS TRANSFER DEVICES:
RESEARCH AREAS

-
-
1. Expand data base
 2. Develop generalized models for mass, momentum, and heat transfer
 3. Perform parametric studies to improve devices
 4. Develop manufacturing techniques for devices
-

Table ES-5

MEMBRANE SEPARATIONS: RESEARCH AREAS

-
-
1. Generalized theory and expanded data base
 2. Membrane materials science
 3. Process engineering: membrane process design
 4. Membrane manufacturing techniques
 5. Membrane modules
 6. Applications research (demonstrations)
 7. Molecular sieve membranes
-

Table ES-6
ADSORPTION: RESEARCH AREAS

-
-
1. Equilibrium data and models
 2. Design and analysis models
 3. Process engineering: adsorption process design
 4. Applications research
 5. Molecular sieve membranes
-

Table ES-7
EXTRACTION: RESEARCH AREAS

SUPERCritical EXTRACTION

1. Equilibrium and phase behavior
2. Entrainers and co-solvents
3. Generalized theory and models
4. Materials science
5. Applications research

LIQUID/LIQUID EXTRACTION

1. Entrainers and co-solvents
 2. Generalized theory and models
 3. Applications research
-

Table ES-8
CRYSTALLIZATION: RESEARCH AREAS

-
-
1. Equilibrium and crystal formation kinetics
 2. Heat and mass transfer models
 3. Liquid occlusion mechanisms
 4. Process design
 5. Materials science
 6. Applications research
-