

Effect of process parameters on tire pyrolysis: a review

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This review presents pyrolysis of scrap tires with a focus on effect of process parameters (reactor temperature, gas flow rate and catalyst-tire ratio) on yield. Three commercially important pyrolysis by-products from scrap tires are carbon residue, pyrolytic oil and pyro-gas. Pyrolysis of scrap tire starts at 250°C and gets completed at 550°C. Presence of catalysts produces lighter oil with a drastic increase in the concentration of single ring aromatics.

Keywords: Catalytic pyrolysis, Char, Gas, Oil, Waste tires

Introduction

Disposal of waste scrap tires is a major environmental and economical issue¹. Out of global estimates of scrap tires (5 billion tonnes annually)², 40% are from China, India, South America, South-East Asia, South Africa and Eastern Europe. Recent estimates of scrap tires are: North America, 4.6; European Union³, 3.4; Japan, 1.5; China, 1.3; and India, 0.6 million tonnes (MT). Out of total mass of waste tires, 30% can be reused / recycled as new rubber products, playgrounds, sports surfacing and rubber-modified asphalt⁴. Tires⁵ have been recycled as grinding, crumbling, re-treading, reclaiming, combustion and pyrolysis. Pyrolysis offers an environmentally attractive method to decompose wide variety of wastes, including scrap tires. This review focuses on effect of process parameters (catalyst-tire ratio, operating temperature and gas flow rate) on yield of pyrolytic products.

Methods of Recycling Waste Tires: An Overview

In tire re-treading process, the remaining tread is ground away from a tire to be remolded and a new tread rubber strip is fused to the old carcass by vulcanization. Mechanical milling of tires offers production of ground rubber, which is used in asphalts, carpets, sport surfaces and children's playgrounds. Cryomechanical technology (cooling of rubber to -60° to -100°C) renders very fine

powder, which can be used as reinforcements in new rubber products. However, high consumption of energy, presence of liquid nitrogen in cryomechanical process and limited market for the products are main disadvantages of the process⁶. Important methods and processes for reclaiming waste rubber are mechanical shearing process⁷, thermo-mechanical reclaiming⁸, reclaiming by use of various chemical agents⁹, microwave reclaiming¹⁰, ultrasonic reclaiming¹¹, pyrolysis of waste rubber, reclaiming by renewable resource materials and reclaiming by biotechnological processes¹². Owing to high calorific value, scrap tires are excellent materials for energy recovery⁶. However, combustion of waste tires results in no material recovery, large capital investment, need for flue gas cleaning, CO₂ and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) emissions and high operating costs. Scrap tires can also be used as fuels in cement kilns.

Tire pyrolysis (thermal decomposition in an oxygen-free environment) yield⁶: solid char, 30-40; liquid residue, 40-60; and gases, 5-20 wt%. Solid residue may be used as reinforcement in rubber industry, activated carbon or fuel. Liquid products can be used as fuel, petroleum refinery feedstock or a source of chemicals. Gaseous fraction can be used as fuel in pyrolysis process.

Pyrolysis Reactors

Vacuum Moving-Bed Process

Roy *et al*^{13,14} focused on vacuum pyrolysis process; reactor development has gone through a 1 kg batch vacuum vessel, a 15 kg/h semi-continuous vacuum hearth

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and a 200 kg/h pilot scale continuous moving bed. Advantage of vacuum process is that the evaporating volatiles can be immediately removed from reactor, which minimizes secondary reactions (thermal cracking, re-polymerization, and re-condensation). As a result, oil yield is dramatically increased at the expense of char and gas.

Hamburg Fluidized-Bed Process

In this process, an indirectly heated fluidized bed is developed with the principle objective to yield basic chemicals such as BTX and carbon black for reinforcing at 700°C¹⁵. Laboratory-scale plants (capacity, 0.60-3.0 kg/h) have been built followed by pilot-scale plants (capacity, 10-40 kg/h of plastic and 120 kg/h of used tires) at University of Hamburg^{16,17}. Efforts have also been made at lower temperatures in order to improve oil yield and reduce energy input⁵.

BBC Continuous Ablative Process

Ablative is achieved by sliding contact of rubber particles on a hot metal surface, which results in high yield of liquids. Studies¹⁸⁻²⁰ demonstrated efficient heat and mass transfer from a 50 kg/h pilot-scale reactor, operated a smaller test unit at a throughput of 10-25 kg/h, and found that liquid yields of 54 wt% can be obtained at 470-540°C with a 0.88 s residence time and a 1.3 mm feeding size. Helleur *et al*²¹ reported that pyrolytic char with steam or carbon dioxide can be converted to activated char, which exhibited excellent product for the removal of organics and heavy metals from aqueous solutions.

Continuous Rotary Kiln Process

A rotary kiln pyrolyzer with slow rotation of inclined kiln ensures thorough mixing of waste, resulting in quality pyrolytic products. Also, residence times of solid can be easily adjusted to provide optimum conditions for pyrolysis reaction. Solid wastes of various shapes, sizes and calorific values can be fed into a rotary kiln either in batches or continuously. Typical rotary kiln plants include Kobe Steel (commercial 1 tonne/h plant), Italian ENEA Research Center Trisaia pilot-scale plant and Kassel University laboratory-scale setup^{22,23}. These rotary kiln reactors widely exist in the process for pyrolysis or gasification, but technical and pilot-scale testing data availability is quite scarce.

Yield of pyrolysis oil is closely related to type of reactors used. Vacuum process¹³ had a maximum oil yield (53.7 wt%) at 431°C. Hamburg fluidized-bed process⁵

produced 56.8 wt% oil at 550°C. Continuous ablative process^{17,18} gave a maximum oil yield (52.9 wt%) at 450°C. Continuous rotary kiln process²² gave oil yield (45.1 wt%) at 500°C. Different oil yields of various reactors are mainly attributed to the difference of vapor residence time in high-temperature zone in each process.

Effect of Process Parameters on Yield of Pyrolytic Products

Catalyst-Tire Ratio

Liquid products of pyrolysis²⁴ (mixtures of paraffins, olefins and aromatic compounds) from waste tires possess high caloric value (43 MJ/kg) and can be used directly as a fuel or added to petroleum refinery feedstock²⁵. But yields of these chemicals are not adequate enough for extraction from pyrolytic oil and utilization as a chemicals feedstock^{26,27}. Therefore, catalytic treatment is required to upgrade quality and quantity of liquid products obtained from pyrolysis of waste tire. Tire pyrolysis carried out in the absence of catalyst yielded oils of high boiling point²⁸. Use of catalyst in pyrolysis of waste tires result in cracking down heavy hydrocarbons into lower molecular weight pyrolytic oils (Table 1). Increase in catalyst-tire ratio decreased amount of asphaltene in pyrolytic oil²⁹. Xie *et al*³⁰ found that copper nitrate as catalyst slightly increased the amount of most PAHs (phenanthrene) in pyrolytic oils, and improved specific surface area of pyrolytic char. Ates *et al*³¹ reported that pyrolytic oil yield increased with increase of catalyst-tire ratio and reached maximum by using 10 wt% activated alumina and also its composition was richer than that of non-catalytic bio-oil. Dung *et al*³² studied catalytic activity of Ru/MCM-41, and proved that high yield of light olefins for catalytic oil was four times higher than those of non-catalytic oil and that Ru/MCM-41 catalyst produced lightest oil with the highest concentration of mono-aromatics.

Using Ru/SBA-1 as a catalyst, Dung *et al*³³ observed that ruthenium (Ru) cluster increased twice the yield of gaseous products as compared to thermal pyrolysis. Ru clusters were active sites for polyaromatic and polar-aromatic hydrocarbon (PPAHs) reductions, leading to the production of light oils, with decreased saturates. Zhang *et al*³⁴ reported that pyrolytic oil with more dl-limonene was obtained using basic additives (NaOH, Na₂CO₃); NaOH could lower pyrolysis temperature and oil yield could be as high as 49.7 wt% at 480°C, but Na₂CO₃ did not promote pyrolysis reaction. Among basic

Table 1—Influence of some process conditions on char, liquid and gas yields under pyrolytic process

Catalyst	Catalyst ratio		Temp. °C	Nitrogen flow rate	Pressure Kpa	Yield, wt%		
	%					Oil	Gas	Char
Without catalyst ⁵⁰	n.d.		450-650	n.d.	n.d.	50	40	10
Without catalyst ⁵²	n.d.		600	n.d.	-20 to -10 pa	42.7	18	39.3
Without catalyst ⁴⁸	n.d.		390-890	Helium, 30 cm ³ /min	n.d.	5	73	20
Without catalyst ⁴⁶	n.d.		425-600	30 l/min	n.d.	44.5-55	1.8-6.8	33.9-35.8
Without catalyst ¹	n.d.		600	n.d.	n.d.	53.1	8.9	38
Without catalyst ¹³	n.d.		480-520	n.d.	10	43-47	5-6	43-47
Without catalyst ⁴¹	n.d.		430	n.d.	n.d.	33.3	17.7	49
Without catalyst ⁴⁷	n.d.		200-500	n.d.	10.3	61	13	26
Without catalyst ¹⁴	n.d.		450	n.d.	2	59	5	33.8
Y-Zeolite (CBV-780) ⁴⁰	n.d.		500	n.d.	n.d.	33.4	18.3	8
ZSM-5 (CBV-400) ⁴⁰	1.5		500	n.d.	n.d.	35.8	19.8	6.7
Zeolite USY ⁴⁵	0.25-1.0		150-500	n.d.	n.d.	31.6-12.7	30.5-49.9	n.d.
Y-type Zeolite (CBV-400) ³⁹	50		430-600	n.d.	n.d.	38.7-32.2	16.3-21.8	n.d.
ITQ-21, Zeolite additives ²⁹	HMR+2%	ITQ-21	500	30 ml/min	n.d.	41	13.8	45.2
ZSM-5 ³⁹	50		430-600	n.d.	n.d.	34.6	15.1-20	n.d.
Y-Zeolite (CBV-400) ⁴⁰	7		500	n.d.	n.d.	32	14-20	0.2-10.1
ZSM-5 ⁴¹	n.d.		430	n.d.	n.d.	33.6	16.0	50.4
ITQ-24, Zeolite additives ²⁹	HMR+2%	ITQ-24	500	30 ml/min	n.d.	42.4	12	45.6
ZSM-5/LBO ⁴¹	n.d.		430	n.d.	n.d.	48.0	9.3	42.7
LBO ⁴¹	n.d.		430	n.d.	n.d.	33.5	14.0	52.5
Al ₂ O ₃ +SiO ₂ ²⁸	n.d.		400	n.d.	n.d.	14.8	5	80.13
Al ₂ O ₃ ²⁸	n.d.		400	n.d.	n.d.	23.2	20.93	55.67
SiO ₂ ²⁸	n.d.		400	n.d.	n.d.	22.8	15.46	56.26
CaC ₂ ³⁸	0.2		280-400	n.d.	n.d.	38.4	29.6	32
CaCO ₃ ³⁵	n.d.		400	n.d.	n.d.	29.2	31.9	39.06
Ca(OH) ₂ ³⁷	5		500	200 cm ³ /min	n.d.	40	12	48
Na ₂ CO ₃ ³⁴	n.d.		550	n.d.	3.5-10	39	20.8	40.2
NaOH ³⁴	n.d.		550	n.d.	3.5-10	47.8	14.6	37.6
MgO ³⁵	n.d.		400	n.d.	n.d.	27.0	19.33	53.5

n.d. = not determined

catalysts (MgO and CaCO₃)³⁵, MgO resulted in pyrolytic oil with 55% hydrocarbon, whereas CaCO₃ resulted in oil with 50% hydrocarbon. Yorgun & Simsek³⁶ used 60 wt% of activated alumina catalyst and found highest pyrolysis oil yield (51 wt%). Pyrolysis of waste tire in fixed batch reactor under N₂ and Ca(OH)₂ environment showed³⁷ that the highest yield of liquid product was obtained with 5% Ca(OH)₂ addition; Ca(OH)₂ acted to reduce sulfur content (34%) of liquid oil. Shah *et al*²⁸ observed that catalytic pyrolysis with Al₂O₃ gave higher amount of oil and less quantity of gas, mixtures of hydrocarbons were present with higher concentration of polar hydrocarbons (40%) in oil derived with Al₂O₃ and 40% aliphatic hydrocarbons in oil derived with SiO₂, and equal concentration of aliphatic (35%) and polar (35%) hydrocarbons were present in oil derived with Al₂O₃:

SiO₂ in a 1:1 ratio. Using calcium carbide as a catalyst³⁸ in a batch reactor under atmospheric conditions, pyrolytic liquid is obtained relatively with greater value and low boiling range in presence of catalyst as compared to pyrolysis without catalyst.

Using zeolite catalysts^{39,40}, Y-type zeolite catalyst of large pore size and higher surface activity was found to produce higher concentrations of aromatic compounds compared to ZSM-5 catalyst; presence of catalysts reduced oil yield with a consequent increase in gas yield and formation of coke on the catalyst. Wei Qu *et al*⁴¹ observed that a kind of lubricant base oil (LBO) can enhance catalytic effects of pyrolysis of waste tires over ZSM-5 zeolite; compared to pyrolysis without LBO, catalytic co-pyrolysis with LBO shows a sharply increased catalytic degradation rate and the liquid yield

increase, whilst gas yield and residue yield decrease. Dung *et al*²⁹ observed that ITQ-21 and ITQ-24 as zeolite additives have strong effect on catalytic pyrolytic oil using HMOR. As compared with the case of pure HMOR, adding ITQ-21 enhanced production of kerosene, whereas introduction of ITQ-24 result in higher concentration of aromatic compounds in derived oil. With respect to HMOR, ITQ-24 as an additive resulted in higher concentration of aromatics whereas adding ITQ-21 decreased concentration. Boxiong *et al*⁶ showed that the presence of zeolite USY catalyst reduce oil yield with consequent increase in gas yield. Olazer *et al*⁴² studied effect of acid catalysts based on HZSM-5, HY and H Beta zeolites on the distribution of volatile products in pyrolysis of tire material carried out in a fast heating micro-reactor, and observed that acid catalyst allows carrying out tire pyrolysis at 723 K with complete conversion in 60 s.

Abdul Raouf *et al*⁴³ used AlCl_3 , Al_2O_3 and CaCl_2 as a catalyst, and observed that Al_2O_3 gave highest paraffin at any ratio and at any temperature in the order $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 > \text{AlCl}_3 > \text{CaCl}_2$. San Miguel *et al*⁴⁴ investigated catalytic activity of five different acid catalyst [three acid zeolites (ZSM-5, nanocrystalline ZSM-5 and beta) and two meso-structured materials (Al-MCM-41 and Al-SBA-15)] on thermal conversion of used tire, and found that all zeolite materials showed a marked selectivity towards the formation of aromatic species, particularly toluene (up to 19.82%), m/p-xylene (up to 16.91%) and benzene (up to 10.28%); meso-structured catalysts not only exhibited strong aromatization properties, but also a marked alkylation capacity, resulting in the formation of a wider range of alkyl-aromatic products.

Operating Temperature and Gas Flow Rate

Temperature and gas flow rate have a major influence on the yield of tire pyrolysis (Table 1). Boxiong *et al*⁵, using USY zeolite catalyst, observed that heating rate for pyrolysis reactor was 5-40°C/min, preheated temperature for pyrolysis reactor was 150°C, and final temperatures was 550°C; optimum yield of oil was 32.7 wt% at 500°C. Cunliffe & Williams¹ showed that oil yield reached a maximum of 58.2 wt% at 475°C and decreased gradually to 53.1 wt% at 600°C. Lopez *et al*⁶ studied continuous pyrolysis (feed rate, 30 l min⁻¹; temp., 425-600°C) of scrap tire in a conical spouted bed controlled, and found following yields: gases, 1.8-6.8; liquid fraction, 44-55; and char, 33.9-35.8 wt%. However, Qu *et al*¹ studied catalytic co-pyrolysis of waste tires

over ZSM-5 zeolite with LBO at 430°C under nitrogen atmosphere, and found following yields: gases, 17.7; liquid fraction, 33.3; and char, 49.0 wt%. Mirmiran *et al*⁷ attempted vacuum pyrolysis of waste tire at 200-500°C and below 10.3 kPa absolute pressure, and found following yields: gases, 13; oils, 61; and char, 26%. Zabaniotou *et al*⁴⁸ studied tire pyrolysis at 390-890°C, with heating rates of 70-90°C s⁻¹ at atmospheric pressure, under helium (He), and observed that char yield decreased to 20wt% of raw material with temperature reaching an asymptotic value of 830°C. Murillo *et al*⁴⁹ conducted pyrolysis experiment (heating rate, 10°C/min; N flow rate, 100 ml/min; temp., 375-500°C) to check influence of temperature on yield of products at every 35°C, and observed that with increase in temperature (375-500°C), gas yield continuously increased (2.99-20.22 wt%), char yield decreased from 50.67 to 26.41 wt% at 450°C and then remained almost constant, and oil yield increased from 42.24 wt% to a maximum of 60.02 wt% at 425°C and then decreased to 54.1 wt% at 500°C.

In an experimental work⁵⁰ (temp., 450-650°C; heating rate, 5°C/min; residence time of feedstock in reactor, 120 min), tire pyrolysis products as vapor were water cooled to yield following products: pyrolysis oil, 55; pyro-gas, 10; and moisture, 1%. Crude tire pyrolysis oil (TPO) thus obtained had a higher viscosity and sulphur content compared to diesel fuel, but TPO blended with diesel could be used as an alternate fuel for diesel engines.

Shah *et al*^{55,38} observed that catalytic pyrolysis using CaCO_3 and MgO as catalyst gave maximum oil (39 wt%) at 350°C. Dung *et al*³² in tire pyrolysis (temp., 350°C) using catalysts (MCM-41 and Ru/MCM-41, respectively) showed: solid, 45, 45; liquid, 38, 25; and gas, 15%, 30%. Keeping pyrolysis conditions constant, tire was completely decomposed at 500°C⁵¹. Zhang *et al*³⁴ observed that catalytic pyrolysis of granules of waste tires using NaOH under vacuum (3.5-10 kPa) conditions at 480°C gave highest oil yield (49.7 wt%). Roy *et al*¹⁴ found that thermal decomposition of rubber gave maximum yield of oil (55%; specific gravity, 0.95; gross heating value, 43 MJ/kg) at 415°C below 2 kPa. In another pyrolysis process¹³ (temp., 480-520°C; total pressure, < 10 kPa), typical yield of vacuum pyrolysis process were: carbon black, 36-39; oil, 43-47; and gas, 5-6 wt%. Oil yield with vacuum process is higher than the oil yield from an atmospheric pyrolysis process, whereas yields of carbon black and gas, respectively, are lower. Pilot scale pyrolysis in a continuous rotary kiln reactor⁵² (pressure, -20 to -10

Pa) gave maximum oil yield (45 wt%) at 500°C. Pyrolysis (N flow rate, 0.47 l/min) of tire-derived fuels⁵³ (TDFs) yielded a complex mixture of hydrocarbons in pyrolysis oil along with gaseous and char products. Maximum oil yield was found at heating rate of 5°C/min; quantities of by products reached maximum concentration at 500°C. Islam *et al*⁵⁴ observed that tire pyrolysis (feedstock size, 5-7 cm; running time, 75 min) in fixed reactor bed, under N₂ atmosphere, gave maximum yields at 450°C as follows: char, 30; liquid, 61; and gas, 9%. Heating value of oil was quite high, almost similar to diesel fuel.

Pyrolysis oil derived from waste tires is not appropriate for direct use in combustion process due to its high sulphur content⁵⁵. During combustion, sulphur in the fuel form sulphur oxides. Since SO₂ is very corrosive, sulphur content of fuel is limited³. Bunthid *et al*⁵⁵ observed that addition of formic acid (pH 4.0) in presence of 25 vol% of hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂) and tire pyrolysis char enhanced the level of sulphur removal to 70% due to simultaneous adsorption and oxidation of sulfurous compounds on the surface of pyrolysis char. Trongkaew *et al*⁵⁶ achieved a maximum sulphur removal of 43.6% by applying photo assisted oxidation catalyzed by titanium dioxide (TiO₂, Degussap - 25) to partially remove sulphurous compounds in waste tires pyrolysis oil under milder reaction condition without hydrogen consumption. Witpathomwong *et al*⁵⁷ investigated waste tire pyrolysis using MCM-48 and Ru/MCM - 48 as catalysts, and showed that Ru/MCM-48 insignificantly reduced the amount of sulphur in oil. This indicates mild cracking activity of MCM-48 and low activity of Ru on breaking C-S bonds in pyrolytic oil. However, when crude tyre pyrolysis oil was treated with known volume of concentric hydrosulphuric acid (8%), maximum removal of sulphur was achieved⁵⁸.

Conclusions

Pyrolytic oil is mainly used directly as a fuel or added petroleum refinery feedstock. Catalysis leads to substantial increase in amount of gases and a consequent decrease in the amount of liquids, due to stronger thermal cracking produced at higher temperatures. Increasing catalyst to tire ratio decreased the amount of asphaltene in pyrolytic oil. However, there is not much difference in the amount of asphaltene obtained from the case of catalyst-to-tire ratio of 0.25-0.33. Increasing catalyst feed ratio results in increase of alkaline gases (methane and ethane). Gas yield remains almost constant in

catalyst-tire ratio range of 0.00-0.10 and then markedly increases, due to more materials get cracked into uncondensed gaseous products and cracking activity is enhanced with increase of catalyst-to-tire ratio. Larger catalyst pore size results in higher concentration of aromatics. Aromatic species had a greater pre-disposition to being involved in hydrogen transfer and cyclization reactions. Catalytic pyrolysis contains lower amount of olefins and slightly higher amount of aromatics and paraffin's than non-catalytic pyrolysis oils. Also, liquid obtained is relatively in greater volume and low boiling range in presence of catalyst as compared to pyrolysis in the absence of catalyst. Sequence of type of catalyst that shifts reaction towards the yield of pyrolytic oil is: without catalyst > basic catalyst > acid catalyst. Increasing pyrolysis temperature results in an increase in aromatic content of oils with consequent decrease in aliphatic content. Pyrolysis temperature beyond 375°C lead to decrease of liquid content in most of the pyrolysis processes.

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