

## V.E Liquefaction

### V.E.1 Combined Reverse-Brayton Joule Thompson Hydrogen Liquefaction Cycle

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#### **Objectives**

Reduce the cost and improve the energy efficiency of hydrogen liquefaction.

- Produce a small-scale (~200 kg/day) hardware demonstration of a hydrogen liquefaction plant
- Develop an efficient hydrogen turboexpander
- Demonstrate liquid hydrogen production efficiencies of 87% or greater
- Demonstrate scalability to larger sized plants

#### **Technical Barriers**

This project addresses the following technical barriers from the Hydrogen Delivery section of the Hydrogen, Fuel Cells and Infrastructure Technologies Program Multi-Year Research, Development and Demonstration Plan:

- C. High Cost and Low Energy Efficiency of Hydrogen Liquefaction

#### **Technical Targets**

We believe that liquefier power requirement of 3.6 – 5.0 kWh/kg is possible. Under this scenario, the cost of electrical energy is likely to be approximately 50% of the current \$0.99/kg – which is close to the targeted cost. An overall energy efficiency of 90% is possible, which is significantly more efficient than the targeted 87%. Addition of turboexpanders is, however, expected to raise the capital cost by \$0.05 – 0.08 /kg. This would have a marginal impact on the overall cost, as the operating electric cost will be reduced by about \$0.50/kg.

## Approach

The simplest liquefaction process is the Joule Thomson Expansion cycle (Figure 1). The gas to be liquefied is compressed (by compressor K-101), cooled (in aftercooler E-100 and heat exchanger LNG-102) and then undergoes isenthalpic expansion across a throttle valve (VLV-100). If the gas is cooled below its inversion temperature in a heat exchanger (LNG-102 in Figure 1), then this expansion results in further cooling – and may result in liquid formation at the valve outlet. For hydrogen, this temperature is -95 °F. It is obvious that this cycle alone cannot be used for liquefaction of hydrogen without any pre-cooling of hydrogen below its inversion temperature.

A modification of this cycle in which liquid nitrogen is used to cool the gaseous hydrogen below its inversion temperature is sometimes used along with Joule Thomson Expansion to liquefy hydrogen. However, this modified cycle is still limited in overall efficiency as the primary thermodynamic process used for cooling is Joule-Thomson Expansion.

Joule-Thomson expansion is inherently inefficient, as there is no work done during expansion. The advantages are that the expansion requires no moving parts and a simple throttle valve can be used for liquefaction. The industrial gas industry departed from using Joule-Thomson as a primary process in liquefaction of atmospheric gases in the 1960s. Turboexpanders or expansion engines are now used at most industrial gas plants to provide the necessary refrigeration for liquefaction. The expansion across a turboexpander is ideally isentropic, i.e., some useful work is done in

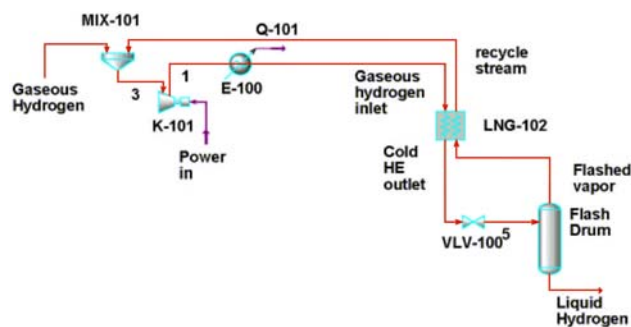


Figure 1. Joule Thomson Expansion Cycle

expansion. Depending on the pressure ratio across a turboexpander, this useful work may be as high as 130 Btu/lbmol (for a pressure ratio of six). Turboexpanders cannot tolerate any liquid condensing at the outlet as the turbine wheels often rotate at up to 170,000 rpm. Therefore, a clever combination of isentropic and isenthalpic expansion is required to generate a practical efficient process.

We propose to use a combined reverse-Brayton Joule-Thompson (CRBJT) expansion cycle (or a modified Claude cycle) to combine the benefits of highly efficient isentropic expansion and the highly reliable Joule Thomson expansion cycle. Figure 2 shows a schematic for the simplest version of the CRBJT cycle.

In this CRBJT cycle, gaseous hydrogen at atmospheric pressure is fed to compressor suction where it combines with the recycle stream from the primary heat exchanger (LNG-101). The motor driven hydrogen compressor (K-101) compresses this stream to the desired pressure. After cooling this stream in an air-cooled or a water-cooled aftercooler (E-100), it is introduced into the primary heat exchanger (LNG-101) where it is cooled by the cold return gases. When this stream is cooled to a suitable temperature, it is withdrawn and a portion of the stream is fed to an air-bearing turboexpander (Q-102). This hydrogen stream is isentropically expanded and cooled to near saturation temperature. The remainder of the pre-cooled stream, stream 2, is fed to the secondary heat exchanger (LNG-102) where it is cooled by stream 5. Upon exiting from

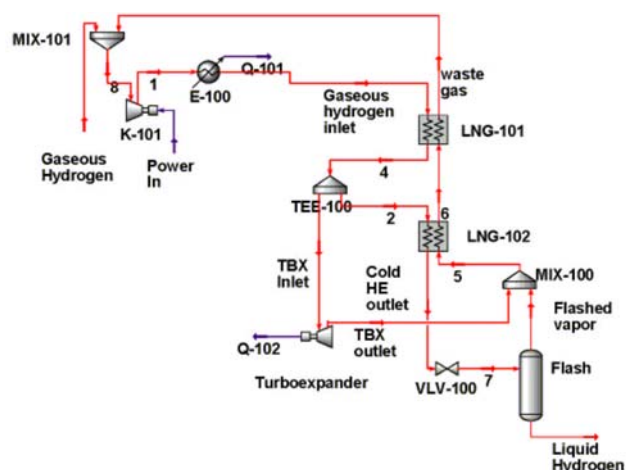


Figure 2. Simple CRBJT Cycle

