Single-Walled Carbon Nanohorns for Hydrogen Storage and Catalyst Supports

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Overview

Timeline

- Project start date: FY05
- Project end date: Oct 2010
- 90 % complete

Budget

- Total project funding
 - DOE share 1.9 M\$
 - Contractor share 0k
- 300k received in FY10

Barriers

- Barriers addressed
 - -A. Weight and Volume
 - Reduced catalyst weight
 - –B. Cost
 - Scalable production
 - -C. Efficiency / Thermal Management
 - Composites
 - -D. Durability / Operability
 - Catalyst stability
 - –P. Lack of Understanding of Hydrogen Physisorption and Chemisorption
 - Catalyst-free production, tailorable pore sizes

Partners

- Characterization: (Partners)
 - Hydrogen sorption Air Products, NREL, NIST, CalTech
 - Neutron scattering NIST
 - NMR UNC
 - Rice Univ. Charged Engineered Nanospaces



Objectives / Relevance

Overall

Utilize single-walled carbon nanohorns (SWNHs) to understand the pore sizes and metal decoration processes needed to optimize hydrogen uptake and tune binding energy in industrially-scalable materials, such as activated carbons.

Past accomplishments and goals

Synthesis and processing of single-wall carbon nanohorns with tunable mesopores was accomplished at high (10g/hr) rates to study effects of engineered nanospaces, and metal decoration. The material exhibits:

- 1) Room temperature storage in metal-free SWNHs Sub-nm mesopores: 0.6 wt.% H₂ at RT (30 bar).
- 2) Spillover in Pt- and Pd-decorated SWNHs up to 1.5 wt.% H₂ storage at RT (100 bar).

Most promising discovery and current focus – nanostructures with permanent high electric fields

A new direction for hydrogen storage resulted from theoretical predictions in this project: using metals to

1) smoothly coat carbon surfaces to take advantage of their entire surface area, and

2) create a charged surface capable of polarizing and binding hydrogen.

Alkaline earth metals (Ca, Sr, etc.) were predicted to smoothly coat nanocarbons and exhibit up to 8.4 wt.% H₂ storage at RT due to *electric-field induced polarization*. We verified the smooth coatings of Ca.

2010 Objectives

Improve and develop Ca-coating processing techniques to uniformly coat SWNHs and other high surfacearea carbons (such as MSC-30) without blocking pores. Test the theoretical predictions for increased hydrogen uptake due to electric-field induced polarization. Theoretically address the key questions for Ca decoration (e.g. effects of layer thickness, oxidation, hydride formation).



Approach and Milestones

Task 1.Ca-decorated nanohorns and MSC-30 with high surface area

Develop activation and decoration processing approaches to Ca-decorate SWNHs and MSC-30 while preserving high surface areas. Previous approaches sacrificed surface area, but showed enhanced hydrogen adsorption relative to undecorated SWNHs of the same surface area.

Theoretically address Ca decoration processing conditions. Ab initio thermodynamic calculations of the effects of calcium layer thickness on hydrogen binding. Also oxide and hydride formation energetics for Ca bound and unbound to C.

Funding Decision

Task 2.Scaled activation/decoration of Ca decorated nanohorns vs. MSC-30

Modify apparatus and approach for the scaled activation/deoxidation and Ca-decoration of downselected material. Demonstrate the scale-up approach with the production of grams quantities per run, and provide the scale-up strategy for kilogram quantities.

Theoretical calculations of pressure effects on Ca cluster dissociation.



Increase and compare the surface areas in activated and Ca-decorated SWNHs and MSC-30 to 1000 m²/g, and demonstrate hydrogen uptake greater than that for pure carbon material of the same surface area. *(quantitative milestone)*

Milestone Achieved / in Progress

Calculations of optimal temperature for decoration of uniform calcium coatings on carbon surfaces with and without oxygen groups, including considerations of edge states vs. surface states. Calculated effects of Ca layer thickness on optimal hydrogen binding through a comparison of the chemical potential between polarization-induced dihydrogen and chemisorbed hydrogen in calcium hydride.

Go/No-Go Decision

Can MSC-30 (commercial activated carbons relevant to the Engineering Center) be coated and exhibit Increased hydrogen uptake? If so, and funded for Subtask 2 (scaleup) – downselect to MSC-30 vs. SWNHs.

Milestone (If funded)

Grams quantities of decorated materials demonstrated.



Synthesis and Processing of Ca-Decorated SWNHs and MSC-30

Bottom-up synthesis approach: SWNHs

- Tune the shape of individual nanohorns during synthesis to find morphologies with adsorption sites & high binding energy (e.g. in tips of SWNHs)
- These nanohorns form aggregates with interstitial pores. Activate these aggregates to tune the interstitial pores and access the internal pores.

Enhance binding through electric-field induced polarization mechanism: Post processing by metal decoration:

- Focus on our theoretical prediction (also substantiated theoretically by others) that Cadecorated carbon nanostructures (including graphene, fullerenes, nanotubes, etc. should exhibit strong binding and hydrogen storage at room temperature from 6 - 8.4%)
 Focus on experimental demonstration.
- Expand materials to include high-surface-area activated carbons such as MSC-30.

Can commercial activated carbons be postprocessed to improve their room temperature hydrogen adsorption simply by Ca-decoration?



TEM of short SWNH aggregate



Each Ca atom is bonded to a surface carbon site and can bind up to 5 dihydrogen.



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Low pressure excess hydrogen adsorption in Ca-Decorated carbon nanostructures materials at 77K: SWNHs and MSC-30

Material	H ₂	@	N ₂ BET	FOM
	wt%	P (atm)	surface	(H₂ wt% per
		H ₂	area	500 m²/g
			(m²/g)	per atm H ₂
s-O-SWNHs +Ca (1)	1.85	0.9	212	4.8
s-O-SWNHs +Ca (2)	0.8	0.9	413	1.1
s-O-SWNHs (1)	1.9	0.9	1123	0.94
s-O-SWNHs +Ca (2)	1.5	2	413	0.91
S-O-SWNHs (2)	1.8	0.9	1251	0.80
L-O-SWNHs	1.3	0.9	997	0.72
AX21	1.8	0.7	2615	0.49
AX21+Ca	2.5	0.9	2942	0.47
AX21+Ca	2.4	0.9	2942	0.45
AX21	2	0.9	2615	0.42

- Ca-decoration of oxidized short SWNHs and MSC-30 activated carbon were performed by high-temperature vapor infiltration in vacuum, and compared to undecorated samples.
- Although pore-blocking was observed by nitrogen BET, the hydrogen storage capacities at ~ 1 atm. in Ca-decorated samples already exceed those expected by Chahine's rule (see graph at right, and Figure of Merit (FOM) above).
- Interesting, reversible hydrogen isotherms at 77K indicate possible capillary filling



Ca decoration results in clear enhancement of hydrogen adsorption even at highly reduced surface areas. The decoration process should be improved to preserve the surface area of nanostructured carbon.





Sub-nanometer pores in activated SWNHs





 CO_2 pore size distributions were measured and correlated with NMR shifts measured at UNC which reveal which pores store hydrogen in large and small SWNHs, before and after oxidation. The results indicate that the smallest pores (0.5 – 0.7 nm) are not as active as the pores in the 0.8-1.0 nm range in storing hydrogen.

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Calculations of Ca-Coating – Implications for Ca Processing and H₂ Storage

Energies of different 2D and 3D systems were calculated and compared.



8 Ca atoms should form atomically smooth 2D layers, and both sides of graphene 8 Managed by UT-Battelle can be used to polarize and bind hydrogen by simple Ca decoration

Calculations of Hydrogenation on Ca-Coating



We will further study thermodynamics and kinetics of H_2 dissociation processes at a finite T

Studies on other systems also support our finding: No H_2 dissociation on Ca surfaces at T=0



H₂ on Ca₁₂B₈₀ H₂ on Ca-B(9,0) tube [Nano Lett. 9, 1944 (2009), M. Li et al.]



H₂ on Ca-decorated graphene-based 3D [J. Phys. Chem. C 113, 20499 (2009), G. Kim and S.Jhi]

Many studies have shown that hydrogen molecules are adsorbed on Ca-decorated carbon surfaces without dissociation at T=0



Calculations of Oxidation on Ca-Coating



 O_2 can oxidize on Ca monolayer surface even at T=0. There is no barrier for O_2 dissociation. So must avoid oxidation of decorated material.

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Developing more uniform activation strategies for higher surface areas





Rotating quartz envelope

- Simple, scalable gas phase process
- Direct injection of flow gas for more uniform flow currents
- Continuous agitation for uniform exposure to oxidant gas

New activation approach was developed to activate carbon nanomaterials and increase their surface areas



11/1/1/11/11/11



Developing scalable strategies for Ca decoration of nanocarbons



Large quantity powder coating chamber with processing station removed for clarity

A vacuum pulsed laser deposition method to coat and preserve against oxygen exposure ~ 200 mg quantities of fluidized MSC-30 or nanohorns with high-kinetic energy calcium vapor was developed and demonstrated

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Technical Accomplishment Testing Predictions of Atomically Thick Coatings by Ca-decoration



The morphology of Ca-decorated SWNHs (upper), Ca-decorated MSC-30 activated carbon (lower), and Ca-decorated graphene (right) indicate smooth, nanoparticulate free coatings in agreement with theoretical predictions. Ca appears to decorate edges of graphene flakes.



Improved room-temperature uptake in Ca:MSC-30 vs. MSC-30





Hydrogen uptake at room temperature in Ca-coated (red curve) and uncoated MSC-30 activated carbon. The Ca coated material shows a factor of 2 improvement. Both materials had ~ 3300 m²/g N₂ BET surface areas, which is the consensus value for this material, indicating that coating did not block the pores in the virgin MSC-30.

Significant enhancements in the reversible, room temperature adsorption of MSC-30 were measured at room temperature at 0-1 bar in Ca-coated MSC-30 yet reproducible batch to batch. Atomic resolution imaging of the materials is ongoing to determine the optimal coating morphology and chemistry.



Low temperature hydrogen adsorption in Ca:MSC-30 vs. MSC-30



Material	H ₂ uptake, wt%, at 1bar, 77K	N ₂ BET, m²/g
Ca-coated	2.93	3306
MSC-30	2.88	3306
Pristine	2.68	3204
MSC-30	2.24	2519

At 77K Ca-coated MSC-30 shows only modest ~10% improvements in hydrogen uptake at 1 bar compared with pristine MSC-30 of the same surface area. Ca coating appears to *increase* surface area slightly, possibly acting as a getter.

The lack of enhancement at 77K and the > 200% enhancement at room temperature implies an activation energy barrier for attachment of hydrogen to Ca coated MSC-30.



Previous Technical Accomplishment

Collaborations



Proposed Future Work

This project has developed a new concept of nanoscale architectures which maintain electric fields sufficient to polarize and bind hydrogen. One architecture is Ca-decorated carbon, which forms an electric field around the entire surface of the decorated C, and appears to be very promising since the demonstrated effect extends to commercial carbons. Clearly, pursuing the design and synthesis of other inexpensive materials, such as ionic organic crystals or thin films, with high, built-in electric fields is a future direction of research.

This year FY2010

Continue to focus on Ca-decorating activated carbons and nanohorns because some low-pressure isotherms indicate a large (>2X) enhancement in the reversible hydrogen storage *at room temperature* (but not 77K) due to Ca-decoration of MSC-30 activated carbon. The limits of this effect have not been quantified. Understand the origin of the effect through atomic-resolution microscopy and modeling. Produce more material and obtain high-pressure isotherms and binding energies. Implement online process diagnostics to quantify Ca deposition process.

Milestone – Go / No-Go – Scaleup – FY2010-FY2011

A milestone decision on whether to proceed with an additional task (and additional funding) in this project occurs now. A Go / No-Go decision whether to scale-up the production of Ca-decorated (a) SWNHs or (b) activated carbon decoration is required. If the factors of two in hydrogen uptake through Ca-decoration and processing can be extended to high tank pressures, then scale-up to larger quantities is obviously warranted.

Future

This project has shown a path forward through the *atomistic design and screening* of nanoscale materials with high, built-in electric fields, capable of polarizing and binding hydrogen. Based upon the work herein, the Ca-decorated nanocarbon system looks extremely promising, is the focus of ongoing worldwide research, and processing / testing of this material in scaled volumes should continue to be pursued in this project. Other systems, such as organic crystals, should also be pursued.



Proposed Future Work: Charge Transfer Organic Crystals



In charge-transfer organic crystals, high electric fields exist naturally which provide the mechanism for binding H₂ without introducing any additional metal atoms. These materials should be explored for systems which are inexpensive, self-assembling, and of the right lattice parameters for storing large quantities of H₂.



Proposed Future Work: Scaling Ca Decoration of AX-21



A rotating wing drum has been shown to provide an effective means of increasing homogeneity during surface modification¹ and coating of powders,² and is amenable to a variety of physical vapor sources, including pulsed laser ablation and sputtering. Powder grains are lifted by the wings of the rotating drum, and dropped through the deposition beam on a continuous basis, thereby providing a great deal of statistical uniformity.

¹*Rev. Sci. Instrum.* **65**, 2963 (1994).

²Surface and Coating Technology 163-164, 281 (2003)

Ca decoration can be scaled-up using existing approaches and their modifications



FY10 Summary

Focus: Testing our theoretical predictions that Ca-decorated carbon should bind dihydrogen due to a high surface electric field. Last year, we observed anomalous storage in Ca-decorated SWNHs and MSC-30, but pore blocking was a problem, reducing surface area. New efforts to activate and decorate materials needed to be developed, and confirmation of the theoretically-predicted smooth coating needed to be made. If the theoretical predictions were true, this points toward a new direction in hydrogen storage, nanostructure architectures with high permanent electric fields.

Achievements

- *Processing*: New methods for activation by gas-phase oxidation, and uniform coating of nanomaterials were developed.
 - Activation: A rotating, tumbling reactor was developed and tested to more uniformly activate nanohorns.
 - Ca-Coating: Several methods were explored to uniformly coat nanohorns and commercial activated carbons such as MSC-30 with calcium vapor. A mechanically-agitated fluidized bed, coupled with pulsed laser deposition of calcium vapor in vacuum was shown to produce highly uniform calcium coatings on SWNHs, MSC-30 and graphene films. Calcium appeared highly uniform and well distributed in SEM, TEM, and Z-STEM images, however ultra-Z-STEM imaging of individual atoms indicates Ca may move to edges of graphene flakes.
- Room temperature storage: Room temperature excess storage in 3300 m²/g MSC-30 activated carbon was enhanced more than 200 % to 0.05 wt.% at 1 bar. The effect was highly reversible, and highly reproducible within a batch. Run to run variations between coating runs were observed and have not been explained yet. The enhancements did not occur at 77K, indicating a thermally-activated process (similar to that observed in Pd- and Pt-decorated SWNHs).
- Pore sizes responsible for room temperature storage in short-SWNHs: We measured the sub-nm pore size
 distributions in short and long nanohorns, and in work with the University of North Carolina which reveal which pores are
 storing hydrogen using NMR, concluded that the smallest pores (5-7 Å) are likely not participating, and that the 8-10 Å
 pores are largely responsible.
- Future Work and Go/No-Go recommendation: Encouraging room-temperature storage enhancement in Ca-decorated MSC-30 activated carbon warrants further investigation. If enhancements are reproduced at high pressures in test samples, other materials such as PEEK and SWNHs should also be investigated. Scaled coating technology should then be pursued, along with ultra-microscopic investigations of the mechanism in concert with theory.



Supplemental Slides



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Calculation Method: Dihydrogen Binding Strength to Metals

*H*₂ binding energy values from ab initio density functional calculations: exchange-correlation energy dependence – LDA vs GGA? Importance of zero-point energy contribution?

	H ₂ binding energy on √7 x √7 porphyrin-incorporated graphene Values in parentheses: including zero- point energy contribution				
	GGA (PBE) (eV)	LDA (eV)			
Ti	0.26	0.70			
V	0.140 (0.042)	0.585 (0.460)			
Са	0.059 (-0.019)	0.173 (0.095)			
Mg	0.035 (-0.041)	0.163 (0.086)			
Zn	0.013 (-0.058)	0.105 (0.030)			

Example: Porphyrin-incorporated graphene



- Difference in H₂ binding energies from LDA and GGA calculations can be as large as ~0.4eV \rightarrow The "true" binding energy lies in between LDA and GGA values (High level calculations are necessary for comparison)
- It is very important to include zero-point energy contribution, in particular for physisorption case

 \rightarrow zero-point energy contribution is as large as 100% of H₂ binding energy

22

Calculation Method: Construction of H₂-adsorption/desorption phase diagram

Example: Porphyrin-incorporated graphene



Each line identifies the thermodynamic phase boundaries for H_2 adsorbed/desorbed regimes

Regions above Lines: H_2 adsorption condition Regions below Lines: H_2 desorption condition

Ab initio thermodynamics approach is performed to construct the phase diagram

• Among the considered metals V is most promising, where H_2 operation is possible at the experimentally accessible P & T conditions

• We expect that Ca-decorated graphene (which has close binding energy to that of Vincorporated structure) has promising T & P condition for H₂ operation



• Overall: This program has demonstrated that pore sizes in carbon nanohorn aggregates can be tuned 1) during synthesis, and 2) during activation, and that this sometimes results in room-temperature binding of up to 1.5 wt.% hydrogen. The effects of metal decoration have been demonstrated. Clear spillover and enhanced binding energy were observed. Decoration with Ca has been shown to result in smooth nanoparticle-free coatings and anomalously high storage, in agreement with our proposed mechanism of *polarization induced by high local electric fields* resulting from the alkaline-earth metal "doping" of C by decoration. Significant enhancements in room-temperature storage at 1 bar have been demonstrated for MSC-30 activated carbons by coating with Ca.

Nanohorns: Summary of results

- High surface areas: SWNHs were synthesized in gram quantities with pore sizes adjusted to maximize surface area (2142 m²/g) and increase excess storage (3.5 wt. % at 77K).
- Tunable, small pores: NMR confirmed the majority of storage in the interstitial (~ 0.5 nm) pores on large SWNHs, and in activated pores (< 1 nm) in short-SWNHs. These NMR shifts are the highest among all materials studied, indicating storage in very small pores. Work continues to understand the activation process, but is aided by the stability of the nanohorn aggregate structure which is defined at very high temperatures during synthesis.
- *Room temperature storage*: Undecorated, short O-SWNHs reversibly store significant hydrogen (0.6 wt.% at 30 bar) at room temperature, comparable to bridged MOFs and Pt-decorated O-SWNHs (1.5 wt.% at 100 bar). These "nanoengineered pores" are defined both by the unique nanostructure self-assembled during synthesis, and by the activated pores during oxidation. Decoration with
- Enhanced Binding Due to Metal Decoration Doping-Induced Charge Separation Methods of vapor phase Cadecoration were developed and found to result in smooth decoration (unlike decoration by transition metals which results in small nanoparticles). These results confirm our theoretical predictions, which predict that of all the elements, alkaline earth metals Ca and Sr should have a special ability to coat C nanostructures without clustering while providing sufficient electric field strength to polarize and bind H₂ with 8.4 wt. % and 0.4 eV for Ca.

Program Focus: Charged nanostructures for hydrogen storage

- Activate and Ca-decorate O-SWNHs and commercial carbons such as MSC-30 for maximal H₂ uptake.
- Theoretically search for new nanostructures with stable, dipole fields, such as organic molecule-based "ionic crystals" with sufficient internal spacing to store hydrogen.



Summary Table

Different types of carbon materials		Surface area, BET (m²/g)	Pore size (nm)	H₂ uptake at 300K (wt.%)	H ₂ uptake at 100K (wt.%)	H₂ uptake at 77K (wt.%)	H ₂ uptake at 30K (wt.%)
As prepared "long"	AP-SWNHs	453		0.18 (AirProd.) 0.2 (NIST)	0.6 (NIST)	1.0 (NREL) 0.8 (NIST)	1.7 (NIST)
Opened by oxidation "long"	O-SWNHs-4	1191	1.5(BET)				
	O-SWNHs-3	1590	1.7(BET)			2.5(30bar) (CalTech)	
	O-SWNHs-5	1892	1.7(BET)				
As prepared, Pt dec.,"long"	SWNH/Pt-LA			0.22 (AirProd.) 0.2 (NIST)	0.6 (NIST)	1.0 (NREL) 0.8 (NIST)	1.7 (NIST)
	SWNH/Pt-CH			0.28 (110bar) (AirProducts)			
Opened and Pt dec.,"long"	O-SWNH-3/Pt- CH					2.2(30bar) (CalTech)	
				1.5 (100bar) (UNC)			
Opened, "short"	O-SWNHs_1	2142		0.6 (30bar) NIST	2.7 (30bar) NIST	3.5 (25bar) NIST	6.3 (4bar) _{NIST}
Opened and Ca dec. "short"	O-SWNHs+Ca	212				1.9 (0.9bar)	
	O-SWNHs	1123				1.9 (0.9bar)	
MSC-30		3204 2519		0.02 (1 bar)		2.7 (1bar) 2.2 (1bar)	
Ca:MSC-30		3306		0.05 (1bar)		2.93 (1bar) 2.88 (1bar)	

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Volumetric capacity

Volumetric capacities of 36 g/L (assuming 3.5 wt.% H_2 stored) were achieved in pure SWNHs which have been compressed to form dense pellets (1.03 g/cm³).

Ca-decorated SWNHs with 8.4 wt.% H₂ stored should enable 86.4 g/L volumetric capacities to address 2010 (45 g/L) and 2015 (81 g/L) system targets.



SWNHs pressed pellet

Net gravimetric capacity

Experimentally, 97% of hydrogen stored in engineered nanospaces within activated SWNHs at room temperature (up to 1.5 wt.%) is released at 3 bar pressure.

The enhanced storage capacities due to Ca decoration of SWNHs (up to 8.4 wt.%) will be utilized to address 2010 (6 wt.%) and 2015 (9 wt. %) system targets

