

# Alternative Fuel Cell Membranes for Energy Independence

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Project ID #fcp\_10\_mauritz

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# Overview

## Timeline

- Project start date 8/01/2008
- Project end date 1/31/2010
- Percent complete 25%

## Budget

- Total funding share
  - DOE share \$984,000
- Funding received in FY08
  - \$984,000
- Funding for YR09/10
  - \$951,000

## Barriers

### Barriers addressed

- Synthesis of bisphenol monomer with tethered ion exchange site has been hampered by availability and high cost of fluorinated reagents.
- Challenge to tailor and test membranes for good proton conductivity at high temperatures over a range of RH.
- Challenge to balance excellent chemical and mechanical durability with excellent fuel cell performance.

## Partner

### Interactions/Collaborators

- Prof. Vijay Ramani, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago (unfunded)

# Project Objectives - Relevance

- Synthesize stable aromatic hydrocarbon polymers containing acid ion-exchange groups tethered to the backbone via fluorinated side chains
- Synthesize benchmark aromatic hydrocarbon membranes for properties comparisons and refinement of synthetic methods
- Establish Nafion<sup>®</sup> benchmark data to which novel hydrocarbon membrane data can be compared on an all-other-things being equal basis
- Establish hydrocarbon membrane structure-property, proton conductivity characterizations and fuel cell performance data as relating to the Hydrogen Program proton conductivity technical achievement milestones.

# Project Objectives - Approach

(a/p current reported segment)

- Condense phenol with acid-functionalized perfluorinated ketone to create bisphenol monomer with tethered ion exchange site; polymerize bisphenol monomer with aromatic dihalide using nucleophilic aromatic substitution.
- Benchmark aromatic hydrocarbon membranes will be synthesized and processed using literature methods.
- Nafion<sup>®</sup> benchmark property data will be established to compare with data for hydrocarbon membrane data on an all-other-factors being equal basis.

# Milestones

Task Number	Project Milestones	Task Completion Date				Progress Notes
		Original Planned	Revised Planned	Actual	Percent Complete	
1.0	Acquisition of Equipment	03/31/09			95%	On-Track.
2.0	Polymer Synthesis	1/31/10			34%	On-Going
2.1	Monomer Synthesis	1/31/10			34%	On-Going
2.2	Polymer Synthesis and Characterization	1/31/10			34%	On-Going
3.0	Establishment of Standard Membrane Benchmark Data	3/31/09			70%	On-Track

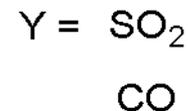
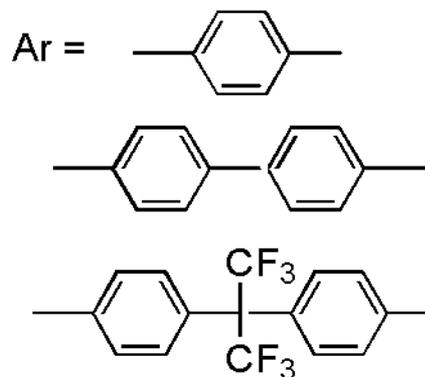
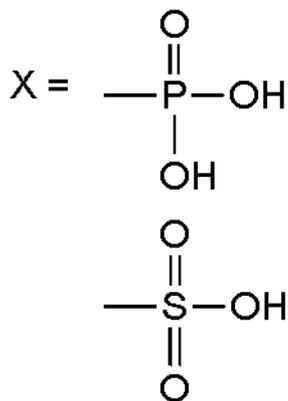
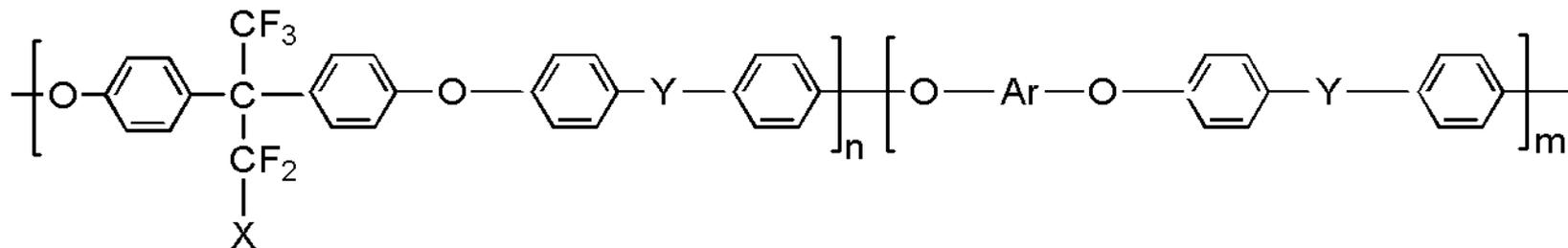
# Technical Accomplishments and Progress

- **A key monomer precursor, 2-oxo-1,1,3,3,3-pentafluoropropane phosphonic acid diethyl ester, was synthesized and purified for condensation with phenol**
- **4,4'-Dichlorodiphenyl)sulfone 3,3'-disulfonic acid was prepared for benchmark hydrocarbon resin synthesis**
- **OCV decay curves for degraded Nafion® MEAs established for comparison w/ degraded hydrocarbon MEAs**
- **MEA preparation shown to improve Nafion® mechanical modulus at 80° C, 100% RH**
- **Stress-strain curves of OCV-degraded samples at 80° C, 100% RH show MEA modulus decreases w/ increasing OCV degradation-failure at very low strain-poor ductility due to decrease in polymer molecular weight, loss of entanglements.**
- **Contractile stress vs. time experiment for RH drop at 80° C for constrained membranes show control and degraded MEA fail. Related to mechanical durability with RH cycling.**
- **Mechanical creep tests show degraded MEA deformation lower than that of control MEA – fewer chain entanglements due to shorter chains.**
- **SEM micrographs of OCV-degraded creep samples show cracks instead of crazing as is the case for non-degraded creep samples.**
- **Broadband dielectric spectroscopy analysis show shifts in time scales of characteristic polymer chain motions that infer changes in molecular weight with degradation.**

# Organic Membrane Synthesis

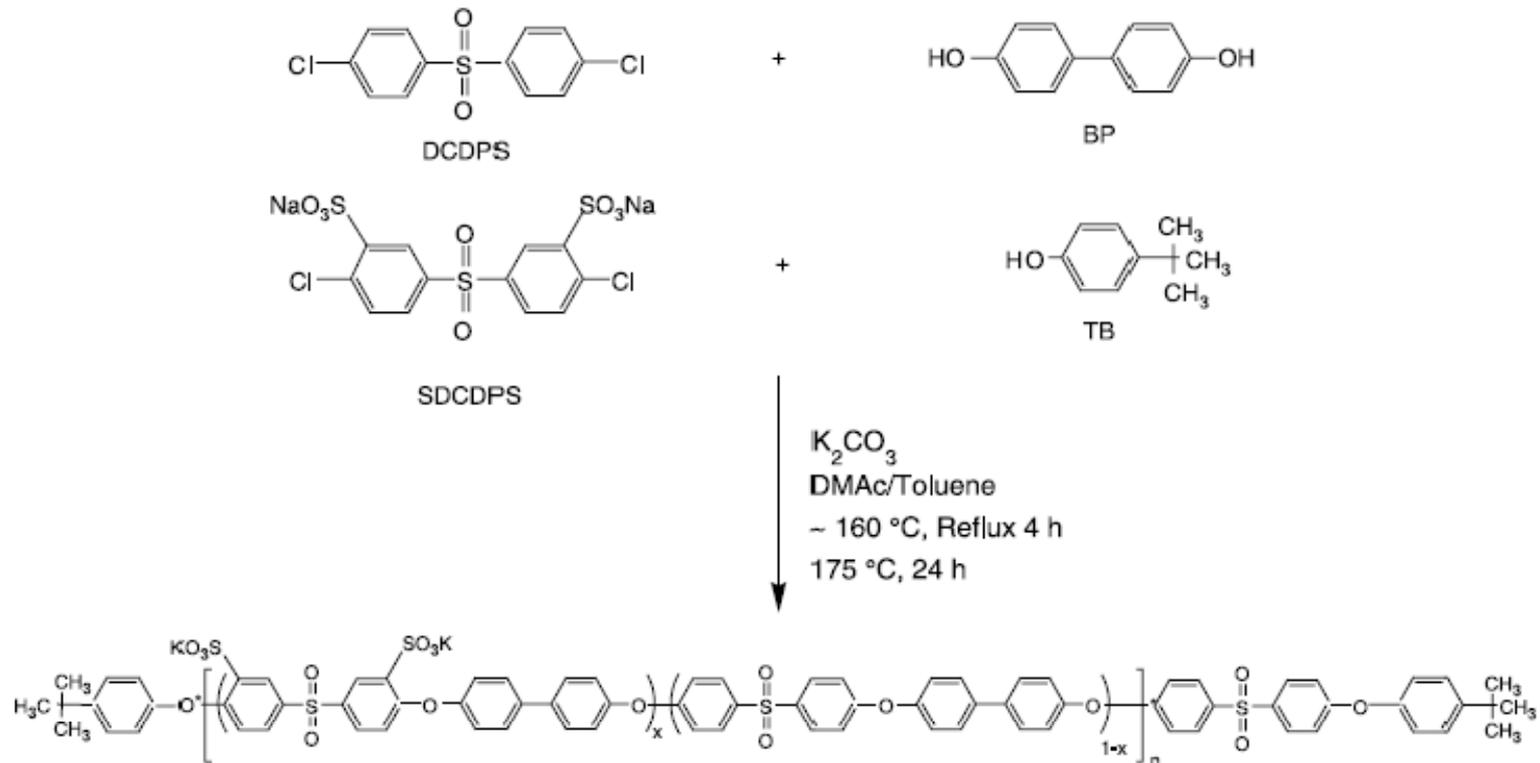
(pertaining to task 2.0: Membrane Synthesis)

Proposed membrane polymers created using step-growth polymerization via nucleophilic aromatic substitution



# Synthesis of Benchmark Aromatic Hydrocarbon Membranes

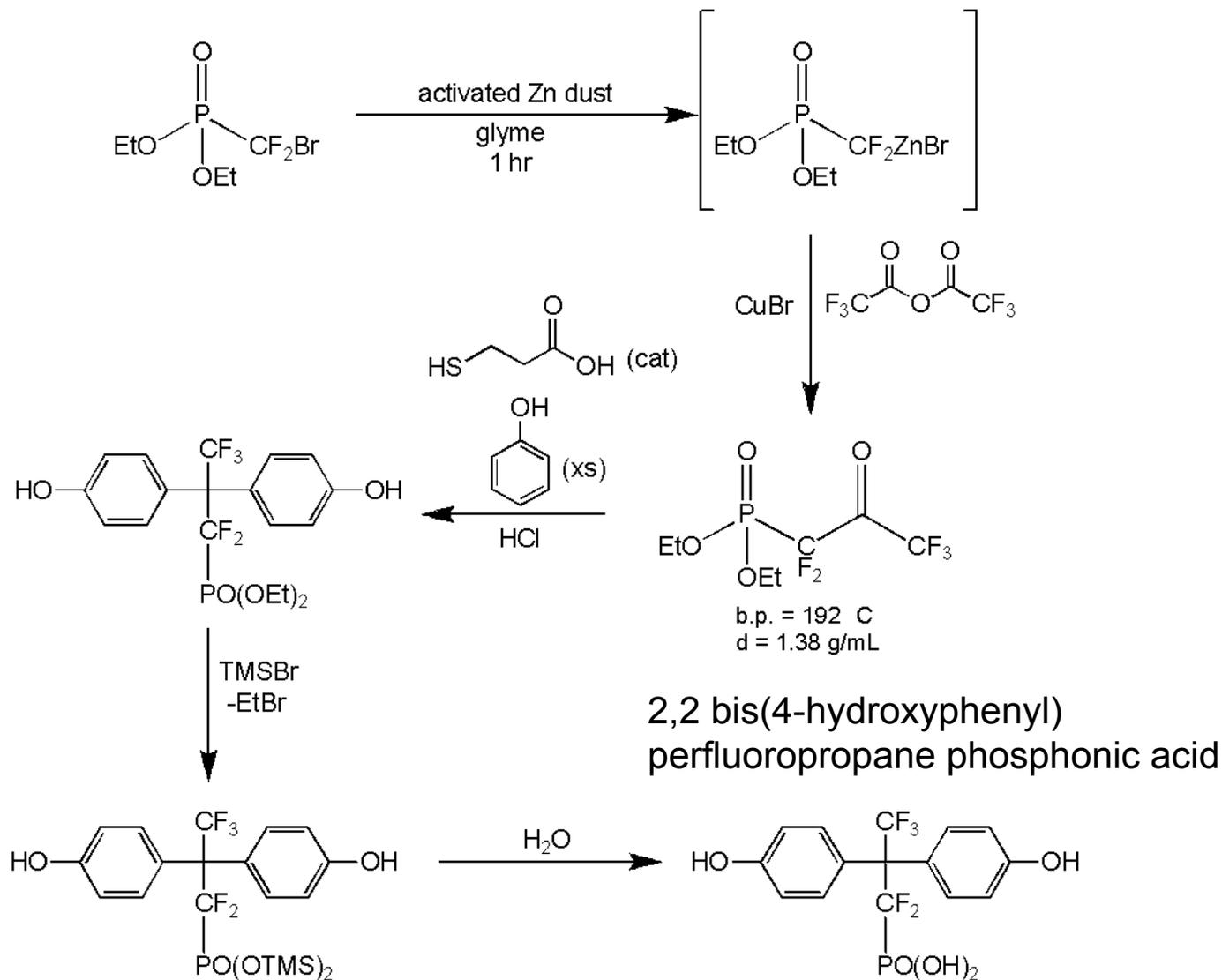
(pertaining to Subtask 2.2: Polymer Synthesis)



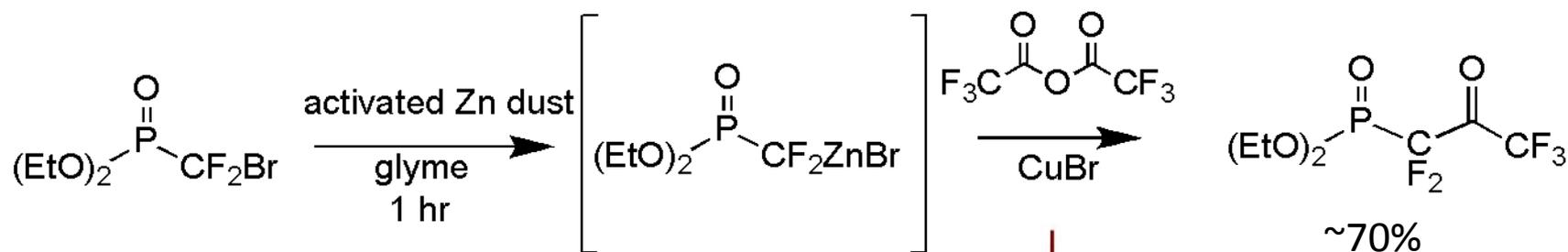
- sPAES has been successfully synthesized (need GPC to determine molecular weight).
- Suspected low MW sPAES batch appears to be water soluble. Low MW is believed to be due to NaCl impurity in SDCDPS.

# Synthesis of Phosphonic Acid-Tethered Monomer

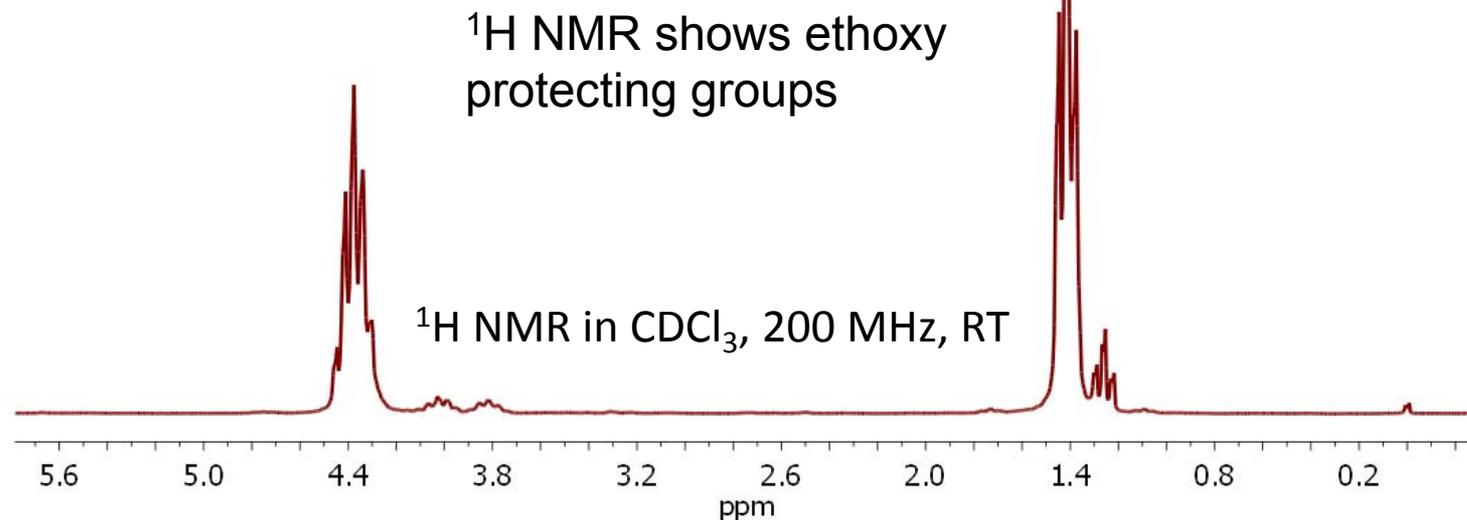
(pertaining to Subtask 2.1: Monomer Synthesis)



# Synthesis of $(\text{EtO})_2\text{P}(\text{O})\text{CF}_2\text{C}(\text{O})\text{CF}_3$ (Subtask 2.1)



\*Alkylation readily occurs with trifluoroacetic anhydride\*



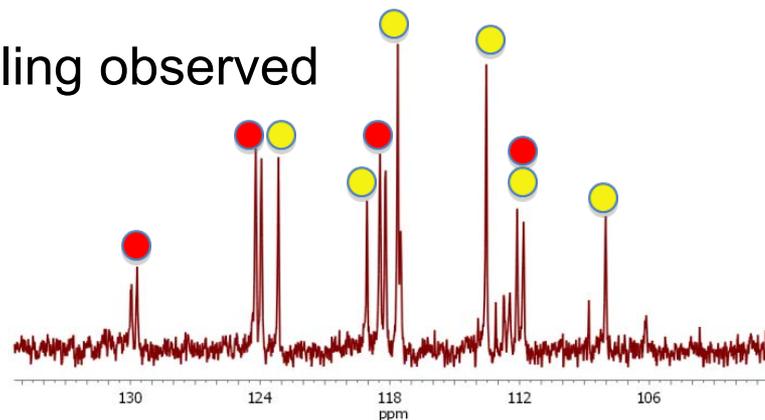
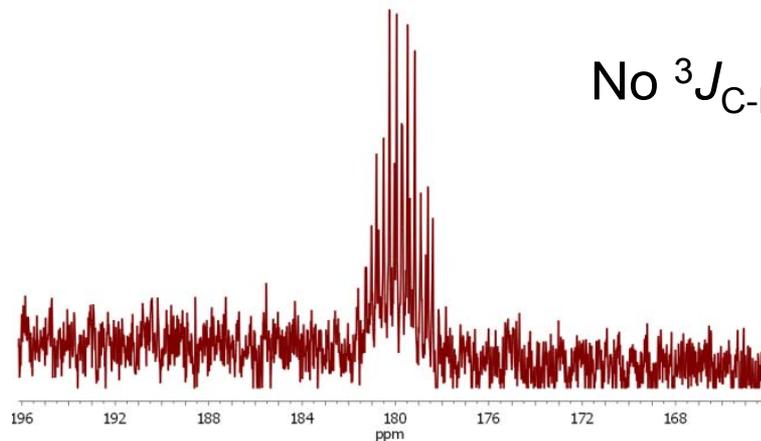
# $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR of $(\text{EtO})_2\text{P}(\text{O})\text{CF}_2\text{C}(\text{O})\text{CF}_3$

(Subtask 2.1)

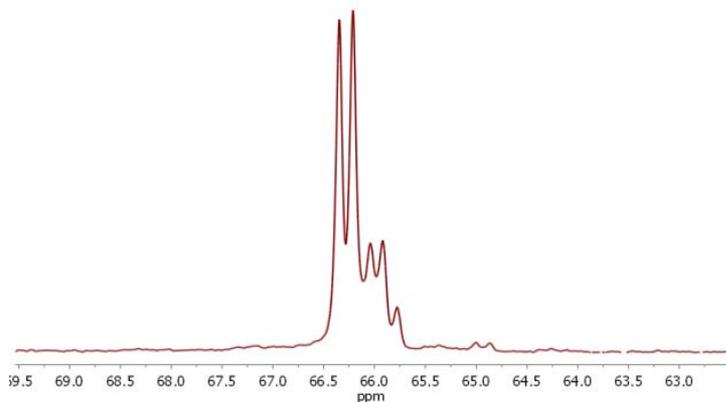
$\text{C}=\text{O}$

- $\text{CF}_2$  dt,  $^1J_{\text{C-F}} = 278$  Hz,  $^1J_{\text{C-P}} = 192$  Hz
- $\text{CF}_3$  dq,  $^1J_{\text{C-F}} = 289$  Hz,  $^3J_{\text{C-P}} = 13$  Hz

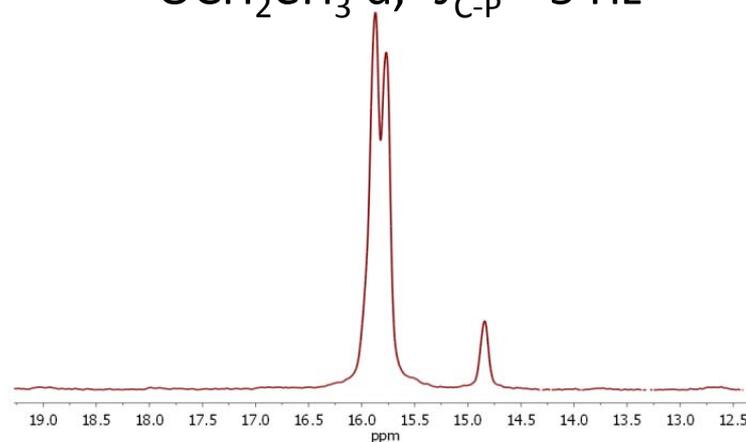
No  $^3J_{\text{C-F}}$  coupling observed



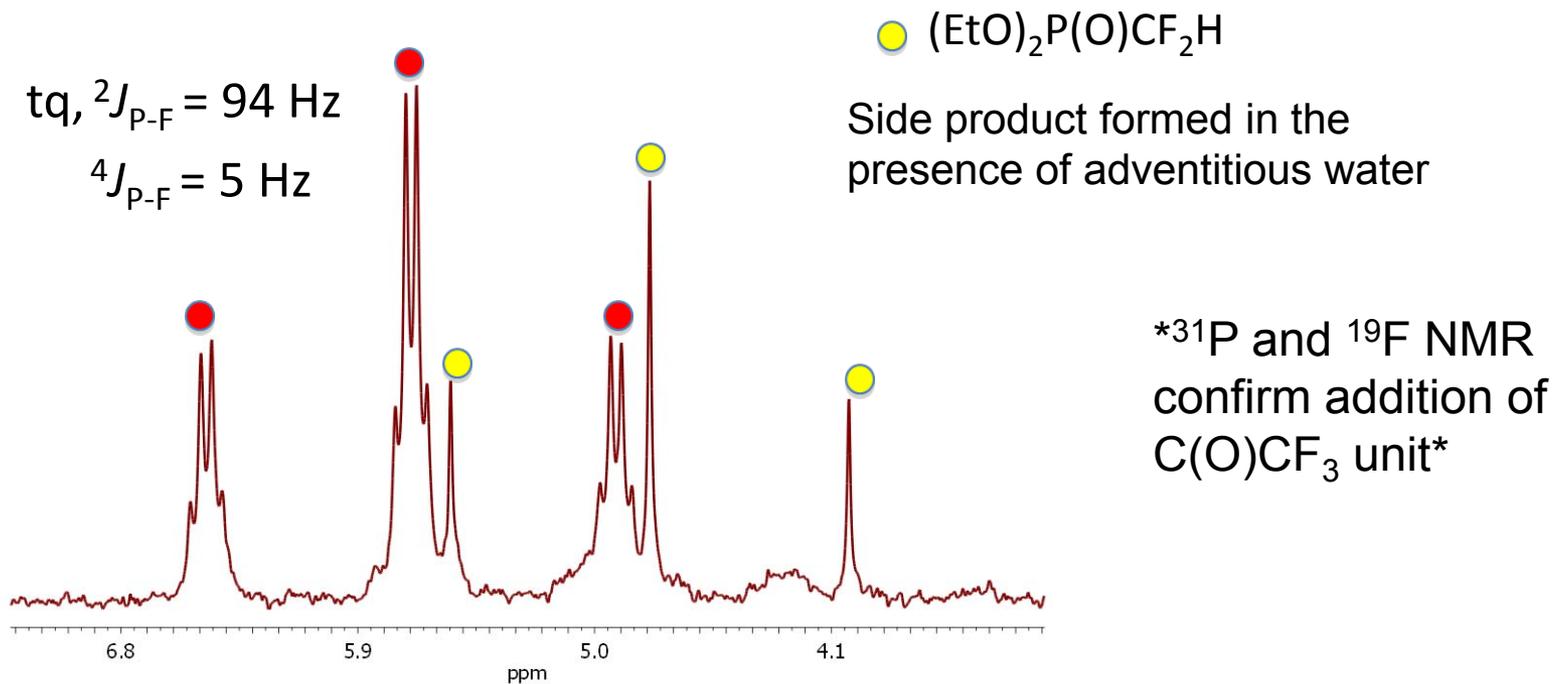
$\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_3$  d,  $^2J_{\text{C-P}} = 7$  Hz



$\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_3$  d,  $^3J_{\text{C-P}} = 5$  Hz



# $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ and $^{19}\text{F}$ NMR of $(\text{EtO})_2\text{P}(\text{O})\text{CF}_2\text{C}(\text{O})\text{CF}_3$ (Subtask 2.1)

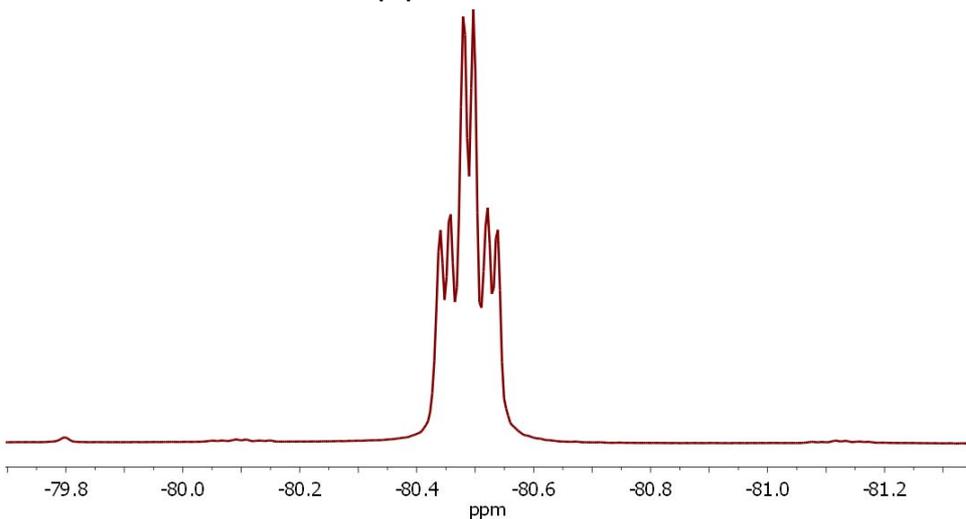


# $^{19}\text{F}$ NMR of $(\text{EtO})_2\text{P}(\text{O})\text{CF}_2\text{C}(\text{O})\text{CF}_3$ (Subtask 2.1)

●  $\text{CF}_3$

dt,  ${}^4J_{\text{F-P}} = 5 \text{ Hz}$

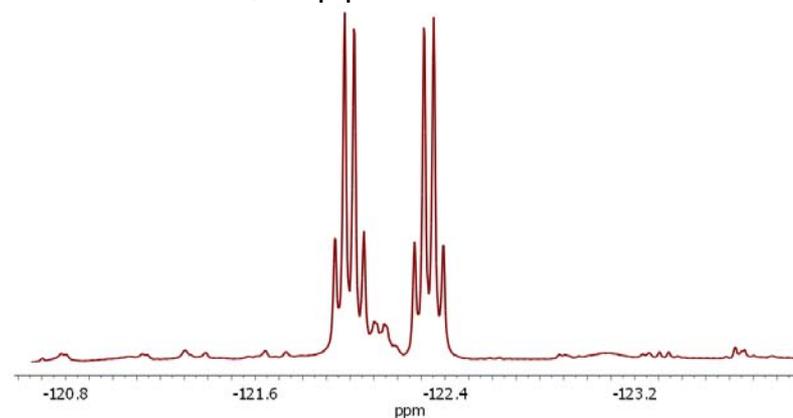
dt,  ${}^4J_{\text{F-F}} = 12 \text{ Hz}$



●  $\text{CF}_2$

dq,  ${}^4J_{\text{F-F}} = 12 \text{ Hz}$

dq,  ${}^2J_{\text{F-P}} = 94 \text{ Hz}$



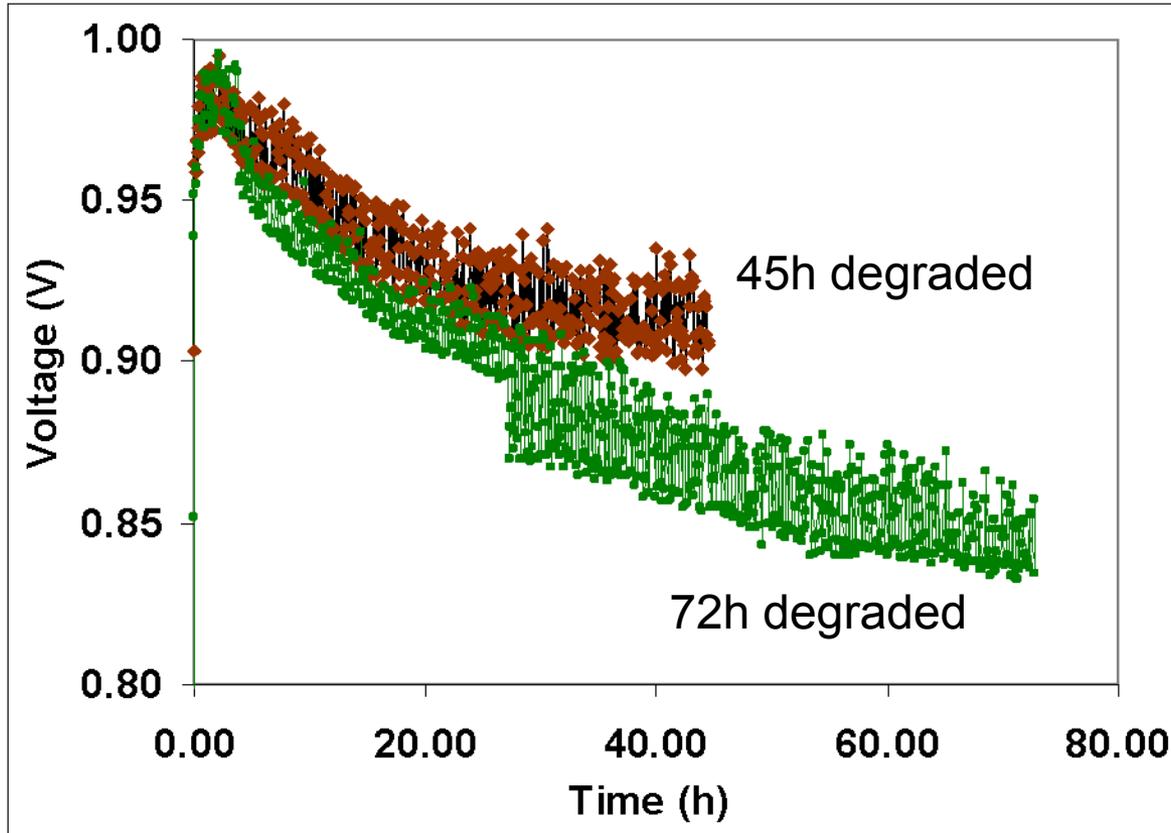
## Task 3.0 Establishment of Standard Membrane Benchmark Data

Data collected on Nafion<sup>®</sup> membranes prepared under the same conditions as hydrocarbon membranes as Nafion<sup>®</sup> is the benchmark for comparison.

*In situ, ex situ* membrane degradation studies, generation of polarization profiles:

1. Effect of degradation on mechanical properties of membranes
2. Dielectric spectroscopy characterization of membrane degradation

# OCV decay curves for degraded MEA samples



- 90° C, 30% RH, 25 cm<sup>2</sup> MEA
- Catalyst loading 0.4 ± 0.01 mg/cm<sup>2</sup>

- Increased fuel cross over with time due to membrane degradation results in gradual decrease in cell voltage.
- Sudden drop in 72h degraded MEA due to pinhole formation?

## Mechanical properties

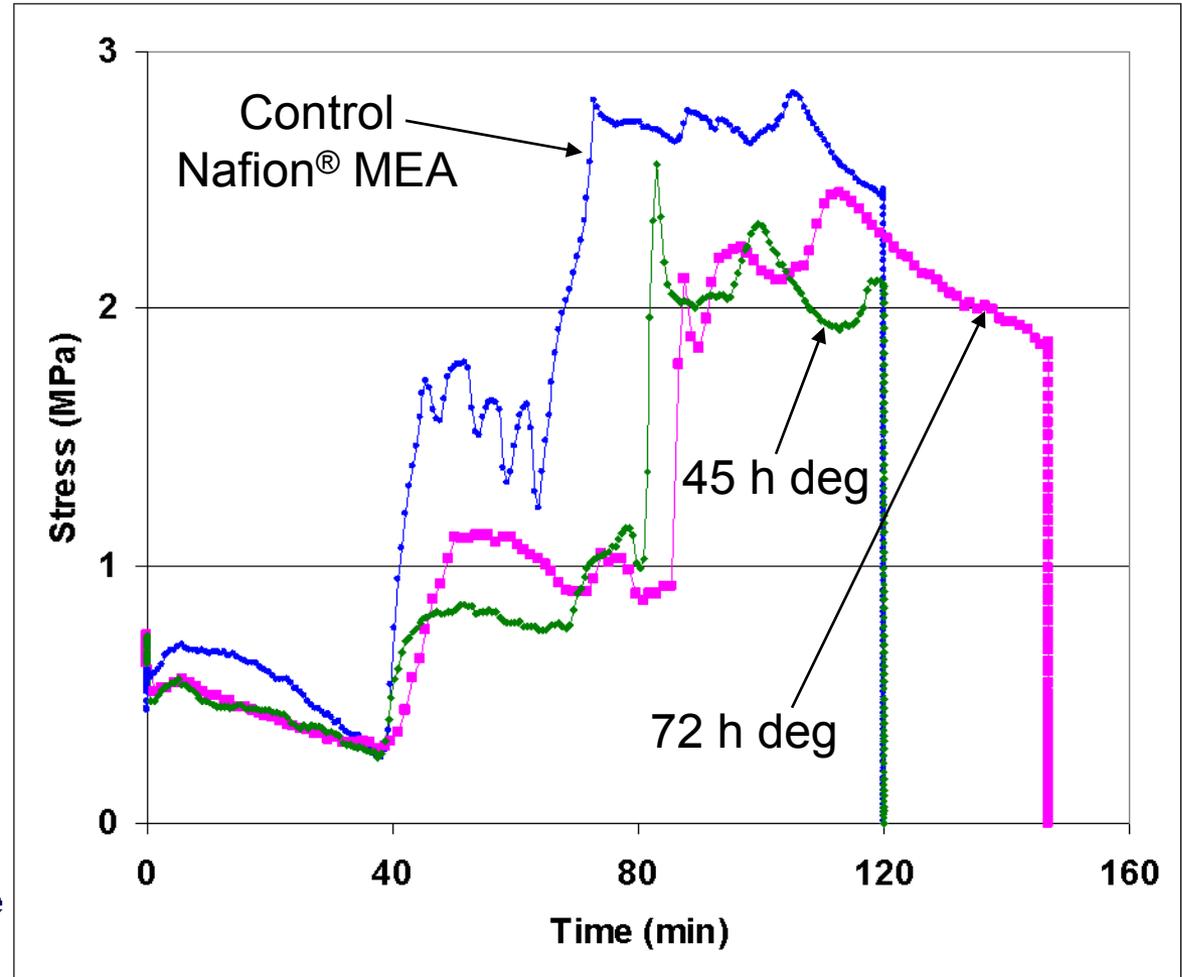
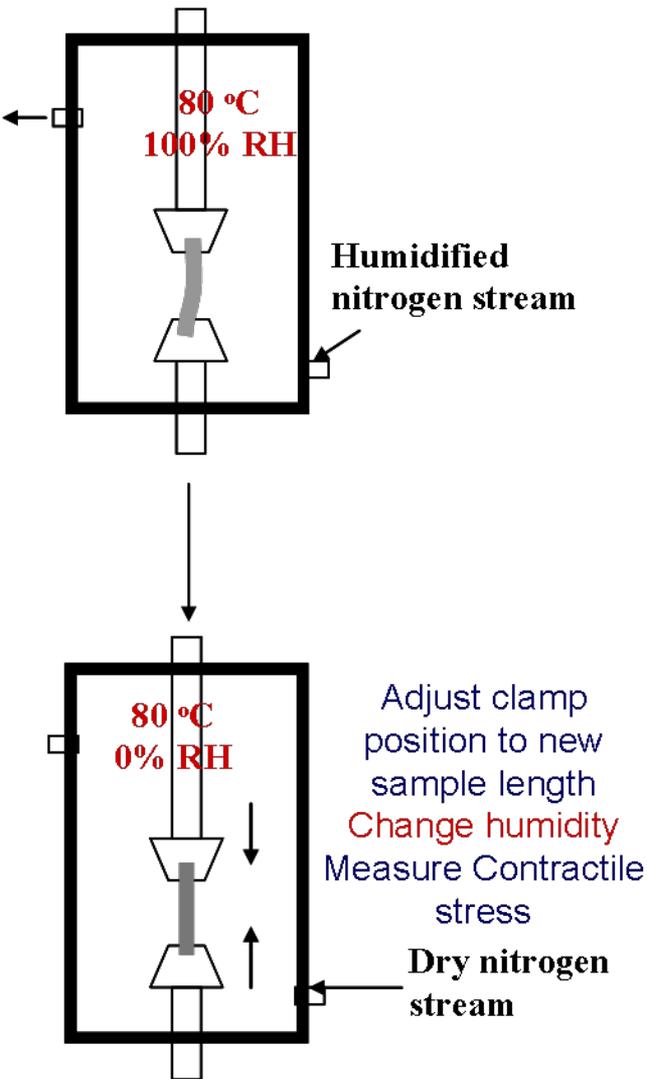
at 80° C, 100% RH

sample prep	Modulus	Linear expansion	Strain-at-break	Stress-at-break
	MPa	%	mm/m m	MPa
Acid cleaned	24.8 ± 5.7	15.1 ± 3.4	4.8 ± 0.7	15.6 ± 1.5
Control MEA	38.2 ± 4.7	8.2 ± 1	4.82 ± 0.5	15.74 ± 1
45h degraded MEA	22.8 ± 8.1	6.3 ± 1.9	0.2 ± 0.03	2.6 ± 0.7
72h degraded MEA	19.5 ± 4.8	7.2 ± 2.3	0.17 ± 0.05	1.8 ± 0.3

← MEA preparation process improves membrane modulus - due to high processing temperature, increased crystallinity?

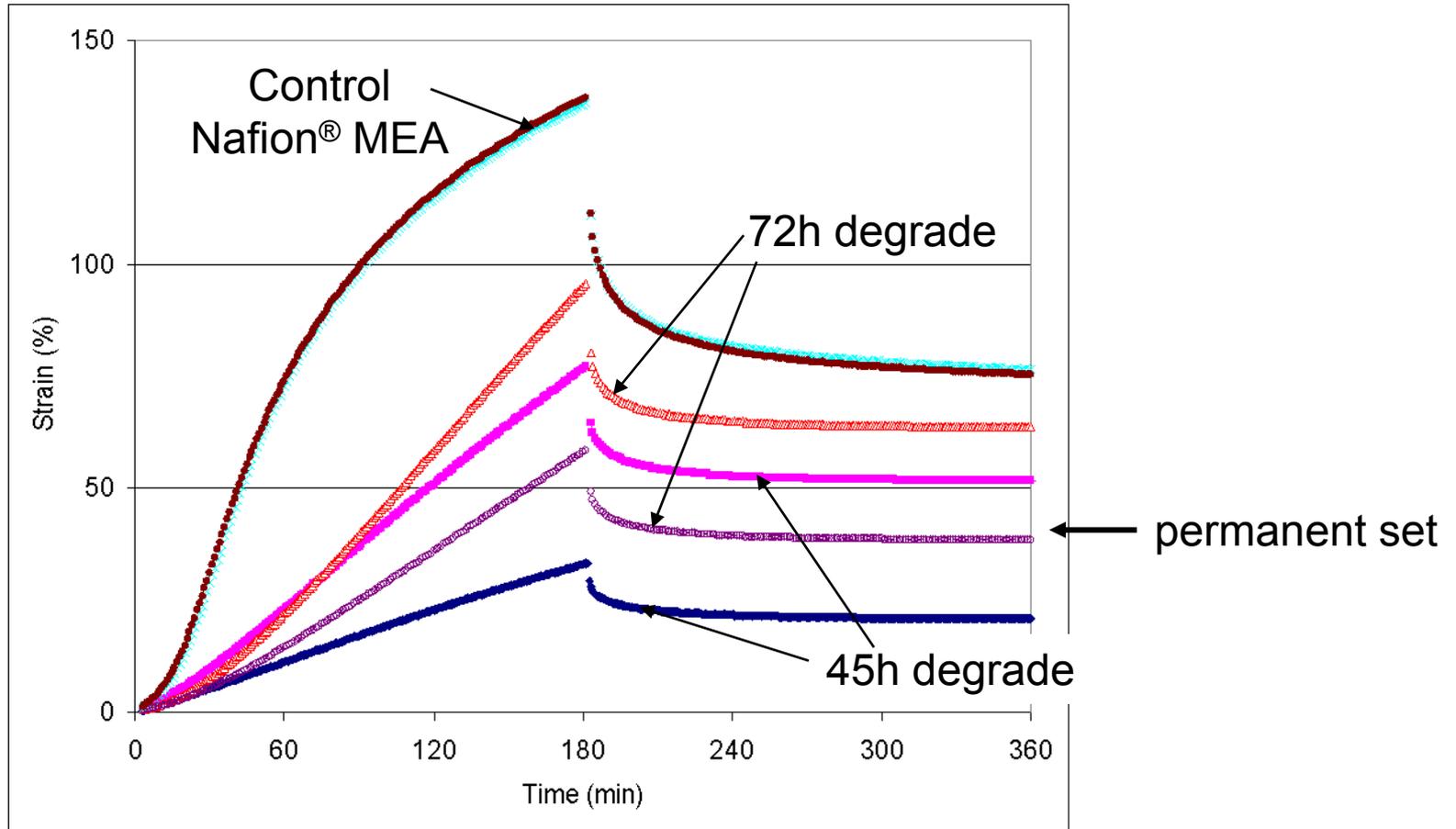
↑ OCV degradation severely deteriorates membrane mechanical properties. Modulus reduction + reduced ductility – polymer molecular weight lowering causes fewer chain entanglements

# Contractile stress response to humidity change from 100 down to 0% RH at 80° C



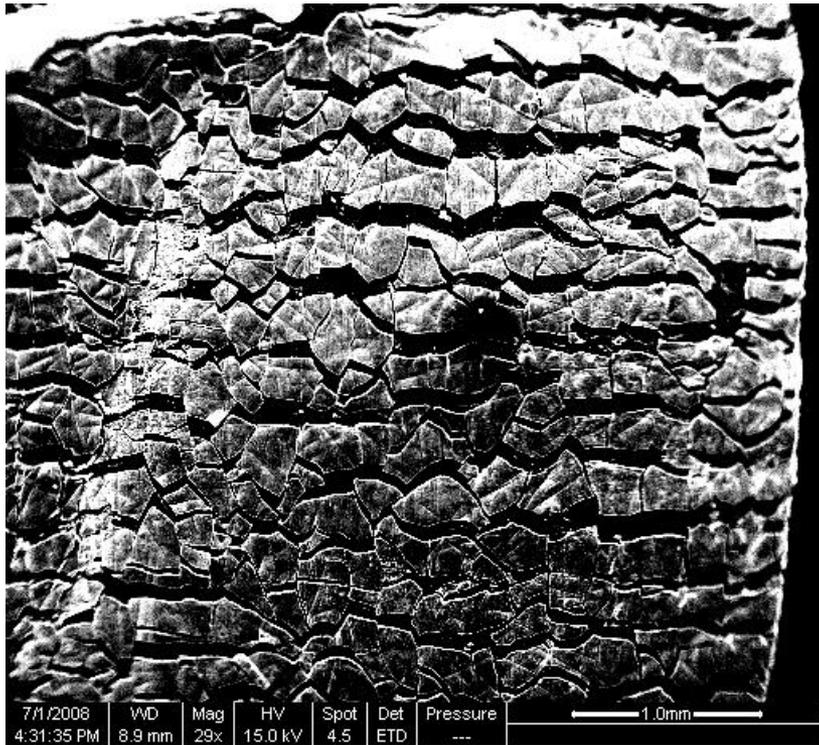
- Control as well as degraded MEA fails when subjected to stresses resulting from humidity change

# Creep response to 10 MPa stress at 80° C



- Degraded MEA deformation lower than that of control MEA – fewer chain entanglements due to shorter chains
- SEM micrographs of creep samples: wide cracks suggesting failure instead of deformation

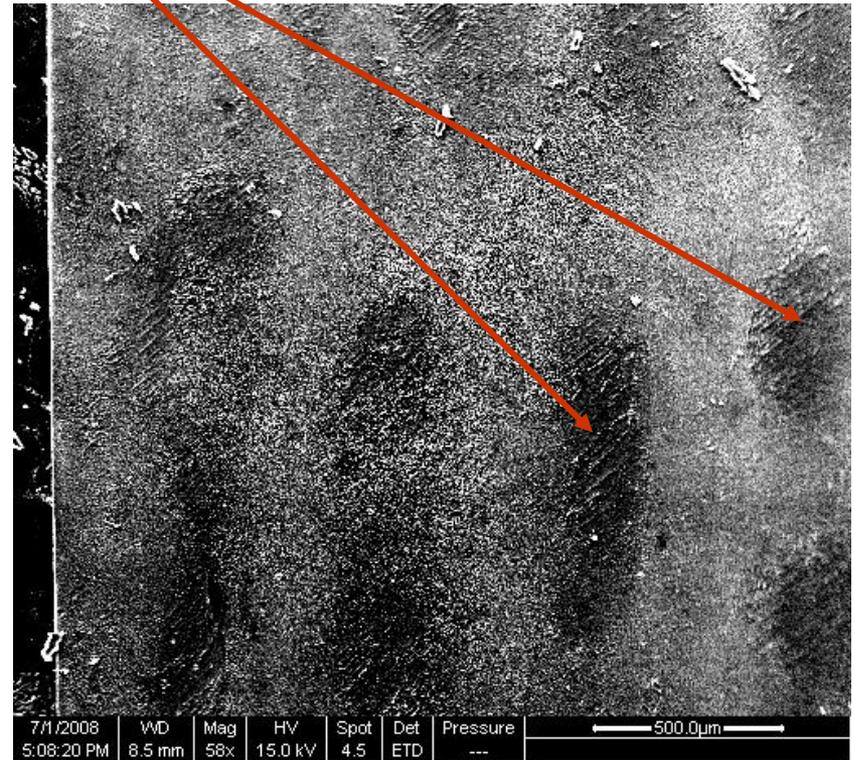
# 72h degraded MEA micrograph after creep



**72h OCV - degraded MEA shows wider cracks over entire surface than 45h degraded MEA. Cracks extend over entire surface.**

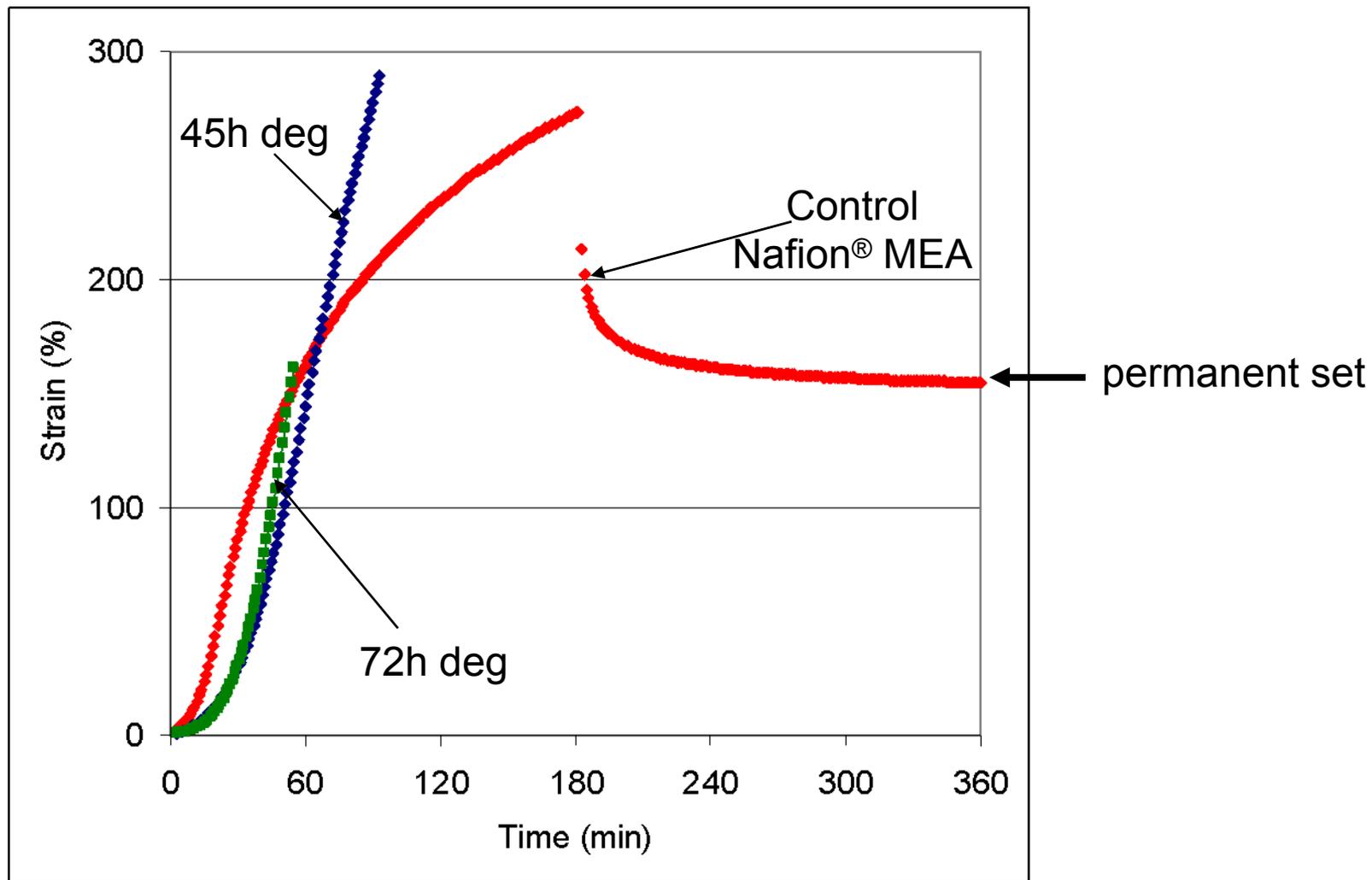
# Control (non-degraded) MEA micrograph after creep deformation

failure regions



Control MEA shows no wide cracks as for degraded samples, but crazes which could be spots for failure initiation

# Creep response to 20 MPa stress at 80° C



Subject to 20 MPa stress control MEA is intact but degraded MEAs break; reduced ability to withstand stress – fewer polymer chain entanglements

# Membrane Degradation Strategy for Broadband Dielectric Spectroscopy Analysis

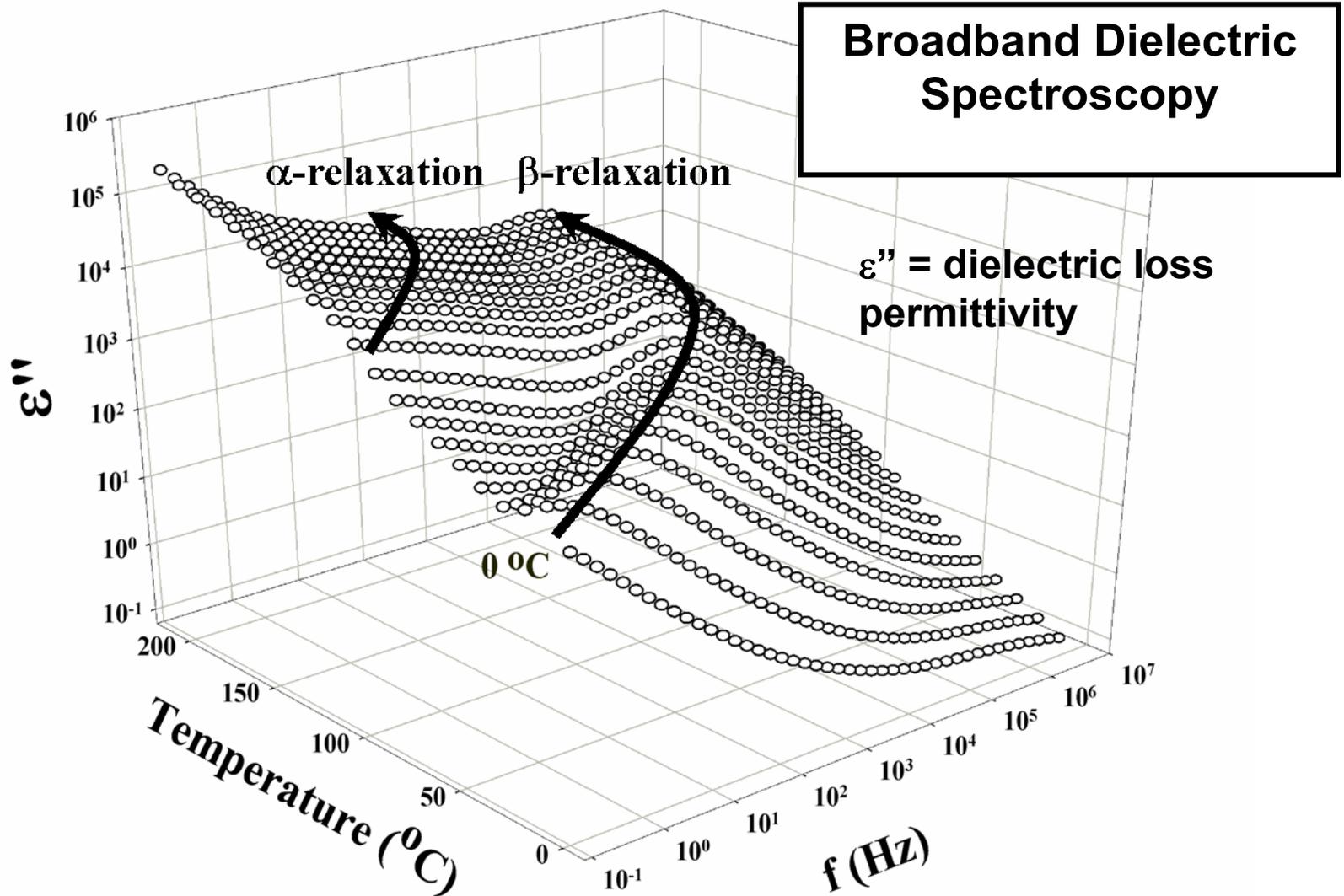
**Fenton Reagent Degradation (*ex-situ*)**  
( $\text{FeSO}_4/\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ - 0.005 g/g polymer + 30%  
 $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ ) @ 80° C

- Membranes degraded up to 200h
- Degraded membranes cleaned w/ 2M HCl to convert  $[\text{SO}_3^-]_{2,3}$   $\text{Fe}^{+2}/\text{Fe}^{+3}$  coordination back to  $\text{SO}_3\text{H}$  groups
- Membranes tested with dielectric spectroscopy in forms of degraded films and film made by solution re-cast

**FC Degradation-OCV (*in-situ*)**

- Catalyst layer removed by mixing with EtOH/ $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (50:50)
- Membranes dissolved in DMAc and re-cast directly on dielectric electrodes

$\epsilon'' - f - T$  response surface for *undegraded* Nafion<sup>®</sup> acid film. Curves spaced at 10° C increments from onset of  $\beta$  relaxation up to 200° C. Arrows show crests of peaks

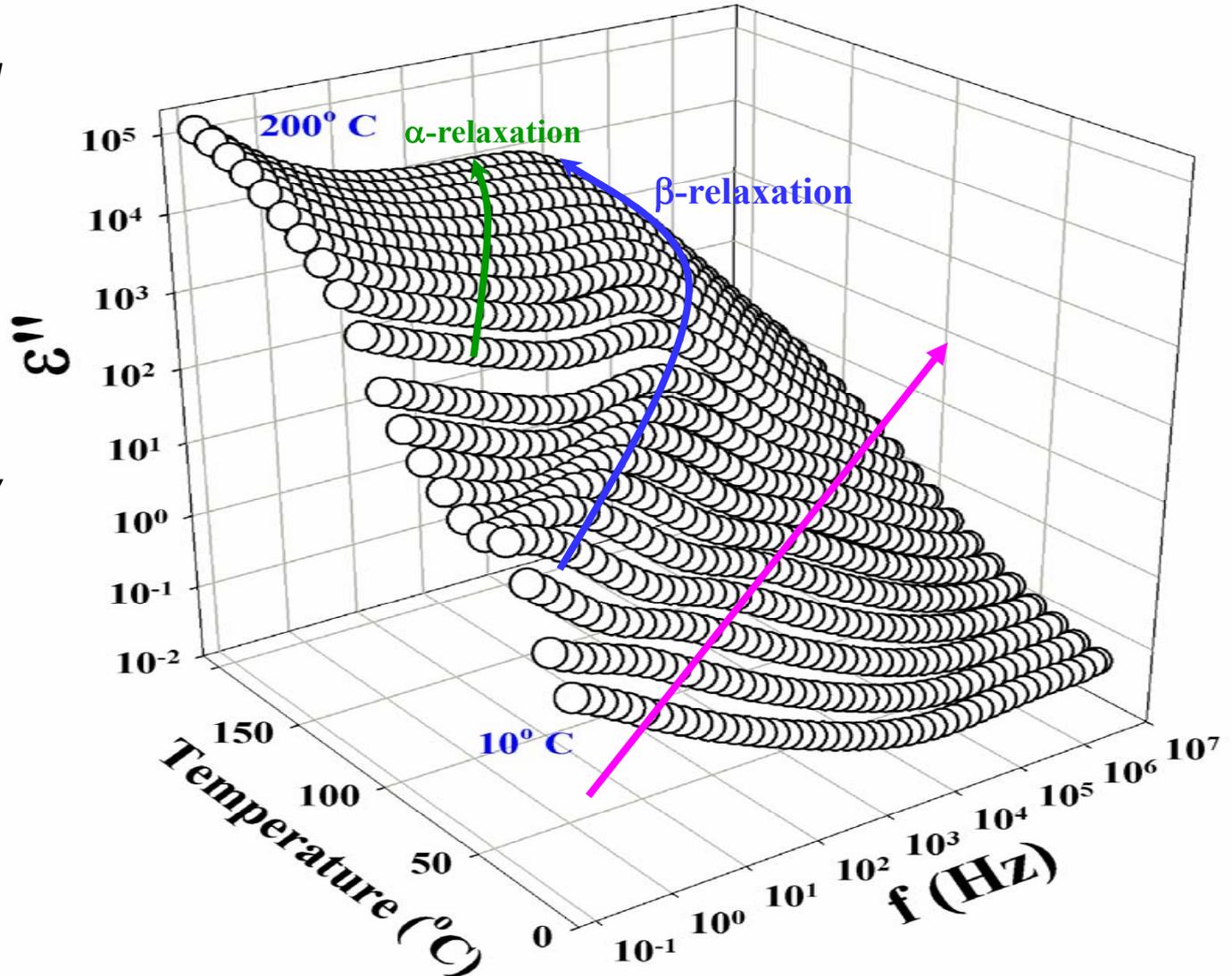


# $\epsilon'' - f - T$ response surface for NRE 212 degraded 75h in Fenton reagent

Degraded film  
cleaned w/ 2M HCl  
→ dissolved → re-  
cast from DMF at  
180° C

Relaxation crests  
shift and an extra  
peak (pink arrow)  
appears in the low  
temperature  
region.

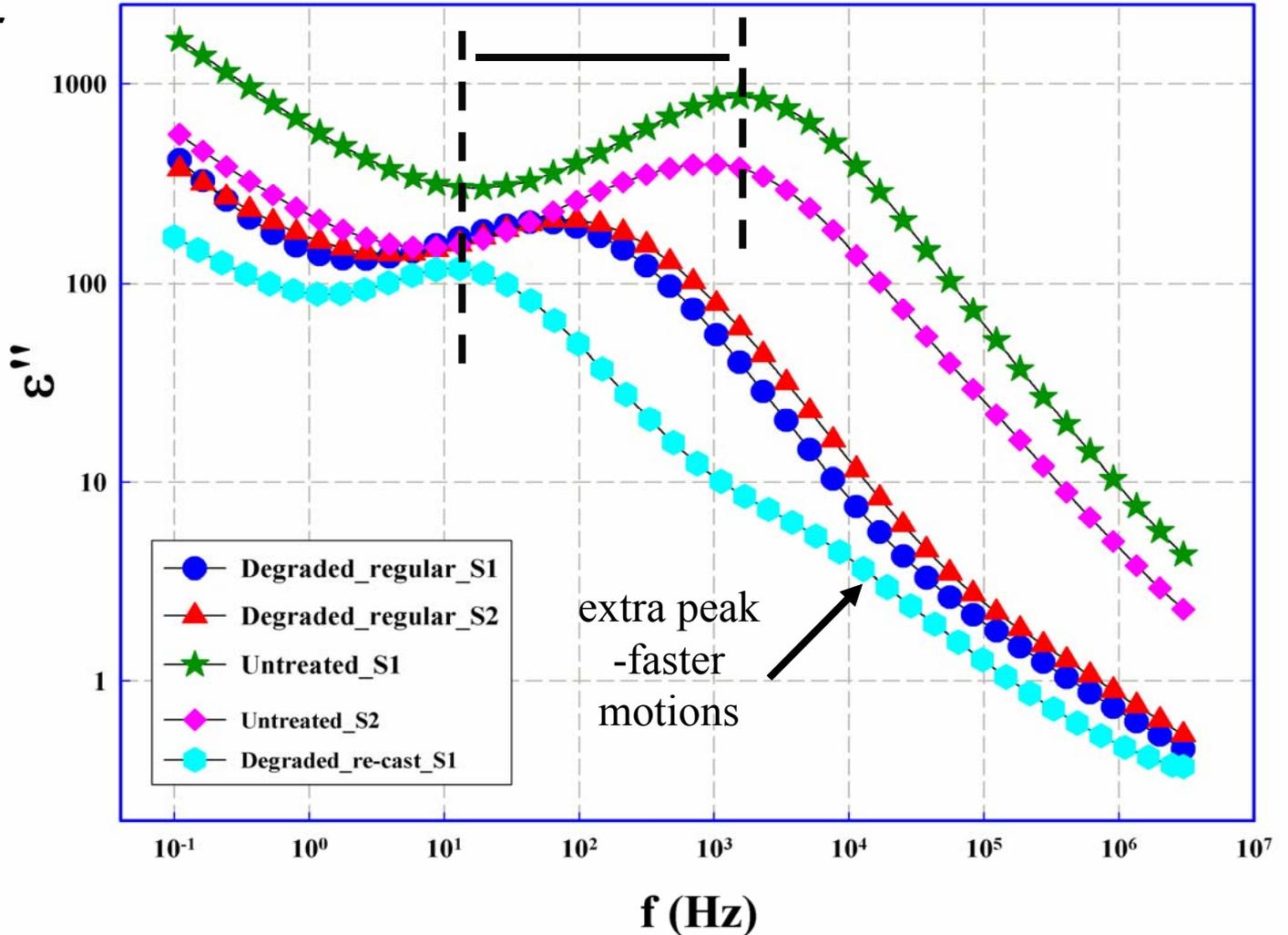
Signatures of  
change in  
membrane  
molecular  
motions with  
degradation.



# NRE 212\_75h Degraded in Fenton Reagent Comparison at 70° C

*$\beta$  relaxation slower  
w/ degradation:  
Out-leaching low  
MW chains?*

**Extra peak for  
degraded samples  
in high  $f$  range.  
Emergence of  
additional polymer  
motions.**



# Collaborations

- Prof. Vijay Ramani, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago.

# Proposed Future Work

- Condensation of phosphonic acid ketone with phenol; polymerization of resulting 2,2-bis(4-hydroxyphenyl) perfluoropropane phosphonic acid with aromatic dihalide vis NAS.
- Synthesis of sulfonic acid ketone with phenol and subsequent polymerization.
- Solution cast hydrocarbon membranes will be prepared for structure-property-conductivity characterization and MEAs for fuel cell testing.
- *Ex-situ* tests of hydrocarbon membrane durability will be performed.
- Inorganic modification of synthesized hydrocarbon membranes for enhanced durability. Battery of structure-property-performance tests.
- Extension of dielectric spectroscopy studies to the gigahertz region.

# Summary Slide

- Relevance: Attain DOE goal of high temperature proton exchange membrane fuel cells for automotive applications.
- Approach: Synthesize novel stable hydrocarbon membrane polymers that are economical. Characterize structure-properties and fuel cell performance of novel membranes.
- Technical Accomplishments and Progress:
  - A key monomer precursor, 2-oxo-1,1,3,3,3-pentafluoropropane phosphonic acid diethyl ester, was synthesized and purified for condensation with phenol
  - 4,4'-Dichlorodiphenyl)sulfone 3,3'-disulfonic acid was prepared for benchmark hydrocarbon resin synthesis
  - Open circuit voltage (OCV) decay curves for degraded Nafion® MEAs established for comparison w/ degraded hydrocarbon MEAs. Mechanical studies of degraded samples, related to mechanical durability with RH cycling, were conducted.
  - Scanning electron microscopy of OCV-degraded creep samples show cracks rather than crazes as is the case for non-degraded creep samples.
  - Dielectric spectroscopy analysis show shifts in polymer chain motions with degradation.
- Collaborations: Professor Vijay Ramani, IIT, Chicago.
- Proposed Future Research:
  - Condensation of phosphonic acid ketone with phenol; polymerization of resulting 2,2-bis(4-hydroxyphenyl) perfluoropropane phosphonic acid with aromatic dihalide vis NAS.
  - Synthesis of sulfonic acid ketone with phenol and subsequent polymerization.
  - Solution cast hydrocarbon membranes will be prepared for structure-property-conductivity characterization and MEAs for fuel cell testing.
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  - Extension of dielectric spectroscopic characterization to the gigahertz region.

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