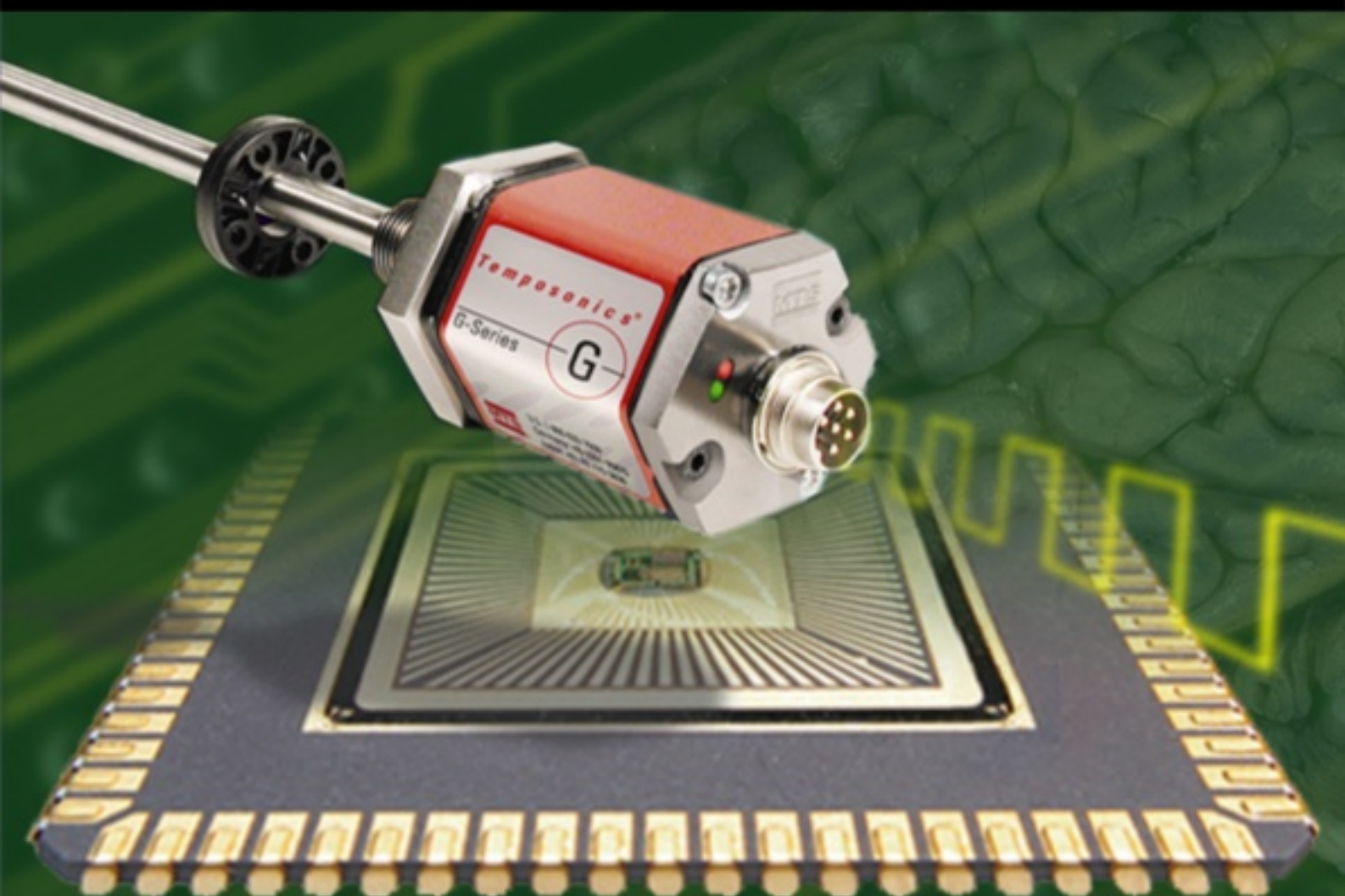


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Contents

Volume 77
Issue 3
March 2007

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Research Articles

| | |
|---|------|
| System Verification <i>Javad Mokhbery</i> | 1020 |
| High Temperature Humidity Sensor for Detection of Leak Through Slits and Cracks in Pressurized Nuclear Power Reactor Pipes <i>Debdulal Saha, Kamalendu Sengupta</i> | 1025 |
| Mathematical Formulation for Strain and Pressure Mapping Fiber Bragg Grating Sensors <i>Pandey N. K., Tripathi Anupam</i> | 1032 |
| Lifetime Based Temperature Sensing <i>Nirupama Rai, Vineet Kumar Rai</i> | 1040 |
| A New Concept of Theory and Technique for Remote Strain Measurement <i>Tapan Kumar Maiti, Asim Kar</i> | 1045 |
| Using RF Smart Points for the Improvement of Metrological Activities <i>Claudio de Capua, Emilia Romeo, Antonino Battaglia, Bruno Piccolo</i> | 1051 |
| Data Acquisition and Digital Filtering for Infrasonic Records on Active Volcanoes <i>José Chilo, Thomas Lindblad</i> | 1058 |
| Real-Time Air Pollution Monitoring in Urban Environment Using <i>In-Situ</i> Measurements Using WO₃ Gas Sensors and Satellite Imagery Through Internet GIS <i>O. Pummakarnchana, V. Phonekeo, A. Vaseashta</i> | 1065 |

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High Temperature Humidity Sensor for Detection of Leak Through Slits and Cracks in Pressurized Nuclear Power Reactor Pipes

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Abstract: The leak before break (LBB) concept is well known to nuclear power reactor. The problem is common to water power reactor. This is based on the premise that a detectable leak will develop before catastrophic break occurs. The main purpose of the present study is to develop tape cast $\text{MgCr}_2\text{O}_4+35\text{mole\% TiO}_2$ and gel cast $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ humidity sensor for use in LBB applications at 300°C . The material capacitance varies with transient injection of water vapour adsorption. In actual plant, the sensors are placed on a steam pipe surrounded by heat insulation. The pipe unites the nuclear reactor and power generator. The analysis of humidity distribution in the annulus is calculated assuring leak rate 0.1gpm in a 30 m long tube. In this paper, analysis is done on the basis of the two types of sensor using AC frequency. Performance characteristics are observed for the LLB application.

Keywords: High temperature moisture sensor, Tape cast, Nuclear power reactor

1. Introduction

The choice of $\text{Mg}_2\text{CrO}_4\text{-TiO}_2$ tape cast as sensor elements in the form of porous thick films is considered. The inherent hydrophilicity to water molecules, $\text{Mg}_2\text{CrO}_4\text{-TiO}_2$ based humidity sensors responses of surface conductance under an electric field, when the environment humidity is low; the protons released from surface hydroxyls help from site to site from the spinel surface or hydrate with adjacent water molecules to form H_3O^+ ions as charge carriers. At high humidities the vapour

molecules inside the pores form a continuous layer, which enhance transfer of protons. The sensing response depends on pore geometry of spinel structure. $\text{Mg}_2\text{CrO}_4\text{-TiO}_2$ spinel structure is effective for H_3O^+ ions as charge carriers [2-3, 6]. The study presents new results for electrical sensing properties of $\text{Mg}_2\text{CrO}_4\text{-TiO}_2$ spinel and aero gel alumina thick films after depositing on parallel gold electrodes. To detect leakage, humidity sensors are used for sensing of moisture through slits and cracks in pipes for nuclear power reactor. If steam leak occurs in reactor pipe, there is a possibility of reactor failure and the radiation leaks into the containment area environment. The sensors are required to withstand significant amounts of heat at 300°C [1-3] without failure in the event a leak occurs into the containment area. Such a humidity sensor is already implemented in European Nuclear Power Plants [4-5]. According to NUREG-1061 (U.S.N.R.C, 1984) [1] the essentials of a leak sensor are as follows:

- 1) Leak detection system should be able to detect 1gram per minute (gpm) in the identified leak, and 0.1 gpm in the unidentified leak
- 2) The leak detection systems must have three diversity, each with three redundancies.
- 3) Local sensors are applicable.

Here in this paper the electrical characteristics of humidity sensors have been described for use directly in Main Stream Line (MSL) piping.

2. Experimental

Stoichiometric amount of nitrate salts were dissolved separately in distilled water, then a stoichiometric amount of citric acid was added and after the complete mixing a homogenous solution was achieved. These solutions were slowly evaporated at around $80\text{-}100^\circ\text{C}$. In the system dehydration takes place followed by gelation to form highly viscous colloidal mass but the gelation probably results due to the formation of Metal-citrate-nitrate complex. On continuous heating the mass was converted in to ash. This ash was calcined at 900°C for 4 hours. The end product of the synthesis was MgCr_2O_4 . The crystalline phase was identified at room temperature by standard x-ray diffraction technique using Cu- radiation with a Philips PW 1730 diffractometer. Humidity Sensor ($\text{MgCr}_2\text{O}_4\text{+}35\text{mole\%TiO}_2$) thick tape cast is sensitive to humidity at 300°C [6] and fit for MSL operational condition. The change in AC conductivity can be measured by a low cost electronic device. Both $\text{MgCr}_2\text{O}_4\text{+}35\text{mole\%TiO}_2$ and $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ are sensitive to H_2O ionic condition [7-8]. Preparation of characterization of material $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ was prepared by Yoldas method [11].

3. Results and Discussion

SEM (SEM LEO, S430i, LEO, UK) micrograph shows surface structure contains high degree of porosity with a large enhancement of active surface, responsible for the high absorption and adsorption ability of the material. $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ phase crystallographic peak and $\text{MgCr}_2\text{O}_4\text{-}35\text{mole\%TiO}_2$ crystallographic peak were done by XRD PW 1730 using Cu $\text{K}\alpha$ radiation (Philips, Holland).

3.1 SEM Picture:

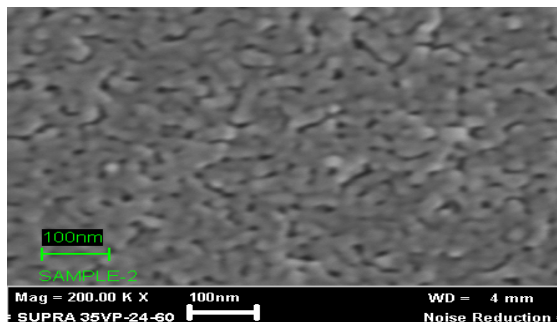


Fig. 1. Nanoporous γ -Al₂O₃ tape.

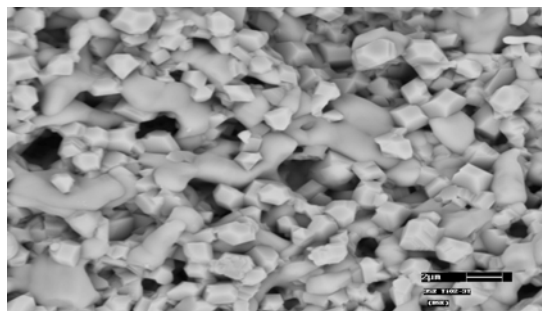


Fig.2. Micro porous tape cast MgCr₂O₄+35mole% TiO₂

3.2 Sensor Picture.

Fig. 3 shows the complete structure of a nano porous sensor, electrode on both sides. Fig. 4 shows micro porous structure with parallel electrodes fixed on alumina strips. The strips are provided with conducting tracks for inserting it into a temperature zone of 300⁰C. The 75 percent of the strip will remain in the annulus portion and the rest 25 percent will remain out side the insulation for connection to active device.

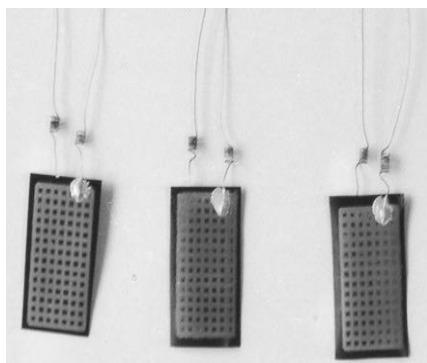


Fig. 3. γ - Al₂O₃ sensor.

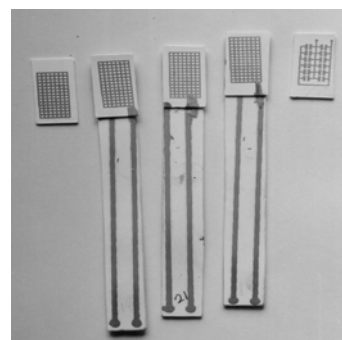


Fig. 4. MgCr₂O₄ +35mole%TiO₂ sensor.

3.3 XRD-analysis.

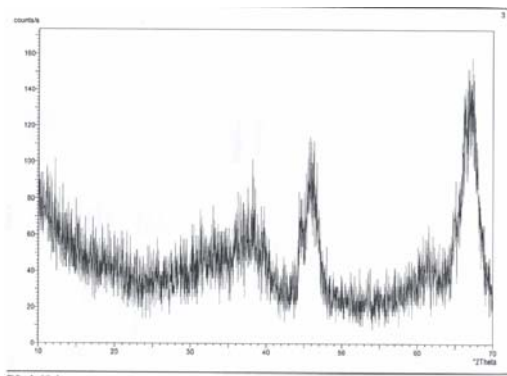


Fig. 5. γ - Al₂O₃

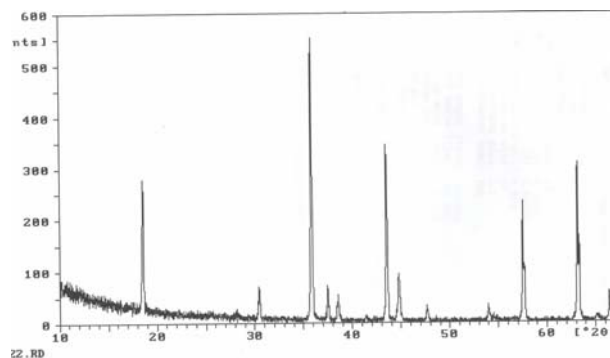


Fig. 6. MgCr₂O₄ -35 mole%TiO₂

3.4 Impedance Gain Phase Analysis Data for MgCr₂O₄ +35mole%TiO₂ & γ -Al₂O₃:

Table 1.

| Fr(Hz) | RH(%) | Cp | D | X (Ω) | Z (Ω) | θ (theta) $\delta\epsilon\gamma$. |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|----------------|--|
| 1000 | 0 | 100pF | 0.11 | -1.5M | 1.5M | -83 |
| 1000 | 85 | 756pF | 2 | -61.3k | 79.5k | -39.9 |
| 1000 | 0 | 90pF | 0.054 | -1.4M | 1.8M | -86.94 |
| 1000 | 85 | 86nF | >10 | -36k | 828k | -2.5 |

The conduction mechanism of MgCr₂O₄+35mole%TiO₂ tape cast start in a way such that the absorbed first layer of water molecules dissociate hydroxyl ion (OH⁻) and proton (H⁺), H⁺ chemisorbed on the surface metal ion combines with surface oxygen to form second OH⁻ ions. Chromium is most active surface metal ion because Cr³⁺ easily combines with OH⁻ ion. The weakly bonded hydroxyl group dissociates to form mobile protons. Mobile protons on the surface can migrate by hopping to increase the electrical conductivity (Anderson and Parks⁵ 1998). It is seen from the table 1 that when water is injected to increase the humidity level, Z changes from 1.5 M Ω to 79.2 K Ω . The response of the tape material with time in MSL operation at 300^o C is shown in Fig. 7a. Dissipation factor increases due to proton hopping and ionic conduction [4]. That from equation,

$$\epsilon^* = \epsilon - j\epsilon'' = \epsilon - j(k/\omega\epsilon_0) \quad (1)$$

The overall capacity changes to a high value are shown in Table 1. Intermittent rise of capacitance Fig. 7a is due to intermittent insertion of steam in the insulation sheath. In case of Al₂O₃ shown in Table 1 the change in Z value from 1.8 M to 828 K from low to high humidity condition and dissipation factor changes from 0.054 to >10, Cp changes from 90pF -86nF. So γ -Al₂O₃ can be considered as a good candidate for detection of leakage in water Reactor. For long time operation γ -Al₂O₃ may be considered as an ideal sensor for its highly crystallographic stable structure. The change in sensor voltage with steam injection is shown in Fig. 7 b.

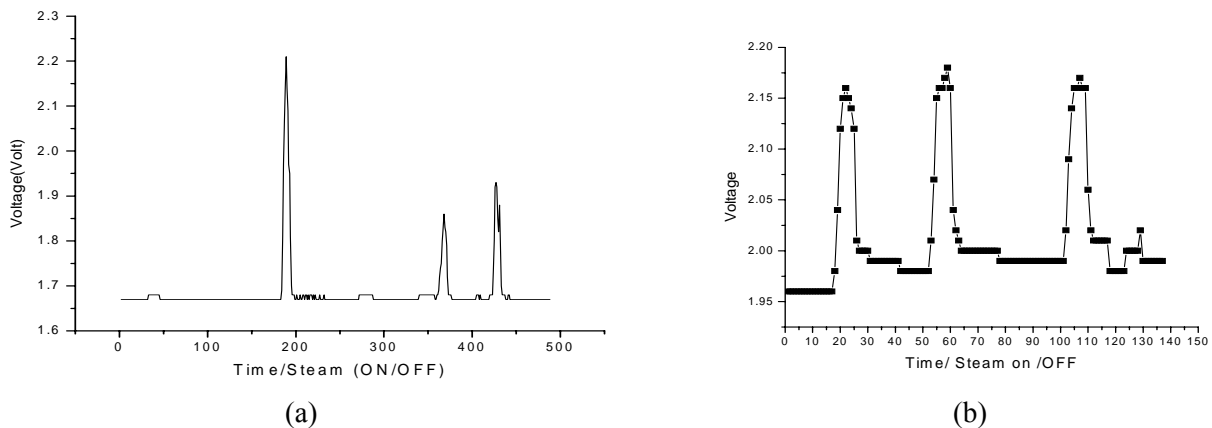


Fig. 7. Transient response of (a) MgCr₂O₄+35mole%TiO₂ and (b) γ -Al₂O₃ during steam injection measured at temperature T=300^oC.

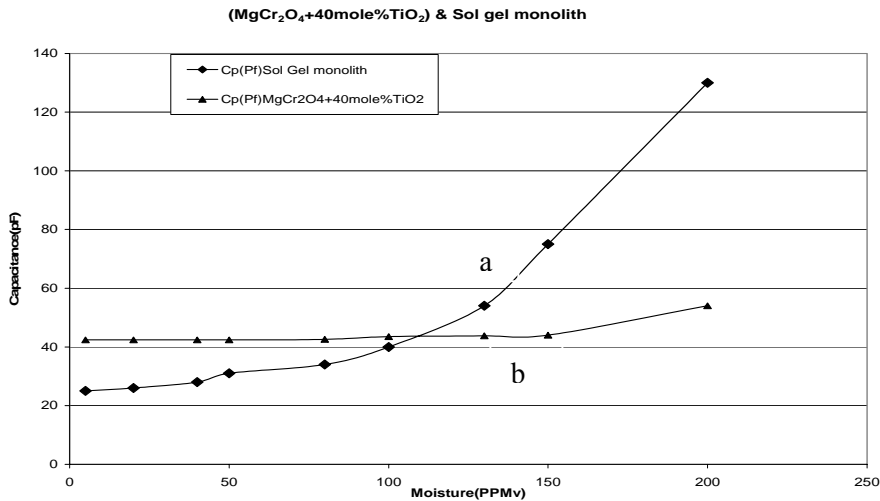


Fig. 8. Study of sensitivity (a) γ -Al₂O₃ and (b) MgCr₂O₄+35 mole%TiO₂ in trace moisture level.

From the theoretical analysis the generation of moisture is calculated per second. It is clear that nano porous γ -Al₂O₃ is sensitive to trace moisture than MgCr₂O₄+35 mole%TiO₂.

4. Location Analysis

Leak is postulated to occur as a line source representing a crack. The concentration of moisture at a distance X from the crack line at a time (T) can be determined by the experimental arrangement as shown in the Fig 9(a). A 30 m length tube of 30-inch diameter is covered by 8 mm insulation sheath of wood fiber. 20 sensors were installed at equal spacing with a separation of 1.5 m. Each sensor was concentrated to a 20-channel Data Acquisition system.

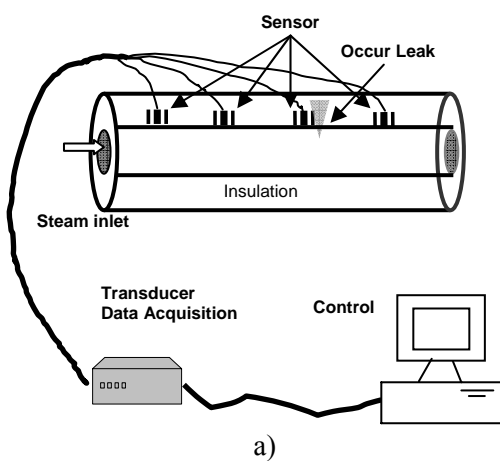


Fig. 9. Schematic diagram of location analysis.

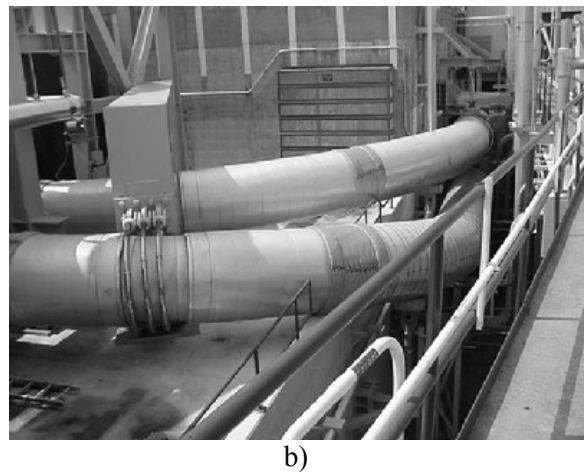


Fig. 9. Nuclear Reactor pipe.

Table 2.

| Channel/sensor position | Successive Distance from left side of the pipe (m) | Voltage (mV) | Time(T) |
|-------------------------|--|--------------|-------------|
| 1 | 1.5 | 8 | < 1 min |
| 2 | 3 | 12 | -do- |
| 3 | 4.5 | 14 | -do- |
| 4 | 6 | 15 | -do- |
| 5 | 7.5 | 16 | -do- |
| 6 | 9 | 17 | -do- |
| 7 | 10.5 | 18 | -do- |
| 8 | 12 | 20 | -do- |
| 9 | 13.5 | 28 | -do- |
| 10 | 15 | 30 | -do- |
| 11 | 16.5 | 27 | -do- |
| 12 | 18 | 20 | -do- |
| 13 | 19.5 | 15 | -do- |
| 14 | 21 | 14 | -do- |
| 15 | 22.5 | 10 | -do- |
| 16 | 24 | 8 | -do- |
| 17 | 25.5 | 7 | -do- |
| 18 | 27 | 6 | -do- |
| 19 | 28.5 | 3 | -do- |
| 20 | 30 | 2 | -do- |

This is a straightforward method of location analysis. From Table 2 the location of steam leakage lies between 13.5 m to 16.5 m from channel 1, first sensor from left of the pipe in the array of 20 sensors. Response time of the sensors is within one minute so the position of maximum voltage/min. is the probable leakage position.

5. Conclusion

MgCr₂O₄+35mole% TiO₂ and γ -Al₂O₃ sol-gel template/tape has been developed to detect pipe cracks/slits in a pressurized system. The sol-gel based nanoporous γ -Al₂O₃ template has adequate sensitivity over the leak rate 200 ppm per minute over the temperature 300°C. AC response is found to be useful for humidity detection. For LBB realization parallel connection method with AC voltage measurement is proposed. By parallel connection system both leak rate and leak position can be detected accurately. The result shows that ceramic humidity sensor can be used for leak detection and position of leak for use in Nuclear power plant.

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Guide for Contributors

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