

TECECO ECO-CEMENT MASONRY PRODUCT UPDATE – Carbonation = Sequestration

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Abstract

Around 26 billion tonnes of CO₂ are released to the atmosphere annually, around 20 billion metric tonnes of which is from the burning of fossil fuels. As a consequence of global warming there is considerable interest around the world in exploiting major natural carbon sinks such as the oceans, subsurface reservoirs (such as brines or depleted oil & gas fields), or the terrestrial carbon sink to sequester carbon dioxide on a large scale.

The author is the inventor of eco-cements which, given the huge size of the built environment, represent a novel new method of sequestering large amounts of CO₂ as calcium and magnesium carbonates in bricks, blocks, pavers, mortars and other building materials as well as a potential method of lowering embodied energies and reducing wastes.

This article goes into the as yet unclear chemistry of carbonation processes in eco-cements and corrects previous incorrect assumptions made by the author about the magnesium carbonates formed when eco-cements carbonated.

Introduction

Eco-cements became known to the world mainly through an article on them in New Scientists Magazine (Pearce, 2002) and a program shown by Discovery Channel (The Daily Planet, 2002). This intense interest has been for several reasons – the potential lower embodied energy, the ability of the material to benignly encapsulate a wide range of wastes and the potential for CO₂ sequestration on a massive scale. The ability of eco-cements to utilise wastes and reabsorb carbon dioxide is the subject matter for this paper.

The built environment is our footprint on the globe and probably accounts for around 70% of all materials flows. Current cement production is over two billion tonnes per annum which is used to make over two tonnes of concrete per person on the planet per annum putting concrete at around 30% of all materials flows.

Global carbon dioxide flows in billions of tonnes CO₂ are (Woods Hole Research Centre, 2004):

Atmospheric increase	=	Emissions from Fossil fuels	+	Net emissions from changes in land use	-	Oceanic uptake	-	Missing carbon sink
12.07 (±0.73)	=	20.152 (±0.1.83)	+	5.86 (±2.56)	-	7.32 (±2.93)	-	6.59 (±4.39)

Unless we want to face climate change on a massive and global scale we must sequester around 6 billion tonnes of CO₂ per annum. As we are unlikely to kick the fossil fuel habit until it kicks us the need is urgent. Now Russia has joined the Kyoto treaty it has come into affect and countries that do not make an effort to sequester carbon will in due course face sanctions. What better way to sequester carbon than by using TecEco eco-cement concretes in bricks, blocks, pavers, mortars and renders in our own built environment?

Both calcium and magnesium minerals in eco-cements appear to carbonate readily and to date concrete blocks and mortars in combination with a wide range of wastes have successfully been experimented with and tested to compliance with AS/NZS 4456.4, an Australian Standard for the strength of masonry units.

With the inclusion of carbon containing organic wastes such as sawdust, shredded waste plastic etc. there is an opportunity to not only sequester carbon and utilise waste but create masonry units with other new and desirable properties such as lighter weight and high R factor.

When reactive magnesia is substituted for OPC the first noticeable affect is an improvement in the rheology; blocks go through block machines with fewer failures, mortars spread more easily and stick better. There are several reasons for this. Principal amongst them are the fineness of the reactive magnesia which affects particle packing and lubrication and the surface charge.

What happens inside an eco-cement block or mortar to give it durability and strength is even more fascinating. Brucite is the stable phase in the system MgO-SiO₂-H₂O over a wide range of temperatures and pressures, but this may not be the case at the high early pHs in tec-cement concretes as the observable formation of some Mg – silicates at room temperature is still being investigated.

In the presence of carbon dioxide brucite (Mg(OH)₂) carbonates forming hydrated magnesium carbonates such as nesquehonite and lansfordite at room temperatures. Although theories abound it is thought that there is a gradual desiccation with lansfordite loosing water forming nesquehonite and so on, particularly in relation to the formation of magnesite which Deelman claims to have solved (Deelman, 2003). Significantly, both magnesium and calcium appear to carbonate more readily in porous concretes made using TecEco eco-cements containing magnesia that in concretes containing only Portland cement (PC) as the binder.

The silicification reactions of Portland cement are relatively well known and not discussed in this short paper. Carbonation of both Portlandite and brucite adds

strength to eco-cement concretes used for bricks, blocks pavers and mortars and is encouraged for this and sequestration reasons.

Masonry Products as a Focus for Sustainability and Utilizing Wastes

The built environment is the obvious place to focus sustainability efforts. More than 60% of the population of the planet is housed in mud bricks or within mud walls. If clay bricks and concrete blocks are included the figure is probably well over 90%.

There is a huge opportunity for sustainability within the masonry industry. The dominant proportion of what we take, manipulate and make that we do not consume immediately goes into the materials with which we build the built environment. "Combined with eco-city design principles, green building technologies therefore have the potential to make an enormous contribution to a required 50% reduction in the energy and material intensity of consumption in the post-modern world." (Rees, 1999).

"In 1999, construction activities contributed over 35% of total global CO₂ emissions - more than any other industrial activity. Mitigating and reducing the impacts contributed by these activities is a significant challenge for urban planners, designers, architects and the construction industry, especially in the context of population and urban growth, and the associated requirement for houses, offices, shops, factories and roads." (UNEP, 2001)

According to the Human Settlements Theme Report, State of the Environment Australia 2001 (CSIRO, 2001), "Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions are highly correlated with the energy consumed in manufacturing building materials. "On average, 0.098 tonnes of CO₂ are produced per gigajoule of embodied energy of materials used in construction. The energy embodied in the existing building stock in Australia is equivalent to approximately 10 years of the total energy consumption for the entire nation. Choices of materials and design principles have a significant impact on the energy required to construct a building. However, this energy content of materials has been little considered in design until recently, despite such impacts being recognized for over 20 years."

Making Sustainability Economic

The widely held view is that sustainable strategies for construction are complex to devise and politically difficult to introduce. Currently it is more expensive to reuse and recycle than to use newly extracted resources. There would be a rapid improvement in sustainability if this hurdle could be overcome so that it was not only cheaper to reuse or recycle, but the process resulted in superior properties.

The problem is the costs involved in re-using and recycling. Sorting waste streams and then transporting sorted recyclable materials back to a location in which they can be is expensive and tends to make recycled inputs more expensive than raw materials. Disorder is prevalent for two main reasons; things are made with mixed materials and the waste collection process tends to mix them up even more.

The current technical paradigm for the recycling process generates separate outputs based on chemical composition rather than class of property. Costs are incurred and waste generated in separating what is required from the balance of materials and then transporting to factories that can only use specific waste inputs.

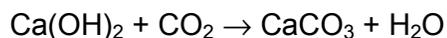
The TecEco cement technologies provide an inherently more economic process as they change the technology paradigm redefining wastes as resources (Pilzer, Zane, 1990). TecEco cements are benign binders that can utilise waste more on their class of property rather than chemical composition, and therefore reduce sorting problems and costs associated with recycling.

TecEco cements also contribute to properties for example TecEco eco-cement mud bricks tested to date have resulted in a 50% improvement in strength which is significant.

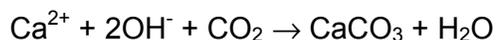
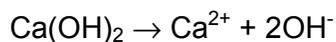
The Carbonation of Eco-cement Bricks, Blocks, Pavers and Mortars

Eco-cements first became known because they carbonate readily and therefore sequester CO₂. With the inclusion of wastes containing carbon such as sawdust or plastics they are net carbon sinks.

The carbonation of Portlandite (free lime) in the presence of water is as below.



The steps of the reaction are first the dissolution of calcium hydroxide followed by reaction with dissolved carbon dioxide.



The mineralogical forms of calcium carbonate are vaterite, aragonite and calcite, and their precipitate follows Ostwald's law in that order (Cole and Kroone, 1960).

Magnesia is made from magnesite. In porous eco-cement concretes it first hydrates forming brucite and this then carbonates forming hydrated magnesium carbonates to lansfordite and nesquehonite. There is probably also an amorphous form that slowly changes to nesquehonite, A simplified thermodynamic cycle is depicted in Figure 1 but is in reality more complex.

The more important carbonates of calcium and magnesium are listed in Appendix 1 – Calcium and Magnesium Carbonates.

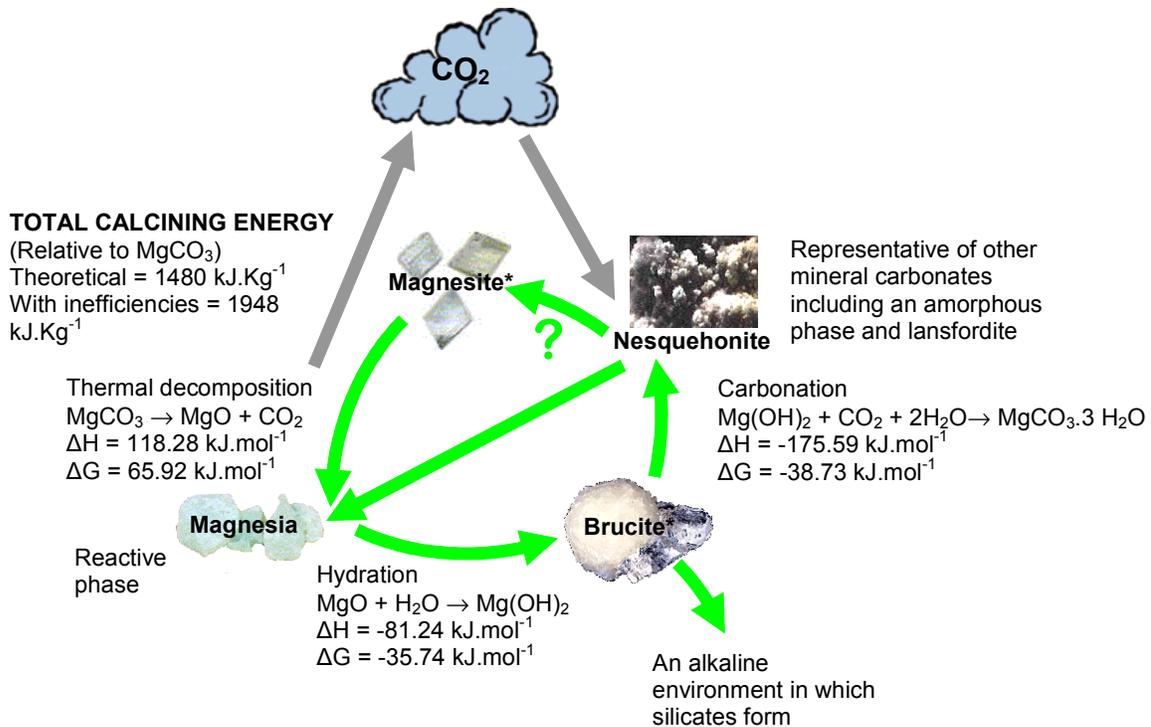


Figure 1 - The Magnesium Thermodynamic Cycle

The XRD traces for a simple block formulation using sand as an aggregate are shown before and after treatment with HCL used to remove carbonates in Figure 2 and are clear evidence that the binder in eco-cements is a mixture of calcite, lansfordite and nesquehonite, not calcite, hydromagnesite and magnesite as originally predicted on the basis of the thermodynamics.

The rate for the carbonation of both calcium and magnesium compounds depends on the dissolution rate of Ca^{2+} and Mg^{2+} and partial pressure and transport of CO_2 . These in turn are influenced by the mix design and setting atmospheric conditions. Wet dry cycles appear to promote carbonation providing alternatively transport and reaction media. Ideal carbonation conditions are still being considered, presently 50 – 70% relative humidity and exposure although wet dry is thought to work best.

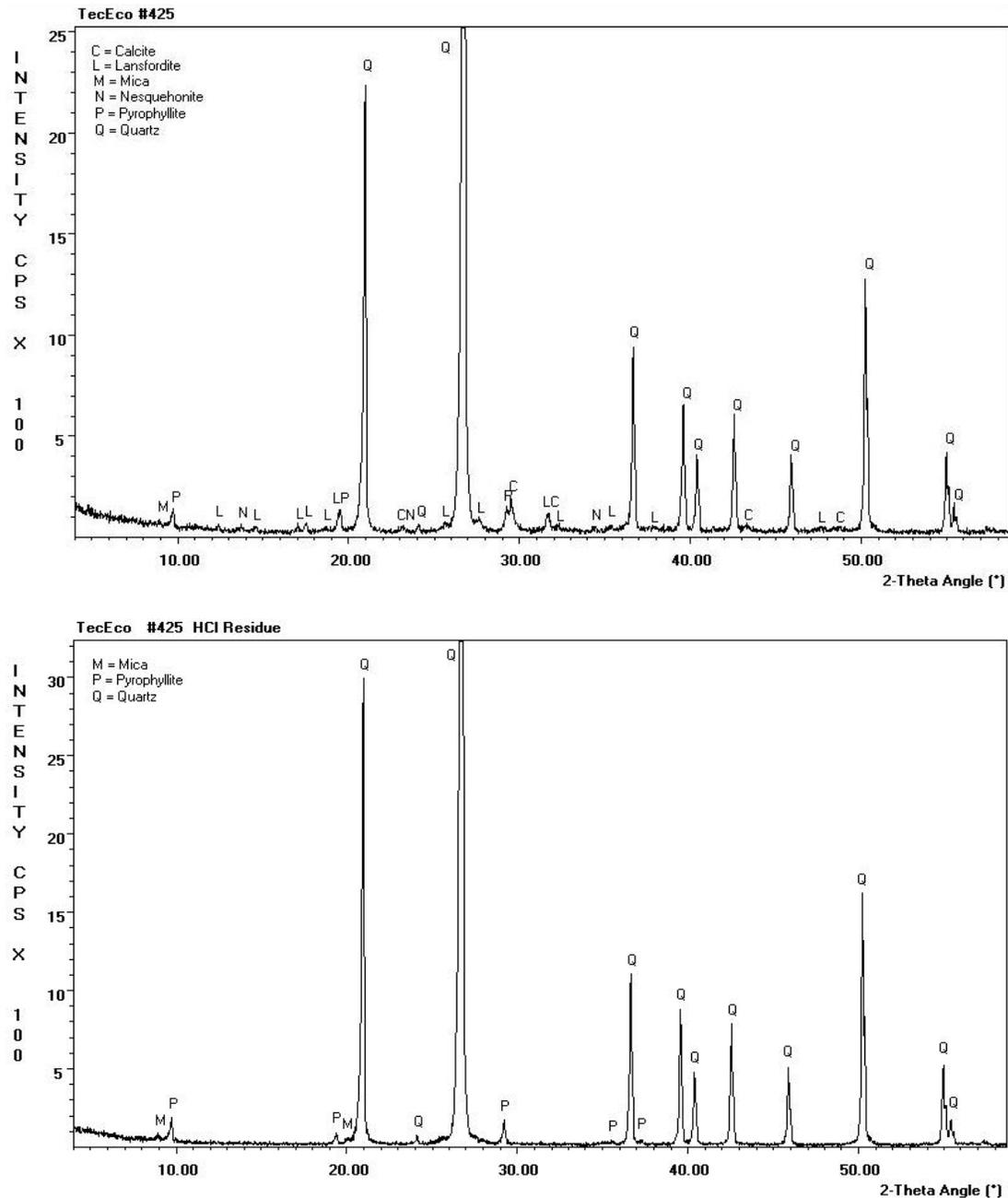


Figure 2 - XRD Showing Carbonates Before and Minerals Remaining after their Removal with HCl in a Simple Mix (70 Kg PC, 70 Kg MgO, colouring oxide .5Kg, sand unwashed 1105 Kg)

All the calcium and magnesium carbonation products have strength giving properties. Of the calcium minerals aragonite is the strongest with a hardness of 3.5 – 4. Both calcite and vaterite are relatively soft with a hardness of 3. Nesquehonite or lansfordite contribute to strength and the reason is thought to be microstructural as they are not particularly strong with a hardness of 2.5.

Of the calcium carbonates only vaterite and rarely aragonite are fibrous. Most of the carbonates and hydrated carbonates of magnesium can be fibrous or otherwise

elongated. For example nesquehonite is prismatic and generally forms star like clusters thought to be the source of microstructural strength. Fibrous and needle like crystal growths add more microstructural strength than more rounded or tabular crystals such as calcite because of the 3D structures formed.

Calcium silicate hydrates can form elongated growths but commonly have a more granular or tabular habit. All are harder than Brucite or the carbonates of calcium or magnesium. Harder minerals that form more quickly tend to have the physical effect of forcing the growth of slower growing softer minerals into interstitial spaces. It is also possible that the more reformation processes that occur, the more crystals interlock with each other adding to strength and that the hydroxides and carbonates of magnesium are compressed adding to strength. According to CANMET, compressed brucite is, for example, as strong as CSH.(Beaudoin, Ramachandran, Feldman, 1977).

Lansfordite and nesquehonite are more soluble than magnesite and hydromagnesite which are virtually insoluble (both with a solubility of approximately $.001 \text{ g L}^{-1}$), however both are more soluble than Brucite with a solubility of $.000154 \text{ g L}^{-1}$ ($K_{sp} = 1.8 \times 10^{-11}$) which is virtually insoluble. (See Appendix 1 – Calcium and Magnesium Carbonates). The solubility of magnesium carbonates in mild acids seems to be generally lower.

Carbonation starts at the surface and works inwards and can be accelerated by exposure to the weather. It is generally accepted medium to high humidity is best. Simple experiments performed by the author have also demonstrated that the presence of accelerators such as iron salts and triethanolamine may accelerate carbonation. The use of carbonated steam, carbon dioxide foam and of substance like EGDA which release CO_2 is also being considered.

Masonry units are usually made hollow and due to the manufacturing process they are porous and the presence of air voids clearly speeds up carbonation. If a porous aggregate such as bottom ash, scoria or pumice is also added an even higher surface area results further speeding up carbonation.

Reactive magnesia fly ash eco-cements carbonate more rapidly than similar formulations with just Portland cement. Portland eco-cements carbonate better than Sorel cements. In all cases, carbonation occurs rapidly only in porous materials.

Other magnesium cements such as magnesium oxychloride and magnesium oxysulfate take a long time to carbonate and as reported by Cole and Demediuk (Cole and Demediuk, 1955) tend to remain as unstable oxy compounds, but do eventually carbonate.

Thermodynamics

In multi-component alkaline concretes there is still a lot to learn, and the reader should be aware that the thermodynamic and equilibrium calculations do not accurately predict what happens in practice. If they were followed, hydromagnesite would be the first carbonate formed and as a result of desiccation would eventually become magnesite as originally first predicted by the author who is the inventor of calcium-magnesium cements. This is not the case however and the first minerals

formed are an lansfordite and nesquehonite possibly accompanied by an amorphous phase.

The free energy and enthalpy of formation of calcium and magnesium carbonates formed from hydroxides have been calculated and are included in Appendix 1 – Calcium and Magnesium Carbonates

Kinetics

According to Langmuir (Langmuir, 1971) thermodynamics make it clear that magnesite must be considered more stable than nesquehonite, which in turn is more stable than magnesium hydroxide carbonate (MgHCO_3). The sequence as so far determined however seems to be

$\text{MgO} \rightarrow \text{Mg(OH)}_2 \rightarrow \text{MgCO}_3 \cdot 5\text{H}_2\text{O} \rightarrow \text{MgCO}_3 \cdot 3\text{H}_2\text{O} ? \rightarrow \text{??????}$ and maybe eventually MgCO_3

Defying simple thermodynamics lansfordite and nesquehonite are the first minerals formed and do not readily proceed towards magnesite.

Carbonation Volume Changes

Consider the volume changes that occur when Portlandite carbonates to calcite:



74.08 + 44.01 \leftrightarrow 100 molar mass

33.22 + gas \leftrightarrow 36.93 molar volumes

Slight expansion. But shrinkage from surface water loss

Consider the volume changes that occur when Brucite carbonates to nesquehonite:



24.3 + (g) \rightarrow 74.77 + (l) molar volumes.

Significant expansion.

The water lost by Portland cement as it shrinks is used by reactive magnesia as it hydrates negating or eliminating shrinkage.

The Extent and Potential of Carbonation in Eco-Cement Concretes

The amount of CO_2 concretes absorb is dependent on a number of factors.

Thickness is the key factor - only the outer 35-50 mm (1 ½ to 2") of poured Portland cement and somewhat less for TecEco tec-cement concretes will absorb CO_2 .

Concrete masonry units and mortars are on the other hand more porous and will generally absorb CO₂ throughout.

Eco-cements contain a relatively high proportion of reactive magnesia. In masonry products such as mortars and blocks, there is a much greater proportion of materials such as reactive magnesia (and thus Brucite) in the cement component that carbonate and carbonation proceeds to completion and much more CO₂ is reabsorbed. A typical eco-cement formulation for masonry products would contain 50 - 85% readily carbonated material in the cement component compared to 20-25% in the cement component of ordinary CMU's containing Portland cement only. There is therefore approximately 50 - 60% more carbonation in an eco-cement block compared to an ordinary concrete block.

The carbonation of a typical block formulation containing 15% cement is depicted in Figure 3 - The Carbonation of a Typical Eco-Cement Block.

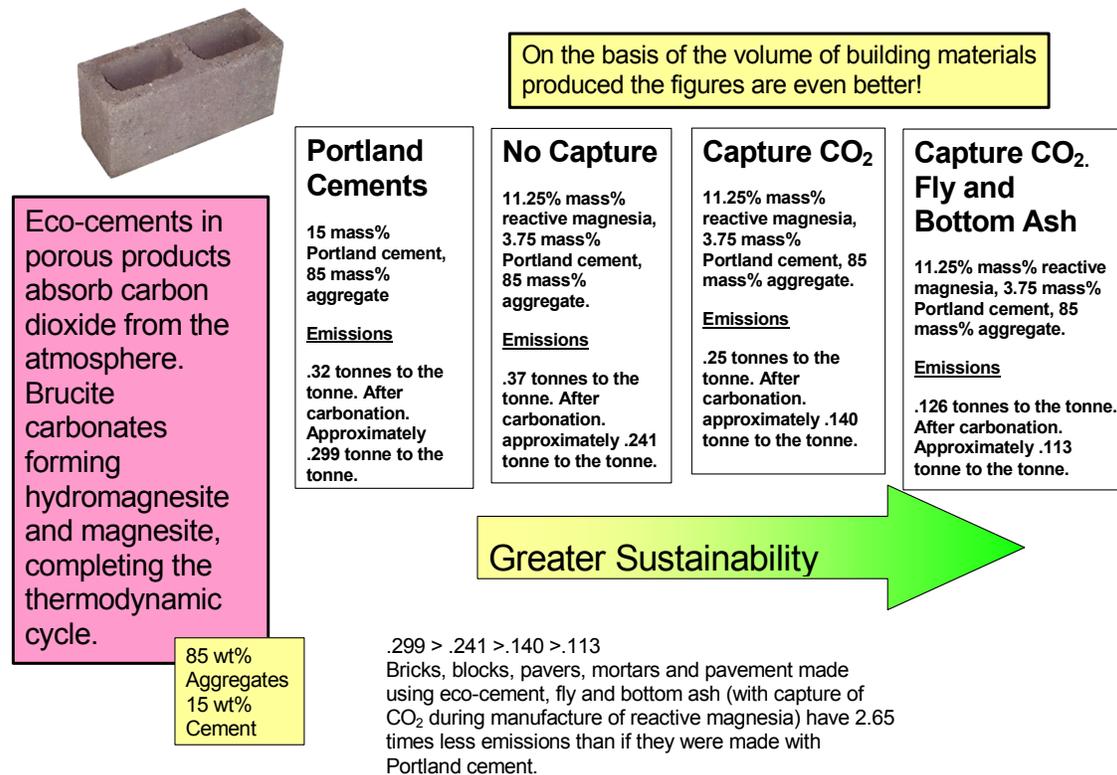


Figure 3 - The Carbonation of a Typical Eco-Cement Block

If eco-cements were adopted for 80% of concrete the potential global sequestration is over two billion tonnes, over the 10% of the global anthropogenic emissions contributed by concrete because of potential cross substitution of more emitting materials. If carbon based materials such as plastic, sawdust and bottom ash are included as aggregates the figure could be higher.

Summary

The late great H.F.W. Taylor, perhaps the most pre-eminent cement chemist ever, predicted a need to do something about global warming in regard to cement and

concrete publicly at least as far back as 1990 in his address to a Conference on Advances in Cementitious Materials (Taylor, 1990), and forecast many changes not only in the way cements are made but in their composition, particularly in relation to the incorporation of wastes.

The TecEco eco-cement development is the first successful method of using carbon dioxide and wastes to create construction materials such as masonry products.

As stated by Fred Pearce in the article on eco-cements that was published in the New Scientist “There is a way to make our city streets as green as the Amazon Forest. Almost every aspect of the built environment from bridges to factories to tower blocks, and from roads to sea walls, could be turned into structures that soak up carbon dioxide – the main greenhouse gas behind global warming. All we need to do it change the way we make cement.”

There is much still to learn about carbonation processes and the carbonation of magnesium compounds has become an area of international interest because of the need for massive sequestration offered in a practical way by the TecEco eco-cement innovation.

The carbonation of TecEco eco-cement concretes used in masonry products such as blocks, mortars and renders results in the formation of lansfordite, nesquehonite and possibly an amorphous phase and not hydromagnesite and magnesite as previously thought.

Appendix 1 – Calcium and Magnesium Carbonates

Numerous magnesium carbonates, hydrated magnesium carbonates and hydroxide carbonates exist. Mixed Mg-Ca, Mg-Fe Mg-Na etc. carbonates not shown but numerous. For a list of carbonates see <http://mineral.galleries.com/minerals/carbonat/class.htm>. For detail see <http://webmineral.com>

Basic Magnesium Carbonates

Numerous magnesium hydroxide carbonates exist.

Mineral	Formula	XRD (B) I/I ₀	Intensity	Molecular Weight	Hardness	Density	Solubility (Ml ⁻¹ , cold water)	ΔH° reaction from hydroxide (kJ.mol ⁻¹)	ΔG° reaction from hydroxide (kJ.mol ⁻¹)	Comment
Artinite	Mg ₂ CO ₃ (OH) ₂ .3 H ₂ O		2.736(1), 5.34(0.65), 3.69(0.5)	198.68	2.5	2.02		-194.4	-49.81	Hydrated basic magnesium carbonate
Hydro magnesite	Mg ₅ (CO ₃) ₄ (OH) ₂ .4H ₂ O		5.79(1), 2.899(0.82), 9.2(0.39)	365.31	3.5	2.16	.001095	-318.12	-119.14	Hydrated basic magnesium carbonate
Dyppingite	Mg ₅ (CO ₃) ₄ (OH).2.5H ₂ O		10.6(1), 6.34(0.6)	485.65		2.15				Hydrated basic magnesium carbonate
Giorjosite	Mg ₅ (CO ₃) ₄ (OH).2.5H ₂ O		11.8(1), 3.38(0.7)	485.65		2.17				Hydrated basic magnesium carbonate
Nesquehonite	Mg(HCO ₃)(OH).2(H ₂ O) or MgCO ₃ .3(H ₂ O)		6.5(1), 2.61(0.7)	138.36	2.5	1.85	.012937	-175.59	-38.73	Commonly formed at room temperature and from Lansfordite
Pokrovskite	Mg ₂ (CO ₃)(OH) ₂ .0.5(H ₂ O)		2.6(1), 6.1(0.7), 2.17(0.9)	151.64	3	2.51				Alteration product

Carbonates and Hydrated Carbonates

Mineral	Formula	XRD	Molecular Weight	Hardness	Density	Solubility (Ml ⁻¹ , cold water)	ΔH° reaction from hydroxide (kJ.mol ⁻¹)	ΔG° reaction from hydroxide (kJ.mol ⁻¹)	Comment
Vaterite	CaCO ₃	2.73(1), 3.3(1), 3.58(1)	100.09	3	2.54			-61.33	Polymorph of calcite and aragonite
Calcite	CaCO ₃	3.035(1), 2.095(0.18), 2.285(0.18),	100.09	3	2.71	.0001399	-69.58	-64.63	Polymorph of vaterite and aragonite
Aragonite	CaCO ₃	3.396(1), 1.977(0.65), 3.273(0.52),	100.09	3.5-4	2.93	.00015			Polymorph of vaterite and calcite
Ikaite	CaCO ₃ ·6H ₂ O	5.17(1), 2.64(0.9), 2.63(0.7), 2.8(0.5), 2.46(0.3), 2.61(0.3), 4.16(0.3), 5.85(0.3), 4.16(0.3),	208.18		1.78				Forms in cold saline marine waters
Monohydrocalcite	CaCO ₃ ·H ₂ O	4.33(1), 3.08(0.8), 1.931(0.6), 2.17(0.6), 2.83(0.5), 2.38(0.4), 2.28(0.4), 1.945(0.3),	118.10	2-3	2.38				
Magnesite	MgCO ₃	2.742(1), 2.102(0.45), 1.7(0.35)	84.31	4	3.009	.001257		-19.55	The most stable form but difficult to make.
Amorphous	MgCO ₃ ·nH ₂ O	Amorphous							Exists in nature and the lab
Magnesium carbonate monohydrate	MgCO ₃ ·H ₂ O								Does not exist in nature
Barringtonite	MgCO ₃ ·2(H ₂ O)	2.936(1), 3.093(1), 8.682(1)	120.34		2.83				Rare form
Lansfordite	MgCO ₃ ·5(H ₂ O)	3.85(1), 5.8(0.8)	174.39	2.5	1.73	.01009			Commonly forms at room temperature

Mixed Carbonates and Hydrated Carbonates of Calcium and Magnesium

Mineral	Formula	XRD	Molecular Weight	Hardness	Density	Solubility (M ⁻¹ , cold water)	ΔH° reaction from hydroxide (kJ.mol ⁻¹)	ΔG° reaction from hydroxide (kJ.mol ⁻¹)	Comment
Dolomite	CaMg(CO ₃) ₂	2.883(1), 1.785(0.6), 2.191(0.5)	184.4	3.5-4	2.84	insoluble			Massive.
Huntite	CaMg ₃ (CO ₃) ₄	2.833(1), 1.972(0.3), 2.888(0.2)	353.03	1-2	2.696	Rel. insoluble			Rare
Sergeevite	Ca ₂ Mg ₁₁ (CO ₃) ₉ (HCO ₃) ₄ (OH) ₄ ·6(H ₂ O)	2.82(1), 1.965(0.3), 2.87(0.3), 3.58(0.3), 7.14(0.3), 1.755(0.2), 3.37(0.2), 2.68(0.1)	1,307.78	3.5	2.27	insoluble			Very rare

Source thermodynamic data for calculation ΔH° and ΔG° and reaction from hydroxide: Robie, Richard A., Hemingway, Bruce S., and Fisher, James R. *Thermodynamic Properties of Minerals & Related Substances at 298.15K and 1 Bar (105 Pascals) Pressure and at Higher Temperatures*. U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1452. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1978.

Source Solubility Data: Data extracted from CRC Handbook of Chemistry and Physics, 74th Edition, 1993-1994 and from Chemistry Web Server at California State University at <http://155.135.31.26/oliver/chemdata/data-ksp.htm> valid 01/11/2003

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