

Industrial Polymers, Specialty Polymers, and Their Applications

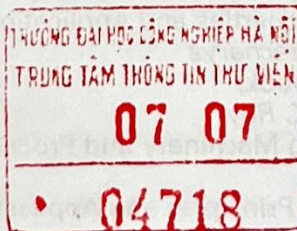
P l a s t i c s E n g i n e e r i n g S e r i e s

Manas Chanda
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Contents

Preface	xiii
Authors	xv
1 Industrial Polymers	1-1
1.1 Introduction	1-1
1.2 Part I: Addition Polymers	1-2
1.2.1 Polyolefins	1-3
1.2.1.1 Polyethylene.....	1-3
1.2.1.2 Polypropylene.....	1-9
1.2.1.3 Polyallomer	1-15
1.2.1.4 Poly(Vinyl Chloride)	1-16
1.2.1.5 Poly(Vinylidene Chloride).....	1-24
1.2.1.6 Polytetrafluoroethylene and Other Fluoropolymers	1-25
1.2.1.7 Polyisobutylene	1-29
1.2.1.8 Polystyrene.....	1-30
1.2.1.9 Polybutadiene (Butadiene Rubber)	1-31
1.2.1.10 Polyisoprene	1-31
1.2.1.11 Polychloroprene.....	1-32
1.2.2 Olefin Copolymers	1-32
1.2.2.1 Styrene-Butadiene Rubber	1-32
1.2.2.2 Nitrile Rubber	1-33
1.2.2.3 Ethylene-Propylene-Elastomer	1-33
1.2.2.4 Butyl Rubber.....	1-35
1.2.2.5 Thermoplastic Elastomers	1-35
1.2.2.6 Fluoroelastomers	1-38
1.2.2.7 Styrene-Acrylonitrile Copolymer	1-39
1.2.2.8 Acrylonitrile-Butadiene-Styrene Terpolymer	1-39
1.2.2.9 Ethylene-Methacrylic Acid Copolymers (Ionomers)	1-42
1.2.3 Acrylics	1-43
1.2.3.1 Polyacrylonitrile.....	1-43
1.2.3.2 Polyacrylates	1-44
1.2.3.3 Polymethacrylates	1-45
1.2.3.4 Polyacrylamide.....	1-47
1.2.3.5 Poly(Acrylic Acid) and Poly(Methacrylic Acid)	1-48
1.2.3.6 Acrylic Adhesives.....	1-49
1.2.4 Vinyl Polymers	1-50
1.2.4.1 Poly(Vinyl Acetate).....	1-50
1.2.4.2 Poly(Vinyl Alcohol)	1-52

1.2.4.3	Poly(Vinyl Acetals)	1-53
1.2.4.4	Poly(Vinyl Cinnamate)	1-53
1.2.4.5	Poly(Vinyl Ethers)	1-54
1.2.4.6	Poly(Vinyl Pyrrolidone)	1-54
1.2.4.7	Poly(Vinyl Carbazole)	1-54
1.3	Part II: Condensation Polymers	1-55
1.3.1	Polyesters	1-55
1.3.1.1	Poly(Ethylene Terephthalate)	1-55
1.3.1.2	Poly(Butylene Terephthalate)	1-57
1.3.1.3	Poly(Dihydroxymethylcyclohexyl Terephthalate)	1-58
1.3.1.4	Unsaturated Polyesters	1-59
1.3.1.5	Aromatic Polyesters	1-66
1.3.1.6	Wholly Aromatic Copolyester	1-68
1.3.1.7	Polycarbonates	1-69
1.3.2	Polyamides	1-71
1.3.2.1	Aliphatic Polyamides	1-72
1.3.2.2	Aromatic Polyamides	1-80
1.3.2.3	Polyimides	1-82
1.3.3	Formaldehyde Resins	1-87
1.3.3.1	Phenol-Formaldehyde Resins	1-88
1.3.3.2	Urea-Formaldehyde Resins	1-92
1.3.3.3	Melamine-Formaldehyde Resins	1-96
1.3.4	Polyurethanes	1-97
1.3.4.1	Polyurethane Rubbers and Spandex Fibers	1-99
1.3.4.2	Flexible Polyurethane Foam	1-103
1.3.4.3	Rigid and Semirigid Polyurethane Foams	1-104
1.3.4.4	Polyurethane Coatings	1-105
1.3.5	Ether Polymers	1-106
1.3.5.1	Polyacetal	1-107
1.3.5.2	Poly(Ethylene Oxide)	1-109
1.3.5.3	Applications	1-110
1.3.5.4	Poly(Propylene Oxide)	1-112
1.3.5.5	Epoxy Resins	1-114
1.3.5.6	Poly(Phenylene Oxide)	1-126
1.3.6	Cellulosic Polymers	1-128
1.3.6.1	Regenerated Cellulose	1-128
1.3.6.2	Cellulose Nitrate	1-129
1.3.6.3	Cellulose Acetate	1-130
1.3.6.4	Other Cellulose Esters	1-131
1.3.6.5	Cellulose Ethers	1-131
1.3.7	Sulfide Polymers	1-132
1.3.7.1	Polysulfides	1-132
1.3.7.2	Poly(Phenylene Sulfide)	1-133
1.3.8	Polysulfones	1-134
1.3.8.1	Properties	1-135
1.3.9	Polyether Ketones	1-136
1.3.10	Polybenzimidazole	1-138
1.3.11	Silicones and Other Inorganic Polymers	1-139
1.3.11.1	Silicones	1-139
1.3.11.2	Polyphosphazenes	1-145
1.3.11.3	Polythiazyl	1-146
1.3.12	Polyblends	1-146
1.3.12.1	Prediction of Polyblend Properties	1-150
1.3.12.2	Selection of Blend Components	1-151
1.3.12.3	Compatibilization of Polymers	1-152

1.3.12.4	Industrial Polyblends	1-154
1.3.12.5	Nanoblends	1-156
1.3.13	Interpenetrating Polymer Networks	1-157
1.3.13.1	Industrial IPNs	1-159
References		1-159
2	Polymers in Special Uses	2-1
2.1	Introduction	2-1
2.2	High-Temperature and Fire-Resistant Polymers	2-1
2.2.1	Temperature-Resistant Polymers	2-2
2.2.2	Fire-Resistant Polymers	2-4
2.3	Liquid Crystal Polymers	2-5
2.3.1	Thermotropic Main-Chain Liquid Crystal Polymers	2-11
2.3.2	Side-Chain Liquid Crystal Polymers	2-13
2.3.3	Chiral Nematic Liquid Crystal Polymers	2-14
2.3.4	Properties of Commercial LCPs	2-17
2.3.5	Applications	2-19
2.4	Electroactive Polymers	2-19
2.4.1	Filled Polymers	2-19
2.4.1.1	EMI Shielding	2-22
2.4.1.2	Conductive Coating	2-24
2.4.1.3	Signature Materials	2-25
2.4.2	Inherently Conductive Polymers	2-26
2.4.2.1	Doping	2-28
2.4.2.2	Conducting Mechanisms	2-33
2.4.2.3	Applications	2-35
2.4.3	Photoconductive Polymers	2-43
2.4.4	Polymers in Fiber Optics	2-44
2.4.5	Polymers in Nonlinear Optics	2-47
2.4.6	Langmuir-Blodgett Films	2-48
2.4.7	Piezo- and Pyroelectric Polymers	2-49
2.4.7.1	Applications	2-51
2.4.8	Polymeric Electrolytes	2-53
2.5	Polymers in Photoresist Applications	2-55
2.5.1	Negative Photoresists	2-58
2.5.2	Positive Photoresists	2-61
2.5.2.1	Near-UV Application	2-61
2.5.2.2	Mid- and Deep-UV Photoresists	2-63
2.5.3	Electron Beam Resists	2-66
2.5.4	Plasma-Developable Photoresists	2-67
2.6	Photoresist Applications for Printing	2-68
2.6.1	Printing Plates	2-68
2.6.1.1	Relief or Raised-Image Plates	2-68
2.6.1.2	Photolithography/Planographic Plates	2-70
2.6.1.3	Photogravure	2-70
2.6.2	Photoengraving	2-70
2.6.3	Printed Circuits	2-71
2.6.4	Collotype and Proofing Systems	2-71
2.7	Optical Information Storage	2-71
2.8	Polymers in Adhesives	2-72
2.8.1	Solvent-Based Adhesives	2-73
2.8.2	Water-Based Adhesives	2-75
2.8.3	Hot Melt Adhesives	2-76
2.8.4	Radiation-Curable Adhesives	2-76

2.9	Degradable Polymers	2-77
2.9.1	Packaging Application	2-79
2.9.2	Medical and Related Applications	2-80
2.9.2.1	Synthetic Polymers	2-80
2.9.2.2	Controlled Release Agents	2-81
2.9.2.3	Tissue Engineering	2-82
2.10	Ionic Polymers	2-84
2.10.1	Physical Properties and Applications	2-86
2.10.1.1	Ionic Cross-Linking	2-86
2.10.1.2	Ion-Exchange	2-86
2.10.1.3	Hydrophilicity	2-88
2.10.2	Ionomers	2-91
2.10.2.1	Polyethylene Ionomers	2-91
2.10.2.2	Elastomeric Ionomers	2-93
2.10.2.3	Ionomers Based on Polytetrafluoroethylene	2-94
2.10.2.4	Ionomers Based on Polysulfones	2-96
2.10.3	Polyelectrolytes	2-97
2.10.3.1	Ion Exchangers	2-97
2.10.3.2	Applications	2-102
2.10.3.3	Polycarboxylates	2-105
2.10.3.4	Integral Polyelectrolytes	2-105
2.11	Scavenger Resins	2-106
2.12	Synthetic Polymer Membranes	2-107
2.12.1	Membrane Preparation	2-107
2.12.1.1	Wet-Extrusion Process	2-107
2.12.1.2	Hollow-Fiber Membranes	2-110
2.12.2	Membrane Modules	2-111
2.12.3	Applications	2-113
2.13	Hydrogels and Smart Polymers	2-115
2.13.1	Smart Polymers	2-117
2.14	Dendritic Polymers	2-123
2.14.1	Applications	2-124
2.15	Shape Memory Polymers	2-126
2.16	Microencapsulation	2-128
2.16.1	Processes for Microencapsulation	2-129
2.16.1.1	Complex Coacervation	2-129
2.16.1.2	Polymer-Polymer Incompatibility	2-130
2.16.1.3	Interfacial and In Situ Polymerization	2-130
2.16.1.4	Spray Drying	2-133
2.16.1.5	Fluidized-Bed Coating	2-134
2.16.1.6	Co-Extrusion Capsule Formation	2-135
2.16.1.7	Other Processes	2-136
2.16.2	Applications	2-137
2.17	Polymer Nanocomposites	2-138
2.17.1	Preparation of Polymer Nanocomposites	2-139
2.17.2	Applications of Polymer Nanocomposites	2-144
2.18	Wood-Polymer Composites	2-146
2.18.1	WPC Feedstocks	2-147
2.18.1.1	Wood	2-147
2.18.1.2	Plastics	2-148
2.18.1.3	Compounded Pellets	2-148
2.18.1.4	Additives	2-148
2.18.2	Manufacture of WPC Products	2-148
2.18.2.1	Compounding	2-149
2.18.2.2	Extrusion	2-149

2.18.3	Properties of WPC Products	2-151
2.18.4	Applications of WPC Products	2-152
2.19	Polymerization-Filled Composites	2-154
	References	2-155
3	Trends in Polymer Applications	3-1
3.1	Introduction	3-1
3.2	Polymers in Packaging	3-2
3.2.1	Retorting	3-4
3.2.2	Asseptic Packaging	3-4
3.2.3	Hot-Filling	3-5
3.2.4	Controlled-Atmosphere Packaging	3-5
3.2.5	High-Barrier Films	3-5
3.2.6	Oxygen Scavenger-Based Packaging	3-6
3.2.7	Plastic Bottles	3-6
3.2.8	Chemical Containers	3-7
3.2.9	Dual Ovenables	3-7
3.2.10	Closures	3-8
3.2.11	Biodegradable Packaging	3-8
3.2.12	Pharmaceutics Packaging and Nanomedicines	3-9
3.2.13	Wood-Plastic Composites	3-10
3.3	Polymers in Building and Construction	3-10
3.3.1	Roofing	3-11
3.3.2	Flooring	3-11
3.3.3	Windows	3-12
3.3.4	Pipes	3-13
3.3.5	Insulation	3-13
3.3.6	Polymer-Concrete Composites	3-14
3.3.7	Wood-Plastic Composites	3-16
3.4	Polymers in Corrosion Prevention and Control	3-16
3.4.1	Flue Gas Desulfurization	3-17
3.4.2	Chemical Resistant Masonry	3-17
3.4.3	Piping Systems	3-18
3.4.4	Boiler and Cooling Water Treatment	3-18
3.4.5	Biodegradable Scale Inhibitor	3-18
3.4.6	Reinforcing Steel in Concrete	3-19
3.5	Plastics in Automotive Applications	3-20
3.5.1	Exterior Body Parts	3-20
3.5.2	Interior Components	3-21
3.5.3	Load-Bearing Parts	3-22
3.5.4	Under-the-Bonnet (Hood)	3-22
3.5.5	Future Trends	3-23
3.5.6	Polymer Nanocomposites	3-23
3.5.7	"Green" Composites	3-24
3.6	Polymers in Aerospace Applications	3-25
3.6.1	Carbon Fibers	3-25
3.6.2	Resins	3-26
3.7	Polymers in Electrical and Electronic Applications	3-27
3.7.1	Wire and Cable Insulation	3-28
3.7.2	Polymer Insulators	3-29
3.7.3	Printed Circuit Boards	3-29
3.7.4	Connectors	3-29
3.7.5	Enclosures	3-30
3.7.6	Optical Fibers	3-30

3.7.7	Information Storage Discs	3-31
3.7.8	Polymeric FET and LED	3-32
3.8	Polymers in Agriculture and Horticulture	3-33
3.8.1	Plastic Film	3-33
3.8.2	Plastic Crates	3-34
3.8.3	Building	3-34
3.8.4	Pipes and Hoses	3-34
3.8.5	Greenhouses	3-35
3.9	Polymers in Domestic Appliances and Business Machines	3-35
3.9.1	Large Appliances	3-36
3.9.2	Small Appliances	3-37
3.9.3	Business Equipment	3-37
3.9.4	Air Filters	3-38
3.9.5	Solar Systems	3-38
3.10	Polymers in Medical and Biomedical Applications	3-39
3.10.1	Medical Packaging	3-39
3.10.2	Nontoxic Sterilizable Items	3-40
3.10.3	Biodegradable Polymers	3-41
3.10.4	Conducting Polymer Nanotubes	3-41
3.10.5	Biomimetic Actuators	3-42
3.10.6	Dental Resin Composites	3-43
3.10.7	Appliances	3-43
3.10.8	Disposables	3-43
3.11	Polymers in Marine and Offshore Applications	3-44
3.11.1	Cables	3-44
3.11.2	Coatings	3-44
3.11.3	Other Applications	3-45
3.12	Polymers in Sport	3-45
3.12.1	Synthetic Surfaces	3-45
3.12.2	Footwear	3-46
3.12.3	Equipment	3-46
	References	3-47
Appendices		
A1	Trade Names for Some Industrial Polymers	A1-1
A2	Commonly Used Abbreviations for Industrial Polymers	A2-1
A3	Typical Properties of Polymers Used for Molding and Extrusion	A3-1
A4	Typical Properties of Cross-Linked Rubber Compounds	A4-1
A5	Typical Properties of Representative Textile Fibers	A5-1
	Index	I-1

Preface

The polymer industry consumes more than half of the total output of the organic chemical industry, but only a few polymers account for most of it. For example, the combined output of polypropylene, high-density polyethylene, and linear low-density polyethylene, all produced by polymerization with transition-metal catalysts, was responsible for 42% of the 41 million metric tons of thermoplastic resins produced in the United States in the year 2000, while another 40% represented a handful of polymers that are produced using a free-radical mechanism, namely, low-density polyethylene, poly(vinyl chloride), polystyrene, poly(vinyl alcohol), poly(methyl methacrylate), and poly(vinyl acetate). Most of the remaining 18% corresponded to polyurethanes and a few condensation polymers, such as poly(ethylene terephthalate), poly(butylene terephthalate), polyamides, and polycarbonates. Even the period from 2000 to 2005, which witnessed considerable stress and change in the U.S. chemical industry, did not cause any significant change in the landscape (Villa, C. M. 2007. *Ind. Eng. Chem. Res.*, 46, 5815–5823). In the present book, all these polymers are prominently discussed in Chapter 1, which also includes other less widely used polymer types such as acrylics, ether polymers, cellulose, sulfide polymers, silicones, polysulfones, polyether ether ketones, and polybenzimidazoles. Polyblends and interpenetrating network polymers are also included in this chapter.

Besides the aforesaid industrial polymers, most of which we often encounter in everyday life, there are hundreds of other polymers, polymer derivatives, and polymeric combinations that play special and often critical roles in diverse fields of human activities. Chapter 2 deals with such polymers. Some of these *specialty polymers* possess, inherently, one or more special properties that make them indispensable for specific applications, while there are many others that are tailor-made or made by modification of the aforesaid industrial polymers to meet specific and critical needs. For a systematic discussion, these polymers can be placed in different groups according to their properties and/or areas of uses, such as high-temperature and fire-resistant polymers, liquid crystal polymers, electroactive polymers, electrolytic polymers, photoresist polymers, ionic and ion-exchange polymers, packaging polymers, biodegradable polymers, adhesive polymers, polymers in optical information storage, polymeric sensors, conductive fiber fillers, polymeric optical fibers, polymer electrolyte membranes, biodegradable polymer scaffolds, scavenger resins, permselective polymer membranes, hydrogels, smart polymers, dendritic polymers, shape memory polymers, microencapsulation polymers, polymer nanocomposites, wood-polymer composites, and polymerization-filled composites.

As we live in a plastic age, the diverse fields of plastics technology are also undergoing rapid change both qualitatively and quantitatively with many newer applications of common polymers and specialty polymers coming to light. While there are continuous improvements in the established uses of polymers, new uses are being developed in such diverse areas as the automotive and aerospace industries, packaging, agriculture, horticulture, domestic and sports appliances, office equipment,

communication, electronics and electrical technology, and biomedical applications. Chapter 3 presents a comprehensive overview of new developments in polymer uses in all these areas.

The material in this book is included in our well-known *Plastics Technology Handbook* and it focuses on a wide range of polymers, both of common and special types, and their myriad applications. For readers who are not quite familiar with polymers and their characteristics, it would be advisable to read *Plastics Fundamentals, Properties, and Testing*, before taking up the present book. We thank Allison Shatkin, Materials Science and Chemical Engineering Editor at CRC Press/Taylor & Francis, who first conceived the idea of this book and took the initiative in publishing it.

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