

Enhancing polymer adhesion through surface activation using an in-line atmospheric pressure plasma

John Tynan (john.tynan@ucd.ie), Dr. D. Dowling and Prof. G. Byrne

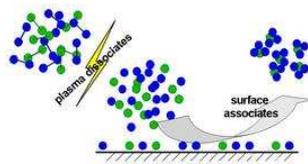
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Project Summary

Plasma and corona treatments have been widely used to enhance the surface energy of polymers prior to adhesive bonding. In this study a reel-to-reel atmospheric pressure plasma treatment system known as Labline™, was used to activate the surface of polypropylene (PP) and polyethylene terephthalate (PET). An epoxy adhesive was used to bond the activated polymers and the bond strength was assessed using the tensile lap shear test method. The effect of adding nitrogen and oxygen into the helium plasma was examined, both with respect to the bond strength of the epoxy and polymer surface energy. The change in surface energy with time after treatment was monitored using the contact angle technique. A correlation was made between the contact angle change as the polymer relaxed and the adhesive bond strength.

Influence of plasma on polymers:

- Crosslinking
Chain Scissioning
- Etching
Removal of surface contaminants
- Functionalisation
Increase surface energy



Effect of plasma gas composition on adhesion

The addition of a small amount (1.25%) of oxygen (O₂) or nitrogen (N₂) to the helium plasma has the effect of enhancing the adhesion for PP. Addition of O₂ or N₂ had limited effect for adhesion of PET. The O₂ or N₂ containing helium plasma more effectively polarises PP. The effect is also observed through surface energy measurements

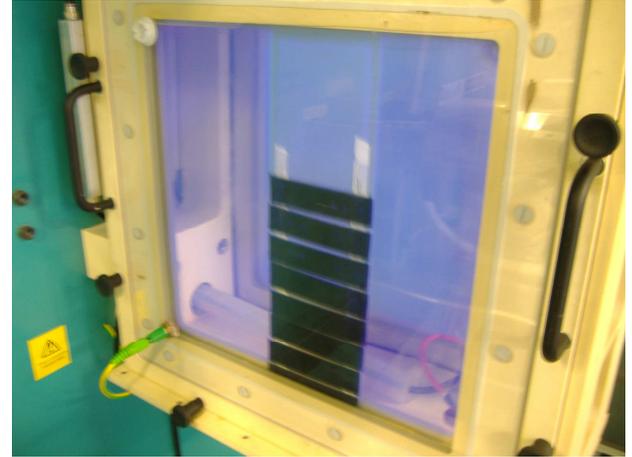


Figure 1: Samples being treated in an atmospheric pressure plasma

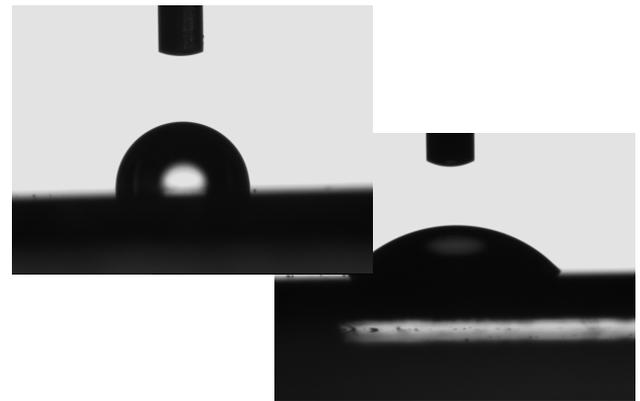


Figure 2: Effect of plasma treatment on water contact angle

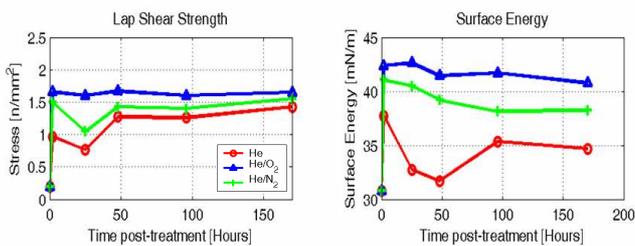


Figure 4: Effect of plasma gas composition on lap shear strength and surface energy for PP

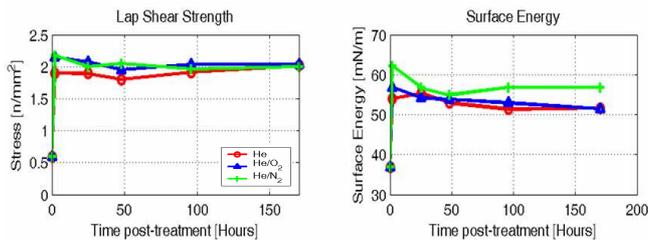


Figure 5: Effect of plasma gas composition on lap shear strength and surface energy for PET



Figure 3: Adhesion test (Lap Shear Strength) machine and schematic