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DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTROLYTIC OXYGEN RECOVERY SYSTEM FOR ADVANCED LIFE
SUPPORT**Abstract**

The oxygen (O₂) recovery system for the International Space Station (ISS) can recover approximately 50 percent of O₂ from metabolic carbon dioxide (CO₂). Increasing the O₂ recovery rate and closing the open loop for future long duration crewed missions in space beyond Low Earth Orbit (LEO) is essential. There are several developmental efforts underway to increase the recovery rate. However, most of these technologies result in a complex, heavy, and power consuming system. The desired exploration O₂ recovery system would be reliable and efficient with maximum O₂ recovery. Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC) is currently investigating an electrolytic O₂ recovery approach that will increase the O₂ recovery to greater than 70 percent as well as lowering the complexity, mass, and power consumption than most other technologies currently under development. The electrolytic O₂ recovery system consists of a Microfluidic Electrochemical Reactor (MFECR) that is based on the electrochemical reduction of CO₂ to O₂ and ethylene (C₂H₄) using water (H₂O) as precursor and operates at standard condition with a theoretical recovery rate of 73 percent. In 2016, NASA's Game Changing Development Program awarded the University of Texas Arlington (UTA) a grant to initiate the development of the MFECR. Since 2019, MSFC and UTA have been collaborating with the current goals of increasing the O₂ recovery efficiency, advancing the technology readiness to a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 4, and maturing the system to process CO₂ of one crew-member. Based on the results from UTA's initial efforts, the following were identified as key areas of improvement in order to maximize O₂ recovery for the system: further development of the anode material and cathode catalyst, model-based cell design optimization, and the addition of a separation system and fuel cell. This paper will present the current developmental efforts of the electrolytic system including MFECR design and overall system enhancements as well as results from single cell stack testing.