

Flash points of gasoline from Kukersite oil shale: Prediction from vapor pressure

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Abstract. The flash point of liquid fuels, especially of light distillates such as gasoline or naphtha, is an important parameter for the handling of such materials. In this work, flash points and volatility characteristics (vapor pressure, boiling point) of a number of shale gasoline samples with different volatilities were measured. The shale gasoline fractions were produced from Kukersite oil shale using solid heat carrier retorting technology. Several existing correlations for calculating flash points of hydrocarbons and petroleum fractions are evaluated, and the absolute average deviations were found to be between 1.1 to 20.9 °C. New, easy-to-use correlations are proposed for estimating flash points for oil shale based gasolines from volatility characteristic that are readily available. The correlation proposed in this work are based on the vapor pressure at 20 or 37.8 °C (100 °F), Reid vapor pressure (37.8 °C) or boiling point. The average absolute deviations for these correlations were 0.82 to 0.93 °C, meaning they are comparable to or better than existing methods developed for petroleum oils, which mostly use boiling point as the input parameter, when applied to gasoline from Kukersite oil shale.

Key words: oil shale, gasoline, flash point, closed cup, correlations, vapor pressure, Reid vapor pressure, boiling point, alternative fuel, mineral oil.

INTRODUCTION

Oil shale (a solid fossil fuel) has the potential to be an important source of liquid fuel due to the large amount of oil shale resources available worldwide (Oja & Suuberg, 2012). The world's oil shale resources are estimated to be equivalent to more than 2.9 trillion barrels of oil (1 barrel = 0.159 m³) (Dyni, 2003). Shale oil is obtained by thermally processing kerogen, the insoluble crosslinked organic matter in oil shale (Savest et al., 2007; Hruļjova et al., 2013). This is performed in an oxygen free environment in a process termed pyrolysis (also known by the industrial term 'retorting'). The process results in a so called 'synthetic crude oil', which, similarly to tars/oils from coal or biomass pyrolytic thermochemical conversions (Suuberg & Oja, 1997; Oja & Suuberg, 1998), has a wide distribution of properties/constituents (for kukersite oil shale derived shale oils see Oja, 2005; Oja, 2015; Oja, 2015a; Järviķ & Oja, 2017). Therefore, in industry commonly the 'synthetic crude oil' is divided into 'straight-run fractions' as products (Qian, 2010). Often one of these products is a shale gasoline fraction with a boiling range up to about 200 °C (Oja, 2007; Qian, 2010). As with

petroleum based gasoline, the handling of shale gasoline depends on several parameters, one of which is the flash point. Knowledge of a flammable liquid's flash point is an important factor in the production, processing, handling and transport of these liquids because it describes the fire and explosion potential of a material (Hristova & Tchaoushev, 2006; Skrinska et al., 2015). Fuels with low flash points have a higher fire hazard. The flash point is also a key parameter for the classification of flammable liquids, and is an important parameter included on material safety data sheets (MSDS). The flash point is defined as the lowest temperature at which there is enough vapor to ignite a mixture of air and these vapors. Therefore, in addition to technical constraints (experimental methods/procedures (Phoon et al., 2014)), the flash point value depends in large measure on vapor pressure of a substance, but also somewhat on its composition/structure. There are various prediction methods available for flash points, varying from simple empirical methods with one input parameter to more sophisticated methods (Hristova & Tchaoushev, 2006; Valenzuela et al., 2011; Phoon et al., 2014). However, for oils and oil fractions (ill-defined mixtures that can contain from hundreds to thousands of components) mostly one input parameter based empirical methods are of practical interest (see Table 1).

In this paper the practical interest is in evaluating the close cup flash points of the 'straight run' gasoline fraction (ill-defined mixture) from Kukersite shale oil. For this particular shale oil, produced by solid heat carrier (SHC) retorting technology from Kukersite oil shale, about 20% of the shale oil is taken as the gasoline fraction, which has a boiling range below 200 °C. The shale gasoline consists mainly of paraffins and olefins (67%). It also contains compounds containing heteroatoms, such as sulphur or oxygen, as the content of heteroatoms is about 2–4% (Gubergrits et al., 1989; Qian, 2010). Some background information on thermodynamic properties of shale oil gasolines can be found from (Kollerov, 1951; Qian, 2010; Baird & Oja, 2016). The aim of this work was to provide convenient predictive correlations for determining the flash point of this shale gasoline from its vapor pressure at a certain temperature (vapor pressure at 20 °C or Reid vapor pressure at 100 °F) or its atmospheric boiling point. In addition to proposing new correlations, we also test the applicability of existing flash point correlations that have been proposed for hydrocarbons or petroleum fractions. The correlations tested are given in Table 1. A more detailed description of some of these correlations, and several other correlations that use different input parameters than what we tested in this work, can be found in (Alqaheem et al., 2017).

EXPERIMENTAL

Materials

The shale gasoline fractions used in this study were obtained from the whole shale oil (Kollerov, 1951; Baird et al., 2015; Oja et al., 2016) produced using a solid heat carrier process (Golubev, 2003; Elenurm et al., 2008) at Eesti Energia's Narva Oil Plant (Narva, Estonia). This plant uses Kukersite oil shale (Estonia) as the raw material. Two different gasoline fractions were used, which were produced at different times. The gasoline fractions are henceforth identified as Sample 1 (specific gravity (SG) of 0.751, atomic hydrogen-carbon ratio (H/C) of 1.82) and Sample 2 (SG 0.77, H/C 1.81). From these, different shale gasoline samples with varying volatility were prepared by evaporating part of the sample in a simple batch distillation system (similar to the setup

for an Engler distillation (ASTM D86). In total 8 samples were prepared for further analysis, with 7 to 38% of the gasoline being evaporated. These samples were used for vapor pressure and flash point measurements. The flash points of the initial shale gasoline fractions (Sample 1 and Sample 2) were ≤ -38 °C.

Closed cup flash point measurements

The flash points were measured according to the ASTM D6450 closed cup flash point standard. Measurements were carried out using an Eralytics Eraflash Flash Point Tester. It was found that due to the limitations of our Eraflash flash point tester measurements for samples with flash points below -10 °C were less accurate than measurements for the other samples. The standard deviation for samples with flash points greater than -10 °C was below 1 °C. However, for samples with flash points lower than -10 °C, the standard deviation was found to be up to 2.1 °C. Therefore, more measurements had to be carried out to get a more accurate average flash point and the flash points reported in this study are average values of five measurements. The performance of the setup was tested using dodecane and benzene (Sigma-Aldrich, purity > 99%). Using the Eraflash Flash Point Tester the flash point of dodecane was found to be 78.5 ± 0.5 °C, which is comparable to the flash point found in the literature (81–83 °C (Hughes et al., 1996; Li et al., 2014)); the flash point benzene was found to be -0.8 ± 0.5 °C, which is comparable to the flash point found in literature (-13 to -9 °C (Mack, 1923; Choe, 1988)); the flash point of toluene was found to be 8.2 ± 0.5 °C, which is comparable to the flash point found in literature (7.2 °C (Liaw et al., 2010)).

Vapor pressure measurements

The vapor pressure curves covering the temperature range from room temperature to 100 °C were measured using a commercial Eralytics Eravap Vapor Pressure Tester according to the ASTM D6378 Standard. Performance tests for the device can be found in (Siitsman & Oja, 2015). Some earlier vapor pressure data also exist for Kukersite shale gasoline fractions with narrow boiling ranges (Siitsman & Oja, 2015), which were measured using the DSC technique (Siitsman et al., 2014; Siitsman & Oja, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Because the aim of this work was to derive/propose easy-to-use correlations for the determination of the flash point from a convenient volatility characteristic (such as the vapor pressure at a specific temperature or the boiling point), the vapor pressures of the shale gasoline samples were measured. For the 8 samples the exact evaporation percentages and vapor pressure data are given in (Table 2).

Table 1. Overview of existing flash point (TF) correlations, containing either boiling point (TB) or vapor pressure (pvap) as input parameters, tested in this work

| Correlation | Authors | Equation | Range | Ref |
|-------------|---|--|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Butler et al. | $T_F (^{\circ}K) = 255.752T_B(^{\circ}K) - 119$ | $366.2 \leq T_B \leq 644.2^{\circ}K$ | (Butler et al., 1956) |
| 2 | Riazi-Daubert | $\frac{1}{T_F 0.556(^{\circ}K)} = -1.4568 * 10^{-2} + \frac{2.84947}{0.556T_B(^{\circ}K)} - 1.057 * 10^{-3} \ln T_B(^{\circ}K)$ | $338.2 \leq T_B \leq 866.2^{\circ}K$ | (Riazi & Daubert, 1987) |
| 3 | Walsh-Mortimer | $T_F(K) = 231.2 - 40 \log(p^{vap}(310.93^{\circ}K)) (bar)$ | N/A | (Walsh & Mortimer, 1971) |
| 4 | Patil | $T_F(K) = 4.656 + 0.844T_B - 2.34 * 10^{-3}T_B^2$ | $248.15 \leq T_F \leq 381.48^{\circ}K$ | (Patil, 1988) |
| 5 | Satyanarayana-Kakati | $T_F(^{\circ}K) = -83.3362 + 273.73T_B(^{\circ}K) + 0.1118 * \frac{10^{-3}}{274.15T_B(^{\circ}C)} + 38.734SG$ | $293.2 \leq T_B \leq 613.2^{\circ}K$ | (Satyanarayana & Kakati, 1991) |
| 6 | Satyanarayana-Rao (hydrocarbons) | $T_F(K) = 225.1 + \frac{537.6 \left(\frac{2217}{T_B(K)} \right)^2 e^{-\frac{2217}{T_B}}}{\left(1 - e^{-\frac{2217}{T_B}} \right)^2}$ | N/A | (Satyanarayana & Rao, 1992) |
| 7 | Satyanarayana-Rao (petroleum fractions) | $T_F(K) = 237.9 + \frac{334.4 \left(\frac{1807}{T_B(K)} \right)^2 e^{-\frac{1807}{T_B}}}{\left(1 - e^{-\frac{1807}{T_B}} \right)^2}$ | N/A | (Satyanarayana & Rao, 1992) |
| 8 | Hshieh (Organic) | $T_F(^{\circ}K) = -54.5377 + 273.7383T_B(^{\circ}K) + 0.00022T_B^2$ | $263.2 \leq T_B \leq 648.2^{\circ}K$ | (Hshieh, 1997) |
| 9 | Hshieh (Organosilicon) | $T_F(^{\circ}K) = -51.2385 + 273.6494T_B(^{\circ}K) + 0.00047T_B^2$ | $263.2 \leq T_B \leq 648.2^{\circ}K$ | (Hshieh, 1997) |
| 10 | Alqaheem-Riazi (Hydrocarbons) | $T_F(K) = 0.71T_B(K)$ | $393.0 \leq T_B \leq 707.0^{\circ}K$ | (Alqaheem & Riazi, 2017) |
| 11 | Alqaheem-Riazi (Petroleum Fractions) | $T_F(K) = 0.69T_B(K)$ | $393.0 \leq T_B \leq 707.0^{\circ}K$ | (Alqaheem & Riazi, 2017) |
| 12 | Wang-Sun | $T_F(K) = 33.176 + 0.67465T_B(K)$ | N/A | (Wang & Sun, 2001) |

SG stands for the specific gravity.

Table 2. Vapor pressure data for initial Sample 1, initial Sample 2 and the samples obtained from evaporating different percentages of these initial shale gasoline samples

| T, °C | Sample 1 VP, kPa | Vaporized from Sample 1 | | | | | Sample 2 VP, kPa | Vaporized from Sample 2 | | |
|-------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | 7.1% VP, kPa | 12.0% VP, kPa | 16.6% VP, kPa | 24.8% VP, kPa | 37.8% VP, kPa | | 13.6% VP, kPa | 19.2% VP, kPa | 23.6% VP, kPa |
| 20 | 18.9 | 10.9 | 8.2 | — | — | — | 18.1 | — | — | — |
| 30 | 25.9 | 15.4 | 12.1 | 11.0 | 9.5 | — | 25.2 | 9.8 | 7.2 | 6.5 |
| 37.8 | 32.9 | 20.1 | 16.0 | 14.7 | 12.8 | 9.2 | 32.2 | 13.1 | 9.8 | 8.9 |
| 40 | 35.2 | 21.7 | 17.3 | 15.9 | 13.9 | 10.3 | 34.5 | 14.3 | 10.8 | 9.7 |
| 50 | 46.7 | 29.9 | 24.4 | 22.5 | 19.7 | 15.3 | 46.1 | 20.2 | 15.4 | 13.9 |
| 60 | 61.2 | 40.6 | 33.6 | 31.3 | 27.5 | 21.7 | 60.5 | 28.0 | 21.7 | 19.6 |
| 70 | 78.9 | 54.3 | 45.7 | 42.6 | 37.6 | 30.3 | 70.8 | 38.2 | 30.0 | 27.1 |
| 80 | 100.5 | 71.5 | 61.0 | 57.2 | 50.7 | 41.5 | 99.0 | 51.1 | 40.7 | 36.9 |
| 90 | 126.8 | 93.1 | 80.5 | 75.8 | 67.5 | 56.2 | 124.3 | 67.5 | 54.4 | 49.5 |
| 100 | 158.5 | 119.8 | 104.7 | 99.0 | 88.8 | 74.8 | 154.6 | 87.8 | 71.8 | 65.7 |

The calculated volatility characteristics (vapor pressures at 20 and 37.8 °C (100 °F), Reid vapor pressure at 100 °F and the atmospheric boiling point) and measured flash points for the samples are given in (Table 3). These four volatility characteristics were chosen because they are the most common volatility parameters given in gasoline safety data sheets. Vapor pressures at each temperature and atmospheric boiling points were calculated using the data given in (Table 2). For this the dataset corresponding for different evaporation percentages were fitted by an integrated Calusius-Clapeyron equation. Reid Vapor Pressure was calculated from the vapor pressure at 37.8 °C using the following equation (1) from 'ASTM D6377':

$$RVP = 0.915VP_{37.8\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}} \quad (1)$$

where RVP is the Reid vapor pressure and $VP_{37.8\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}}$ is the measured vapor pressure at 37.8 °C.

The measured flash points were used along with the selected volatility characteristics in Table 3 to develop correlations. Here it is also worth mentioning that when extrapolating to calculate the vapor pressure at the flash point temperature it was found that for shale gasoline the vapor pressure at the flash point was between 1.5 to 2.5 kPa. This is in the range of lower and upper flammability limits ($0.01 < P_{\text{vap}}(\text{atm}) < 0.08$) proposed by 'Algunaibet et al., 2016'.

Table 3. Flash points (T_F) and selected vaporization characteristics of the different samples, obtained from evaporating different percentages of these initial shale gasoline samples. The vaporization characteristics are vapor pressure at 20 °C ($VP_{20\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}}$), vapor pressure at 37.8 °C or 100 °F ($VP_{100\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}}$), Reid vapor pressure (RVP) and boiling point (T_B)

| | Based on the initial Sample 1 | | | | | Based on the initial Sample 2 | | |
|--|-------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Evaporated, % | 7.1 | 12.0 | 16.6 | 24.8 | 37.8 | 13.6 | 19.2 | 23.6 |
| T_F , °C | -14.0 | -10.3 | -7.7 | -4.7 | 0.5 | -6.7 | 0.5 | 2.2 |
| $VP_{20\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}}$, kPa | 10.7 | 8.1 | 7.3 | 6.3 | 4.4 | 6.5 | 4.8 | 4.3 |
| $VP_{100\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}}$, kPa | 20.2 | 16.1 | 14.7 | 12.8 | 9.4 | 13.1 | 9.8 | 8.9 |
| RVP, kPa | 18.5 | 14.7 | 13.4 | 11.7 | 8.6 | 12.0 | 9.0 | 8.1 |
| T_B , °C | 93.5 | 98.9 | 101.3 | 105.8 | 111.1 | 105.5 | 113.5 | 117.5 |

The aim of developing correlations using these different input parameters was to make it possible to estimate flash points for shale gasoline from a wider range of available data (either from vapor pressure at 20 or 37.8 °C, the Reid vapor pressure at 100 °F or the atmospheric boiling point). As an illustrative example, Fig. 1 illustrates the relation between flash point and vapor pressure at 20 °C for the shale gasoline fractions studied in this work. As seen from Fig. 1, the flash point-vapor pressure dependency for shale gasoline fractions derived from vaporizing portions of either Sample 1 or Sample 2 show a similar trend.

As seen from Fig. 1, a linear equation can be used to describe the relationship between the flash point and the vapor pressure at 20 °C. This is also the case for other pairs. The following are the linear Eqs (2, 3, 4) correlating the flash point with vapor pressures at 20 and 37.8 °C and the Reid vapor pressure:

$$T_F\text{ (}^{\circ}\text{C)} = -2.6547VP_{20\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}}\text{ (kPa)} + 12.14 \quad (2)$$

$$T_F\text{ (}^{\circ}\text{C)} = -1.4948VP_{100\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}}\text{ (kPa)} + 14.337 \quad (3)$$

$$T_F (^{\circ}C) = -1.6337RVP(kPa) + 14.337 \quad (4)$$

The correlation between the flash point and the boiling points of shale gasoline turned out to be similar to the one proposed by ‘Alqaheem and Riazi, 2017’ in Eq. 5:

$$T_F(K) = 0.7068T_B(K) \quad (5)$$

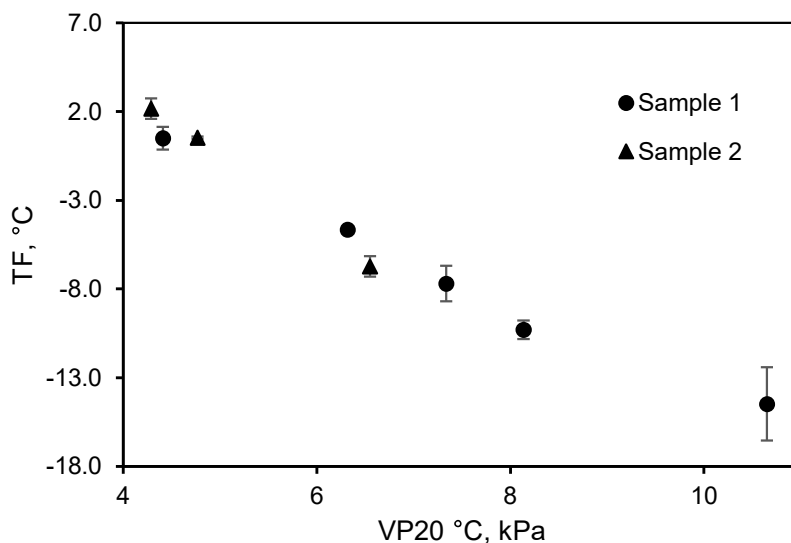


Figure 1. Graphical representation of the relationship between the flash point (T_F) and the vapor pressure at 20 °C (VP_{20}). Error bars represent the standard deviation of the experiments.

Table 4 summarizes an evaluation of the performance of flash point correlations given in Table 1 when applied to the shale gasoline fractions of this study, and also includes the correlations proposed in this work. The evaluation is based on the average deviation (AD) and absolute average deviation (ADD) of the values predicted by the correlations:

Table 4. Average deviation (AD) and absolute average deviation (ADD) of the calculated flash points, using the correlations from Table 1, when compared to experimental values of this work

| | Correlations from Table 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|---------------------------|------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| AD, °C | -5.8 | -6.2 | 0.8 | 6.4 | -13.7 | -10.6 | -22.4 | -15.5 | -12.2 | -1.2 | 6.4 | -21.0 |
| AAD, °C | 5.8 | 6.1 | 1.1 | 10.2 | 13.7 | 10.6 | 21.7 | 15.5 | 12.2 | 1.3 | 6.4 | 20.9 |

Deviation = Experimental – Calculated.

Results presented in Table 4 and Table 5 show that Correlations 3 and 10 (from Table 1) and the ones proposed in this work are the most accurate when estimating the flash points of shale gasoline. All these correlations have AADs around 1 °C. On the other hand, Correlations 7 and 12 gave AADs of over 20 °C. Correlations developed specifically for petroleum fractions were also less accurate than their counterparts that were developed for pure hydrocarbons (Correlations 6 vs 7 and 10 vs 11).

Table 5. Average deviation (AD) and absolute average deviation (ADD) of the calculated flash points, using the correlation derived in this study, when compared to experimental values of this work

| | Correlations in this work | | | |
|---------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------|
| | T _B | VP _{20 °C} | VP _{100 °F} | RVP |
| AD, °C | 0 | 0 | 0 | -0.2 |
| AAD, °C | 0.87 | 0.93 | 0.82 | 0.90 |

Deviation = Experimental – Calculated.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this work was to propose correlations for estimating the close cup flash point for shale gasoline fraction produced from Kukersite oil shale. These correlations can be used in risk assessment calculations related to handling and transporting these fuels. The work was based on experimentally measured closed cup flash points and vapor pressure curves. Based on the vapor pressure data the desired volatility properties (vapor pressures at 20 and 37.8 °C (100 °F), Reid vapor pressure at 100 °F and the atmospheric boiling point) were determined for 8 gasoline samples with different volatilities. Using this data, convenient correlations were developed or selected from the literature that allow the flash point of Kukersite shale gasoline to be estimated with an AADs of around 1 °C.

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