



the **ENERGY** lab

R&D FACTS

Geological & Environmental
Sciences

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Cynthia Powell

Director

541-967-5803

cynthia.powell@netl.doe.gov

Angela Goodman-Hanson

Technical Portfolio Lead

Carbon Storage

412-386-4962

angela.goodman@netl.doe.gov

Yee Soong

Technical Portfolio Lead

Unconventional Fossil Energy Resources

412-386-4925

yee.soong@netl.doe.gov

Subsurface Experimental Laboratories

Autoclave and Core Flow Test Facilities

Description

Researchers at NETL study subsurface systems in order to better characterize and understand gas-fluid-rock and material interactions that impact environmental and resource issues related to oil, gas, and CO₂ storage development. However, studying the wide variety of subsurface environments related to hydrocarbon and CO₂ systems requires costly and technically challenging tools and techniques. As a result, NETL's Experimental Laboratory encompasses multi-functional, state-of-the-art facilities that perform a wide spectrum of geological studies providing an experimental basis for modeling of various subsurface phenomena and processes. This includes, but is not limited to, long term exposure of geological samples to specific conditions such as CO₂ saturation at elevated pressure and temperature and the study of geomechanical properties and behavior of fluids, including fluid-solid and fluid-fluid physical and chemical interactions. The laboratory has a wide range of tools and instrumentation to ensure a complete cycle of scientific studies from preparation of representative samples, through the preliminary measurements of basic properties, to the advanced investigation of the processes of interest under simulated subsurface conditions.



Half-liter and one-liter continuously-stirred autoclave reactors

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Capabilities

The Autoclave Test Facility utilizes half-liter, one-liter, and 1.2 liter continuously-stirred autoclave reactors equipped with CO₂, SO₂, and flue gas feed lines with pressure ratings of 6,000 psig at temperatures up to 650 °F. Test reactors are ideally suited to investigate gas/liquid or gas/slurry interactions.

The Geological Sequestration Core Flow Facility includes three flow-through test systems that can measure permeability, CO₂-enhanced oil recovery, and CO₂-water-rock interaction of core samples under CO₂ sequestration conditions. Water-rock flow-through systems allow for measurement of relative permeability of various fluids to study fluid displacement in reservoir rocks under high pressure (up to 5000 psi) and temperature (up to 150 °C) conditions. These units can also be used to study flow through fractured seal materials such as well-bore cements and caprocks.

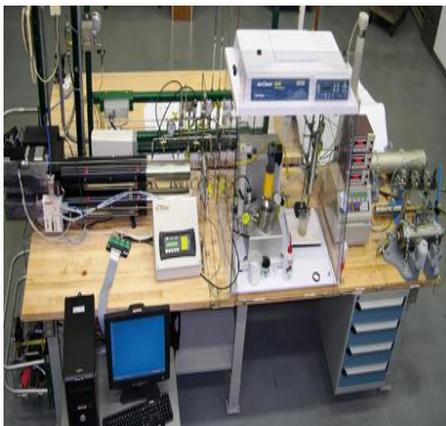


Six fixed-head autoclave system with PC interface

Goals and Objectives

Research aimed at monitoring the long-term storage stability and integrity of CO₂ sequestered in geologic formations is one of the most pressing areas that needs to be understood if geologic sequestration is to become a significant factor in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The most promising geologic formations under consideration for CO₂ sequestration are active and depleted oil and gas formations, brine formations, and deep, unmineable coal seams. Unfortunately, the long-term CO₂ storage capabilities of these formations are not well understood.

The laboratory's goal is to better simulate the conditions found in major potential geological sequestration sites. Information obtained from laboratory tests of various rock types under a variety of controlled conditions and environments will provide information on the geotechnical effects and chemical interactions that occur when CO₂ is injected into natural rock. This information will also be used to predict potential problems that might be encountered in field-scale investigations.



Flow-through unit for studying CO₂-enhanced oil recovery



CFS-839Z water-rock flow-through system

Benefits

To help meet a national strategic commitment to clean power generation, NETL is developing a technology base for tomorrow's highly efficient, near-zero-emissions power plants. Environmental and geosciences researchers perform laboratory-scale studies of solid, liquid, and gaseous flows and their interactions. These studies are aimed at understanding the suitability of flue gases for capture and storage in industrial wastes after release from coal fired power plants. Utilization and sequestration of green-house gases such as CO₂, to mitigate global warming is a primary focus of NETL's research initiatives. The Autoclave and Geological Sequestration Core Flow Test Facilities will be instrumental in accessing the realistic potential of CO₂ geologic sequestration, as well as coalbed methane production. Activities conducted at these test facilities will be instrumental in linking laboratory, field, and modeling activities ensuring accurate test results while optimizing resources to achieve program goals.