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Effect of low dose electron beam irradiation on the alteration layer formed during nuclear glass leaching

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Abstract

This investigation concerns borosilicate glass leaching mechanisms and the evolution of alteration layer under electron beam irradiation. A simple glass doped with rare earth elements was selected in order to access mechanistic and structural information and better evaluate the effects of irradiation. It was fully leached in initially pure water at 90°C and at high glass surface area to solution volume ratio (S/V = 20 000 m⁻¹) in static conditions. Under these conditions, the system quickly reaches the residual alteration rate regime. A small particle size fraction (2-5 µm) was sampled in order to obtain a fairly homogeneous altered material enabling the use of bulk characterization methods. External irradiations with 10 MeV electrons up to a dose of 10 MGy were performed either before or after leaching, to investigate respectively the effect of initial glass irradiation on its alteration behavior and the irradiation stability of the alteration layer. Glass dissolution rate was analyzed by regular leachate samplings and the alteration layer structure was characterized by Raman, luminescence (continuous or time-resolved), and ²⁹Si MAS NMR and EPR spectroscopy.

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