Using Polyethylene Glycol, as a Phase Change Material and Fins for the Cooling of Photovoltaic Cells of the Crystalline Type

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ABSTRACT
Photovoltaic (PV) technology is one of the most popular ways to producing power. In hot days of year, which the maximum irradiation of sun is available, because of the temperature value is high, the efficiency of PV cells is falls down. In this paper, in order to decrease the temperature of PV cells, using Polyethylene-Glycol 600 (PEG-600) as phase change material (PCM), for cooling the PV panel was studied. Moreover, integrating some fins was investigated too. The panel with PCM included, in about 80 mins of the end of test, had a same temperature with the conventional panel, as well as panel with both PCM and fins, at the end of experiment, had a temperature difference of about 9°C compared with conventional panel. Furthermore, the maximum efficiency difference between the panel with PCM and panel with PCM + fins, were about 2.4 % and 4.6 %, respectively. This means that fins, due to the increased amount of heat exchange between the panel and PCM, has been able to play an important role to increasing the efficiency and controlling the temperature of the panel. Finally, for economic and industrial feasibility of the proposed prototypes, the economical estimation is also presented.

KEYWORDS
Phase Change Material; Photovoltaic; Fin; Economic feasibility

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Introduction

Nowadays, environmental protection and efforts to reduce the pollution caused by industrial activities on the one hand and research in order to finding novel and optimal ways to generating energy from the other, have become one of the important concerns of governments around the world. Photovoltaic (PV) technology is one of the most global accepted method to producing power. Unfortunately, increasing the temperature of these cells, caused to decrease to their power generation. Different methods are presented to cooling PV cells i.e. Nanofluids [1-3], thermo-electric [4, 5], wind blowing [6], etc. Moreover, using Phase Change Materials (PCMs) is the other common way to absorb the heat of PV cells. Thus, Strith [7] has carried out both numerical and experimental studies on using RT28HC with melting point of 28°C as PCM behind the panel in order to increasing the efficiency. The results showed that the highest temperature difference between the panels with and without PCM, was up to about 36°C. Sharma [8] used RT40 behind PV panel under constant irradiation of 1000 W/m². They showed the electrical efficiency increasing of 13.7 %. Vaseline was used as PCM, by Indartono et al. [9].

This study was located in Indonesia country by two identical 10 W panels and the increase of 21.6 % was illustrated. So, in this paper we focused on enhancing the thermal potential of PCM, by using a number of aluminum fins, in order to decreasing the temperature of PV panels. Furthermore, a financial estimation of proposed prototypes is presented.

PCM selection

Because the temperature of 25°C is known as the best operating temperature for PV panels, Polyethylene-Glycol 600 (PEG 600) with the melting range of 23-26°C was selected as PCM. PEGs are odorless, non-toxic, colorless, low vapor pressure and have various industrial applications such as application in ceramics, adhesives, dough and paper, electroplating metals, lubricants, agriculture and detergents. The thermo-physical properties of PEG-600 is presented in Table 1.

<table>
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<th>Table 1: Thermo-physical properties of PEG 600</th>
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<td>Melting range (°C)</td>
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Experimental procedure

Three similar 60 Watts polycrystalline PV modules, made by Yingli Solar Company, has been tested in the photovoltaic laboratory of Jundi-shapur University of Technology, Dezful. In order to observe the effect of using PCM and fins, three prototypes were studied as follows:

Prototype 1: Conventional PV panel,
Prototype 2: PV panel with PCM behind it,
Prototype 3: PV panel integrated with both PCM and aluminum fins.

Figure 1, shows a schematic of prototypes 2 and 3.

Figure 1: Schematics of (a) prototype 2 and (b) prototype 3

In prototype 3, the number of 10 longitudinal aluminum fins with the thermal conductivity of 204 W/mK were used. The mentioned experiment was carried out in an indoor condition which both ambient temperature and irradiation are adjustable with using three identical 1-kW projectors. In this study, temperature and irradiation are fixed on 85°C and 630 W/m², respectively.

Results and Discussion

In this paper, the effect of both PEG-600 as a phase change material and fins, in order to controlling of the temperature of PV panels have been presented. All tests were done for 270 minutes and finally, results were compared together. In order to keep assurance of experimental data, each test was twice performed.
The variation of temperature, efficiency and power are illustrated in Figure 2. In this figure, temperature is plotted during time. As expected, during time, the temperature is increased and both efficiency and power are decreased. But the third prototype which is integrated with PCM and fins had less temperature of other prototypes, and this temperature behavior caused to be more efficient.

In order to provide a better mindset of temperature difference between prototype 2 and 3 with prototype 1, Figure 3 is plotted. This figure reveals that in about 90 minutes of the end of experiment, prototype 2 had the same temperature with prototype 1. Despite, prototype 3 had a temperature difference of about 9°C at the end of test.

Finally, the financial estimation (F.E.) of proposed cases is presented in Figure 4. In this figure, the vertical axis is in Iranian Rials (IRR).

The financial estimation, illustrates that prototype 3, has appropriate performance compared with the others.

Conclusions

In this paper, experimental and economical analysis of using PEG-600 as PCM and fins were studied. The results showed that prototype 3 has a better performance for controlling the temperature of PV panel. Moreover, the mentioned prototype has a suitable results from the financial view point.

References