

Characteristics of permeability and matrix swelling by injecting N₂ and CO₂ into dry coal sample

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Japan CO₂ Geosequestration in Coal Seams Project had been carried out from 2002 to 2007 by injecting CO₂ into one of Yubari coal seams, Hokkaido, Japan. It was observed that the injected amount of CO₂ decreases gradually when CO₂ is kept injecting in the coal seams. Then, when CO₂ was re-injected after N₂ was injected into the coal seams, the injected amount of CO₂ recovered temporally. In this study, we measured the change of permeability, swelling strain, and P-wave velocity (V_p) by injecting the supercritical CO₂ and N₂ into the coal sample on the dry condition in the laboratory, because the change of the permeability, strain, and elastic wave velocity by injecting CO₂ and N₂ into the coal is not understood well. In the experiments, we used the Bibai coal sample of the Sanbi Coal Mine in Hokkaido. Sample length was cut into about 50 mm diameter core and doubly polished to a length of about 125 mm. The eight strain gauges and the four piezoelectric transducers were put on the sample, and lateral strain and P-wave velocity (V_p) were measured. The strain gauges were put on the side which crosses face cleat and butt cleat at the position of 15 mm, 50 mm, 75 mm, and 110 mm from the bottom to top. The piezoelectric transducers were put on the position of 25 mm and 100 mm, and V_p values which cross with the face cleat were measured. At first, the coal sample made the vacuum under 2 MPa of confining pressure, and N₂ was injected into the pore at 0.1 MPa. Confining pressure and pore pressure were raised up to 12 MPa and 10 MPa step-by-step. Then, supercritical CO₂ was injected at 10 MPa of pore pressure under 12 MPa of confining pressure. The permeability test was carried out after breakthrough of supercritical CO₂. N₂ was re-injected into the sample after observing the change accompanying adsorption of supercritical CO₂ for the 24 hours. Similarly, the check of breakthrough, the permeability test of N₂, observation of the change by adsorption, re-injecting of supercritical CO₂, and the permeability retest were repeated. Temperature was controlled at 40 degrees C through the experiment. As a result, the strain continued swelling (+0.1%) up to 7 MPa of pore pressure, and then showed nearly constant. Similarly, V_p value increased up to 7 MPa (+6.5%) and showed nearly constant. The permeability of N₂ is from 9×10^{-4} darcy to 5×10^{-4} in the pore pressure conditions of 2 MPa to 10 MPa, and showed a little negative trend along with the increasing pressure. When supercritical CO₂ was injected into the coal sample saturated with N₂ at 0.2 MPa of the differential pressure, the rapid swelling strain of about +0.7% was measured. It is considered that N₂ is replaced with CO₂, and supercritical CO₂ adsorbs to the cleat and crack, then the whole coal swells. Since the strain values showed nearly constant in several hours, it is possible that adsorption of supercritical CO₂ is saturated comparatively for a short time. At that time, V_p increased +2.2%. The permeability of supercritical CO₂ fell to about 1/3 of N₂. Then, when N₂ was re-injected, the shrink strain of about -0.5 % was observed. Once V_p decreased greatly (-2.1%), it increased gradually with time (+1.3%). The permeability of N₂ at this time was almost the same as that of supercritical CO₂. Finally, the strain swelled about +0.5% which was equivalent to the CO₂ injection in the beginning when supercritical CO₂ was re-injected. V_p increased about +0.5%, since V_p largely increased in the N₂ re-injection phase. The V_p values were finally equal to it of the initial CO₂ injection phase. And, the significant change of the permeability in this phase could not be observed. The permeability lowering of N₂ is inferred the cleat closed by injecting CO₂ do not re-open by re-injecting N₂.