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Cold starting shell boilers

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Cold starts place a much greater mechanical load on shell boilers than normal operation.

A cold start is unavoidable the first time the boiler is commissioned.

However, procedures similar to cold starts can also occur after initial start-up, e.g. after the boiler has been left idle for some time or in the case of multiboiler units with sequencing control without pressure and temperature maintenance. They are characterised by the fact that the water in the boiler does not boil. For example, the water at the first start-up has a temperature of around 20 °C and is thus some 80 K colder than water boiling at an absolute pressure of 1 bar.

The reason for the higher mechanical load during cold starts is the temperature difference between the flame tube and the boiler shell, which is much higher than in normal operation. For this reason, the flame tube expands more in relation to the boiler shell than in normal operation. This creates, between the flame tube and the boiler shell or the flame tube and colder flue pipes, a considerably increased mechanical load on the relevant connecting and fixing elements, such as flame tube / floor connection, anchor tubes, flame tube / reversing chamber joints, corner anchors, etc.

The following shows, in the first place, calculations for the temperature difference between the flame tube and boiler shell and then summarises and evaluates them.

Calculating the temperature difference between the flame tube and the boiler shell during a cold start

The average flame tube temperature was calculated using a simple calculation model. The following practice-based assumptions were made:

- ▶ The heating process is carried out initially with the steam

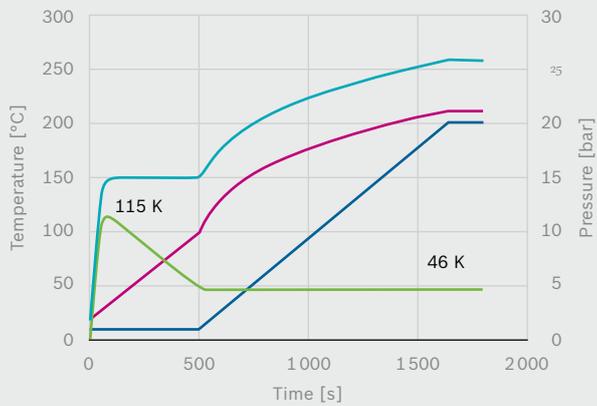
valve open at an absolute pressure of 1 bar. The temperature of the boiler water is 20 °C to start with and then increases on a linear basis with time until boiling point is reached (phase 1).

- ▶ After this, the heating process is carried out with the steam valve closed. The pressure increase was assumed to be 1bar/min, which corresponds to the normal pressure rise in a shell boiler at full burner load and with a closed steam valve (phase 2).

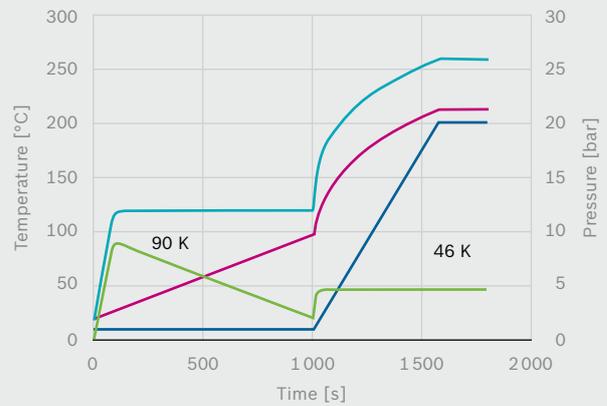
The calculation was carried out for various burner loads during the first phase, and 100 % burner load was assumed in the second phase.

The shell of a shell boiler has more or less the temperature of the boiler water. It is therefore subject to a much smaller temperature-related expansion in length than the flame tube, which is intensely heated by the burner flame. The temperature difference between the average flame tube temperature and the boiler shell temperature is thus a measure of the difference in lengthways expansion between the flame tube and the boiler shell. The differences in length deformation, also known as „Flame tube thrust“, must be absorbed by the connection elements.

On the basis of the high burner load, it takes only around 500 s until the water in the boiler reaches boiling temperature. What is interesting is the line of the temperature difference. It reaches its maximum at 115 K. This is 2.5 times the value in normal operation (46 K). In other words: flame tube thrust



— Flame tube temperature — Shelltemperature — Pressure — Temperature difference



Grafik 1 zeigt das Ergebnis einer Berechnung mit 100 % Brennerlast in Phase 1. Über der Zeit sind aufgetragen: die Temperatur des Kesselmantels, die gemittelte Flammrohrtemperatur, deren Differenz, der absolute Kesseldruck.

Grafik 2 zeigt die Verhältnisse mit 25 % Brennerlast in Phase 1. Aufgrund der Reduzierung der Beheizung vergehen 2000 s, bis das Kesselwasser siedet. Das Maximum der Temperaturdifferenz zwischen Kesselwasser und Flammrohr beträgt 90 K, somit immer noch das 1,96-fache des Wertes im Regelbetrieb.

during a cold start at 100 % burner load in phase 1 is up to 2.5 times as much as in normal operation. It must therefore be assumed that the mechanical loading on the shell boiler is considerably increased. The only possible way in which the boiler operator can influence this is to reduce the burner load in phase 1.

be noted that even with a burner load of only 25 %, the maximum flame tube thrust is almost twice the stationary value. For this reason, procedures similar to cold starts should be avoided as far as possible after the first unavoidable cold start.

Summary

Cold starts cause a much greater mechanical load than normal operation. They should be carried out with the lowest possible burner load until boiling point is reached. However, it should

In order to ensure operation without damage, we strongly recommend that systems which only operate on a temporary basis and with long idling phases (e.g. not operating at weekend, or redundant systems with sequencing control) are fitted with a state-of-the-art pressure and temperature maintenance device.

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