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Radical loss in the atmosphere from Cu-Fe redox coupling in aerosols

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Abstract

The hydroperoxyl radical (HO_2) is a major precursor of OH and tropospheric ozone. OH is the main atmospheric oxidant, while tropospheric ozone is an important surface pollutant and greenhouse gas. Standard gas-phase models for atmospheric chemistry tend to overestimate observed HO_2 concentrations, and this has been tentatively attributed to heterogeneous uptake by aerosol particles. It is generally assumed that HO_2 uptake by aerosol involve conversion to H_2O_2 , but this is of limited efficacy as an HO_2 sink because H_2O_2 can photolyze to regenerate OH and from there HO_2 . Joint atmospheric observations of HO_2 and H_2O_2 suggest that HO_2 uptake by aerosols may in fact not produce H_2O_2 . Here we propose a catalytic mechanism involving coupling of the transition metal ions (TMI) Cu(I)/Cu(II) and Fe(II)/Fe(III) to rapidly convert HO_2 to H_2O in aerosols. The implied HO_2 uptake significantly affects global model predictions of tropospheric OH, ozone, and other species, improving comparisons to observations, and may have a major and previously unrecognized impact on atmospheric oxidant chemistry.

1 Introduction

HO_2 in the troposphere cycles rapidly with other members of the hydrogen oxide radical family ($\text{HO}_x \equiv \text{OH} + \text{H} + \text{HO}_2 + \text{organic peroxy and oxy radicals}$). This cycling determines OH levels and ozone production. The main sources of HO_x are photolysis of ozone in the presence of water vapor and photolysis of carbonyls. The sinks involve formation of peroxides, HNO_3 , and water. Peroxides and HNO_3 can photolyze, returning HO_x . Formation of water is a terminal sink. HO_2 is in general the dominant component of HO_x , so that the budget of HO_2 is largely defined by that of HO_x .

Uptake of HO_2 by aqueous aerosols is promoted by its high solubility in water (Henry's law constant $2.0 \times 10^3 \text{ M atm}^{-1}$ at 298 K) and aqueous-phase dissociation to O_2^- ($pK_a = 4.7$), with rapid ensuing ionic redox chemistry. The efficacy of uptake is com-

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part due to the enhanced loss of aqueous HO₂ by Reaction (RA1) and Fe(III) + O₂(-I), resulting in suppressed production of H₂O₂ by Reaction (RA5). On the other hand, at higher pH, the oxidation of Fe(II) is enhanced by Fe(OH)⁺ + H₂O₂ which is five orders of magnitude faster than Fe²⁺ + H₂O₂. Reactions (RA6) and (RA7) then become the dominant sinks for Fe(II) and may lead to a reactive uptake of H₂O₂ ($Y_{\text{H}_2\text{O}_2} < 0$). The slight increase of at Cu/Fe = 0.1 while pH increases from 0 to 3 is mainly due to the enhanced H₂O₂ production by Reaction (RA2). This pathway becomes unimportant at lower Cu/Fe.

Figure 3c examines the sensitivity of $\gamma(\text{HO}_2)$ to a decrease of Cu concentrations from the 2.9×10^{-3} M assumed in the standard simulation, keeping a fixed Cu/Fe = 0.05. We find that the sensitivity is weak as long as Cu remains above 5×10^{-4} M. For example, at pH = 3, $\gamma(\text{HO}_2)$ only decreases from 0.85 to 0.61 with a five-fold decrease of Cu concentrations. This weak response is mainly because uptake of HO₂ is limited by diffusion in the aqueous phase, reflecting its very fast reaction with Cu(II). As Cu(II) concentrations drop to values sufficiently low for HO₂ to become well-mixed into the aerosol, $\gamma(\text{HO}_2)$ then decreases rapidly with decreasing Cu. This dependence of $\gamma(\text{HO}_2)$ on Cu concentrations also appears to be consistent with laboratory measurements (Mozurkewich et al., 1987).

5 Global implications for atmospheric oxidant chemistry

We examine the potential global implications of Cu-Fe-HO_x cycling by incorporating the corresponding HO₂ uptake in the GEOS-Chem global model of aerosol-oxidant chemistry (v9-01-01, <http://www.geos-chem.org>). Values in Fig. 3a indicate $\gamma(\text{HO}_2)$ in the range 0.4–1 depending on pH and the Cu/Fe ratio at 298 K; $\gamma(\text{HO}_2)$ is more likely to approach 1 at colder temperatures because of the higher solubility of HO₂ (Mao et al., 2010). At these high values of $\gamma(\text{HO}_2)$, HO₂ uptake can be limited by gas-phase diffusion with little residual dependence on $\gamma(\text{HO}_2)$ (Fig. S1). Thus we assume here $\gamma(\text{HO}_2) = 1$ as a reasonable upper limit, and we further assume $Y_{\text{H}_2\text{O}_2} = 0$ (Fig. 3b),

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since observations suggest that the dissolved Cu/Fe ratio is usually below 0.1 (Table S4); in fact, it appears from Fig. 3b that $Y_{\text{H}_2\text{O}_2}$ is more likely to be negative than positive. Finally, we assume as an upper limit that this reactive uptake of HO₂ proceeds on all non-cloud aerosol surfaces in GEOS-Chem (Martin et al., 2003), i.e., that Cu and Fe are internally mixed and that all aerosol particles are aqueous. The GEOS-Chem simulation has been successfully evaluated against global observations of aerosol optical depth (van Donkelaar et al., 2010). There remain large uncertainties in the aerosol phase and mixing state, and so the calculations presented here should only be viewed as illustrative of the potential effect. Other mechanisms than the Cu-Fe-HO_x redox chemistry described here could also contribute to HO₂ conversion to H₂O in aqueous aerosols (Sect. 2 in the Supplement) and help explain the fast HO₂ loss ($\gamma(\text{HO}_2) \sim 1$) inferred from field studies (Table 1).

Figure 4 shows the difference of annual mean surface air concentrations of OH, HO₂, CO, and O₃ during 2005 as a result of this HO₂ uptake. The effects are largest in the extratropical Northern Hemisphere, where aerosol loading is high and the gas-phase photochemistry controlling HO_x levels is relatively slow. Surface OH and HO₂ concentrations decrease by 20–30 % and 40–60 %, respectively over that region; the decrease in OH is partly compensated by an increase in NO_x concentrations. The global mean (mass-weighted) tropospheric OH concentration in GEOS-Chem decreases by 12 % from 12.4×10^5 to 11.0×10^5 molecules cm⁻³, improving agreement with observational constraints from methylchloroform data ($10.8 \pm 0.8 \times 10^5$ molecules cm⁻³) (Prinn et al., 2005). The N/S interhemispheric OH ratio decreases from 1.09 to 1.02, in better agreement with the best estimate of 0.98 derived from methylchloroform observation (Krol and Lelieveld, 2003). The conversion of HO₂ to H₂O is critical for this effect. A sensitivity simulation with $\gamma(\text{HO}_2) = 1$ and $Y_{\text{H}_2\text{O}_2} = 0.5$ shows only a 3 % decrease in global mean OH concentration.

The decrease of OH concentrations drives an annual mean increase of model CO concentrations by 20–30 ppb in the extratropical Northern Hemisphere, with maximum effect in spring. As shown in Fig. 5, this fully corrects the long-standing seasonal

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Table 1. Field evidence on HO₂ aerosol uptake.

Location	Type	HO ₂ Conc (pptv) ^a	Estimated γ(HO ₂)	Comments	Reference
Mauna Loa	remote	~ 15 ^b	0.5–1		Cantrell et al. (1996)
Southern Ontario, Canada	rural	~ 10	~ 1	To reduce HO _x by more than a factor of 2	Plummer et al. (1996)
Oki Island, Japan	remote	~ 10	~ 1	To reduce HO ₂ by 50 %	Kanaya et al. (2000)
TRACE-P aircraft campaign	polluted troposphere		N/A	30–50 % loss of peroxy radicals onto aerosols	Cantrell et al. (2003a)
TOPSE aircraft campaign	remote	~ 5	N/A		Cantrell et al. (2003b)
Remote marine boundary layer near Australia	remote	~ 8	1		Sommariva et al. (2004); Haggerstone et al. (2005)
Saharan dust plume	plume	~ 15 ^b	1	No H ₂ O ₂ formed from HO ₂ uptake. Also needs uptake for H ₂ O ₂	de Reus et al. (2005)
Mace Head, Ireland	remote	~ 6	1		Sommariva et al. (2006)
Rishiri Island, Japan	remote	~ 6	1		Kanaya et al. (2007)
Jungfraujoch research station ^c	remote	~ 6	1		Parker et al. (2009)
Biomass burning plumes in West Africa	plume		N/A	Modeled HO ₂ is higher than measured HO ₂ by a factor of 5	Commane et al. (2010)
Arctic spring	remote	~ 5	~ 1		Mao et al. (2010); Olson et al. (2012)
Arctic summer	remote	~ 10	~ 1		Olson et al. (2012)

^a Noontime mean or median value.

^b Estimated from the measured total peroxy radicals (HO₂ + RO₂).

^c Estimated for the uptake on snow surface.

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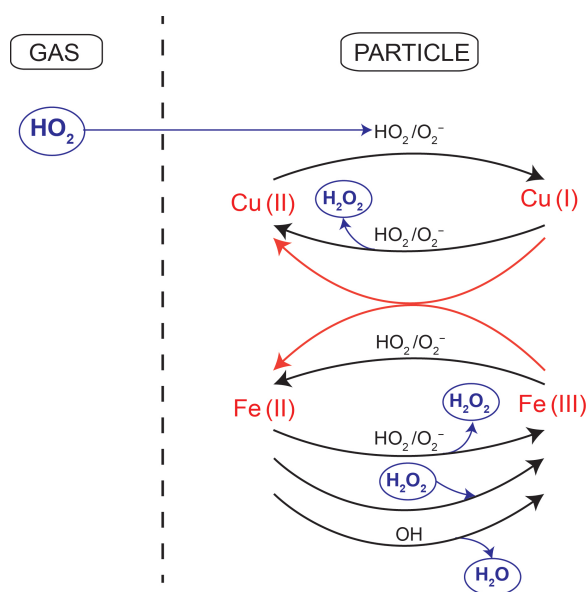


Fig. 1. Cu-Fe redox coupling in aqueous aerosols driven by HO₂ uptake from the gas phase. In the presence of dissolved Cu alone, HO₂ is converted to H₂O₂. In the presence of both dissolved Cu and Fe, HO₂ is converted to either H₂O₂ or H₂O and may also catalytically consume H₂O₂.

27072

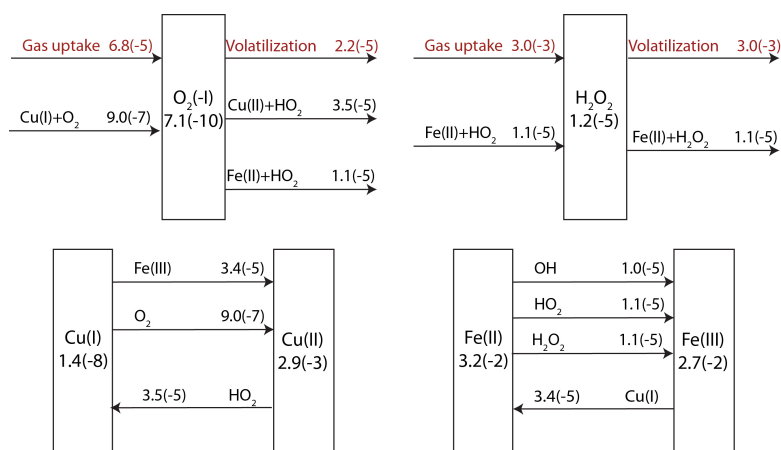


Fig. 2. Simulated aerosol budgets of $O_2(-I) \equiv HO_2(aq) + O_2^-$, H_2O_2 , dissolved Cu, and dissolved Fe. The main reaction pathways are indicated. The values shown are aqueous concentrations (M) and transformation rates ($M s^{-1}$). Read 6.8(-5) as 6.8×10^{-5} . The $Cu(I) + HO_2$ Reaction (RA2) is not shown as it is negligibly small under these conditions. Model calculations assume an aqueous NH_4HSO_4 aerosol with dry radius of $0.35 \mu m$ at $RH = 85\%$ and $T = 298 K$. This simulation is constrained with $HO_2(g) = 10$ pptv, $H_2O_2(g) = 1$ ppb, $O_3(g) = 30$ ppb. Aerosol pH is 0.15 with ionic strength $7.8 mol kg^{-1}$ (the resulting activity coefficient $A(Cu^{2+}) = 0.067$). Dissolved Cu concentration is $2.9 \times 10^{-3} M$, adopted from Ross and Noone (1991). The dissolved Cu to Fe ratio is $Cu/Fe = 0.05$.

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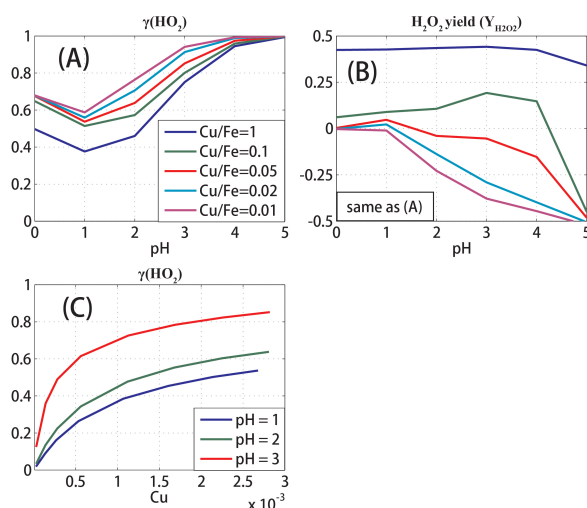


Fig. 3. Impacts of Cu-Fe- HO_x cycling on aerosol chemistry for the model calculations described in the text. **(A, B)** pH dependence of the HO_2 reactive uptake probability $\gamma(HO_2)$ and the corresponding H_2O_2 yield for different Cu/Fe molar ratios. **(C)** Dependence of $\gamma(HO_2)$ on Cu concentrations for different pH values with $Cu/Fe = 0.05$.

27074

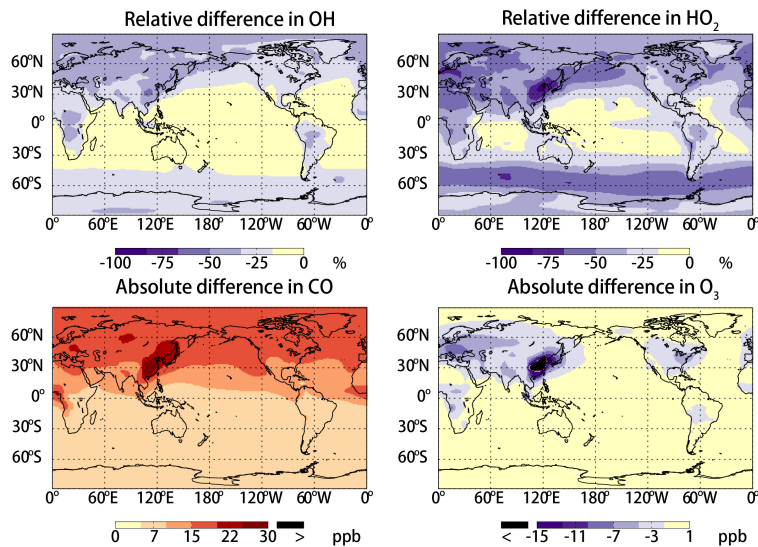


Fig. 4. Effect of HO₂ reactive uptake on non-cloud aerosols ($\gamma(\text{HO}_2) = 1$ producing H₂O) on surface air concentrations of OH, HO₂, CO, and O₃ in the GEOS-Chem model. Values are annual means for 2005 and are calculated by difference with a simulation including no HO₂ uptake.

27075

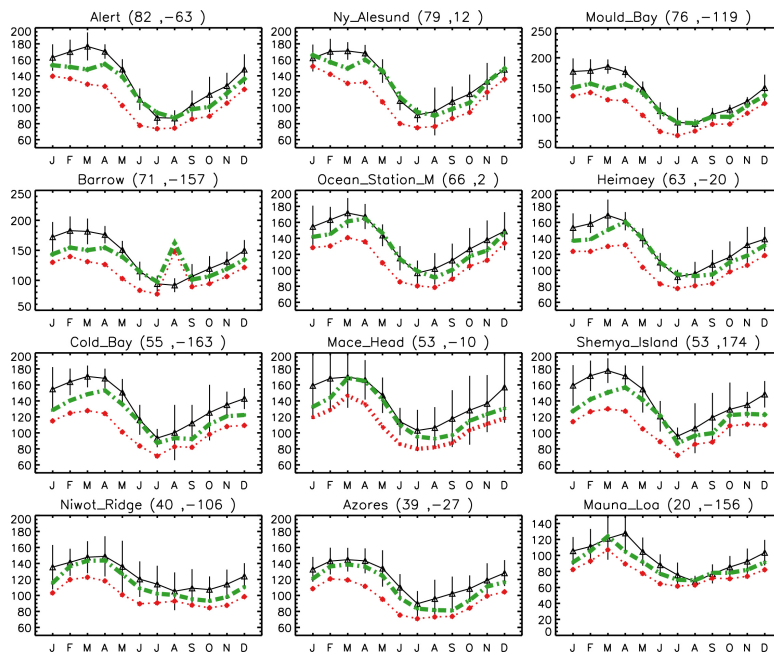


Fig. 5. Seasonal variation of CO concentrations at remote surface sites in northern extratropics. Climatological observations from NOAA/GMD (1988–2007) are shown in black. GEOS-Chem model values are shown in red with no HO₂ uptake and in green with $\gamma(\text{HO}_2) = 1$ producing H₂O.

27076