18-24 June, 2015, Bulgaria

15th INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC GEOCONFERENCE SGEM 2015

Ecology, Economics, Education and Legislation CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS Volume I

ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



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ISBN 978-619-7105-39-1

ISSN 1314-2704

DOI: 10.5593/sgem2015B51

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125. THE OIL PRODUCTS ACCUMULATION IN BOTTOM SEDIMENTS OF SMALL RIVERS OF KALININGRAD REGION FLOWING INTO THE CURONIAN LAGOON, Elena Demenchuk, Olga Ryabkova, Immanuel Kant Baltic federal university Geography and Geoecology Faculty, Russia941
126. THE PROTECTED AREA STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY IMPACT OF THE TOURISM IN THE DEMANOVA VALLEY, Dr. Ivana Tomcikova, Dr. Iveta Rakytova, Catholic university in Ruzomberok, Slovakia945
127. THE TREATMENT OF SALTY MINE WATER IN CONSTRUCTED WETLANDS, Ing. Petra Langerova, RNDr. Novakova Jana, Ph.D., Mgr. Melcakova Iva, Ph.D., VSB-Technical University of Ostrava, Czech Republic953
128. THE VENTILATION RATE DETERMINATION IN THE OFFICE ROOMS, Peter Kapalo, Florin Domnitae, Eva Kridlova Burdova, Richard Nagy, Martina Rysulova, Technical University of Kosice - Faculty of Civil Engineering, Slovakia
129. TiO2 SOLAR LIGHT PHOTOCATALYSIS A PROMISING TREATMENT METHOD FOR WASTEWATER WITH TRINITROTOLUENE CONTENT, Dr. Ines Nitoi, Lucian-Alexandru Constantin, Prof. Dr. Petruta Oancea, Ionut Cristea, Dr. Maria Crisan, National Research and Development Institute for Industrial Ecology - ECOIND, Romania
130. TOP DOWN STRATEGIES AND BOTTOM UP INITIATIVES IN GEOPARKS DEVELOPMENT IN SLOVAKIA, Roberta Stepankova, Katarina Kristianova, Slovak Agriculture University in Nitra, Slovakia977
131. URANIUM IN AEROSOL OF NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE ENTERPRISES REGION (NOVOSIBIRSK, RUSSIA), Svetlana Artamonova, Sobolev V.S. Institute of Geology and Mineralogy Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia
132. URBAN ECOLOGY: ASSESSMENT OF THE POLLUTANTS ACUMULATION IN SEDIMENTS FROM THE COLENTINA LAKES IN BUCHAREST, Stanescu Bogdan, Stanescu Elena, Batrinescu Gheorghe, Kim Lidia, Cuciureanu Adriana, National Reserach and Development Institute for Industrial Ecology - ECOIND, Romania

NICKEL REMOVAL FROM WASTE WATERS, Alexandra Raluca Miron, PhD.Daniela – Elena Pascu, Oanamari Daniela Orbulet, Simona Caprarescu, Cristina Modrogan, Politehnica University of Bucharest, Romania
134. USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBALIZATION, Ada Flavia Cristina, Camelia Manescu, Teodor Mateoc, Attila Toth, Nicoleta Mateoc-Sirb, Banat University of Agronomical Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Romania
135. USING THE GEORADAR METHOD (GPR - GROUND PENETRATION RADAR) FOR SEARCHING AND LOCATION OF INACCESSIBLE OR UNKNOWN, HISTORIC UNDERGROUND EXCAVATIONS, PhD.Madziarz M., Wrocław University of Technology Faculty of Geoengineering Mining and Geology, Poland
136. VEGETATION, A STABILITY FACTOR IN SLOPE MODELING. CASE STUDY: VULCANA BAI COMMUNE, Lecturer dr. Mihaela Sencovici, Valahia. University of Targoviste, Romania
137. URBAN TRAM INDUCED VIBRATIONS: REAL TIME MONITORING OF HISTORICAL BUILDINGS IN THE CENTRE OF ROME, G. Alfaro Degan, G. Coltrinari, D. Lippiello, Roma Tre University, Italy
138. WATER FOOTPRINT, CARBON FOOTPRINT, ENERGY FOOTPRINT GENERAL ASPECTS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY, Mihaela Pisleaga, Alina Girbaciu, Cristian Girbaciu, Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania
139. WEB PLATFORM TO IMPROVE THE PUBLIC AWARENESS ON ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION, PhD Vergil Marian Muraru, PhD Cornelia Muraru-Ionel, Math. Petru Cardei, Eng. Raluca Sfiru, Techn. Tania Ticu, INMA Bucharest, Romania
140. YIELDING CAPACITY AND QUALITY OF TOMATO FRUITS AT DROP IRRIGATION WITH ELECTROCHEMICALLY ACTIVATED WATER IN LIGHT-CHESTNUT SOILS OF THE LOWER VOLGA REGION, Prof. Dr. Sergey Semenenko, Prof. Dr.Victor Borodychev, Prof. Dr. Elena Ivantsova, Dr. Michail Lytov, Volgograd State University, Russia

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TiO₂ SOLAR LIGHT PHOTOCATALYSIS A PROMISING TREATMENT METHOD OF WASTEWATER WITH TRINITROTOLUENE CONTENT

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ABSTRACT

2,4,6-Trinitrotoluene (TNT) is the most common pollutant identified in wastewater generated from munitions plants where this explosive is synthesized or handled (munitions load, assembly and pack operations). Due to their toxic and suspected carcinogenic characteristics, nitroaromatic compounds like TNT are included on the list of prioritary pollutants and strictly regulated in EU countries. Since their presence in water bodies is risky for human health and aquatic life, development of powerful, modern treatment methods like photocatalysis are needed in order to assures environmental pollution mitigation.

The photocatalytic degradation of TNT was carried out at pH=7.8, in aqueous TiO₂ based catalyst suspension, under sunlight irradiation. The enhanced photo activity of catalyst in visible domain was assured by 0.5% Fe doping.

TNT degradation experiments were performed using a tubular collector type solar photoreactor (26 UV permeable silica glass tubes series connected), plug in a total recycle loops. The influence of substrate concentration and catalyst dose on the pollutant degradation and mineralization by-products (NO₂, NO₃, NH₄⁺) formation efficiencies was studied.

In order to compare the experimental results obtained in various working conditions, the pollutant and mineralization by-products measured concentrations have been-considered as functions of irradiation time and cumulative photonic energy Q incident on the reactor surface (kJ/L).

In the tested experimental conditions, at tens mg/L pollutant concentration, increase of 0,5wtFe%-TiO₂ dose up to 200mg/L leads to the enhancement of TNT degradation efficiency. Since, doubling of TNT content has a negative effect on pollutant degradation efficiency, in similar experimental condition, prolonged irradiation time from 360 to 480 min was necessary in order to assures the compliance of treated effluent with limits imposed by EU legislation (TNT≤10µg/L).

Keywords: Wastewater treatment, TNT, photocatalysis

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