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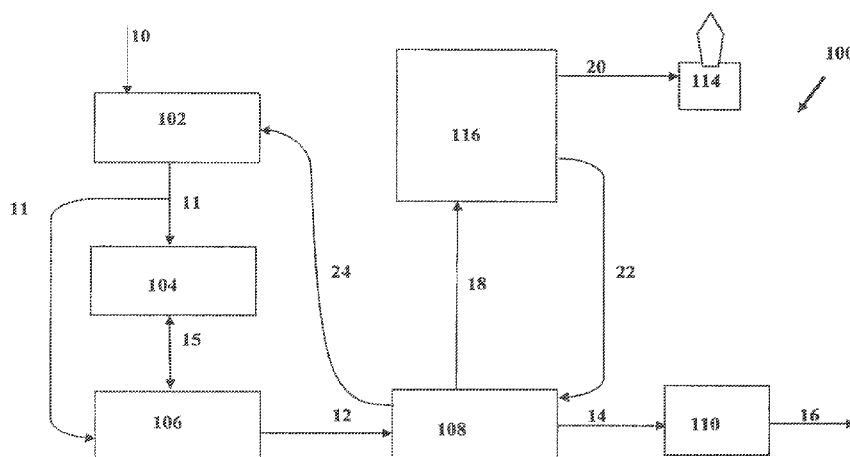


FIGURE 1

(57) Abstract: A polyethylene production process, comprising contacting ethylene and a polymerization catalyst under suitable reaction conditions to yield a polymerization product stream, separating a light gas stream from the polymerization product stream, wherein the light gas stream comprises ethane and unreacted ethylene, contacting the light gas stream with an absorption solvent system, wherein at least a portion of the ethylene from the light gas stream is absorbed by the absorption solvent system, removing unabsorbed gases of the light gas stream from contact with the absorption solvent system to form a waste gas stream, and recovering ethylene from the absorption solvent system.

IMPROVED ETHYLENE SEPARATION

BACKGROUND

Field of the Invention

[0001] This invention generally relates to the production of polyethylene. More specifically this invention relates to systems and processes for improving polyethylene production efficiency by decreasing ethylene losses.

Background of the Invention

[0002] The production of polymers such as polyethylene from light gases requires a high purity feedstock of monomers and co-monomers. Due to the small differences in boiling points between the light gases in such a feedstock, industrial production of a high purity feedstock may require the operation of multiple distillation columns, high pressures, and cryogenic temperatures. As such, the energy costs associated with feedstock purification represent a significant proportion of the total cost for the production of such polymers. Further, the infrastructure required for producing, maintaining, and recycling high purity feedstock is a significant portion of the associated capital cost.

[0003] In order to offset some of the costs and maximize production, it can be useful to reclaim and/or recycle any unreacted feedstock gases, especially the light hydrocarbon reactants, such as ethylene. Gases comprising unreacted monomers may be separated from the polymer after the polymerization reaction. The polymer is processed while the unreacted monomers are recovered from the gases that are reclaimed following the polymerization reaction. To accomplish this, the reclaimed gas streams have conventionally either been routed through a purification process or redirected through other redundant processing steps. In either case, conventional processes of recovering monomer have necessitated energetically unfavorable and expensive processes.

[0004] Consequently, there is a need for high-efficiency separation of ethylene from a recycle stream.

BRIEF SUMMARY

[0005] A polyethylene production process, comprising contacting ethylene and a polymerization catalyst under suitable reaction conditions to yield a polymerization product

stream, separating a light gas stream from the polymerization product stream, wherein the light gas stream comprises ethane and unreacted ethylene, contacting the light gas stream with an absorption solvent system, wherein at least a portion of the ethylene from the light gas stream is absorbed by the absorption solvent system, removing unabsorbed gases of the light gas stream from contact with the absorption solvent system to form a waste gas stream, and recovering ethylene from the absorption solvent system.

[0006] A polyethylene production process, comprising contacting ethylene and a polymerization catalyst in a polymerization reactor under suitable reaction conditions to yield a polymerization product stream, separating a light gas stream from the polymerization product stream, wherein the light gas stream comprises ethane and unreacted ethylene, contacting the light gas stream with an absorption solvent system in an absorption vessel, wherein at least a portion of the ethylene from the light gas stream is absorbed by the absorption solvent system to yield a composition comprising a complex of the absorption solvent system and ethylene, and removing the unabsorbed gases of the light gas stream from contact with the absorption solvent system.

[0007] A polyethylene production system, comprising a feed stream comprising ethylene introduced into a first polymerization reactor, a polymerization product stream emitted from the first polymerization reactor and introduced into a separator, a light gas stream comprising unreacted ethylene emitted from the separator, the light gas stream being separated from the polymerization product stream and introduced into an absorption reactor comprising an absorption solvent system, an absorbent-ethylene conjugant, wherein the conjugant is formed from unreacted ethylene absorbed by the absorption solvent system, and a waste gas stream comprising ethane, wherein the waste gas stream comprises components of the light gas stream that are not absorbed by the absorption solvent system.

[0008] The foregoing has outlined rather broadly the features and technical advantages of the invention in order that the detailed description of the invention that follows may be better understood. The various characteristics described above, as well as other features, will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art upon reading the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments, and by referring to the accompanying drawings.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] For a detailed description of the preferred embodiments of the invention, reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings in which:

[0010] FIGURE 1 illustrates a schematic of a first embodiment of a polyethylene production system;

[0011] FIGURE 2 illustrates a schematic of a second embodiment of a polyethylene production system;

[0012] FIGURE 3 illustrates a schematic of a third embodiment of a polyethylene production system;

[0013] FIGURE 4 illustrates a flow diagram of a first embodiment of a polyethylene production process;

[0014] FIGURE 5 illustrates a flow diagram of a second embodiment of a polyethylene production process;

[0015] FIGURE 6 illustrates a flow diagram of a third embodiment of a polyethylene production process; and

[0016] FIGURE 7 illustrates a schematic of an embodiment of a simulated polyethylene production system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0017] Disclosed herein are systems, apparatuses, and processes related to the production of polyethylene with improved efficiency. The systems, apparatuses, and processes are generally related to the separation of a first chemical component or compound from a composition resulting from the production of polyethylene and comprising the first chemical component or compound and one or more other chemical components, compounds, or the like.

[0018] Referring to Figure 1, a first polyethylene production (PEP) system 100 is disclosed. PEP system 100 generally comprises a purifier 102, reactors 104, 106, a separator 108, a processor 110, an absorption reactor 116, and a flare 114. In the PEP embodiments disclosed

herein, various system components may be in fluid communication via one or more conduits (e.g., pipes, tubing, flow lines, etc.) suitable for the conveyance of a particular stream, for example as show in detail by the numbered streams in Figures 1-3.

[0019] In the embodiment of Figure 1, a feed stream 10 may be communicated to the purifier 102. A purified feed stream 11 may be communicated from the purifier 102 to one or more of the reactors 104, 106. Where such a system comprises two or more reactors, a reactor stream 15 may be communicated from reactor 104 to reactor 106. A polymerization product stream 12 may be communicated from one or more of the reactors 104, 106 to the separator 108. A polymer stream 14 may be communicated from the separator 108 to the processor 110. A product stream 16 may be emitted from the processor 110. A gas stream 18 may be communicated from the separator 108 to the absorption reactor 116. A waste stream 20 may be communicated from the absorption reactor 116 to the flare 114 and a recycle stream 22 may be communicated from the absorption reactor 116 to the separator 108. A reintroduction stream 24 may be communicated from the separator 108 to the purifier 102.

[0020] Referring to Figure 2, a second PEP system 200 is disclosed, which has a number of system components common with PEP 100. In the alternative embodiment illustrated by Figure 2, the second PEP system 200 additionally comprises a deoxygenator 118. Alternatively to the first PEP system 100 (as illustrated in Figure 1), in the embodiment illustrated by Figure 2, the gas stream 18 may be communicated to the deoxygenator 118. A treated gas stream 26 may be communicated from the deoxygenator 118 to the absorption reactor 116.

[0021] Referring to Figure 3, a third PEP system 300 is disclosed, which has a number of system components common with PEP 100 and PEP 200. In the alternative embodiment illustrated by Figure 3, the third PEP system 300 additionally comprises a regenerator 120 (e.g., a desorption vessel). Alternatively to the first and second PEP systems 100 and 200, respectively, in the embodiment illustrated in Figure 3, a complexed stream 28 may be communicated from the absorption reactor 116 to the regenerator 120. A recycle stream 22 may be communicated from the regenerator 120 to the separator 108, and a regenerated absorbent stream 30 may be communicated from the regenerator 120 to the absorption reactor 116.

[0022] Various embodiments of suitable PEP systems having been disclosed, embodiments of a PEP process are now disclosed. One or more of the embodiments of a PEP process may be described with reference to one or more of PEP system 100, PEP system 200, and/or PEP system 300. Although a given PEP process may be described with reference to one or more embodiments of a PEP system, such a disclosure should not be construed as so-limiting. Although the various steps of the processes disclosed herein may be disclosed or illustrated in a particular order, such should not be construed as limiting the performance of these processes to any particular order unless otherwise indicated.

[0023] Referring to Figure 4, a first PEP process 400 is illustrated. PEP process 400 generally comprises at block 51 purifying a feed stream, at block 52 polymerizing monomers of the purified feed stream to form a polymerization product, at block 53 separating the polymerization product into a polymer stream and a gas stream, at block 54 processing the polymer stream, at block 55 separating at least one gaseous component from the gas stream to form a recycle stream and a waste stream, and at block 56 combusting the waste stream.

[0024] In an embodiment, the first PEP process 400 or a portion thereof may be implemented via the first PEP system 100 (e.g., as illustrated in Figure 1). Referring to Figures 1 and 4, in an embodiment the feed stream 10 may comprise a gaseous reactant, particularly, ethylene. In an embodiment, purifying the feed stream may yield a purified stream 11 comprising substantially pure monomers (e.g., ethylene monomers) as will be described herein. Polymerizing monomers of the purified stream 11 may yield the polymerization product stream 12 generally comprising unreacted ethylene, ethane (which may be by-product ethane formed from ethylene and hydrogen) and a polymerization product (e.g., polyethylene). Separating the polymerization product stream 12 may yield the polymer stream 14 (e.g., polyethylene polymer) and the gas stream 18 generally comprising unreacted monomer (e.g., ethylene monomer) and various waste gases (e.g., ethane). Processing the polymer stream 14 may yield the product stream 16. Separating at least one gaseous component from the gas stream 18 may yield a recycle stream 22, generally comprising unreacted ethylene monomer, and a waste gas stream 20. In an embodiment, separating the gas stream 18 comprises absorbing ethylene from the gas stream 18 to yield the waste gas stream 20 and then releasing the absorbed ethylene to form the recycle stream 22. The recycle stream 22, comprising ethylene, may be pressurized (e.g., returned to the separator 108 for pressurization) and re-introduced into a PEP process

(e.g., PEP process 400) as reintroduction stream 24. Combusting the waste gas stream 20 may be carried out with flare 114.

[0025] Referring to Figure 5, a second PEP process 500 is illustrated, which has a number of process steps common with PEP process 400. In the alternative embodiment illustrated by Figure 5, block 55 of Figure 4 is enhanced by at block 57 treating the gas stream to form a treated gas stream and at block 55' separating at least one gaseous component from the treated gas stream to form a recycle stream and a waste stream.

[0026] In an embodiment, second PEP process 500 or a portion thereof may be implemented via the second PEP system 200 (e.g. as illustrated in Figure 2). Alternatively to the embodiments of Figures 1 and 4, in the embodiment of Figures 2 and 5 treating the gas stream 18 may yield the treated gas stream 26. In an embodiment, treating the gas stream 18 comprises deoxygenating the gas stream 18. Separating at least one gaseous component from the treated gas stream 26 may yield a recycle stream 22, generally comprising unreacted ethylene monomer, and a waste gas stream 20.

[0027] Referring to Figure 6, a third PEP process 600 is illustrated, which has a number of process steps common with PEP process 500. In the alternative embodiment illustrated by Figure 6, block 55' of Figure 5 is enhanced by at block 55'' separating at least one gaseous component from the treated gas stream to form a complexed stream and a waste gas stream and at block 58 separating the complexed stream into an absorbent stream and a recycle stream.

[0028] In an embodiment, third PEP process 600 or a portion thereof may be implemented via the third PEP system 300 (e.g. as illustrated in Figure 3). Alternatively to the embodiments of Figures 1&4 and 2&5, in the embodiment of Figures 3 and 6 separating at least one gaseous component from the treated gas stream 26 may yield an unreacted monomer-absorbent (e.g., an ethylene-absorbent) complexed stream 28. In an embodiment, separating the unreacted monomer-absorbent complexed stream 28 comprises releasing the absorbed ethylene to form a recycle stream 22 and a regenerated absorbent stream 30.

[0029] In one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, purifying a feed stream (e.g., at block 51) may comprise separating unwanted compounds and elements from a feed stream comprising ethylene to form a purified feed stream. In an embodiment, the feed stream may

comprise ethylene and various other gases, such as but not limited to methane, ethane, acetylene, propylene, various other hydrocarbons having three or more carbon atoms, or combinations thereof. In an embodiment, purifying a feed stream may comprise any suitable method or process, including the non-limiting examples filtering, membrane screening, reacting with various chemicals, absorbing, adsorbing, distillation(s), or combinations thereof.

[0030] In embodiments as illustrated by Figures 1-3, purifying a feed stream may comprise routing the feed stream 10 to the purifier 102. In one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, the purifier 102 may comprise a device or apparatus suitable for the purification of one or more reactant gases in a feed stream comprising a plurality of potentially unwanted gaseous compounds, elements, contaminants, or the like. Non-limiting examples of a suitable purifier 102 may comprise a filter, a membrane, a reactor, an absorbent, a molecular sieve, one or more distillation columns, or combinations thereof. The purifier 102 may be configured to separate ethylene from a stream comprising methane, ethane, acetylene, propane, propylene, water, oxygen various other gaseous hydrocarbons, various contaminants, and/or combinations thereof.

[0031] In an embodiment, purifying a feed stream may yield a purified feed 11 comprising substantially pure ethylene. In an embodiment, the purified feed stream may comprise less than 25% by weight, alternatively, less than about 10%, alternatively, less than about 1.0% of any one or more of nitrogen, oxygen, methane, ethane, propane, or combinations thereof. As used herein “substantially pure ethylene” refers to a fluid stream comprising at least about 60% ethylene, alternatively, at least about 70% ethylene, alternatively, at least about 80% ethylene, alternatively, at least about 90% ethylene, alternatively, at least about 95% ethylene, alternatively, at least about 99% ethylene by weight, alternatively, at least about 99.5% ethylene by weight. In an embodiment, the feed stream 11 may further comprise trace amounts of ethane, for examples, as from a recycle stream as will be discussed.

[0032] In one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, polymerizing monomers of the purified feed (e.g., at block 52) comprises allowing a polymerization reaction between a plurality of monomers by contacting a monomer or monomers with a catalyst system under conditions suitable for the formation of a polymer. In an embodiment, any suitable catalyst system may be employed. A suitable catalyst system may comprise a catalyst and, optionally,

a co-catalyst and/or promoter. Nonlimiting examples of suitable catalyst systems include Ziegler Natta catalysts, Ziegler catalysts, chromium catalysts, chromium oxide catalysts, chromocene catalysts, metallocene catalysts, nickel catalysts, or combinations thereof. Catalyst systems suitable for use in this disclosure have been described, for example, in U.S. Patent No. 7,619,047 and U.S. Patent Application Publication Nos. 2007/0197374, 2009/0004417, 2010/0029872, 2006/0094590, and 2010/0041842, each of which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

[0033] In embodiments as illustrated by Figures 1-3, polymerizing monomers of the purified feed may comprise routing the feed stream 11 to the polymerization reactors or “reactors” 104, 106. In one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, the reactors 104, 106 may comprise any vessel or combination of vessels suitably configured to provide an environment for a chemical reaction (e.g., a contact zone) between monomers (e.g., ethylene) and/or polymers (e.g., an “active” or growing polymer chain) in the presence of a catalyst to yield a polymer (e.g., a polyethylene polymer). Although the embodiments illustrated in Figures 1, 2, and 3, illustrate various PEP systems having two reactors in series, one of skill in the art viewing this disclosure will recognize that one reactor, alternatively, any suitable number and/or configuration of reactors may be employed.

[0034] As used herein, the terms “polymerization reactor” or “reactor” include any polymerization reactor capable of polymerizing olefin monomers to produce homopolymers or copolymers. Such homopolymers and copolymers are referred to as resins or polymers. The various types of reactors include those that may be referred to as batch, slurry, gas-phase, solution, high pressure, tubular or autoclave reactors. Gas phase reactors may comprise fluidized bed reactors or staged horizontal reactors. Slurry reactors may comprise vertical or horizontal loops. High pressure reactors may comprise autoclave or tubular reactors. Reactor types can include batch or continuous processes. Continuous processes could use intermittent or continuous product discharge. Processes may also include partial or full direct recycle of un-reacted monomer, un-reacted comonomer, and/or diluent.

[0035] Polymerization reactor systems of the present invention may comprise one type of reactor in a system or multiple reactors of the same or different type. Production of polymers in multiple reactors may include several stages in at least two separate polymerization reactors

interconnected by a transfer device making it possible to transfer the polymers resulting from the first polymerization reactor (e.g., reactor 104) into the second reactor (e.g., reactor 106). The desired polymerization conditions in one of the reactors may be different from the operating conditions of the other reactors. Alternatively, polymerization in multiple reactors may include the manual transfer of polymer from one reactor to subsequent reactors for continued polymerization. Multiple reactor systems may include any combination including, but not limited to, multiple loop reactors, multiple gas reactors, a combination of loop and gas reactors, multiple high pressure reactors or a combination of high pressure with loop and/or gas reactors. The multiple reactors may be operated in series or in parallel.

[0036] According to one aspect of the invention, the polymerization reactor system may comprise at least one loop slurry reactor comprising vertical or horizontal loops. Monomer, diluent, catalyst and optionally any comonomer may be continuously fed to a loop reactor where polymerization occurs. Generally, continuous processes may comprise the continuous introduction of a monomer, a catalyst, and a diluent into a polymerization reactor and the continuous removal from this reactor of a suspension comprising polymer particles and the diluent. Reactor effluent may be flashed to remove the solid polymer from the liquids that comprise the diluent, monomer and/or comonomer. Various technologies may be used for this separation step including but not limited to, flashing that may include any combination of heat addition and pressure reduction; separation by cyclonic action in either a cyclone or hydrocyclone; or separation by centrifugation.

[0037] A typical slurry polymerization process (also known as the particle form process), is disclosed, for example, in U.S. Patent Nos. 3,248,179, 4,501,885, 5,565,175, 5,575,979, 6,239,235, 6,262,191 and 6,833,415, each of which is incorporated by reference in its entirety herein.

[0038] Suitable diluents used in slurry polymerization include, but are not limited to, the monomer being polymerized and hydrocarbons that are liquids under reaction conditions. Examples of suitable diluents include, but are not limited to, hydrocarbons such as propane, cyclohexane, isobutane, n-butane, n-pentane, isopentane, neopentane, and n-hexane. Some loop polymerization reactions can occur under bulk conditions where no diluent is used. An

example is polymerization of propylene monomer as disclosed in U.S. Patent Nos. 5,455,314, which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

[0039] According to yet another aspect of this invention, the polymerization reactor may comprise at least one gas phase reactor. Such systems may employ a continuous recycle stream containing one or more monomers continuously cycled through a fluidized bed in the presence of the catalyst under polymerization conditions. A recycle stream may be withdrawn from the fluidized bed and recycled back into the reactor. Simultaneously, polymer product may be withdrawn from the reactor and new or fresh monomer may be added to replace the polymerized monomer. Such gas phase reactors may comprise a process for multi-step gas-phase polymerization of olefins, in which olefins are polymerized in the gaseous phase in at least two independent gas-phase polymerization zones while feeding a catalyst-containing polymer formed in a first polymerization zone to a second polymerization zone. One type of gas phase reactor is disclosed in U.S. Patent Nos. 5,352,749, 4,588,790 and 5,436,304, each of which is incorporated by reference in its entirety herein.

[0040] According to still another aspect of the invention, a high pressure polymerization reactor may comprise a tubular reactor or an autoclave reactor. Tubular reactors may have several zones where fresh monomer, initiators, or catalysts are added. Monomer may be entrained in an inert gaseous stream and introduced at one zone of the reactor. Initiators, catalysts, and/or catalyst components may be entrained in a gaseous stream and introduced at another zone of the reactor. The gas streams may be intermixed for polymerization. Heat and pressure may be employed appropriately to obtain optimal polymerization reaction conditions.

[0041] According to yet another aspect of the invention, the polymerization reactor may comprise a solution polymerization reactor wherein the monomer is contacted with the catalyst composition by suitable stirring or other means. A carrier comprising an inert organic diluent or excess monomer may be employed. If desired, the monomer may be brought in the vapor phase into contact with the catalytic reaction product, in the presence or absence of liquid material. The polymerization zone is maintained at temperatures and pressures that will result in the formation of a solution of the polymer in a reaction medium. Agitation may be employed to obtain better temperature control and to maintain uniform polymerization mixtures

throughout the polymerization zone. Adequate means are utilized for dissipating the exothermic heat of polymerization.

[0042] Polymerization reactors suitable for the present invention may further comprise any combination of at least one raw material feed system, at least one feed system for catalyst or catalyst components, and/or at least one polymer recovery system. Suitable reactor systems for the present invention may further comprise systems for feedstock purification, catalyst storage and preparation, extrusion, reactor cooling, polymer recovery, fractionation, recycle, storage, loadout, laboratory analysis, and process control.

[0043] Conditions that are controlled for polymerization efficiency and to provide resin properties include temperature, pressure and the concentrations of various reactants. Polymerization temperature can affect catalyst productivity, polymer molecular weight and molecular weight distribution. Suitable polymerization temperature may be any temperature below the de-polymerization temperature according to the Gibbs Free energy equation. Typically this includes from about 60°C to about 280°C, for example, and from about 70°C to about 110°C, depending upon the type of polymerization reactor.

[0044] Suitable pressures will also vary according to the reactor and polymerization type. The pressure for liquid phase polymerizations in a loop reactor is typically less than 1000 psig. Pressure for gas phase polymerization is usually at about 200 – 500 psig. High pressure polymerization in tubular or autoclave reactors is generally run at about 20,000 to 75,000 psig. Polymerization reactors can also be operated in a supercritical region occurring at generally higher temperatures and pressures. Operation above the critical point of a pressure/temperature diagram (supercritical phase) may offer advantages. In an embodiment, polymerization may occur in an environment having a suitable combination of temperature and pressure. For example, polymerization may occur at a pressure in a range from about 550 psi to about 650 psi, alternatively, about 600 psi to about 625 psi and a temperature in a range from about 170° F to about 230° F, alternatively, from about 195° F to about 220° F.

[0045] The concentration of various reactants can be controlled to produce resins with certain physical and mechanical properties. The proposed end-use product that will be formed by the resin and the method of forming that product determines the desired resin properties.

Mechanical properties include tensile, flexural, impact, creep, stress relaxation and hardness tests. Physical properties include density, molecular weight, molecular weight distribution, melting temperature, glass transition temperature, temperature melt of crystallization, density, stereoregularity, crack growth, long chain branching and rheological measurements.

[0046] The concentrations and/or partial pressures of monomer, co-monomer, hydrogen, co-catalyst, modifiers, and electron donors are important in producing these resin properties. Comonomer may be used to control product density. Hydrogen may be used to control product molecular weight. Co-catalysts can be used to alkylate, scavenge poisons and control molecular weight. Modifiers can be used to control product properties and electron donors affect stereoregularity, the molecular weight distribution, or molecular weight. In addition, the concentration of poisons is minimized because poisons impact the reactions and product properties.

[0047] In an embodiment, polymerizing monomers of the purified feed may comprise introducing a suitable catalyst system into the first and/or second reactor 104, 106, respectively, so as to form a slurry. Alternatively, a suitable catalyst system may reside in the first and/or second reactor 104, 106, respectively.

[0048] As explained above, polymerizing monomers of the purified feed may comprise selectively manipulating one or more polymerization reaction conditions to yield a given polymer product, to yield a polymer product having one or more desirable properties, to achieve a desired efficiency, to achieve a desired yield, the like, or combinations thereof. Non-limiting examples of such parameters include temperature, pressure, type and/or quantity of catalyst or co-catalyst, and the concentrations and/or partial pressures of various reactants. In an embodiment, polymerizing monomers of the purified feed 52 may comprise adjusting one or more polymerization reaction conditions.

[0049] In an embodiment, polymerizing monomers of the purified feed may comprise maintaining a suitable temperature, pressure, and/or partial pressure(s) during the polymerization reaction, alternatively, cycling between a series of suitable temperatures, pressures, and/or partials pressure(s) during the polymerization reaction.

[0050] In an embodiment, polymerizing monomers of the purified feed may comprise circulating, flowing, cycling, mixing, agitating, or combinations thereof, the monomers, catalyst system, and/or the slurry within and/or between the reactors 104, 106. In an embodiment where the monomers, catalyst system, and/or slurry are circulated, circulation may be at a velocity (e.g., fluid velocity) of from about 1 m/s to about 30 m/s, alternatively, from about 2 m/s to about 17 m/s, alternatively, from about 3 m/s to about 15 m/s.

[0051] In an embodiment, polymerizing monomers of the purified feed may comprise configuring reactors 104, 106 to yield a multimodal (e.g., a bimodal) polymer (e.g., polyethylene). For example, the resultant polymer may comprise both a relatively high molecular weight, low density (HMWLD) polyethylene polymer and a relatively low molecular weight, high density (LMWHD) polyethylene polymer. For example, various types of suitable polymers may be characterized as having a various densities. For example, a Type I may be characterized as having a density in a range of from about 0.910 g/cm³ to about 0.925 g/cm³, alternatively, a Type II may be characterized as having a density from about 0.926 g/cm³ to about 0.940 g/cm³, alternatively, a Type III may be characterized as having a density from about 0.941 g/cm³ to about 0.959 g/cm³, alternatively, a Type IV may be characterized as having a density of greater than about 0.960 g/cm³.

[0052] In the embodiments illustrated in Figures 1-3, polymerizing monomers of the purified feed may yield a polymerization product stream 12. Such a polymerization product stream 12 may generally comprise various solids, semi-solids, volatile and nonvolatile liquids, gases and combinations thereof. In an embodiment, the polymerization product stream 12 may comprise hydrogen, nitrogen, methane, ethylene, ethane, propylene, propane, butane, isobutane, pentane, hexane, hexene-1 and heavier hydrocarbons. In an embodiment, ethylene may be present in a range of from about 0.1% to about 15%, alternatively, from about 1.5% to about 5%, alternatively, about 2% to about 4% by weight. Ethane may be present in a range of from about 0.001% to about 4%, alternatively, from about 0.2% to about 0.5% by weight. Isobutane may be present in a range from about 80% to about 98%, alternatively, from about 92% to about 96%, alternatively, about 95% by weight.

[0053] The solids and/or liquids may comprise a polymer product (e.g., a polyethylene polymer), often referred to at this stage of the PEP process as “polymer fluff.” The gases may

comprise unreacted, gaseous reactant monomers (e.g., unreacted ethylene monomers), gaseous waste products, and/or gaseous contaminants.

[0054] In one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, separating the polymerization product into a polymer stream and a gas stream (e.g., at block 53) may generally comprise removing any gases from liquids and/or solids (e.g., the polymer fluff) by any suitable process.

[0055] In embodiments as illustrated by Figures 1-3, separating the polymerization product into a polymer stream and a gas stream may comprise routing the polymerization product stream 12 to the separator 108. In one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, the separator 108 may be configured to separate a stream (e.g., polymerization product comprising polyethylene) into gases, liquids, solids, or combinations thereof. The reaction product may comprise unreacted, gaseous monomers (e.g., unreacted ethylene monomers), gaseous waste products, and/or gaseous contaminants. As used herein, an “unreacted monomer,” for example, ethylene, refers to a monomer that was introduced into a polymerization reactor during a polymerization reaction but was not incorporated into a polymer.

[0056] In an embodiment, the separator 108 may comprise a vapor-liquid separator. Suitable examples of such a separator may include a distillation column, a flash tank, a filter, a membrane, a reactor, an absorbent, an adsorbent, a molecular sieve, or combinations thereof. In an embodiment, the separator comprises a flash tank. Not seeking to be bound by theory, such a flash tank may comprise a vessel configured to vaporize and/or remove low vapor pressure components from a high temperature and/or high pressure fluid. The separator 108 may be configured such that an incoming stream may be separated into a liquid stream (e.g., a condensate stream) and a gas (e.g., vapor) stream. The liquid or condensate stream may comprise a reaction product (e.g., polyethylene), often referred to as “polymer fluff.” The gas or vapor stream may comprise volatile solvents, gaseous, unreacted monomers, waste gases (secondary reaction products, such as contaminants and the like), or combinations thereof. The separator may be configured such that the feed stream is flashed by heat, pressure reduction, or both such that the enthalpy of the stream is increased. This may be accomplished via a heater, a flashline heater, various other operations commonly known in the art, or combinations thereof. For example, a flash line heater comprising a double pipe may exchange heat by hot

water or steam. Such a flashline heater may increase the temperature of the stream while reducing its pressure.

[0057] In an embodiment, separating the polymerization product into a polymer stream and a gas stream 53 may comprise distilling, vaporizing, flashing, filtering, membrane screening, absorbing, adsorbing, or combinations thereof, the polymerization product. In the embodiments illustrated in Figures 1-3, separating the polymerization product into a polymer stream and a gas stream yields a gas stream 18 and a polymer stream 14. In an embodiment, the gas stream may comprise hydrogen, nitrogen, methane, ethylene, ethane, propylene, propane, butane, isobutane, pentane, hexane, hexene-1 and heavier hydrocarbons. In an embodiment, ethylene may be present in a range of from about 0.1% to about 15%, alternatively, from about 1.5% to about 5%, alternatively, about 2% to about 4% by weight. Ethane may be present in a range of from about 0.001% to about 4%, alternatively, from about 0.2% to about 0.5% by weight. Isobutane may be present in a range from about 80% to about 98%, alternatively, from about 92% to about 96%, alternatively, about 95% by weight.

[0058] In one or more one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, processing the polymer stream (e.g., at block 54) comprises any suitable process or series of processes configured to produce a polymer product as may be suitable for commercial or industrial usage, storage, transportation, further processing, or combinations thereof.

[0059] In embodiments as illustrated by Figures 1-3, processing the polymer stream may comprise routing the polymer stream 14 to the processor 110. The processor 110 may be configured for the performance of a suitable processing means, nonlimiting examples of which include cooling, injection molding, melting, pelletizing, blow molding, extrusion molding, rotational molding, thermoforming, cast molding, the like, or combinations thereof. Various additives and modifiers may be added to the polymer to provide better processing during manufacturing and for desired properties in the end product. Nonlimiting examples of such additives may include surface modifiers such as slip agents, antiblocks, tackifiers; antioxidants such as primary and secondary antioxidants; pigments; processing aids such as waxes/oils and fluoroelastomers; and special additives such as fire retardants, antistats, scavengers, absorbers, odor enhancers, and degradation agents.

[0060] In an embodiment, the processor 110 may be configured to form a suitable polymer product. Nonlimiting examples of suitable polymer products as may result from such processing include films, powders, pellets, resins, liquids, or any other suitable form as will be appreciated by those of skill in the art. Such a suitable output may be for use in, for examples, one or more of various consumer or industrial products. For example, the polymer product may be utilized any one or more of various articles, including, but not limited to, bottles, drums, toys, household containers, utensils, film products, drums, fuel tanks, pipes, geomembranes, and liners. In a particular embodiment, the processor is configured to form pellets for transportation to a consumer product manufacturer. For example, in the embodiments illustrated in Figures 1-3, processing the polymer stream yields a polymer product 16 (e.g., pelletized polyethylene).

[0061] In one or more one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, treating the gas stream (e.g., at block 57) comprises any suitable process or reaction for removing oxygen, oxygenated compounds, oxidizing compounds, or combinations thereof (cumulatively referred to herein as “oxygen”) from the gas stream. Suitable processes or reactions will be appreciated by those of skill in the art viewing this disclosure. Nonlimiting examples of suitable processes for removing oxygen include various catalyzed reactions, contacting with a chemical species known to react with oxygen, filtering, absorbing, adsorbing, heating, cooling, or combinations thereof.

[0062] In embodiments as illustrated by Figures 2-3, treating the gas stream may comprise routing the gas stream 18 to the deoxygenator 118. In one or more one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, the deoxygenator 118 may comprise a device or apparatus configured for the removal oxygen, from a gas stream. Nonlimiting examples of a suitable deoxygenator include various reactors (e.g., a fluidized bed reactor or a fixed bed), a filter, or combinations thereof. A suitable deoxygenator 118 may be configured to reduce, prevent, or exclude compounds and/or elements (e.g., oxygen) that may have the effect of poisoning an absorption solvent from reaching the absorption reactor.

[0063] In the embodiments illustrated by Figures 2-3, treating the gas stream yields a treated gas stream 26 being substantially free of oxygen. As used herein “substantially free of oxygen” refers to a fluid stream comprising no more than least about 5% oxygen, alternatively, no more

than about 1% oxygen, alternatively, no more than about 0.1% oxygen, alternatively, no more than about 0.01% oxygen by weight.

[0064] In one or more one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, separating at least one gaseous component from the gas stream and/or the treated gas stream, collectively referred to as a gas stream, (e.g., at block 55, 55', or 55'') generally comprises any suitable method of selectively separating at least a first chemical component or compound from a stream comprising the first chemical component or compound and one or more other chemical components, compounds, or the like. In various embodiments, the gaseous component separated from the gas stream may comprise one or more hydrocarbons. Nonlimiting examples of such hydrocarbons include alkanes (e.g., butane, particularly, isobutane) and alkenes or olefin monomers (e.g., ethylene). In an embodiment, the gaseous component separated from the gas stream may comprise an unreacted hydrocarbon monomer, e.g., ethylene. In an embodiment, the gaseous component separated from the gas stream may comprise an unreacted hydrocarbon monomer, e.g., ethylene, alone or in combination with other hydrocarbons, e.g., isobutane. In an embodiment, the gaseous component separated from the gas stream may comprise ethylene, alone or in combination with isobutane. In an embodiment, capturing isobutane may result in a savings of the cost of the captured isobutane and reduce the presence of isobutene in flare emissions. Nonlimiting examples of suitable separating means include distilling, vaporizing, flashing, filtering, membrane screening, absorbing, adsorbing, molecular weight exclusion, size exclusion, polarity-based separation, or combinations thereof.

[0065] In an embodiment as illustrated by Figures 1-3, separating at least one gaseous component from the gas stream (e.g., gas stream 18 of Figure 1 or treated gas stream 26 of Figures 2-3) may comprise routing the gas stream to the absorption reactor 116. In one or more one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, the absorption reactor 116 may comprise a reactor configured to selectively absorb at least a first chemical component or compound from a stream comprising the first chemical component or compound and one or more other chemical components, compounds, or the like. Non-limiting examples of suitable absorption reactors include an absorption (distillation) tower, a sparger tank, an agitation reactor, one or more compressors, one or more recycle pumps, or combinations thereof. For examples, in an embodiment the absorption reactor may be configured to dissipate a gas within a liquid (e.g., by bubbling the gas through the liquid). For example, a suitable absorption reactor is illustrated in

the Gas Processors Association, "Engineering Data Book" 10th ed. at Fig 19-16. The absorption reactor 116 may be capable of selectively inducing thermal and/or pressure fluctuations, variations, or cycles. In an embodiment, the absorption reactor 116 may be configured to selectively absorb and/or induce the absorption of an unreacted ethylene monomer from a composition comprising various other gases (e.g., ethane). In another embodiment, the absorption reactor 116 may be configured to selectively absorb and/or induce the absorption of butane, particularly, isobutane, from a composition comprising various other gases. In still another embodiment, the absorption reactor 116 may be configured to selectively absorb both unreacted ethylene and butane, particularly, isobutane, from a composition comprising various other gases (e.g., ethane).

[0066] In an embodiment where the absorption reactor 116 comprises a solvent reactor, the absorption reactor may comprise a suitable absorption solvent system, as will be disclosed herein. Such an absorption reactor 116 may be configured to retain the absorption solvent system. For example, the absorption solvent system may be retained within the reactor as a liquid, as a fixed bed, or as a fluidized bed.

[0067] In an embodiment, a suitable absorption solvent system may be capable of reversibly complexing with the ethylene and/or isobutane. Such an absorption solvent system may generally comprise a metallic salt and a solvent. In an embodiment, an absorption solvent system may be characterized as having a selectivity of ethylene to ethane where ethylene and ethane are present at the same partial pressure of about 40:1 at approximately 14 psi, about 12:1 at approximately 20 psi, about 6:1 at approximately 40 psi, and about 3:1 at approximately 180 psi partial pressure. In an embodiment, the solvent system may be further characterized as having a high contaminant tolerance and as exhibiting high stability at increased and/or fluctuating temperatures and/or pressures, or combinations thereof.

[0068] In an embodiment, the metallic salt may comprise a salt of one or more transition metals and a weakly-ionic halogen. Non-limiting examples of suitable transition metals include silver, gold, copper, platinum, palladium, or nickel. Non-limiting example of suitable weakly-ionic halogens include chlorine and bromine. In an embodiment, a suitable transition metal salt may be characterized as having a high specificity for olefins. Non-limiting examples of suitable transition metal-halogen salts include silver chloride (AgCl) and copper chloride

(CuCl). In a particular embodiment, the salt employed in the absorption solvent system comprises CuCl. Not seeking to be bound by theory, such a metallic salt may interact with the double carbon bonds of olefins.

[0069] In an embodiment, the solvent comprises an amine or an amine complex. Non-limiting examples of solvent amines include pyridine, benzylamine, and aniline. For examples, the amine may comprise an aniline (phenylamine, aminobenzene); alternatively, aniline combined with dimethyleformamide (DMF), and in embodiments, aniline and N-methylpyrrolidone (NMP).

[0070] In an embodiment, the solvent may be characterized as aprotic, that is, as not including a dissociable hydrogen atom. Without limitation by theory, a dissociable hydrogen solvent may result in the hydrogenation of the double bond between carbons in an olefin such as ethylene. Further, the solvent may be characterized as polar, as having a slight polarity, or as having unidirectional, electric charge. Not seeking to be bound by theory, a polar solvent may interact with and at least partially solubilize the salt.

[0071] In an embodiment, the solvent may be characterized as a liquid produced industrially in relatively high volumes, having a relatively low cost, being easily transportable, or combinations thereof. The solvent may be further characterized as capable of retaining a complexed olefin-metal salt or retaining a weakly ionic metal salt despite fluctuations in temperature and/or pressure.

[0072] In an embodiment, the absorption solvent system may comprise copper chloride, aniline, and dimethyleformamide (CuCl/aniline/DMF). In an alternative embodiment, the absorption solvent system may comprise copper chloride, aniline, and N-methylpyrrolidone (CuCl/aniline/NMP). In ethylene absorption applications, a CuCl/aniline/NMP solvent system may be characterized as having increased volatile stability at lower pressures and higher temperatures.

[0073] In an embodiment, the absorption reactor 116 may be configured to provide or maintain a suitable pressure during operation. Such a suitable pressure may be in a range of from about 5 psig to about 500 psig, alternatively, from about 50 psig to about 450 psig, alternatively, from about 75 psig to about 400 psig. In an additional embodiment, the

absorption reactor 116 may be configured to provide or maintain a suitable partial pressure of ethylene during operation. Such a suitable ethylene partial pressure may be in a range of from about 1 psia to about 400 psia, alternatively, from about 30 psia to about 200 psia, alternatively, from about 50 psia to about 250 psia. Not intending to be bound by theory, pressurizing the absorption reactor 116 may facilitate absorption of ethylene and/or the formation of a complex of ethylene and the absorption solvent system (e.g., the CuCl/aniline/NMP system). Also, without limitation by theory, the selectivity of the absorption solvent system for ethylene may increase with a decrease in the pressure of the absorption reactor.

[0074] In an embodiment, the absorption reactor may be configured for the removal of unabsorbed gases therefrom. In an embodiment, the absorption reactor 116 may be capable of inducing thermal fluctuations, for example, such that unabsorbed gases may be flashed from the absorption reactor 116. Such an absorption reactor 116 may be configured to provide or maintain a suitable temperature. Such a suitable temperature may be in a range of from about 0°C to about 250°C, alternatively, from about 50°C to about 200°C, alternatively, from about 75°C to about 150°C to facilitate removal of the unabsorbed gases.

[0075] In an embodiment, the absorption reactor 116 may be configured to induce the release of the gas absorbed or complexed by the absorption solvent therefrom (e.g., absorbed and/or complexed ethylene and/or isobutane). Not intending to be bound by theory, inducing the release of the absorbed or complexed gas may comprise altering the reaction kinetics or the gas-solvent equilibrium of the absorption solvent system, the temperature of the absorption reactor 116, the pressure of the absorption reactor 116, the partial pressure of the absorbed gas, or combinations thereof. In such an embodiment, the absorption reactor 116 may comprise controls, thermal conduits, electric conduits, compressors, vacuums, the like, or combinations thereof configured to alter the reaction kinetics, the gas-solvent equilibrium, the temperature of the absorption reactor 116, the pressure of the absorption reactor 116, or combinations thereof.

[0076] In an embodiment, the absorption reactor 116 may be configured to evacuate gases (e.g., a previously absorbed and then released gas, such as ethylene) and/or to facilitate the release of the absorbed gas via a pressure differential. The absorption reactor 116 may be configured to provide or maintain a suitable partial pressure. Such a suitable partial pressure may be in a range of from about 0.1 psig to about 40 psig, alternatively, from about 5 psig to

about 30 psig, alternatively, from about 5 psig to about 15 psig. In an embodiment, the absorption reactor 116 may be configured to provide or maintain an ethylene partial pressure in a range of from about 0 psia to about 5 psia.

[0077] In an embodiment, the absorption reactor 116 may be configured for batch and/or continuous processes. For example, in an embodiment, a PEP system may comprise two or more absorption reactors (e.g., such as absorption reactor 116), each of which may be configured for batch operation. For example, by employing two or more absorption reactors, such a system may be configured to allow for continuous operation by running a first batch in the first absorption reactor while a second batch is prepared in the second absorption reactor. As such, by cycling between two or more suitable reactors, a system may operate continuously.

[0078] In an embodiment, separating at least one gaseous component from the gas stream comprises selectively absorbing the at least one gaseous component from a gas stream. In such an embodiment, absorbing the at least one gaseous component from the gas stream generally comprises contacting the gas stream with a suitable absorbent, allowing the at least one component to be absorbed by the absorbent, and, optionally, removing a waste stream comprising unabsorbed gases. In an additional embodiment, separating at least one gaseous component from the gas stream may comprise liberating the absorbed gaseous component from the absorbent (e.g., via regenerator 120). In an alternative embodiment, the absorbed gaseous component and absorbent may be removed for further processing.

[0079] In an embodiment, contacting the gas stream with the absorbent (e.g., an absorption solvent system) may comprise any suitable means of ensuring sufficient contact between the gas stream and the absorbent. Nonlimiting examples of suitable means by which to provide sufficient contact between the gas stream and the absorbent include the use of various reactor systems, such as those disclosed above (e.g., an absorption column or sparged or mixed tank). Not intending to be limited by theory, a suitable reactor system may ensure contact between a two or more gaseous, liquid, and/or solid compositions by agitating or mixing the two components in the presence of each other, circulating, dispersing, or diffusing a first composition through or within a second composition, or various other techniques known to those of skill in the art. In an embodiment, the gas stream and the absorbent may be brought into contact in a suitable ratio. Such a suitable ratio of gas stream to absorbent may be in a range of from about 1,000

lb/hr :1000 gpm to about 2,500 lb/hr :25 gpm, alternatively, from about 1000 lb/hr :250 gpm to about 2500 lb/hr :100 gpm, alternatively, about 1875 lbs/hr :250 gpm.

[0080] In an embodiment, allowing the at least one component to be absorbed by the absorbent may comprise allowing the at least one component to become reversibly bound, linked, bonded or combinations thereof to the absorbent or a portion thereof, for example, via the formation of various links, bonds, attractions, complexes, or combinations thereof. For example, in an embodiment where the absorbent comprises an absorption solvent system (e.g., a CuCl/aniline/DMF solvent system or a CuCl/aniline/NMP solvent system), allowing absorption of the at least one component may comprise allowing a complex to form between the absorbent and the at least one component, referred to as an absorbed component complex (e.g., an absorbed ethylene complex).

[0081] Allowing absorption of the at least one component may further comprise providing and/or maintaining a suitable pressure of the environment in which the gas stream and absorbent are brought into contact, providing and/or maintaining a suitable partial pressure of a gas, providing and/or maintaining a suitable temperature in the environment in which the gas stream and absorbent are brought into contact, catalyzing the absorption, or combinations thereof. Not intending to be bound by theory, the absorption of the at least one component by the absorbent may be improved at a suitable temperature and/or pressure.

[0082] In an embodiment, separating at least one gaseous component from the gas stream comprises removing a waste stream. In an embodiment, the remaining unabsorbed gas stream components form the waste stream. In an embodiment where the absorbed component comprises ethylene and the absorbent comprises a CuCl/aniline/DMF or a CuCl/aniline/NMP solvent system, such a waste stream may comprise methane, ethane, acetylene, propylene, various other hydrocarbons, volatile contaminants, or combinations thereof. Further, such a waste stream may be substantially free of ethylene monomers. As used herein, “substantially free of unreacted ethylene monomers” means that the waste gases comprise less than 50% unreacted ethylene monomers, alternatively, less than 10% unreacted ethylene monomers, alternatively, less than 1.0% unreacted ethylene monomers, alternatively, less than 0.1 unreacted ethylene monomers, alternatively, less than 0.01% unreacted ethylene monomers by weight.

[0083] In an embodiment, removing the waste stream comprises cooling the waste stream, reducing or increasing the waste stream pressure such that the waste stream flows to the flare 114. For example, in an embodiment, the waste stream may be “swept away” by conveying a suitable sweep gas (e.g., an inert or unreactive gas, as disclosed above) through the vessel containing the waste gas (e.g., the absorption reactor 116) at a sufficient pressure, at velocity, or combinations thereof to expel the waste gases therefrom. For example, in the embodiments illustrated by Figures 1-3, separating at least one gaseous component from the gas stream yields a waste gas stream 20 being substantially free of unreacted ethylene monomers, alternatively, a waste gas stream having a reduced concentration of unreacted ethylene monomers. For example, the waste gas stream may comprise less than about 30%, alternatively, less than about 25%, alternatively, less than about 20%, alternatively, less than about 15%, alternatively, less than about 10% unreacted ethylene monomers by weight. In an additional embodiment, the ethylene may be decreased by a percentage of the ethylene present in the gas stream prior to separating at least one gaseous component therefrom. For example, the waste gas stream may comprise less than about 40%, alternatively, less than about 30%, alternatively, less than about 20% by weight of the unreacted ethylene monomers present in the gas stream prior to separation.

[0084] In an embodiment, separating at least one gaseous component from the gas stream may further comprise liberating the absorbed gaseous component from the absorbent (e.g., in situ within absorption reactor 116 and/or in another vessel such as regenerator 120). In an embodiment, the absorbed gaseous component may be liberated from the absorbent before or after the waste gas has been removed. Liberating the absorbed gaseous component from the absorbent generally comprises any suitable means of reversing the various links, bonds, attractions, complexes, or combinations thereof by which the at least one gaseous component is bound, linked, bonded or combinations thereof to the absorbent or a portion thereof. Nonlimiting examples of a suitable means by which to liberate the absorbed gaseous component include altering absorption kinetics or the absorption equilibrium of the absorbent; heating, or depressurizing the absorbent; altering the partial pressure of the absorbed gas, or combinations thereof. For example, in an embodiment, liberating the absorbed gaseous component may comprise depressurizing the solution comprising the complexed ethylene to a suitable partial pressure.

[0085] In an embodiment, liberating the absorbed gas yields a recycle stream comprising unreacted monomers which may be returned to the separator 108 for pressurization (e.g., via one or more compressors located at the separator 108). For example, in the embodiments illustrated by Figures 1-3, liberating the absorbed gas yields a recycle stream 22 which may be returned to the separator 108. Pressurizing the recycle stream 22 may yield a reintroduction stream 24 which may be reintroduced into or reused in a PEP process. For example, in the embodiments illustrated by Figures 1-3, a reintroduction stream 24 is introduced into the purifier 102. In an alternative embodiment, a recycle stream (such as recycle stream 22) may be pressurized and/or reintroduced into a PEP process without being returned to the separator 108. In an embodiment, the recycle stream 22 may comprise substantially pure ethylene; alternatively, the recycle stream 22 may comprise ethylene and butane, particularly, isobutane. In an embodiment, the gas stream may comprise may comprise nitrogen, ethylene, ethane, and/or isobutene. Ethylene may be present in a range of from about 65% to about 99%, alternatively, from about 70% to about 90%, alternatively, about 75% to about 85% by weight. Ethane may be present in a range of from about 1% to about 20%, alternatively, from about 5% to about 15%, alternatively, from about 7.5% to about 12.5% by weight. Isobutane may be present in a range of from about 1% to about 20%, alternatively, from about 5% to about 15%, alternatively, from about 7.5% to about 12.5% by weight.

[0086] In an alternative embodiment, separating at least one gaseous component from the gas stream may further comprise removing the solution comprising the absorbed component complex (e.g., the absorbed ethylene complex) for further processing. For example, in the embodiment illustrated by Figure 3, separating at least one gaseous component from the gas stream may yield complexed stream 28, as will be discussed in greater detail below. In an embodiment, the complexed stream 28 may comprise may comprise ethylene, ethane, and/or isobutene. Ethylene may be present in a range of from about 0.1% to about 10%, alternatively, from about 0.4% to about 5%, alternatively, from about 0.5% to about 2.5% by weight. Ethane may be present in a range of from about 0.1% to about 1%, alternatively, from about 0.2% to about 0.5% by weight. Isobutane may be present in a range of from about 0.1% to about 1%, alternatively, from about 0.2% to about 0.5% by weight.

[0087] In one or more one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, separating a complexed stream into a recycle stream and an absorbent stream (e.g., at block 58) comprises liberating the absorbed gaseous component from the absorbent.

[0088] In the embodiment illustrated by Figure 3, separating a complexed stream into a recycle stream and an absorbent stream may comprise routing the complexed stream 28 to the regenerator 120. In one or more one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, a regenerator 120 may comprise a device or apparatus configured to recover, regenerate, recycle, and/or purify an absorption solvent and/or to liberate an absorbed gas. Non-limiting examples of a suitable regenerator include a flash reactor, a depressurization reactor, a solvent regeneration reactor, or combinations thereof. In an embodiment, regenerator 120 may be configured to operate on the basis of a pressure differential. In such an embodiment, the regenerator 120 may be configured to provide or maintain a suitable internal pressure. Such a suitable internal pressure may be in a range of from about 0.1 psia to about 150 psig, alternatively, from about 5 psig to about 30 psig, alternatively, from about 5 psig to about 15 psig. In an embodiment, the regenerator 120 may be configured to provide or maintain a suitable partial pressure. Such a suitable partial pressure may be in a range of from about 0 psia to about 50 psia. In an embodiment, regenerator 120 may be configured to operate on the basis of an elevated temperature. Such an regenerator 120 may be configured to provide or maintain a suitable temperature. Such a suitable temperature may be in a range of from about 0°C to about 250°C, alternatively, from about 50°C to about 80°C, alternatively, from about 60°C to about 70°C to vaporize and/or release an absorbed compound (e.g., ethylene and/or isobutane) from the absorption solvent.

[0089] In an embodiment, the regenerator 120 may be configured for batch and/or continuous processes. For example, in an embodiment, a PEP system may comprise two or more absorption regenerators (e.g., such as regenerator 120), each of which may be configured for batch operation. As explained above, by employing two or more absorption reactors, such a system may operate to regenerate the absorbent continuously.

[0090] As explained above, liberating the absorbed gaseous component from the absorbent generally comprises any suitable means reversing the various links, bonds, attractions, complexes, or combinations thereof by which the at least one gaseous component is bound,

linked, bonded or combinations thereof to the absorbent or a portion thereof. Various processes for liberating an absorbed gaseous component were disclosed above with respect to the step of separating at least one gaseous component from the gas stream.

[0091] In an embodiment, separating a complexed stream into a recycle stream and an absorbent stream may yield a regenerated absorbent stream which may be reused in an absorption reaction and a recycle stream comprising unreacted monomers which may be reintroduced into or reused in a PEP process. For example, in the embodiment illustrated by Figure 3, separating a complexed stream into a recycle stream and an absorbent stream 58 yields a recycle stream 22 which may be returned to the purifier 102 and a regenerated absorbent stream 30 which may be returned to the absorption reactor 116.

[0092] In one or more one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, combusting waste gas stream (e.g., at block 56) may generally comprise burning or incinerating the gases of the waste gas stream 20.

[0093] In embodiments as illustrated by Figures 1-3, combusting waste gas stream may comprise routing the waste gas stream 20 to the flare 114. In one or more one or more of the embodiments disclosed herein, the flare 114 may comprise a combustion device or apparatus. Nonlimiting examples of a suitable flare include a torch, incinerator, the like, or combinations thereof. A flare may suitably comprise one or more controllable nozzles, an ignition source, a bypass valve, a pressure relief valve, or combinations thereof. Flare 114 may be configured to provide an environment for the combustion of various waste products, for example, atomic gases (e.g. nitrogen, oxygen), oxides (e.g. carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen or sulfur), various unwanted gaseous products, or combinations thereof. In an embodiment, the flare 114 may additionally comprise a device or apparatus configured to selectively remove one or more of contaminants prior to, during, and/or after combustion (e.g., such that a given combustion product is not released into the atmosphere).

[0094] In an embodiment, combusting waste gas stream may further or alternatively comprise scrubbing, converting, and/or treating the waste gas stream, or combustion products, or combinations thereof. As disclosed herein, the waste gas stream may comprise volatilized solvents, unreacted gases, secondary products, contaminants, hydrocarbons, or combinations thereof. In an embodiment, the waste gas stream 20 may comprise may comprise hydrogen,

nitrogen, methane, ethylene, ethane, propylene, propane, butane, isobutene, and heavier hydrocarbons. Ethylene may be present in a range of from about 1% to about 40%, alternatively, from about 2.5% to about 20 % by weight. Ethane may be present in a range of from about 5% to about 50%, alternatively, from about 30% to about 40% by weight. Isobutane may be present in a range from about 1% to about 20%, alternatively, from about 1.5% to about 5%, alternatively, from about 2% to about 3% by weight. Nitrogen may be present in a range from about 10% to about 80%, alternatively, from about 35% to about 50%, alternatively, from about 40% to about 45% by weight.

[0095] In alternative embodiments, rather than flaring, waste stream 20 may be used as fuel (for example for steam generation or co-gen operations, and/or may be used as fuel and/or a feed to a thermal cracking unit to form ethylene (e.g., to form feed stream 10). In another alternative embodiment, the waste gas may be exported from the plant to a monomer plant.

[0096] In an embodiment, implementation of one or more of the disclosed systems (e.g., PEP systems 100, 200, and/or 300) and/or processes (e.g., PEP processes 400, 500, and/or 600) may allow for the recovery of a substantial portion of the ethylene monomers that would otherwise be lost due to the operation of such systems or processes, for example, by flaring. In an embodiment, one or more of the disclosed systems may allow for the recovery of up to about 75%, alternatively, up to about 85%, alternatively, up to about 90%, alternatively, up to about 95% by weight of the ethylene monomers that would otherwise be lost. In an embodiment, one or more of the disclosed systems may allow for the recovery of up to about 75%, alternatively, up to about 85%, alternatively, up to about 90%, alternatively, up to about 95% by weight of the isobutane that would otherwise be lost. The recovery of such a portion of the unreacted ethylene monomers may yield a significant economic benefit, for example, by improving the efficiency of usage of ethylene monomers and decreasing capital inputs associated with the acquisition of ethylene monomers. Similarly, the recovery of such a portion of isobutane may yield a significant economic benefit, for example, by decreasing capital inputs associated with the acquisition of isobutene and/or by reducing the presence of isobutene in flare emissions.

[0097] In an embodiment, implementation of one or more of the disclosed systems and/or processes may decrease the amount of ethane that is returned to a polymerization reactor (such as reactors 104 and/or 106) via a recycle stream. By decreasing the amount of ethane contained

in a stream recycled to a polymerization reactor, the overall efficiency of the polyethylene production may be improved (for example, by increasing the ethylene concentration without reaching the bubble point in the loop reactor). For example, decreasing the amount of ethane in a recycled stream may improve polymerization reactor efficiency, improve catalyst efficiency, reduce polymer fouling, reduce polymerization downtime, or combinations thereof.

[0098] A skilled artisan will recognize that industrial and commercial polyethylene manufacturing processes may necessitate one or more, often several, compressors or similar apparatuses. Such compressors are used throughout polyethylene manufacturing, for example to pressurize reactors 104, 106 during polymerization. Further, a skilled artisan will recognize that a polyethylene manufacturing process includes one or more deoxygenators and/or similar de-oxidizing apparatuses, for instance purifying solvents or reactants and/or for purging reactors of oxygen. Because the infrastructure and the support therefore, for example to provide power and maintain the compressors and/or deoxygenators, already exists within a commercial polyethylene manufacturing plant, reallocating a portion of these available resources for use in the disclosed systems may necessitate little, if any, additional capital expenditure in order to incorporate the disclosed systems and or processes.

[0099] Further, because compressors, deoxygenators, and various other components are already employed in various polyethylene processes and systems, the opportunity for increased operation of such apparatuses may improve the overall efficiency of polyethylene production systems and processes. For example, when a portion of a PEP process or system is taken off-line for maintenance and/or repair, other portions of the system (e.g., a compressor, a deoxygenator, a reactor, etc.) may continue to provide service according to the current processes. Operating and/or reallocating resources for operation of the disclosed PEP systems and/or processes may thereby increase the efficiency with which conventional systems are used.

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

[00100] A process and system for the production for polyethylene has been described. The following clauses are offered as further description:

[00101] Clause 1 A polyethylene production process, comprising:

contacting ethylene and a polymerization catalyst under suitable reaction conditions to yield a polymerization product stream;

separating a light gas stream from the polymerization product stream, wherein the light gas stream comprises ethane and unreacted ethylene;

contacting the light gas stream with an absorption solvent system, wherein at least a portion of the unreacted ethylene from the light gas stream is absorbed by the absorption solvent system;

removing unabsorbed gases of the light gas stream from contact with the absorption solvent system to form a waste gas stream; and

recovering unreacted ethylene from the absorption solvent system.

[00102] Clause 2 The process of clause 1, wherein the recovering unreacted ethylene from the absorption solvent system yields recovered ethylene and further comprising contacting the recovered ethylene and the polymerization catalyst.

[00103] Clause 3. The process of clause 1 or 2, wherein the absorption solvent system comprises copper chloride, aniline, and N-methylpyrrolidone.

[00104] Clause 4. The process of any of clauses 1 to 3, further comprising removing at least a portion of elemental oxygen or oxygen-containing compounds from the light gas stream before contacting the light gas stream with the absorption solvent system.

[00105] Clause 5. The process of any of clauses 1 to 4, wherein the contacting the light gas stream with the absorption solvent system comprises pressurizing the light gas stream and the absorption solvent system to a pressure in a range of from about 50 psig to about 250 psig.

[00106] Clause 6. The process of any of clauses 1 to 5, wherein the recovering unreacted ethylene from the absorption solvent system comprises depressurizing the absorption solvent system having absorbed unreacted ethylene to a pressure in a range of from about 5 psig to about 30 psig.

[00107] Clause 7. The process of any of clauses 1 to 6, wherein the light gas stream further comprises isobutene and wherein at least a portion of the isobutane from the light gas stream is absorbed by the absorption solvent system.

[00108] Clause 8. The process of any of clauses 1 to 7, wherein the contacting the light gas stream with the absorption solvent system yields a composition comprising a complex of the absorption solvent system and unreacted ethylene.

[00109] Clause 9. The process of any of clauses 1 to 8, further comprising combusting the waste gas stream, wherein the waste gas stream comprises ethane.

[00110] Clause 10. The process of any of clauses 1 to 9, wherein the waste gas stream comprises less than 5% unreacted ethylene by weight.

[00111] Clause 11. A polyethylene production system, comprising:

- a feed stream comprising ethylene introduced into a polymerization reactor;
- a polymerization product stream emitted from the polymerization reactor and introduced into a separator;
- a light gas stream comprising unreacted ethylene emitted from the separator, the light gas stream being separated from the polymerization product stream and introduced into an absorption reactor comprising an absorption solvent system;
- an absorbent-ethylene conjugant formed within the absorption reactor by absorption of at least a portion of the unreacted ethylene by the absorption solvent system; and
- a waste gas stream comprising ethane emitted from the absorption reactor, wherein the waste gas stream comprises components of the light gas stream that are not absorbed by the absorption solvent system.

[00112] Clause 12. The system of clause 11, further comprising a recovered unreacted ethylene stream emitted from the absorption reactor and reintroduced into the polymerization reactor.

[00113] Clause 13. The system of clause 11, wherein the absorbent-ethylene conjugant is emitted from the absorption reactor and introduced into a regeneration vessel and further comprising a recovered unreacted ethylene stream emitted from the regeneration vessel and reintroduced into the polymerization reactor.

[00114] Clause 14. The system of clause 12 or 13, wherein the recovered unreacted ethylene is recovered from the absorbent-ethylene conjugant via a pressure reduction.

[00115] Clause 15. The system of any of clauses 11 to 14, wherein the absorption solvent system comprises copper chloride, aniline, and N-methylpyrrolidone.

EXAMPLES

[00116] The disclosure having been generally described, the following example is given as particular embodiment of the disclosure and to demonstrate the practice and advantages thereof. It is understood that this example is given by way of illustration and is not intended to limit the specification or the claims in any manner.

PROPHETIC EXAMPLE 1

[00117] To demonstrate the effectiveness of the absorption solvent systems disclosed herein, a computerized commercial process simulator was employed to generate an output from a model in accordance with the systems and/or processes disclosed herein. The model employed is illustrated at Figure 7. In the model of Figure 7, the simulation begins with the introduction of a gaseous stream, designated VAP FEED (for example, like the gas stream disclosed herein). The output generated by the commercial process simulator is a material balance and a heat balance, shown in Table 1. The names designating the various streams listed in Table 1 correspond to streams illustrated in Figure 7.

Table 1

	L1CUCLL	L2CUCLR	L3CUCLR2	L4CUCLR3	L5CUCLL	L6CUCLL	LKO1	LKO2	LKO3	V1	V1FLARE	V2	V3	VAP-REC	VAPFEED
Substream: MIXED															
Mole lbmol/hr															
C2=	1.949416	41.85801	41.85801	41.85801	1.949413	1.949413	2.02E-04	4.41E-03	9.89E-04	3.172776	3.172573	39.91302	39.9096	39.90861	43.08116
C2	0.9764562	5.916248	5.916248	5.916248	0.9764532	0.9764532	6.17E-04	8.14E-04	2.10E-04	5.654325	5.653708	4.940621	4.940017	4.939807	10.5935
N2	1.15E-03	0.1711679	0.1711679	0.1711679	1.15E-03	1.15E-03	8.35E-06	8.99E-07	6.78E-08	7.187729	7.187721	0.1700194	0.1700186	0.1700185	7.357739
IC4	0.8615088	3.112527	3.112527	3.112527	0.8615092	0.8615092	2.14E-04	2.23E-03	1.08E-03	0.1670439	0.1668301	2.253242	2.252096	2.251014	2.417848
CUCU	1.31.4402	131.4402	131.4402	131.4402	131.4402	131.4402	1.50E-13	2.85E-13	0	1.50E-13	4.78E-22	2.85E-13	2.86E-24	0	0
ANILINE	580.5749	580.5749	580.5749	580.5749	580.5748	580.5748	2.47E-03	0.2059512	0.0219362	2.48E-03	9.19E-06	0.20608	0.022065	1.29E-04	0
NMP	789.7864	789.7864	789.7864	789.7864	789.7864	789.7864	2.38E-03	0.1961199	9.42E-03	2.38E-03	3.17E-06	0.1961404	9.44E-03	2.06E-05	0
Mole Frac															
C2=	1.29E-03	0.0269554	0.0269554	0.0269554	1.29E-03	1.29E-03	0.0343637	0.0107758	0.0294004	0.1960108	0.1960697	0.8371173	0.843697	0.8442764	0.6789755
C2	6.49E-04	3.81E-03	3.81E-03	3.81E-03	6.49E-04	6.49E-04	0.1047838	1.99E-03	6.25E-03	0.3493185	0.3494075	0.1036223	0.104433	0.1045028	0.1669576
N2	7.64E-07	1.10E-04	1.10E-04	1.10E-04	7.64E-07	7.64E-07	1.42E-03	2.19E-06	2.02E-06	0.4440506	0.4442117	3.57E-03	3.59E-03	3.60E-03	0.1159608
IC4	5.72E-04	2.00E-03	2.00E-03	2.00E-03	5.72E-04	5.72E-04	0.0362971	5.44E-03	0.032152	0.0103198	0.0103103	0.0472584	0.0476097	0.0476207	0.0381062
CUCU	0.0873014	0.0846439	0.0846439	0.0846439	0.0873014	0.0873014	2.54E-11	6.97E-13	0	9.24E-15	2.95E-23	5.99E-15	6.04E-26	0	0
ANILINE	0.3856129	0.3738747	0.3738747	0.3738747	0.3856128	0.3856128	0.4198489	0.5029009	0.6521121	1.53E-04	5.68E-07	4.32E-03	4.66E-04	2.73E-06	0
NMP	0.5245694	0.5086013	0.5086013	0.5086013	0.5245694	0.5245694	0.4032882	0.4788945	0.2800845	1.47E-04	1.96E-07	4.11E-03	2.00E-04	4.36E-07	0
Mass lb/hr															
C2=	54.68846	1174.274	1174.274	1174.274	54.68837	54.68837	5.68E-03	0.1238009	0.027745	89.00829	89.00261	1119.71	1119.614	1119.587	1208.589
C2	29.36169	177.8994	177.8994	177.8994	29.3616	29.3616	0.0185606	0.0244775	6.32E-03	170.0235	170.005	148.5627	148.5445	148.5382	318.5427
N2	0.0322059	4.795009	4.795009	4.795009	0.0322058	0.0322058	2.34E-04	2.52E-05	1.90E-06	201.3533	201.3531	4.762835	4.762812	4.76281	206.1159
IC4	50.07382	180.9106	180.9106	180.9106	50.07384	50.07384	0.0124277	0.129461	0.0628636	9.709158	9.69673	130.9661	130.8995	130.8366	140.5336
CUCU	13012.41	13012.41	13012.41	13012.41	13012.41	13012.41	1.48E-11	2.83E-11	0	1.48E-11	4.73E-20	2.83E-11	2.83E-22	0	0
ANILINE	54067.97	54067.97	54067.97	54067.97	54067.96	54067.96	0.2303272	19.17989	2.042886	0.2311832	8.56E-04	19.19188	2.054883	0.0120247	0
NMP	78293.58	78293.58	78293.58	78293.58	78293.58	78293.58	0.2355062	19.44187	0.9339974	0.2358215	3.14E-04	19.4439	0.9360284	2.04E-03	0
Mass Frac															
C2=	3.76E-04	7.99E-03	7.99E-03	7.99E-03	3.76E-04	3.76E-04	0.0112959	3.18E-03	9.03E-03	0.1891534	0.1893437	0.7761549	0.7958521	0.797575	0.645
C2	2.02E-04	1.21E-03	1.21E-03	1.21E-03	2.02E-04	2.02E-04	0.0369193	6.29E-04	2.06E-03	0.3613207	0.3616676	0.1029799	0.1053895	0.1038162	0.17
N2	2.21E-07	3.26E-05	3.26E-05	3.26E-05	2.21E-07	2.21E-07	4.66E-04	6.47E-07	6.18E-07	0.4279003	0.4283574	3.30E-03	3.39E-03	3.39E-03	0.11
IC4	3.44E-04	1.23E-03	1.23E-03	1.23E-03	3.44E-04	3.44E-04	0.0247203	3.33E-03	0.0204513	0.0206331	0.0206287	0.0907823	0.0930468	0.0932058	0.075
CUCU	0.0894273	0.0885729	0.0885729	0.0885729	0.0894273	0.0894273	2.95E-11	7.26E-13	0	3.15E-14	1.01E-22	1.96E-14	2.01E-25	0	0
ANILINE	0.3715804	0.36803	0.36803	0.36803	0.3715804	0.3715804	0.4581486	0.4930622	0.6646093	4.91E-04	1.82E-06	0.0133033	1.46E-03	8.57E-06	0

	L1CUCLL	L2CUCLR	L3CUCLR2	L4CUCLR3	L5CUCLL	L6CUCLL	LKO1	LKO2	LKO3	V1	V1FLARE	V2	V3	VAP-REC	VAPFEED
NMP	0.5380702	0.532929	0.532929	0.532929	0.5380702	0.5380702	0.4684502	0.4997972	0.3038561	5.01E-04	6.69E-07	0.013478	6.65E-04	1.46E-06	0
Total Flow lbmol/hr	1505.59	1552.86	1552.86	1552.86	1505.59	1505.59	5.89E-03	0.4095263	0.0336387	16.18674	16.18085	47.67913	47.30324	47.2696	63.45025
Total Flow lb/hr	145508	1.47E+05	1.47E+05	1.47E+05	1.46E+05	1.46E+05	0.5027346	38.89952	3.073815	470.5613	470.0586	1442.638	1406.812	1403.738	1873.781
Total cuft/hr	2000	2063.515	9563.191	13833	2058.304	2058.521	8.16E-03	0.6204605	0.04765	825.9148	634.7071	12547.34	11089.96	8812.544	1155.656
Temperature F	90	105.0961	95.53801	140	158	158.2431	-20	90	-20	96.94405	-20	158	90	-20	0
Pressure psia	117.6959	114.6959	25	25	25	118.6959	114.6959	24.9	24.8	114.6959	114.6959	25	24.9	24.8	226.6959
Vapor Frac	0	0	0.020591	0.0297334	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0.9823996
Liquid Frac	1	1	0.9794089	0.9702665	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0176004
Solid Frac	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enthalpy Btu/lbmol	-60439.71	-58273.13	-58273.13	-56229.58	-57622.43	-57585.8	-49592.05	-47471.61	-28177.63	-8659.402	-9795.256	13137.72	12629.88	11470.01	5793.013
Enthalpy Btu/lb	-625.377	-615.9475	-615.9475	-594.3472	-596.2263	-595.8472	-581.0902	-499.7715	-308.3662	-297.8729	-337.1825	434.201	424.6725	386.242	196.1639
Enthalpy Btu/hr	-9.10E+07	-9.05E+07	-9.05E+07	-8.73E+07	-8.68E+07	-8.67E+07	-292.1342	-19440.87	-947.8608	-1.40E+05	-1.59E+05	6.26E+05	5.97E+05	5.42E+05	3.68E+05
Entropy Btu/lbmol-R	-112.3696	-109.6524	-109.5691	-106.0242	-107.4881	-107.4788	-111.4813	-112.727	-110.4079	-19.64671	-21.92954	-18.274	-19.22263	-21.55552	-25.0739
Entropy Btu/lb-R	-1.162701	-1.159027	-1.158146	-1.120676	-1.112192	-1.112096	-1.306271	-1.186767	-1.208266	-0.6758228	-0.7548814	-0.603955	-0.6463497	-0.7258623	-0.8490563
Density lbmol/cuft	0.75276	0.7525312	0.1623788	0.1122576	0.7314713	0.731394	0.7221323	0.6600361	0.7059546	0.0195985	0.0254934	3.80E-03	4.27E-03	5.36E-03	0.0549041
Density lb/cuft	72.75067	71.19494	15.36222	10.62039	70.69322	70.68575	61.62902	62.6946	64.50811	0.5697456	0.7405913	0.1149756	0.1268545	0.1592887	1.6214
Average MW	96.64524	94.6073	94.6073	94.6073	96.64524	96.64524	85.34311	94.98663	91.37714	29.0708	29.05031	30.25722	29.74029	29.69643	29.5315
Liq Vol cuft/hr	2474.029	2538.765	2538.765	2538.765	2474.029	2474.029	8.78E-03	0.6165612	0.0501975	18.42872	18.41994	65.35257	64.78621	64.73601	83.15566

[00118] At least one embodiment is disclosed and variations, combinations, and/or modifications of the embodiment(s) and/or features of the embodiment(s) made by a person having ordinary skill in the art are within the scope of the disclosure. Alternative embodiments that result from combining, integrating, and/or omitting features of the embodiment(s) are also within the scope of the disclosure. Where numerical ranges or limitations are expressly stated, such express ranges or limitations should be understood to include iterative ranges or limitations of like magnitude falling within the expressly stated ranges or limitations (e.g., from about 1 to about 10 includes, 2, 3, 4, etc.; greater than 0.10 includes 0.11, 0.12, 0.13, etc.). For example, whenever a numerical range with a lower limit, R_l , and an upper limit, R_u , is disclosed, any number falling within the range is specifically disclosed. In particular, the following numbers within the range are specifically disclosed: $R = R_l + k * (R_u - R_l)$, wherein k is a variable ranging from 1 percent to 100 percent with a 1 percent increment, i.e., k is 1 percent, 2 percent, 3 percent, 4 percent, 5 percent, 50 percent, 51 percent, 52 percent... 95 percent, 96 percent, 97 percent, 98 percent, 99 percent, or 100 percent. Moreover, any numerical range defined by two R numbers as defined in the above is also specifically disclosed. Use of the term "optionally" with respect to any element of a claim means that the element is required, or alternatively, the element is not required, both alternatives being within the scope of the claim. Use of broader terms such as comprises, includes, and having should be understood to provide support for narrower terms such as consisting of, consisting essentially of, and comprised substantially of. Accordingly, the scope of protection is not limited by the description set out above but is defined by the claims that follow, that scope including all equivalents of the subject matter of the claims. Each and every claim is incorporated as further disclosure into the specification and the claims are embodiment(s) of the present invention. The discussion of a reference in the disclosure is not an admission that it is prior art, especially any reference that has a publication date after the priority date of this application. The disclosure of all patents, patent applications, and publications cited in the disclosure are hereby incorporated by reference, to the extent that they provide exemplary, procedural or other details supplementary to the disclosure.

CLAIMS

1. A polyethylene production process, comprising:
 - contacting ethylene and a polymerization catalyst under suitable reaction conditions to yield a polymerization product stream;
 - separating a light gas stream from the polymerization product stream, wherein the light gas stream comprises ethane and unreacted ethylene;
 - contacting the light gas stream with an absorption solvent system, wherein at least a portion of the unreacted ethylene from the light gas stream is absorbed by the absorption solvent system;
 - removing unabsorbed gases of the light gas stream from contact with the absorption solvent system to form a waste gas stream;
 - recovering unreacted ethylene from the absorption solvent system to yield recovered ethylene; and
 - contacting the recovered ethylene and the polymerization catalyst.
2. The process of claim 1, wherein the absorption solvent system comprises copper chloride, aniline, and N-methylpyrrolidone.
3. The process of claim 1, further comprising removing at least a portion of elemental oxygen or oxygen-containing compounds from the light gas stream before contacting the light gas stream with the absorption solvent system.
4. The process of claim 1, wherein the contacting the light gas stream with the absorption solvent system comprises pressurizing the light gas stream and the absorption solvent system to a pressure in a range of from about 50 psig to about 250 psig.
5. The process of claim 1, wherein the recovering unreacted ethylene from the absorption solvent system comprises depressurizing the absorption solvent system having absorbed unreacted ethylene to a pressure in a range of from about 5 psig to about 30 psig.

6. The process of claim 1, wherein the light gas stream further comprises isobutene and wherein at least a portion of the isobutane from the light gas stream is absorbed by the absorption solvent system.
7. The process of claim 1, further comprising combusting the waste gas stream, wherein the waste gas stream comprises ethane.
8. The process of claim 7, wherein the waste gas stream comprises less than 5% unreacted ethylene by weight.
9. A polyethylene production process, comprising:
 - contacting ethylene and a polymerization catalyst in a polymerization reactor under suitable reaction conditions to yield a polymerization product stream;
 - separating a light gas stream from the polymerization product stream, wherein the light gas stream comprises ethane and unreacted ethylene;
 - contacting the light gas stream with an absorption solvent system in an absorption vessel, wherein at least a portion of the unreacted ethylene from the light gas stream is absorbed by the absorption solvent system to yield a composition comprising a complex of the absorption solvent system and unreacted ethylene; and
 - removing the unabsorbed gases of the light gas stream from contact with the absorption solvent system.
10. The process of claim 9, wherein the absorption solvent system comprises copper chloride, aniline, and N-methylpyrrolidone.
11. The process of claim 9, wherein the contacting the light gas stream with the absorption solvent system comprises pressurizing the absorption vessel to a pressure in a range of from about 50 psig to about 250 psig.
12. The process of claim 9, further comprising recovering unreacted ethylene from the absorption solvent system within the absorption vessel.

13. The process of claim 12, wherein the recovering unreacted ethylene from the absorption solvent system comprises depressurizing the absorption vessel to a pressure in a range of from about 5 psig to about 30 psig.
14. The process of claim 9, further comprising:
 - introducing a stream comprising the composition comprising the complex of the absorption solvent system and unreacted ethylene into a solvent regenerator;
 - recovering unreacted ethylene from the composition comprising the complex of the absorption solvent system and unreacted ethylene to yield recovered ethylene and a regenerated absorption solvent system;
 - introducing a stream comprising the recovered ethylene into the polymerization reactor; and
 - introducing a stream comprising the regenerated absorption solvent system into the absorption vessel.
15. The process of claim 9, further comprising removing at least a portion of elemental oxygen or oxygen-containing compounds from the light gas stream before introducing the light gas stream into the absorption vessel.
16. A polyethylene production system, comprising:
 - a feed stream comprising ethylene introduced into a polymerization reactor;
 - a polymerization product stream emitted from the polymerization reactor and introduced into a separator;
 - a light gas stream comprising unreacted ethylene emitted from the separator, the light gas stream being separated from the polymerization product stream and introduced into an absorption reactor comprising an absorption solvent system;
 - an absorbent-ethylene conjugant formed within the absorption reactor by absorption of at least a portion of the unreacted ethylene by the absorption solvent system; and
 - a waste gas stream comprising ethane emitted from the absorption reactor, wherein the waste gas stream comprises components of the light gas stream that are not absorbed by the absorption solvent system.

17. The system of claim 16, further comprising a recovered unreacted ethylene stream emitted from the absorption reactor and reintroduced into the polymerization reactor.
18. The system of claim 17, wherein the recovered unreacted ethylene is recovered from the absorbent-ethylene conjugant via a pressure reduction.
19. The system of claim 16, wherein the absorbent-ethylene conjugant is emitted from the absorption reactor and introduced into a regeneration vessel and further comprising a recovered unreacted ethylene stream emitted from the regeneration vessel and reintroduced into the polymerization reactor.
20. The system of claim 19, wherein the recovered unreacted ethylene is recovered from the absorbent-ethylene conjugant via a pressure reduction.
21. The system of claim 16, wherein the absorption solvent system comprises copper chloride, aniline, and N-methylpyrrolidone.

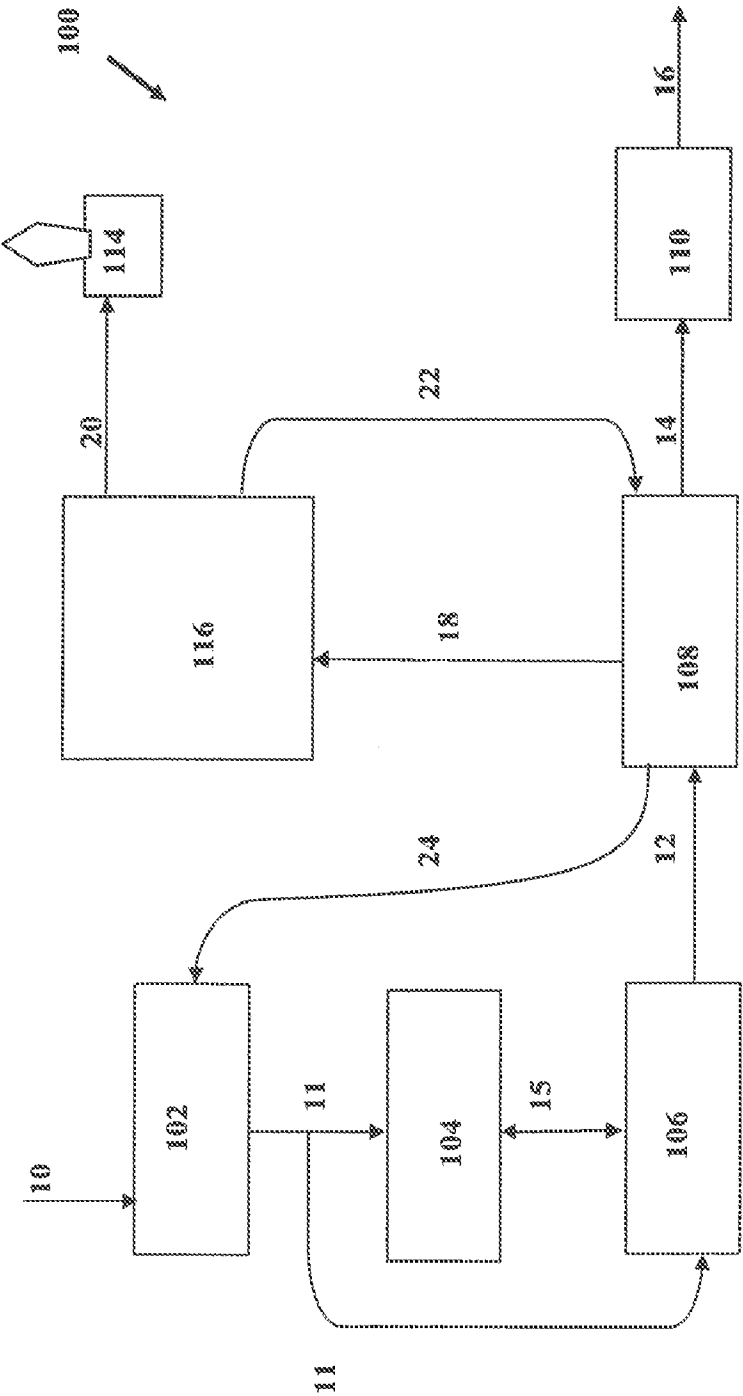


FIGURE 1

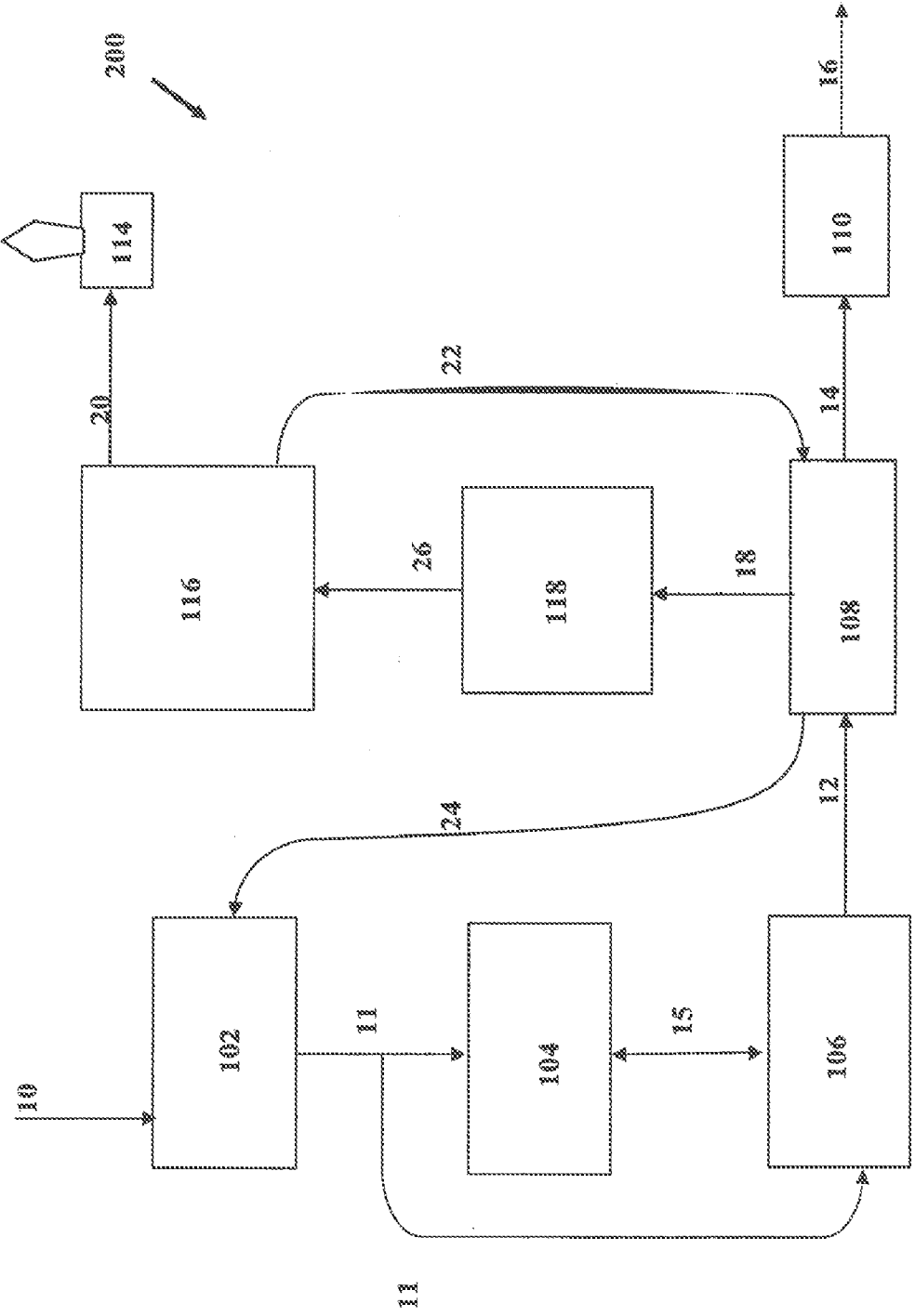


FIGURE 2

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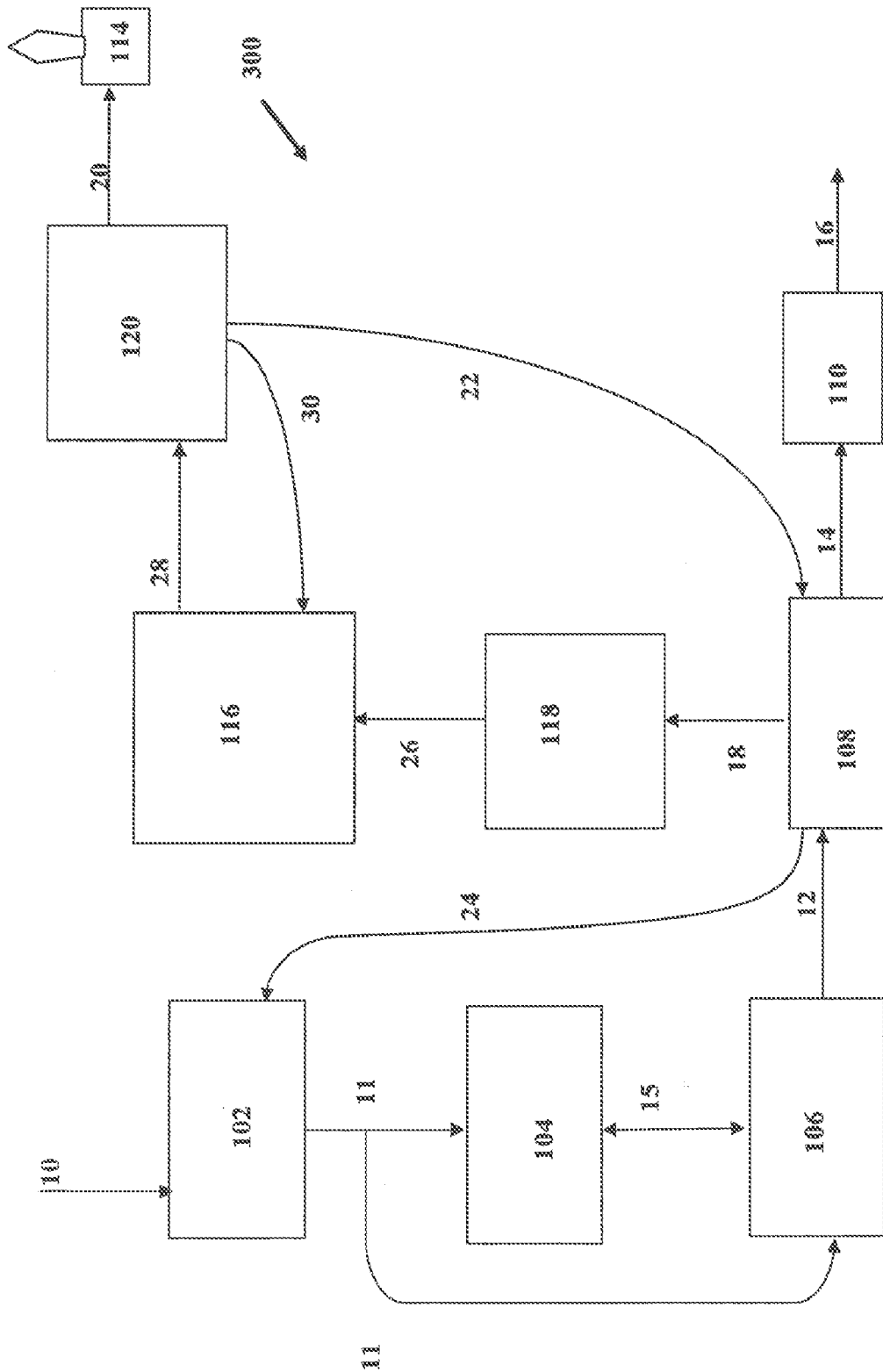


FIGURE 3

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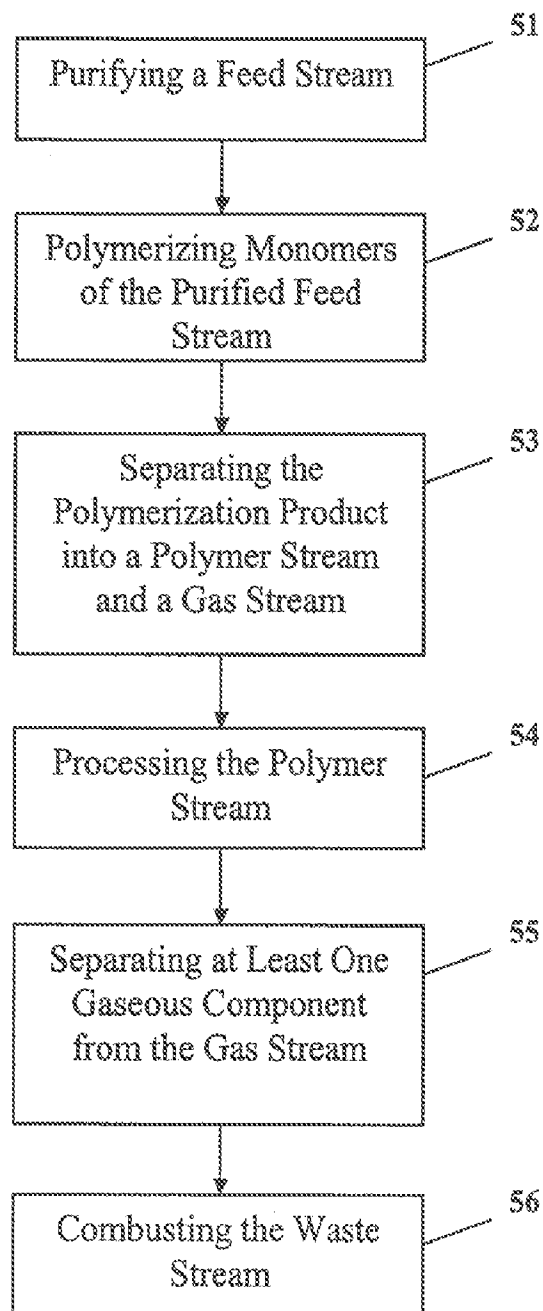


FIGURE 4

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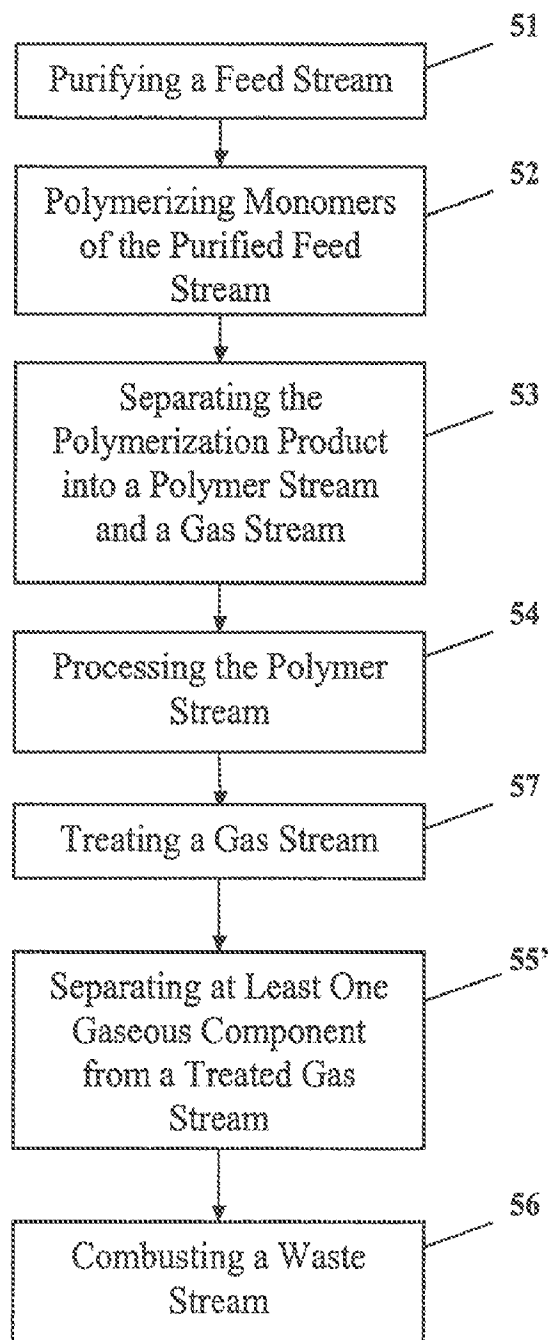


FIGURE 5

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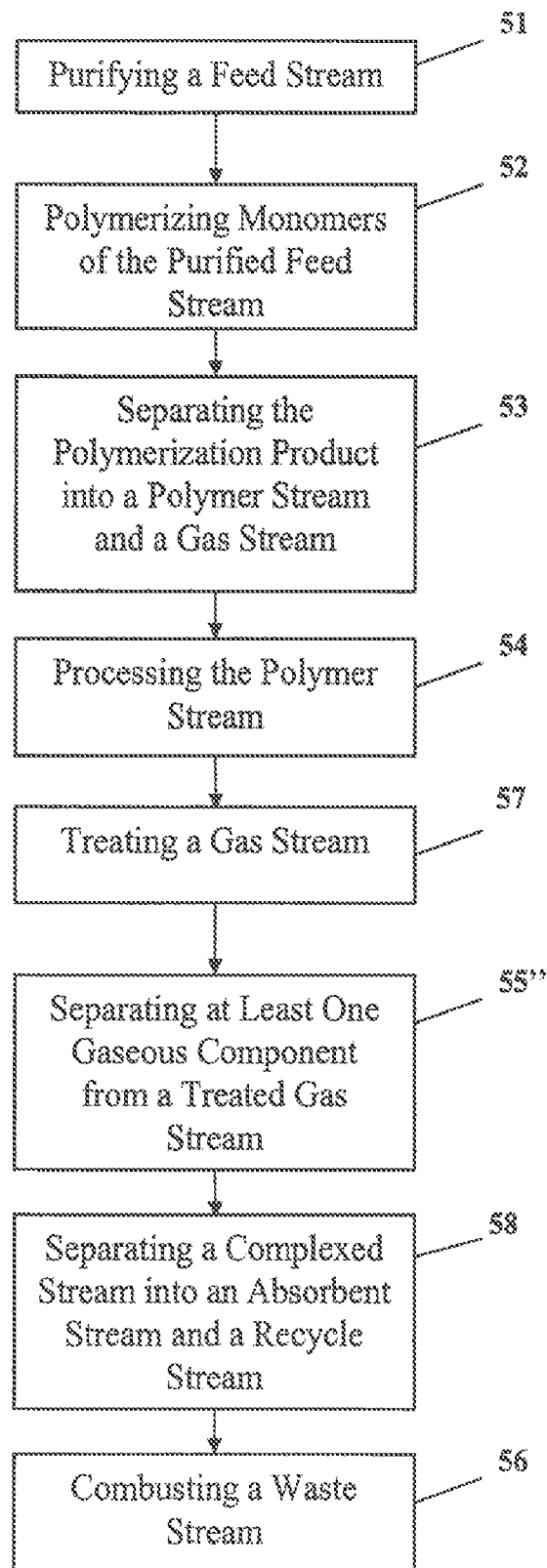
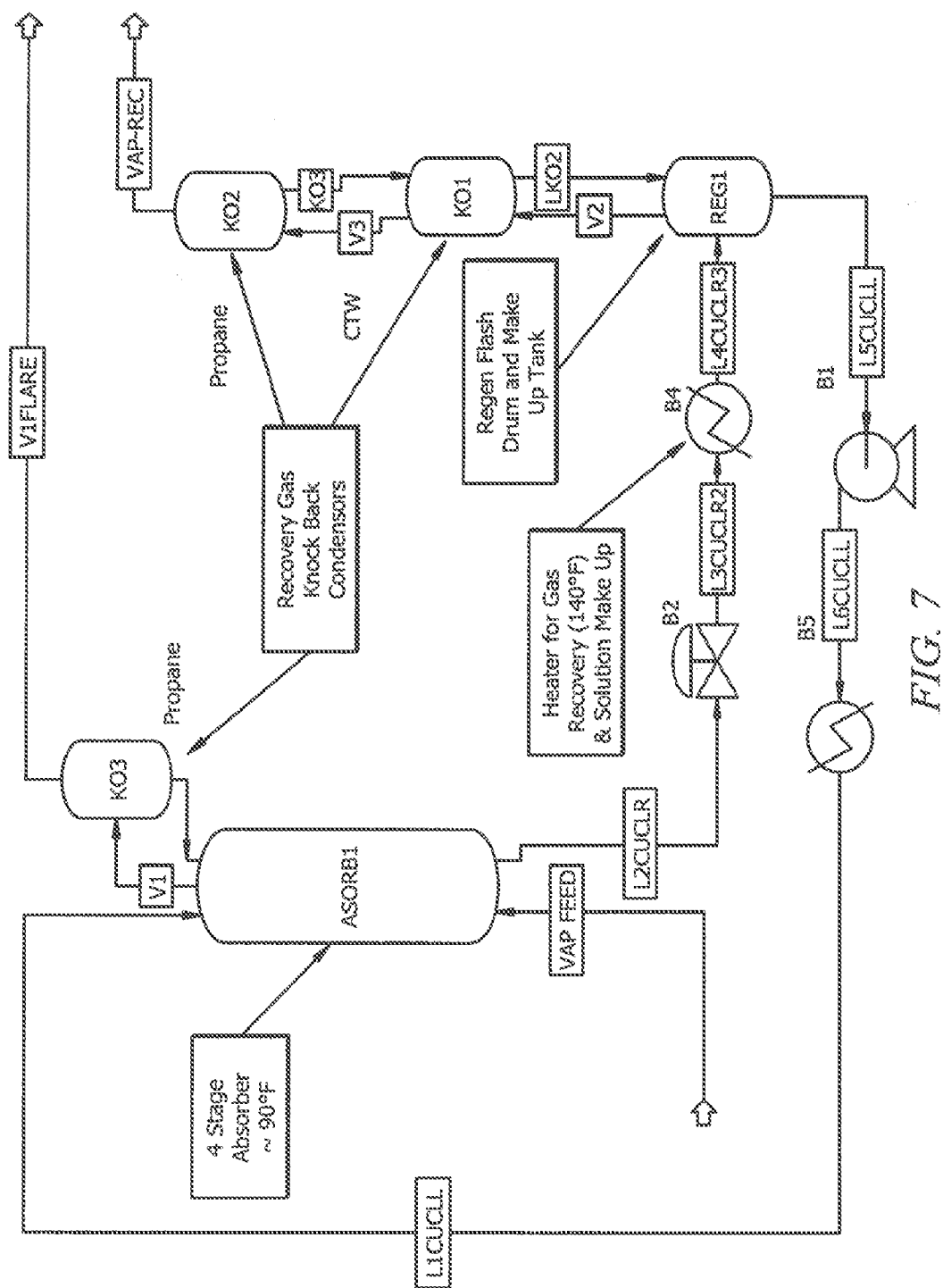


FIGURE 6

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/US2011/055923

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
INV. C08F6/00 B01D53/00 C08F10/02 C08J11/02
ADD.

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
C08F B01D C08J

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	EP 2 083 020 A1 (TOTAL PETROCHEMICALS RES FELUY [BE]) 29 July 2009 (2009-07-29) paragraph [0059] - paragraph [0067]; claims 1-3; example 1 -----	1,3-9, 11-20



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

19 December 2011

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

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