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(71) Applicant: **LANDMARK GRAPHICS CORPORATION** [US/US]; 10200 Bellaire Blvd., Houston, TX 77072 (US).

(72) Inventors: **LIU, Zhengchun**; 1631 Berkoff Drive, Sugar Land, TX 77479 (US). **SAMUEL, Robello**; 11306 Dawnheath Dr., Cypress, TX 77433 (US). **GONZALES, Adolfo**; 8218 Pine Falls Dr., Houston, TX 77095 (US). **KANG, Yongfeng**; 2631 Falcon Knoll Ln, Katy, TX 77494 (US).

(74) Agent: **JENSEN, William, P.**; Crain, Caton & James, 1401 McKinney Street, Suite 1700, Houston, TX 77010 (US).

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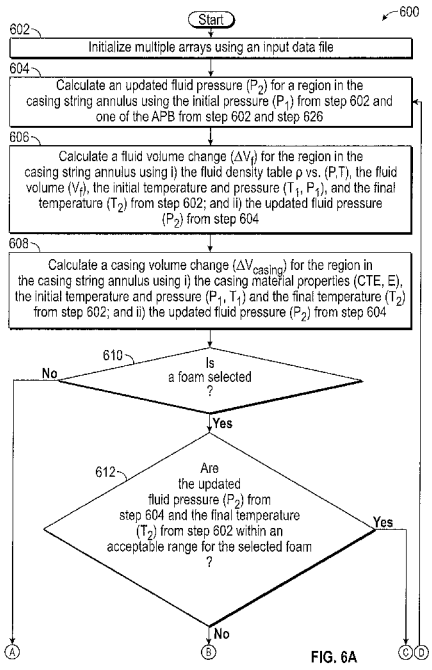

FIG. 6A

(57) Abstract: A method for simulating the effects of syntactic foam on annular pressure buildup during annular fluid expansion in a wellbore to mitigate annular pressure buildup in the wellbore comprises the steps of: calculating one of an elastic foam volume change in a region of a casing string annulus and a crushed foam volume change in the region of the casing string annulus; calculating an adjusted casing volume change for the region in the casing string annulus; and calculating an adjusted annular pressure buildup for the region in the casing string annulus.

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SIMULATING THE EFFECTS OF SYNTACTIC FOAM ON ANNULAR PRESSURE BUILDUP DURING ANNULAR FLUID EXPANSION IN A WELLBORE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The priority of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/108,704 filed January 28, 2015 is hereby claimed and the specification thereof is incorporated herein by reference.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH

[0002] Not applicable.

FIELD OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0003] The present disclosure generally relates to systems and methods for simulating the effects of syntactic foam on annular pressure buildup during annular fluid expansion in a wellbore. More particularly, the present disclosure relates to systems and methods for simulating the effects of syntactic foam on annular pressure buildup during annular fluid expansion in a wellbore to mitigate annular pressure buildup in the wellbore.

BACKGROUND

[0004] Syntactic foam is a kind of composite material synthesized by filling a metal, polymer, or ceramic matrix with hollow particles called micro-balloons or hollow micro-spheres. For oil well applications, pure syntactic foams comprise hollow glass microspheres (HGMS) suspended in a thermoset resin matrix. HGMS collapse pressures are not temperature sensitive. However, the mechanical performance of the matrix resin system is temperature dependent. So too is the collapse pressure of the syntactic foam. In **FIG. 1,** a graph shows typical pressure-strain curves of syntactic foam at different temperatures. In **FIG. 5**, it can be seen that the hydrostatic collapse pressure HCP decreases with increasing temperature.

[0005] The use of syntactic foam is one common option to relieve annular pressure

buildup (APB) in subsea wells. Syntactic foams are usually wrapped around the outer casing wall. When the annular pressure exceeds a specific foam crush-pressure at a certain temperature, the foam collapses and gives extra space for the annular fluid to expand and consequently mitigate APB. Simulation of a syntactic foam's behavior during annular fluid expansion (AFE) analysis and casing load analysis can provide valuable information to assist wellbore tubular design.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] The present disclosure is described below with references to the accompanying drawings in which like elements are referenced with like reference numerals, and in which:

[0007] **FIG. 1** is a graph illustrating typical pressure-strain curves of a syntactic foam at different temperatures.

[0008] **FIG. 2** is a graph illustrating simplified pressure-strain curves of a syntactic foam at different temperatures.

[0009] **FIG. 3** is a graph illustrating the elastic modulus for a syntactic foam as a function of temperature.

[0010] **FIG. 4** is a graph illustrating the compressive modulus and compressive strength correlation for syntactic foam.

[0011] **FIG. 5** is a graph illustrating the crush-pressure (CP, same as aforementioned HCP) as a function of temperature for a typical syntactic foam in an oil well application.

[0012] **FIGS. 6A-6D** are a flow diagram illustrating one embodiment of a method for implementing the present disclosure.

[0013] **FIG. 7** is a graph based on an exemplary CP-T table that illustrates different

phases for a selected foam that may be used in step **612** of **FIG. 6A**.

[0014] **FIG. 8** is a graph illustrating different CP-T curves for selecting a pressure-rated syntactic foam based on the location of multiple initial pressure, temperature pairs and final pressure, temperature pairs.

[0015] **FIG. 9** is a schematic diagram illustrating an exemplary wellbore for simulating the effects of a syntactic foam on annual pressure buildup.

[0016] **FIG. 10** is a block diagram illustrating one embodiment of a computer system for implementing the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0017] The present disclosure overcomes one or more deficiencies in the prior art by providing systems and methods for simulating the effects of syntactic foam on annular pressure buildup during annular fluid expansion in a wellbore to mitigate annular pressure buildup in the wellbore.

[0018] In one embodiment, the present disclosure includes a method for simulating the effects of syntactic foam on annular pressure buildup during annular fluid expansion in a wellbore, which comprises: a) calculating one of an elastic foam volume change in a region of a casing string annulus and a crushed foam volume change in the region of the casing string annulus; b) calculating an adjusted casing volume change for the region in the casing string annulus using i) one of the elastic foam volume change and the crushed foam volume change; and ii) a casing volume change; c) calculating an adjusted annular pressure buildup for the region in the casing string annulus using i) a fluid volume change; and ii) one of the casing volume change and the adjusted casing volume change; d) repeating steps a) – c) for each region in the

casing string annulus; e) repeating steps a) – d) for each casing string annulus in a combined casing string; and f) repeating steps a) – e) using a computer processor until a global pressure equilibrium is achieved in the combined casing string.

[0019] In another embodiment, the present disclosure includes a non-transitory program carrier device tangibly carrying computer executable instructions for simulating the effects of syntactic foam on annular pressure buildup during annular fluid expansion in a wellbore, which comprises: a) calculating one of an elastic foam volume change in a region of a casing string annulus and a crushed foam volume change in the region of the casing string annulus; b) calculating an adjusted casing volume change for the region in the casing string annulus using i) one of the elastic foam volume change and the crushed foam volume change; and ii) a casing volume change; c) calculating an adjusted annular pressure buildup for the region in the casing string annulus using i) a fluid volume change; and ii) one of the casing volume change and the adjusted casing volume change; d) repeating steps a) – c) for each region in the casing string annulus; e) repeating steps a) – d) for each casing string annulus in a combined casing string; and f) repeating steps a) – e) until a global pressure equilibrium is achieved in the combined casing string.

[0020] In yet another embodiment, the present disclosure includes a non-transitory program carrier device tangibly carrying computer executable instructions for simulating the effects of syntactic foam on annular pressure buildup during annular fluid expansion in a wellbore, which comprises: a) calculating one of an elastic foam volume change in a region of a casing string annulus and a crushed foam volume change in the region of the casing string annulus; b) calculating an adjusted casing volume change for the region in the casing string annulus using i) one of the elastic foam volume change and the crushed foam volume change;

and ii) a casing volume change; c) calculating an adjusted annular pressure buildup for the region in the casing string annulus using i) a fluid volume change; and ii) one of the casing volume change and the adjusted casing volume change; d) repeating steps a) – c) for each region in the casing string annulus; e) repeating steps a) – d) for each casing string annulus in a combined casing string; and f) repeating steps a) – e) until a global pressure equilibrium is achieved in the combined casing string, wherein the global pressure equilibrium is achieved when i) a difference between the annular pressure buildup calculated with each iteration of step c) converges toward zero; and ii) all other forces applied to the combined casing string are balanced.

[0021] The subject matter of the present disclosure is described with specificity, however, the description itself is not intended to limit the scope of the disclosure. The subject matter thus, might also be embodied in other ways, to include different steps or combinations of steps similar to the ones described herein, in conjunction with other present or future technologies. Moreover, although the term "step" may be used herein to describe different elements of methods employed, the term should not be interpreted as implying any particular order among or between various steps herein disclosed unless otherwise expressly limited by the description to a particular order. While the present disclosure may be applied in the oil and gas industry, it is not limited thereto and may also be applied in other industries to achieve similar results.

Method Description

[0022] Simulating the effects of syntactic foam on annular pressure buildup during annular fluid expansion in a wellbore may be based on a simplified model or an advanced model.

Simplified Model of Syntactic Foam Characteristics

[0023] In this model, the following constants are assumed: constant ultimate collapse volumetric strain, constant elastic compressibility and constant coefficient of thermal expansion (CTE). As shown by a graph illustrating simplified pressure-strain curves of a syntactic foam at different temperatures in **FIG. 2,** annulus fluid pressure and temperature changed from (P_1, T_1) to (P_2,T_2) at one foam location. For the sake of conservative design and simplicity, the foam volumetric strain is expressed as:

$$\Delta V/ V (\%) = S_c - S_1 - \alpha_T \times (T_2 - T_1) \quad (1)$$

while the actual volumetric strain should be:

$$\Delta V/ V (\%) = S_2 - S_1 - \alpha_T \times (T_2 - T_1) \quad (2)$$

where S_c = ultimate volume strain, which is an input parameter; αT = CTE; S_1 = elastic compressibility × P_1 and S_2 = actual volume strain at P_2, T_2.

Advanced Model of Syntactic Foam Characteristics

[0024] In this model, the elastic compressibility is the inverse of bulk modulus. The bulk modulus is $K = E/(3-6\nu)$ where ν is Poisson's ratio, which is between 0.3 to 0.35. The bulk modulus decreases with temperature since elastic modulus E decreases with temperature as shown by the graph in **FIG. 3**.

[0025] The graph in **FIG. 4** shows that the compressive (bulk) modulus of syntactic foam is roughly proportional to the compressive strength. Since the foam compressive strength is about 80% of foam crush-pressure, the ratio of the bulk modulus (K(T)) to the foam crush-pressure (CP) can be assumed constant at a given temperature:

$$K(T) = \text{constant} \times CP(T) \quad (3)$$

wherein constant = K(60 °F)/CP(60 °F).

[0026] A CP-T table for a particular foam, such as Table 2 below, may be used to estimate elastic compressibility as a function of temperature (C(T)) using the following equation:

$$c(T) = 1/K(T) = CP(60\ °F)/K(60\ °F)/CP(T)$$

$$\text{or } c(T) = c(60\ °F)\times CP(60\ °F)/CP(T) \quad (4)$$

Equation 4 demonstrates that the elastic compressibility of syntactic foam at a given temperature (T) is inversely proportional to the corresponding crush-pressure (CP).

[0027] Through regression, a correlation between CP and T was established as follows:

$$CP(T) = CP_0\left[\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{\pi}\arctan\left(\frac{T-T_0}{c_1}\right) + c_2\right] \quad (5)$$

wherein c_1 and c_2 are model constants, CP_0 is the maximum foam crush pressure, T_0 is the temperature around which the crush pressure (CP) changes the most, and T is T_2 during simulation. Statistical analysis demonstrates that the average absolute relative error of the correlation is about 4.91%. **FIG. 5** illustrates the CP-T curve of the correlation model against the measured data.

[0028] The curves of densification are treated as straight lines as illustrated in **FIG. 2**. Through correlation, the slope of pressure-strain curves (**FIG. 1**) in the densification stage is determined using a regression method. It is about 1/6.0 times the elastic modulus, which means there is a compressibility in densification stage that is 6 times the elastic compressibility:

$$\Delta V/V\ (\%) = S_c - S_1 - \alpha_T \times (T_2 - T_1) + (P_2 - CP(T_2))\times 6.0 \times c(T_2) \quad (6)$$

where $c(T_2)$ is the elastic compressibility at temperature T_2.

[0029] Referring now to **FIGS. 6A-6D**, either model may be used to develop the method **600** for simulating the effects of syntactic foam on annular pressure buildup during annular fluid expansion in a wellbore.

[0030] In step **602**, multiple arrays are initialized using an input data file and techniques well known in the art. The initialized arrays may include, for example: i) initial annulus temperature and pressure (T_1, P_1), final annulus temperature (T_2), annulus fluid volume (V_f), installed foam volume (V_{foam}) if a foam is selected, annulus fluid density table ρ vs. (P,T), and initial annular pressure buildup (APB); and ii) casing material properties (CTE, E) wherein CTE is the coefficient of thermal expansion and E is Young's modulus, foam properties (α_T, c, S_c) if a foam is selected, wherein c is the foam elastic compressibility, α_T is the coefficient of thermal expansion and S_c is the ultimate volumetric strain, and a CP-T table if a foam is selected, wherein CP is the selected foam crush pressure as a function of the final temperature (T_2). The initialized arrays for i) are for each region in each casing string annulus.

[0031] In step **604**, an updated annulus fluid pressure P_2 is calculated for a region in the casing string annulus using the initial pressure P_1 from step **602**, one of the APB from step **602** and step **626** and $P_2 = P_1 + APB$.

[0032] In step **606**, a fluid volume change (ΔV_f) is calculated for the same region in the casing string annulus using i) the fluid density table ρ vs. (P,T), the fluid volume (V_f), the initial temperature and pressure (T_1, P_1), and the final temperature (T_2) from step **602**; and ii) the updated fluid pressure (P_2) from step **604**. The fluid volume change $\Delta V_f = V_f \times [\rho(P_1,T_1)/ \rho(P_2,T_2) - 1]$ wherein $\rho(P_1,T_1)$ and $\rho(P_2,T_2)$ are obtained through linear interpolation using (P_1,T_1), (P_2,T_2) and the fluid density table ρ vs. (P,T).

[0033] In step **608**, a casing volume change (ΔV_{casing}) is calculated for the same region in the casing string annulus using i) the casing material properties (CTE, E), the initial temperature and pressure (P_1, T_1) and the final temperature (T_2) from step **602**; and ii) the updated fluid pressure (P_2) from step **604**. The casing volume change $\Delta V_{casing} = \Delta V_{cas,\,T} + \Delta V_{cas,\,B}$ wherein

casing thermal expansion $\Delta V_{cas,T} = f(CTE, T_1, T_2)$ and casing ballooning $\Delta V_{cas,B} = f(E, P_2, P_1)$.

[0034] In step **610**, the method **600** determines if a foam is selected using the input data file from step **602**. If foam is not selected, then the method **600** proceeds to step **626** to calculate an adjusted APB. Otherwise, the method **600** proceeds to step **612**.

[0035] In step **612**, the method **600** determines if the updated fluid pressure (P_2) from step **604** and the final temperature (T_2) from step **602** are within an acceptable range for the selected foam using a graph based on the CP-T table from step **602** that illustrates different phases for the selected foam. If the updated fluid pressure (P_2) and the final temperature (T_2) are within an acceptable range, then the method **600** proceeds to step **616** to calculate the crush pressure (CP) of the selected foam based on the final temperature (T_2). Otherwise, the method **600** proceeds to step **614**. Referring now to the graph illustrated in **FIG. 7**, the exemplary foam is either crushed or under elastic deformation if the updated fluid pressure and the final temperature (P_2, T_2) are within an acceptable range (i.e. not within a warning zone). The updated fluid pressure (P_2) is used as the crush pressure (CP) to make an initial determination of whether the updated fluid pressure and the final temperature (P_2, T_2) are within an acceptable range. In the warning zones, the annular pressure is not known to be above or below the foam CP. The method **600** thus, will automatically use the maximum CP value in the CP-T table for the selected foam for zone I or the minimum CP value in the CP-T table for the selected foam for zone II. Therefore, the volumetric strains calculated in the warning zones may be unreliable.

[0036] In step **614**, a warning message is displayed using the video interface described further in reference to **FIG. 10** that indicates the updated fluid pressure and the final temperature (P_2, T_2) are not within an acceptable range (i.e. within a warning zone).

[0037] In step **616**, the crush pressure (CP) of the selected foam is calculated for the

same region in the casing string annulus using i) the final temperature (T_2) and the CP-T table from step **602** for the selected foam; and ii) one of techniques well-known in the art for linear interpolation and equation (5).

[0038] In step **618**, the method **600** determines if the updated fluid pressure (P_2) from step **604** is greater than the crush pressure (CP) of the selected foam from step **616**. If the updated fluid pressure (P_2) is greater than the crush pressure (CP) of the selected foam, then the method **600** proceeds to step **622** to calculate a foam volume change (ΔV_{foam}) due to the crushed foam. Otherwise, the method **600** proceeds to step **620** to calculate a foam volume change (ΔV_{foam}) due to the elastic deformation of the foam.

[0039] In step **620**, a foam volume change (ΔV_{foam}) due to the elastic deformation of the foam is calculated for the same region in the casing string annulus using i) the foam properties (α_T, c), the installed foam volume (V_{foam}), the initial temperature and pressure (T_1, P_1) and the final temperature (T_2) from step **602**; and ii) the updated fluid pressure (P_2) from step **604.** The foam volume change (ΔV_{foam}) = $V_{foam} \times [S_2\text{-}S_1 - \alpha_T \times (T_2\text{-}T_1)]$ wherein $S_2\text{-}S_1 = c \times (P_2\text{-}P_1)$. The method **600** then proceeds to step **624**.

[0040] In step **622**, a foam volume change (ΔV_{foam}) due to the crushed foam is calculated for the same region in the casing string annulus using i) the foam properties (α_T, c, S_c), the installed foam volume (V_{foam}), the initial temperature and pressure (T_1, P_1) and the final temperature (T_2) from step **602**; and, optionally, ii) the updated fluid pressure (P_2) from step **604** and the crush pressure (CP) of the selected foam from step **616**. The foam volume change (ΔV_{foam}) = $V_{foam} \times [S_c\text{-}S_1 - \alpha_T \times (T_2\text{-}T_1)]$ or $V_{foam} \times [S_c\text{-}S_1 - \alpha_T \times (T_2\text{-}T_1) + 6 \times c \times (P_2\text{-}CP(T_2)]$ wherein $S_1 = c \times P_1$. The method **600** then proceeds to step **624**.

[0041] In step **624**, an adjusted casing volume change (ΔV_{casing}) is calculated for the same

region in the casing string annulus using i) one of the foam volume change (ΔV_{foam}) from step **620** and step **622**; and ii) the casing volume change (ΔV_{casing}) from step **608**. The adjusted casing volume change (ΔV_{casing}) = $\Delta V_{casing} + \Delta V_{foam}$.

[0042] In step **626**, an adjusted APB is calculated for the same region in the casing string annulus using i) the fluid volume change (ΔV_f) from step **606**; and ii) one of the casing volume change (ΔV_{casing}) from step **608** and the adjusted casing volume change (ΔV_{casing}) from step **624**. If there is an adjusted casing volume change (ΔV_{casing}) from step **624,** then it is used instead of the casing volume change (ΔV_{casing}) from step **608.** The adjusted APB is numerically solved to meet the requirement: $\Delta V_f - \Delta V_{casing} = 0$, wherein $Vf = f_1(APB)$, $\Delta V_{casing} = f_2(APB)$.

[0043] In step **628**, the method **600** determines if there is another region in the casing string annulus using techniques well known in the art. If there is not another region in the casing string annulus, then the method **600** proceeds to step **632**. Otherwise, the method **600** proceeds to step **630**.

[0044] In step **630**, the next region in the casing string annulus is selected and the method **600** returns to step **604**. Steps **604-628** are thus, repeated for each region in the casing string annulus until there are no more regions in the casing string annulus.

[0045] In step **632**, the method **600** determines if there is another casing string annulus using techniques well known in the art. If there is not another casing string annulus, then the method **600** proceeds to step **636**. Otherwise, the method **600** proceeds to step **634**.

[0046] In step **634**, the next casing string annulus is selected and the method **600** returns to step **604**. Steps **604-632** are thus, repeated for each casing string annulus until there are no more casing string annuli.

[0047] In step **636**, the method **600** determines if there is global pressure equilibrium in

the combined casing string comprising each casing string annulus. If there is not global pressure equilibrium in the combined casing string, then the method **600** proceeds to step **638**. Otherwise, the method **600** ends. Global pressure equilibrium may be achieved when i) the difference between the last adjusted APB from step **626** and the next to last adjusted APB from step **626** is near zero (e.g. convergence); and ii) all other forces applied to the combined casing string are balanced.

[0048] In step **638**, the first region of the first casing string annulus is selected and the method **600** returns to step **604** and repeats steps **604-636** until there is a global pressure equilibrium in the combined casing string.

[0049] Referring now to **FIG. 8**, a graph illustrates different exemplary CP-T curves for selecting a pressure-rated syntactic foam based on the location of multiple initial pressure, temperature pairs and final pressure, temperature pairs. Three different CP-T curves for different pressure-rated syntactic foams are used to select one. There are initial and final (P, T) points **802**, **804** for each respective wellbore depth. The CP-T curve of the selected foam should be above the initial pressure and temperature (P_1, T_1) points **802** in the annulus to avoid pre-mature foam collapse. The CP-T curve of the selected foam should also be below the final pressure and temperature (P_2, T_2) points **804** in the annulus to assure foam crush for APB mitigation. For example, given initial (P_1, T_1) conditions of 85 °C and 400 bar at a specific depth in the wellbore, the low pressure-rated foam will fail while the medium and high pressure-rated foams will not. Because the medium and high pressure-rated foams are above the top two initial (P, T) points **802** and are below the top two final (P, T) points **804**, both foams may be selected for the two wellbore depths. The high pressure-rated foam however, will give more design margin. Thus, the i) initial temperature and pressure (T_1, P_1) and the final temperature (T_2) from step **602**; and ii)

updated fluid pressure (P_2) from step **604** may be used to select a foam using CP-T curves for different pressure-rated syntactic foams from respective CP-T tables.

Example

[0050] Referring now to **FIG. 9**, a schematic diagram of an exemplary wellbore **900** is illustrated for simulating the effects of syntactic foam on annular pressure buildup. The wellbore **900** includes about 400 ft^3 of syntactic foam in a 9-5/8" casing annulus. The syntactic foam characteristics are shown in Table 2 below. Initially, the ultimate volumetric strain of the syntactic foam was input as 30%, during production operations. The main part (90.54%) of the foam was crushed **902** and mitigates the APB as shown in Table 2. From the results shown in Table 3 below, the crushed foam **902** gives about 103.77 ft^3 of extra space for the annular fluid to expand.

[0051] To validate the results of the syntactic foam, the ultimate volumetric strain is changed from 30% to 1.3%. The purpose is to make the foam's volume change close to 0.0 during the AFE analysis. In the meantime, a bled volume of 400 × 90.54% × (30% - 1.3%) = 103.94 ft^3 =18.5 bbl is applied to the corresponding annulus. The AFE results are shown in Table 4 below. The final APB values are very close. Only a 5 psi (0.13%) difference was observed.

T, °F	90	100	105	110	115	120	125	130	135	140	145	150	155	160	165
CP, psi	10129	8331	7442	6740	6161	5727	5334	5065	4900	4797	4735	4652	4590	4590	4528

Table 2

String Annulus	Region	Top (ft)	Base (ft)	Device Failure: Disk	Device Failure: Foam	Incremental AFE Pressure (1) (psi)	Incremental AFE Volume (2) (bbl)
20" Surface Casing	Region 1	40.0	450.0	-	-	4733.00	1.8
13 3/8" Intermediate Casing	Region 1	40.0	6000.0	-	-	12126.00	55.1
9 5/8" Protective Casing	Region 1	40.0	9500.0	-	Crushed	**3829.00**	25.5
7" Production Tieback	Region 1	40.0	14800.0	-	-	0.00	13.4
3 1/2" Production Tubing	Region 1	40.0	17000.0	-	-	0.00	17.8
(1) Pressure change caused solely by the (AFE).							
(2) Volume change caused solely by the (AFE).							
9 5/8" Protective Casing: foam interval from 500.0 ft to 1020.0 ft is not crushed (volume change: **-0.48 ft³,** -1.260 %).							
9 5/8" Protective Casing: foam interval from 1020.0 ft to 6000.0 ft is crushed (volume change: **-103.29 ft³,** -28.520 %).							

Table 3

String Annulus	Region	Top (ft)	Base (ft)	Device Failure: Disk	Device Failure: Foam	Incremental AFE Pressure (1) (psi)	Incremental AFE Volume (2) (bbl)
20" Surface Casing	Region 1	40.0	450.0	-	-	4733.00	1.8
13 3/8" Intermediate Casing	Region 1	40.0	6000.0	-	-	12126.00	55.1
9 5/8" Protective Casing	Region 1	40.0	9500.0	-	Crushed	**3834.00**	25.5
7" Production Tieback	Region 1	40.0	14800.0	-	-	0.00	13.4
3 1/2" Production Tubing	Region 1	40.0	17000.0	-	-	0.00	17.8
(1) Pressure change caused solely by the (AFE).							
(2) Volume change caused solely by the (AFE).							
9 5/8" Protective Casing: foam interval from 500.0 ft to 1020.0 ft is not crushed (volume change: -0.48 ft³, -1.270 %).							
9 5/8" Protective Casing: foam interval from 1020.0 ft to 6000.0 ft is crushed (volume change: 0.66 ft³, 0.180 %).							

Table 4

The method **600** will thus, help casing design engineers to design their wells with confident safety margins at acceptable costs.

System Description

[0052] The present disclosure may be implemented through a computer-executable program of instructions, such as program modules, generally referred to as software applications or application programs executed by a computer. The software may include, for example,

routines, programs, objects, components and data structures that perform particular tasks or implement particular abstract data types. The software forms an interface to allow a computer to react according to a source of input. WellCat™, which is a commercial software application marketed by Landmark Graphics Corporation, may be used as an interface application to implement the present disclosure. The software may also cooperate with other code segments to initiate a variety of tasks in response to data received in conjunction with the source of the received data. The software may be stored and/or carried on any variety of memory such as CD-ROM, magnetic disk, bubble memory and semiconductor memory (e.g. various types of RAM or ROM). Furthermore, the software and its results may be transmitted over a variety of carrier media such as optical fiber, metallic wire and/or through any of a variety of networks, such as the Internet.

[0053] Moreover, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the disclosure may be practiced with a variety of computer-system configurations, including hand-held devices, multiprocessor systems, microprocessor-based or programmable-consumer electronics, minicomputers, mainframe computers, and the like. Any number of computer-systems and computer networks are acceptable for use with the present disclosure. The disclosure may be practiced in distributed-computing environments where tasks are performed by remote-processing devices that are linked through a communications network. In a distributed-computing environment, program modules may be located in both local and remote computer-storage media including memory storage devices. The present disclosure may therefore, be implemented in connection with various hardware, software or a combination thereof, in a computer system or other processing system.

[0054] Referring now to **FIG. 10**, a block diagram illustrates one embodiment of a

system for implementing the present disclosure on a computer. The system includes a computing unit, sometimes referred to as a computing system, which contains memory, application programs, a client interface, a video interface, and a processing unit. The computing unit is only one example of a suitable computing environment and is not intended to suggest any limitation as to the scope of use or functionality of the disclosure.

[0055] The memory primarily stores the application programs, which may also be described as program modules containing computer-executable instructions, executed by the computing unit for implementing the present disclosure described herein and illustrated in **FIGS. 2-9**. The memory therefore, includes an APB simulation module, which enables steps **610-626** described in reference to **FIGS. 6A-6B.** The APB simulation module may integrate functionality from the remaining application programs illustrated in **FIG. 10**. In particular, WellCat™ may be used as an interface application to perform steps **602-608** and **628-638** in **FIGS. 6A and 6D**. Although WellCat™ may be used as interface application, other interface applications may be used, instead, or the APB simulation module may be used as a stand-alone application.

[0056] Although the computing unit is shown as having a generalized memory, the computing unit typically includes a variety of computer readable media. By way of example, and not limitation, computer readable media may comprise computer storage media and communication media. The computing system memory may include computer storage media in the form of volatile and/or nonvolatile memory such as a read only memory (ROM) and random access memory (RAM). A basic input/output system (BIOS), containing the basic routines that help to transfer information between elements within the computing unit, such as during start-up, is typically stored in ROM. The RAM typically contains data and/or program modules that are immediately accessible to, and/or presently being operated on, the processing unit. By way of

example, and not limitation, the computing unit includes an operating system, application programs, other program modules, and program data.

[0057] The components shown in the memory may also be included in other removable/nonremovable, volatile/nonvolatile computer storage media or they may be implemented in the computing unit through an application program interface ("API") or cloud computing, which may reside on a separate computing unit connected through a computer system or network. For example only, a hard disk drive may read from or write to nonremovable, nonvolatile magnetic media, a magnetic disk drive may read from or write to a removable, nonvolatile magnetic disk, and an optical disk drive may read from or write to a removable, nonvolatile optical disk such as a CD ROM or other optical media. Other removable/nonremovable, volatile/nonvolatile computer storage media that can be used in the exemplary operating environment may include, but are not limited to, magnetic tape cassettes, flash memory cards, digital versatile disks, digital video tape, solid state RAM, solid state ROM, and the like. The drives and their associated computer storage media discussed above provide storage of computer readable instructions, data structures, program modules and other data for the computing unit.

[0058] A client may enter commands and information into the computing unit through the client interface, which may be input devices such as a keyboard and pointing device, commonly referred to as a mouse, trackball or touch pad. Input devices may include a microphone, joystick, satellite dish, scanner, or the like. These and other input devices are often connected to the processing unit through the client interface that is coupled to a system bus, but may be connected by other interface and bus structures, such as a parallel port or a universal serial bus (USB).

[0059] A monitor or other type of display device may be connected to the system bus via an interface, such as a video interface. A graphical user interface ("GUI") may also be used with the video interface to receive instructions from the client interface and transmit instructions to the processing unit. In addition to the monitor, computers may also include other peripheral output devices such as speakers and printer, which may be connected through an output peripheral interface.

[0060] Although many other internal components of the computing unit are not shown, those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that such components and their interconnection are well-known.

[0061] While the present disclosure has been described in connection with presently preferred embodiments, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that it is not intended to limit the disclosure to those embodiments. It is therefore, contemplated that various alternative embodiments and modifications may be made to the disclosed embodiments without departing from the spirit and scope of the disclosure defined by the appended claims and equivalents thereof.

CLAIMS

1. A method for simulating the effects of syntactic foam on annular pressure buildup during annular fluid expansion in a wellbore, which comprises:

a) calculating one of an elastic foam volume change in a region of a casing string annulus and a crushed foam volume change in the region of the casing string annulus;

b) calculating an adjusted casing volume change for the region in the casing string annulus using i) one of the elastic foam volume change and the crushed foam volume change; and ii) a casing volume change;

c) calculating an adjusted annular pressure buildup for the region in the casing string annulus using i) a fluid volume change; and ii) one of the casing volume change and the adjusted casing volume change;

d) repeating steps a) – c) for each region in the casing string annulus;

e) repeating steps a) – d) for each casing string annulus in a combined casing string; and

f) repeating steps a) – e) using a computer processor until a global pressure equilibrium is achieved in the combined casing string.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the elastic foam volume change is calculated by:

$$\Delta V_{foam} = V_{foam} * [S_2-S_1 - \alpha_{T*}(T_2-T_1)]$$

$$S_2\text{-}S_1 = c * (P_2\text{-}P_1).$$

wherein V_{foam} is an installed foam volume for the region in the casing string annulus, α_T, c are foam properties, T_1, P_1 are initial temperature and initial pressure for the region in the casing string annulus, T_2 is a final temperature for the region in the casing string annulus and P_2 is an updated fluid pressure for the region in the casing string annulus.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the crushed foam volume change is calculated by:

$$\Delta V_{foam} = V_{foam}*[S_c\text{-}S_1, -\alpha_T*(T_2\text{-}T_1) + 6*c*(P_2\text{-}CP(T_2))]$$

$$S_1 = c * P_1$$

wherein V_{foam} is an installed foam volume for the region in the casing string annulus, α_T, c, S_c are foam properties, T_1, P_1 are initial temperature and initial pressure for the region in the casing string annulus, T_2 is a final temperature for the region in the casing string annulus, P_2 is an updated fluid pressure for the region in the casing string annulus and CP is a foam crush pressure.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the casing volume change is calculated by:

$$\Delta V_{casing} = \Delta V_{cas,T} + \Delta V_{cas,B}$$

$$\Delta V_{cas,T} = f(CTE, T_1, T_2)$$

$$\Delta V_{cas,B} = f(E, P_2, P_1)$$

wherein CTE, E are casing material properties, T_1, P_1 are initial temperature and initial pressure for the region in the casing string annulus, T_2 is a final temperature for the region in the casing string annulus and P_2 is an updated fluid pressure for the region in the casing string annulus.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the fluid volume change is calculated by:

$$\Delta V_f = V_f * [\rho(P_1,T_1)/ \rho(P_2,T_2)-1]$$

wherein V_f is a fluid volume for the region in the casing string annulus, T_1, P_1 are initial temperature and initial pressure for the region in the casing string annulus, T_2 is a final temperature for the region in the casing string annulus and P_2 is an updated fluid pressure for the region in the casing string annulus.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the global pressure equilibrium is achieved when a difference between a last adjusted annular pressure buildup and a next to last adjusted annular pressure buildup is about zero.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the global pressure equilibrium is achieved when i) a difference between the annular pressure buildup calculated with each iteration of step c) converges toward zero; and ii) all other forces applied to the combined casing string are balanced.

8. A non-transitory program carrier device tangibly carrying computer executable instructions for simulating the effects of syntactic foam on annular pressure buildup during annular fluid expansion in a wellbore, which comprises:

a) calculating one of an elastic foam volume change in a region of a casing

string annulus and a crushed foam volume change in the region of the casing string annulus;

b) calculating an adjusted casing volume change for the region in the casing string annulus using i) one of the elastic foam volume change and the crushed foam volume change; and ii) a casing volume change;

c) calculating an adjusted annular pressure buildup for the region in the casing string annulus using i) a fluid volume change; and ii) one of the casing volume change and the adjusted casing volume change;

d) repeating steps a) – c) for each region in the casing string annulus;

e) repeating steps a) – d) for each casing string annulus in a combined casing string; and

f) repeating steps a) – e) until a global pressure equilibrium is achieved in the combined casing string.

9. The program carrier device of claim 8, wherein the elastic foam volume change is calculated by:

$$\Delta V_{foam} = V_{foam} * [S_2-S_1 - \alpha_{T*}(T_2-T_1)]$$

$$S_2-S_1 = c * (P_2-P_1).$$

wherein V_{foam} is an installed foam volume for the region in the casing string annulus, α_T, c are foam properties, T_1, P_1 are initial temperature and initial pressure for the region in the casing

string annulus, T_2 is a final temperature for the region in the casing string annulus and P_2 is an updated fluid pressure for the region in the casing string annulus.

10. The program carrier device of claim 8, wherein the crushed foam volume change is calculated by:

$$\Delta V_{foam} = V_{foam}*[S_c-S_1, -\alpha_T*(T_2-T_1) + 6*c*(P_2-CP(T_2))]$$

$$S_1 = c * P_1$$

wherein V_{foam} is an installed foam volume for the region in the casing string annulus, α_T, c, S_c are foam properties, T_1, P_1 are initial temperature and initial pressure for the region in the casing string annulus, T_2 is a final temperature for the region in the casing string annulus, P_2 is an updated fluid pressure for the region in the casing string annulus and CP is a foam crush pressure.

12. The program carrier device of claim 8, wherein the casing volume change is calculated by:

$$\Delta V_{casing} = \Delta V_{cas,T} + \Delta V_{cas,B}$$

$$\Delta V_{cas,T} = f(CTE, T_1, T_2)$$

$$\Delta V_{cas,B} = f(E, P_2, P_1)$$

wherein CTE, E are casing material properties, T_1, P_1 are initial temperature and initial pressure for the region in the casing string annulus, T_2 is a final temperature for the region in the casing

string annulus and P_2 is an updated fluid pressure for the region in the casing string annulus.

12. The program carrier device of claim 8, wherein the fluid volume change is calculated by:

$$\Delta V_f = V_f * [\rho(P_1,T_1)/ \rho(P_2,T_2)-1]$$

wherein V_f is a fluid volume for the region in the casing string annulus, T_1, P_1 are initial temperature and initial pressure for the region in the casing string annulus, T_2 is a final temperature for the region in the casing string annulus and P_2 is an updated fluid pressure for the region in the casing string annulus.

13. The program carrier device of claim 8, wherein the global pressure equilibrium is achieved when a difference between a last adjusted annular pressure buildup and a next to last adjusted annular pressure buildup is about zero.

14. The program carrier device of claim 8, wherein the global pressure equilibrium is achieved when i) a difference between the annular pressure buildup calculated with each iteration of step c) converges toward zero; and ii) all other forces applied to the combined casing string are balanced.

15. A non-transitory program carrier device tangibly carrying computer executable instructions for simulating the effects of syntactic foam on annular pressure buildup during annular fluid expansion in a wellbore, which comprises:

a) calculating one of an elastic foam volume change in a region of a casing string annulus and a crushed foam volume change in the region of the casing string

annulus;

b) calculating an adjusted casing volume change for the region in the casing string annulus using i) one of the elastic foam volume change and the crushed foam volume change; and ii) a casing volume change;

c) calculating an adjusted annular pressure buildup for the region in the casing string annulus using i) a fluid volume change; and ii) one of the casing volume change and the adjusted casing volume change;

d) repeating steps a) – c) for each region in the casing string annulus;

e) repeating steps a) – d) for each casing string annulus in a combined casing string; and

f) repeating steps a) – e) until a global pressure equilibrium is achieved in the combined casing string, wherein the global pressure equilibrium is achieved when i) a difference between the annular pressure buildup calculated with each iteration of step c) converges toward zero; and ii) all other forces applied to the combined casing string are balanced.

16. The program carrier device of claim 15, wherein the elastic foam volume change is calculated by:

$$\Delta V_{foam} = V_{foam} * [S_2-S_1 - \alpha_{T*}(T_2-T_1)]$$

$$S_2-S_1 = c * (P_2-P_1)$$

wherein V_{foam} is an installed foam volume for the region in the casing string annulus, α_T, c are foam properties, T_1, P_1 are initial temperature and initial pressure for the region in the casing string annulus, T_2 is a final temperature for the region in the casing string annulus and P_2 is an updated fluid pressure for the region in the casing string annulus.

17. The program carrier device of claim 15, wherein the crushed foam volume change is calculated by:

$$\Delta V_{foam} = V_{foam}*[S_c-S_1, -\alpha_T*(T_2-T_1) + 6*c*(P_2-CP(T_2))]$$

$$S_1 = c * P_1$$

wherein V_{foam} is an installed foam volume for the region in the casing string annulus, α_T, c, S_c are foam properties, T_1, P_1 are initial temperature and initial pressure for the region in the casing string annulus, T_2 is a final temperature for the region in the casing string annulus, P_2 is an updated fluid pressure for the region in the casing string annulus and CP is a foam crush pressure.

18. The program carrier device of claim 15, wherein the casing volume change is calculated by:

$$\Delta V_{casing} = \Delta V_{cas,T} + \Delta V_{cas,B}$$

$$\Delta V_{cas,T} = f(CTE, T_1, T_2)$$

$$\Delta V_{cas,B} = f(E, P_2, P_1)$$

wherein CTE, E are casing material properties, T_1, P_1 are initial temperature and initial pressure

for the region in the casing string annulus, T_2 is a final temperature for the region in the casing string annulus and P_2 is an updated fluid pressure for the region in the casing string annulus.

19. The program carrier device of claim 15, wherein the fluid volume change is calculated by:

$$\Delta V_f = V_f * [\rho(P_1,T_1)/ \rho(P_2,T_2)-1]$$

wherein V_f is a fluid volume for the region in the casing string annulus, T_1, P_1 are initial temperature and initial pressure for the region in the casing string annulus, T_2 is a final temperature for the region in the casing string annulus and P_2 is an updated fluid pressure for the region in the casing string annulus.

20. The program carrier device of claim 15, wherein the global pressure equilibrium is achieved when a difference between a last adjusted annular pressure buildup and a next to last adjusted annular pressure buildup is zero.

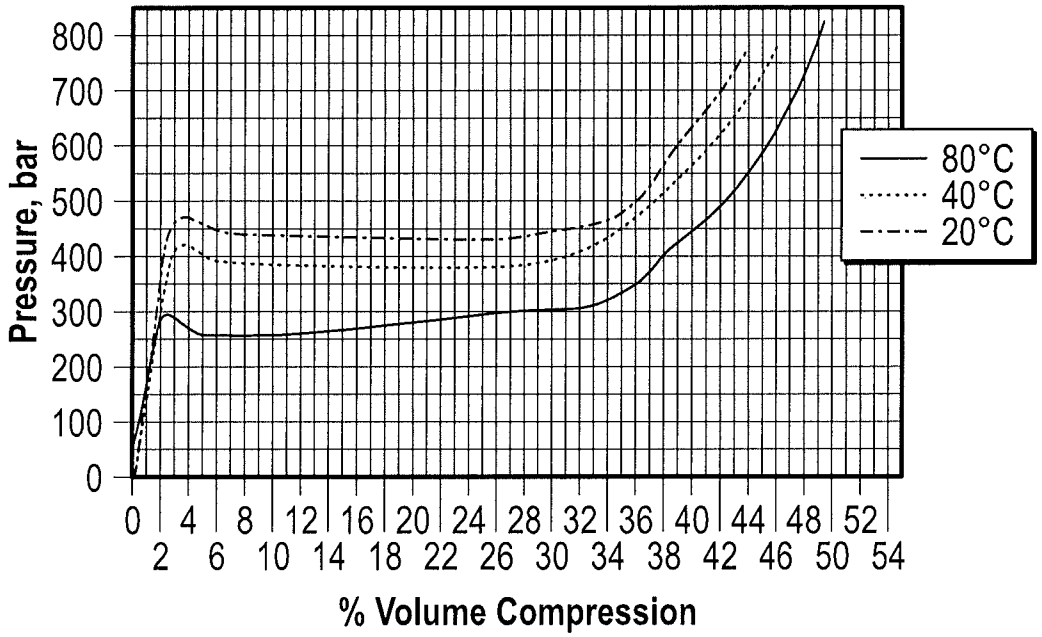
Pressure, bar
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 46 48 50 52 54
% Volume Compression
80°C
40°C
20°C

FIG. 1

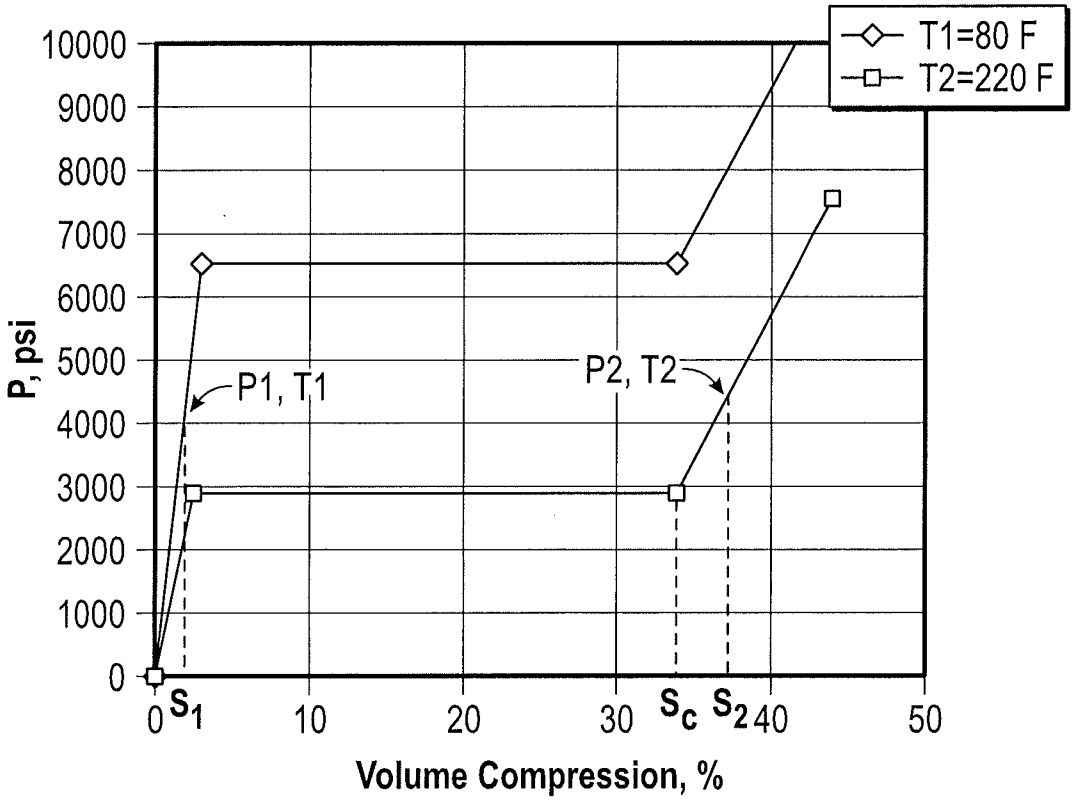
P, psi
10000
9000
8000
7000
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
0
0 10 20 30 40 50
Volume Compression, %
T1=80 F
T2=220 F
P1, T1
P2, T2
S1
Sc
S2

FIG. 2

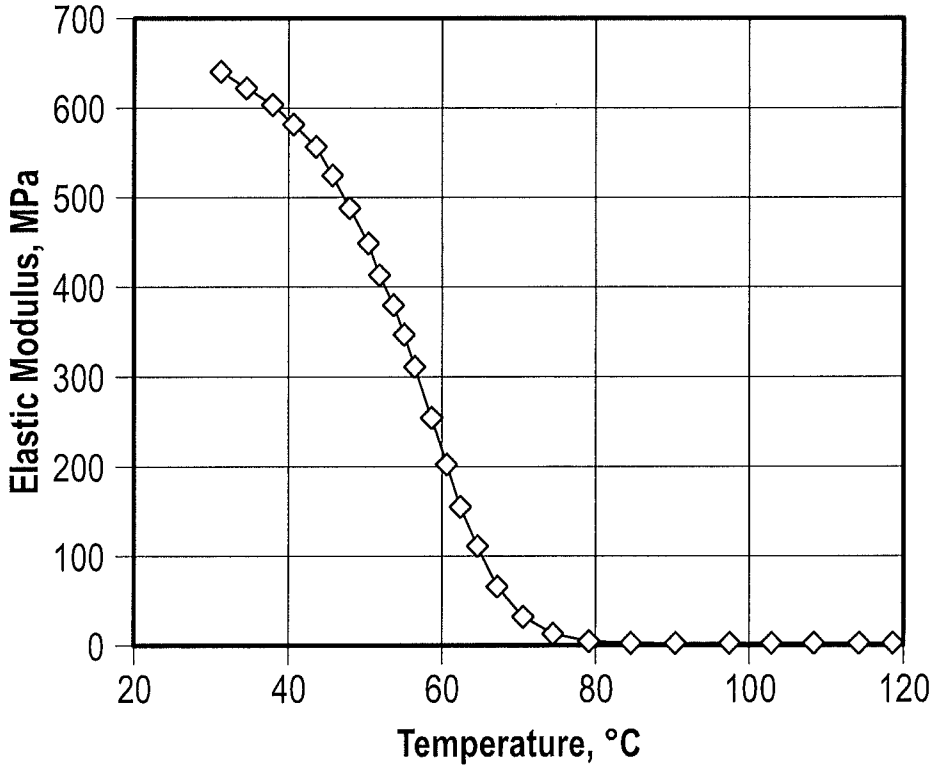
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
Elastic Modulus, MPa
20
40
60
80
100
120
Temperature, °C

FIG. 3

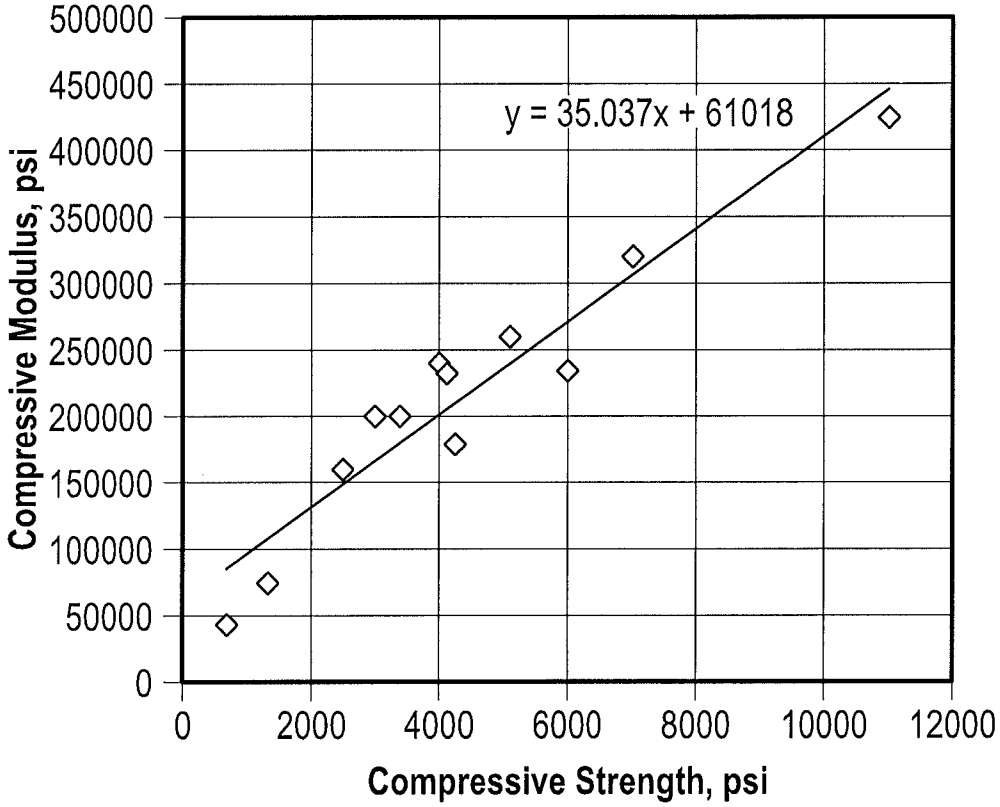
500000
450000
400000
350000
300000
250000
200000
150000
100000
50000
0
Compressive Modulus, psi
y = 35.037x + 61018
0
2000
4000
6000
8000
10000
12000
Compressive Strength, psi

FIG. 4

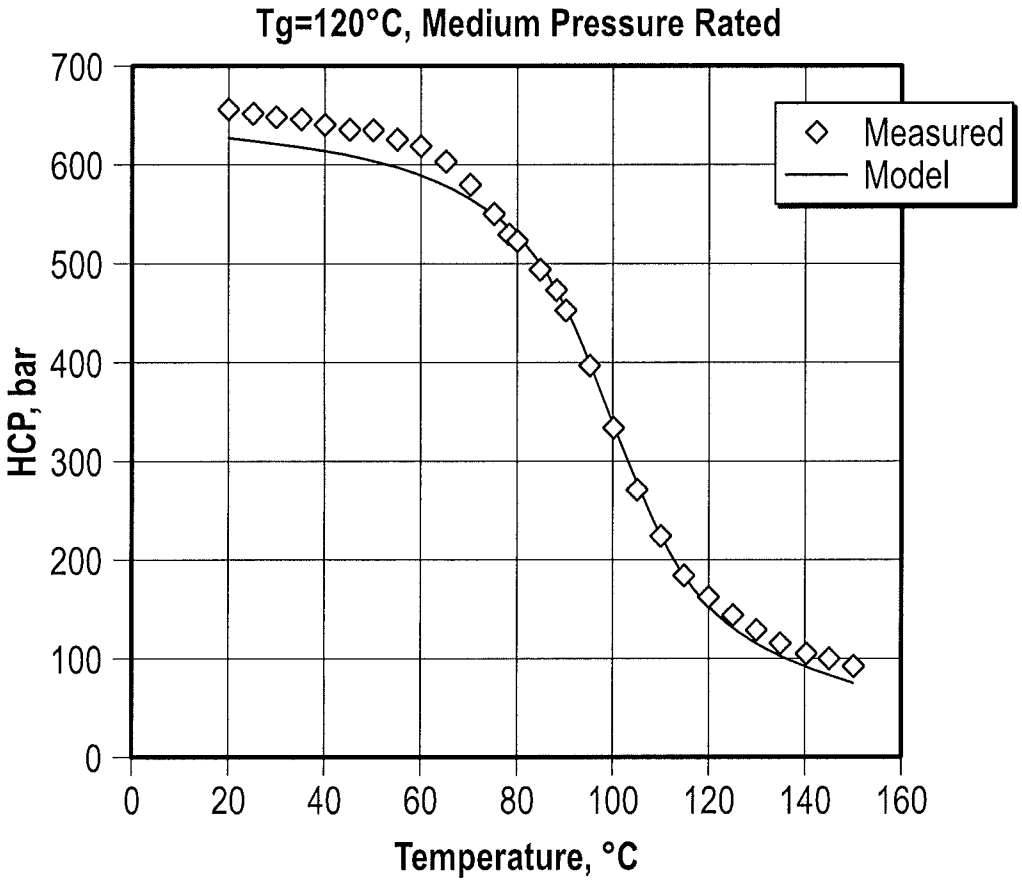
Tg=120°C, Medium Pressure Rated
HCP, bar
Temperature, °C
Measured
Model
0
100
200
300
400
500
600
700
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
140
160

FIG. 5

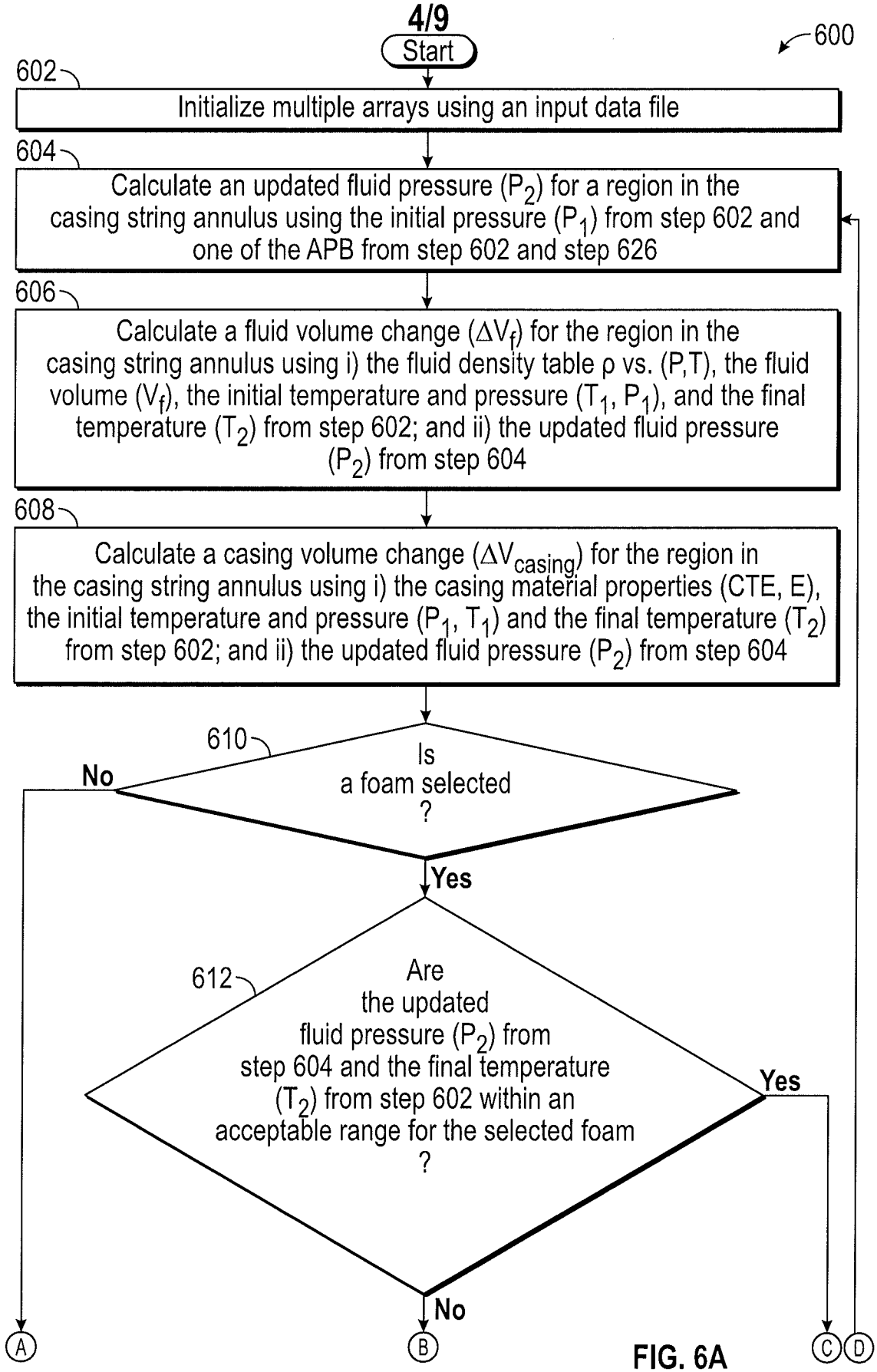
Start
600
602
Initialize multiple arrays using an input data file
604
Calculate an updated fluid pressure (P_2) for a region in the casing string annulus using the initial pressure (P_1) from step 602 and one of the APB from step 602 and step 626
606
Calculate a fluid volume change (ΔV_f) for the region in the casing string annulus using i) the fluid density table ρ vs. (P,T), the fluid volume (V_f), the initial temperature and pressure (T_1, P_1), and the final temperature (T_2) from step 602; and ii) the updated fluid pressure (P_2) from step 604
608
Calculate a casing volume change (ΔV_{casing}) for the region in the casing string annulus using i) the casing material properties (CTE, E), the initial temperature and pressure (P_1, T_1) and the final temperature (T_2) from step 602; and ii) the updated fluid pressure (P_2) from step 604
610
Is a foam selected ?
No
Yes
612
Are the updated fluid pressure (P_2) from step 604 and the final temperature (T_2) from step 602 within an acceptable range for the selected foam ?
Yes
No
A
B
C
D

FIG. 6A

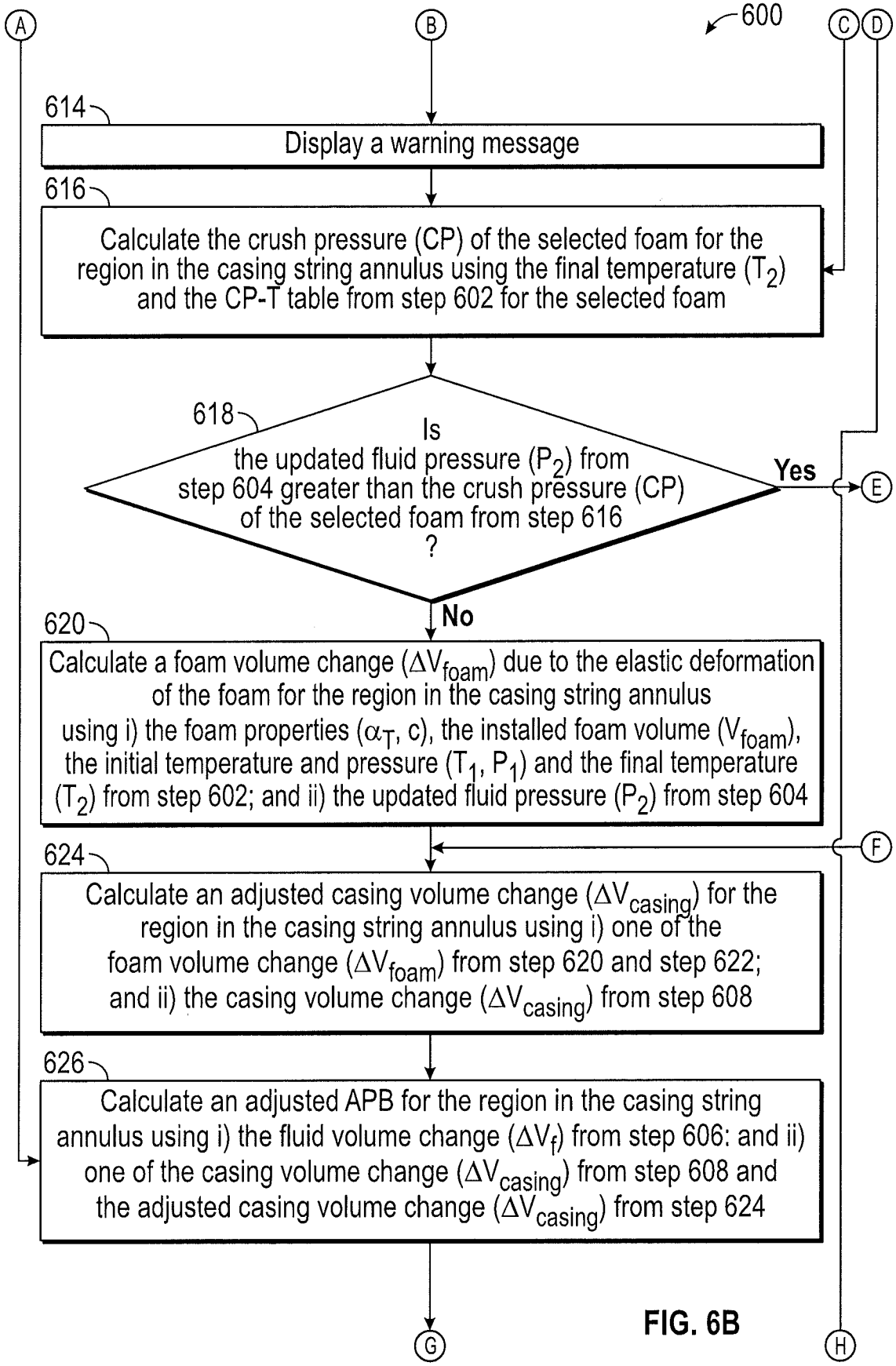
A
B
600
C
D
614
Display a warning message
616
Calculate the crush pressure (CP) of the selected foam for the region in the casing string annulus using the final temperature (T_2) and the CP-T table from step 602 for the selected foam
618
Is the updated fluid pressure (P_2) from step 604 greater than the crush pressure (CP) of the selected foam from step 616 ?
Yes
E
No
620
Calculate a foam volume change (ΔV_{foam}) due to the elastic deformation of the foam for the region in the casing string annulus using i) the foam properties (α_T, c), the installed foam volume (V_{foam}), the initial temperature and pressure (T_1, P_1) and the final temperature (T_2) from step 602; and ii) the updated fluid pressure (P_2) from step 604
F
624
Calculate an adjusted casing volume change (ΔV_{casing}) for the region in the casing string annulus using i) one of the foam volume change (ΔV_{foam}) from step 620 and step 622; and ii) the casing volume change (ΔV_{casing}) from step 608
626
Calculate an adjusted APB for the region in the casing string annulus using i) the fluid volume change (ΔV_f) from step 606: and ii) one of the casing volume change (ΔV_{casing}) from step 608 and the adjusted casing volume change (ΔV_{casing}) from step 624
G
H

FIG. 6B

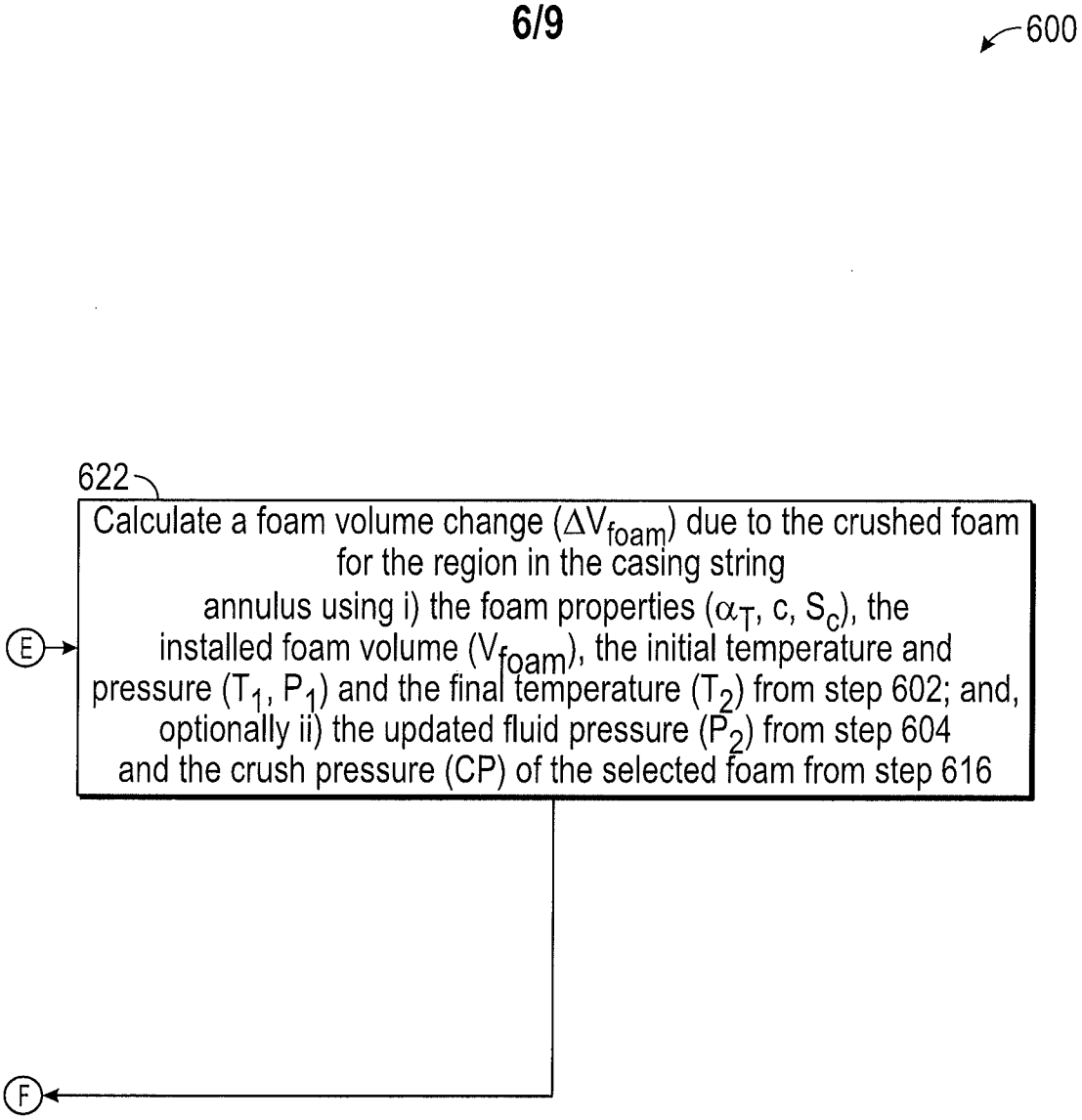
600
622
Calculate a foam volume change (ΔV_{foam}) due to the crushed foam for the region in the casing string annulus using i) the foam properties (α_T, c, S_c), the installed foam volume (V_{foam}), the initial temperature and pressure (T_1, P_1) and the final temperature (T_2) from step 602; and, optionally ii) the updated fluid pressure (P_2) from step 604 and the crush pressure (CP) of the selected foam from step 616
E
F

FIG. 6C

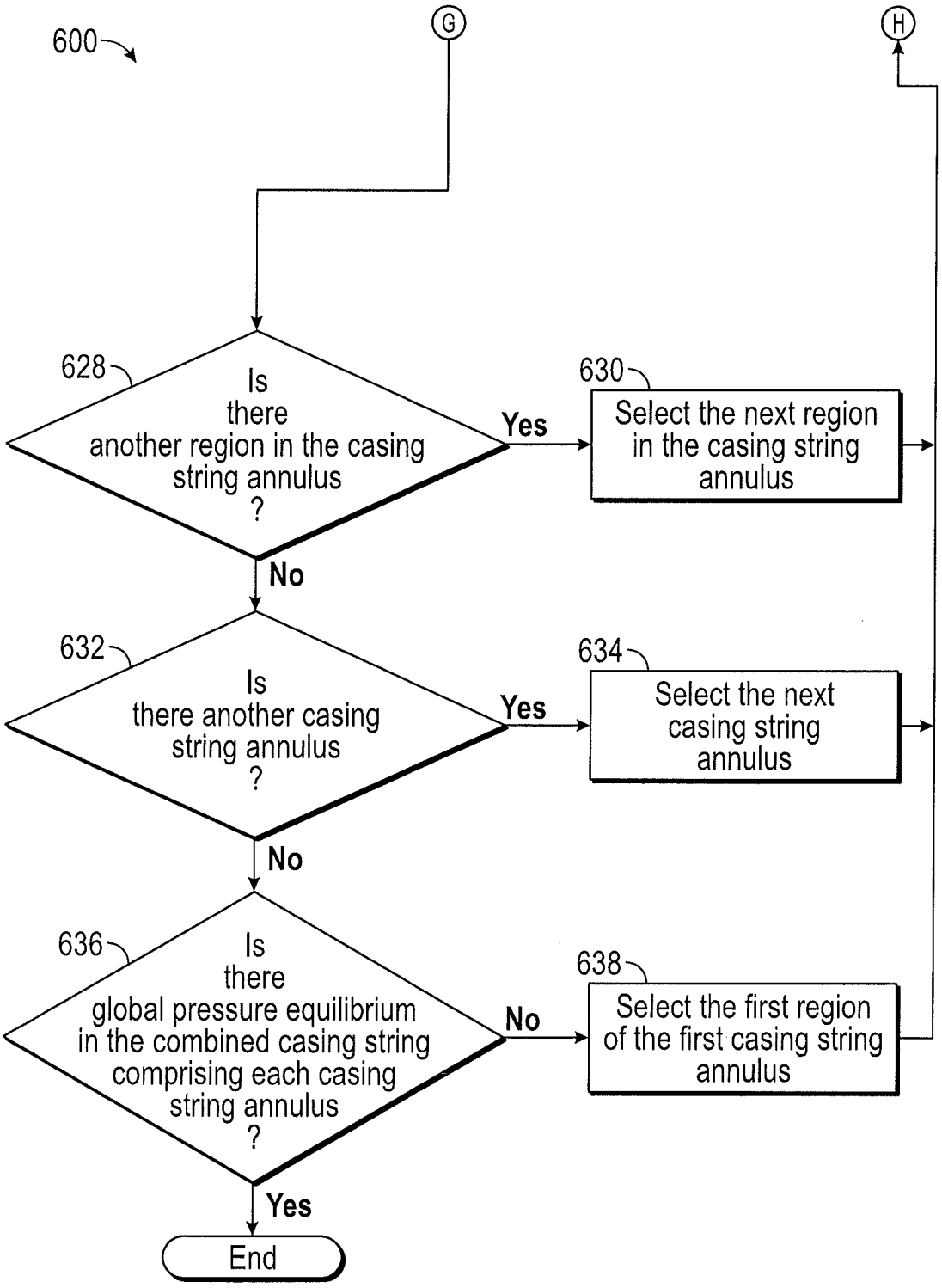
600
G
H
628
Is there another region in the casing string annulus ?
Yes
630
Select the next region in the casing string annulus
No
632
Is there another casing string annulus ?
Yes
634
Select the next casing string annulus
No
636
Is there global pressure equilibrium in the combined casing string comprising each casing string annulus ?
No
638
Select the first region of the first casing string annulus
Yes
End

FIG. 6D

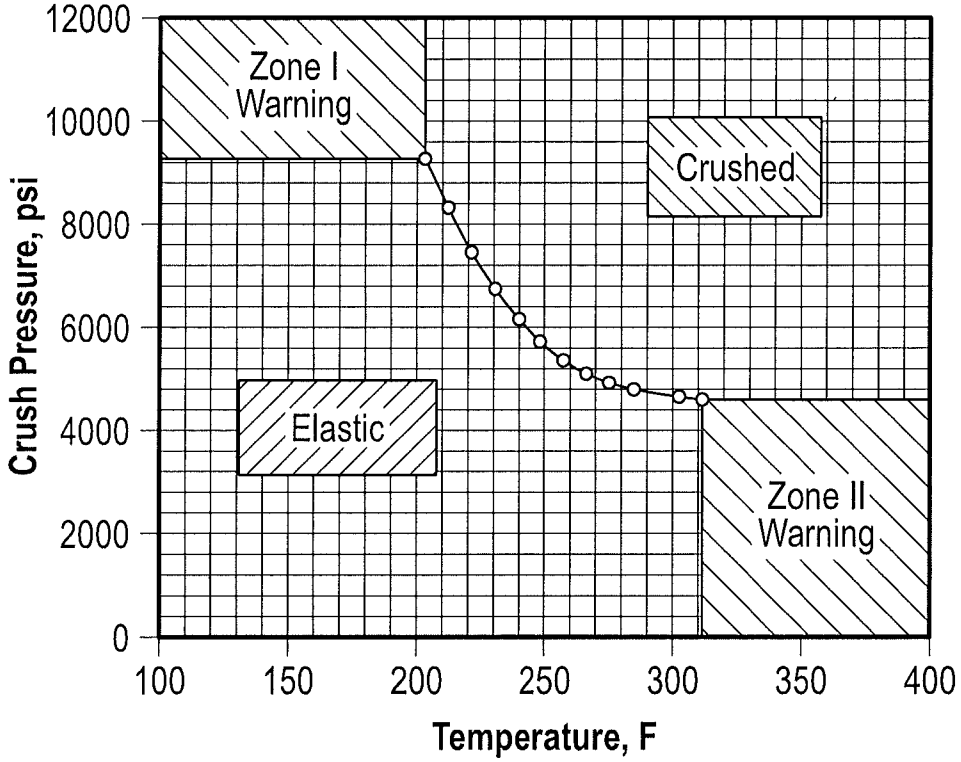
Zone I
Warning
Crushed
Elastic
Zone II
Warning
Crush Pressure, psi
12000
10000
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
100
150
200
250
300
350
400
Temperature, F

FIG. 7

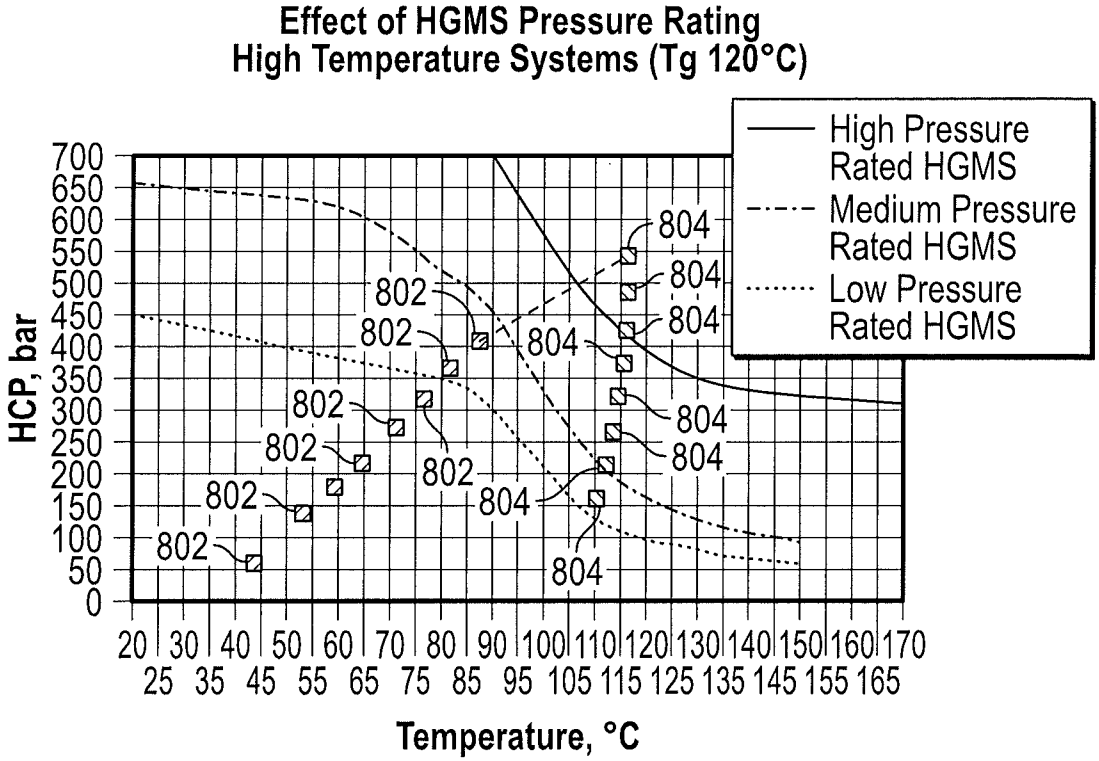
Effect of HGMS Pressure Rating
High Temperature Systems (Tg 120°C)
High Pressure Rated HGMS
Medium Pressure Rated HGMS
Low Pressure Rated HGMS
HCP, bar
700
650
600
550
500
450
400
350
300
250
200
150
100
50
0
802
804
20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 110 120 130 140 150 160 170
25 35 45 55 65 75 85 95 105 115 125 135 145 155 165
Temperature, °C

FIG. 8

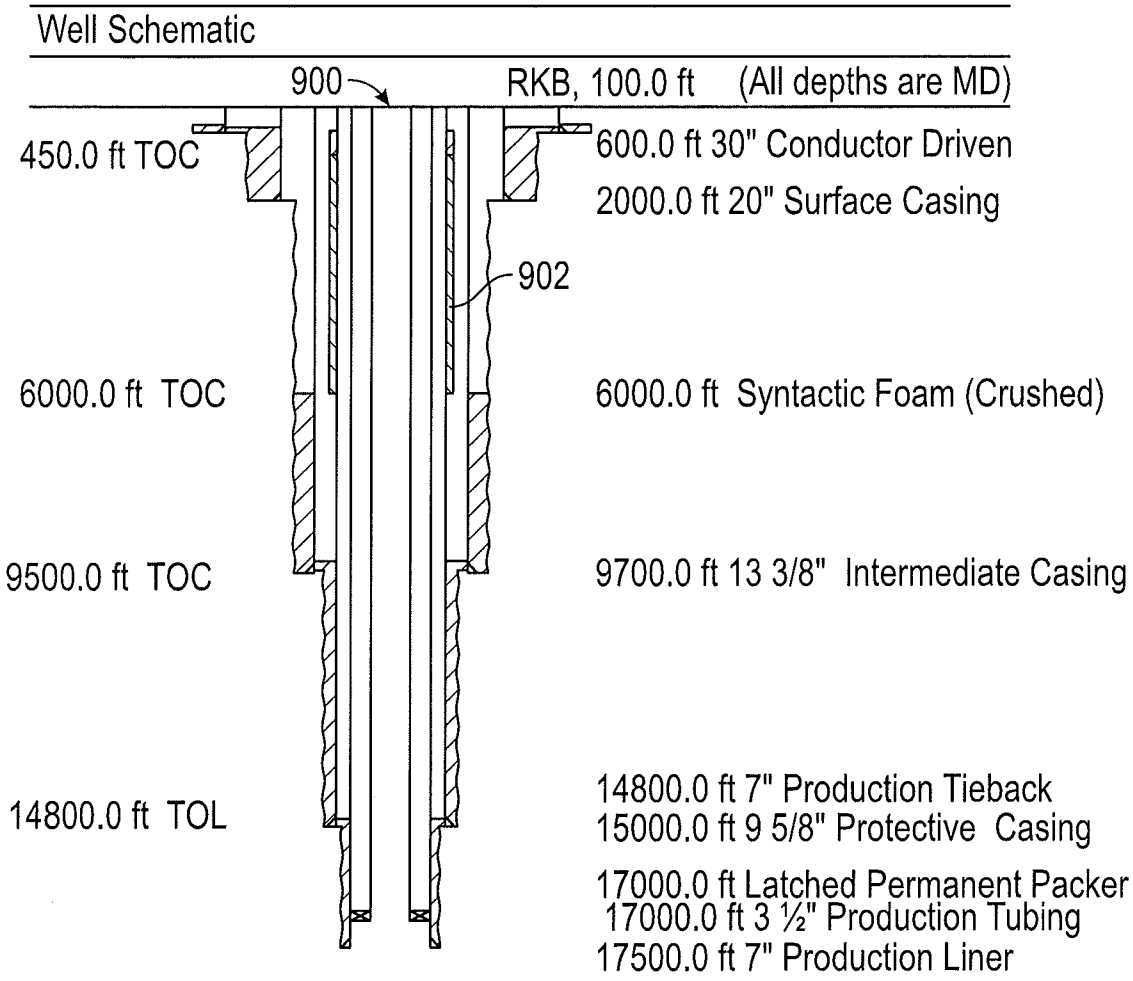
Well Schematic
900
RKB, 100.0 ft (All depths are MD)
450.0 ft TOC
600.0 ft 30" Conductor Driven
2000.0 ft 20" Surface Casing
902
6000.0 ft TOC
6000.0 ft Syntactic Foam (Crushed)
9500.0 ft TOC
9700.0 ft 13 3/8" Intermediate Casing
14800.0 ft TOL
14800.0 ft 7" Production Tieback
15000.0 ft 9 5/8" Protective Casing
17000.0 ft Latched Permanent Packer
17000.0 ft 3 ½" Production Tubing
17500.0 ft 7" Production Liner

FIG. 9

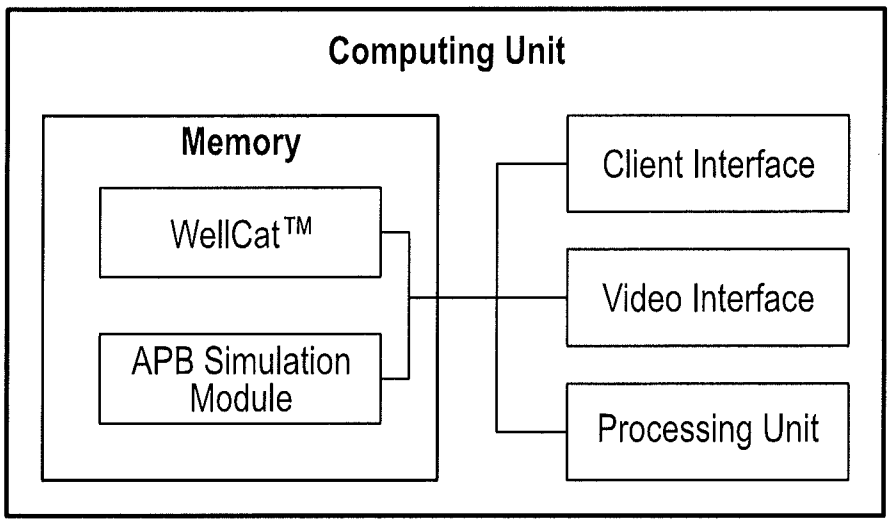
Computing Unit
Memory
WellCat™
APB Simulation Module
Client Interface
Video Interface
Processing Unit

FIG. 10