Small Molecule Solvent Recycling of Adaptable Polymers (#7348)

A method for recycling and repairing carbon fiber reinforced polymer products

Georgia Tech researchers have developed a method for recycling and repairing CFRP products. These products are recycled by dissolving them in a solvent, separating the carbon fibers, and evaporating the solvent to reform the polymer. The reclaimed fibers and polymer have the same mechanical properties as the fresh material and can be reformed and reused in new products. A similar method is used to repair surfaces of CFRP products. This is a major improvement to current repair processes, which require applying pressure to repair surfaces, which are difficult to do in situ.

Benefits/Advantages

- Safe – Does not require strong chemicals
- Environmentally Friendly – Does not generate waste solutions
- Efficient – Can 100% recycle both fiber and polymer
- Effective – Ability to fully repairs surfaces
- Simpler – Does not require a pressurized environment to repair surfaces

Potential Commercial Applications

- Composite repair and recycling
- Plastics industry
- Aerospace industry
- Automobiles industry
- Sporting goods

Background/Context for This Invention

Carbon fiber reinforced polymer, CFRP, is a highly sought after composite for its high strength, high stiffness, and lightweight properties. The recycling process, however, is difficult because the polymer and carbon fiber components have to be separated. The difficulty in recycling combined with the increasing demand has caused an increase in the amount of waste material in both the manufacturing process and from end-of-life products. Thus, there is a need for a method to easily recycle CFRP.

Dr. Hang Qi
Professor and The Woodruff Faculty Fellow – Georgia Tech School of Mechanical Engineering

Qian Shi
PhD Student – Georgia Tech School of Mechanical Engineering
Kai Yu
PhD Candidate – Georgia Tech School of Mechanical Engineering

For more information about this technology, please visit:
https://industry.gatech.edu/technology/small-molecule-solvent-recycling-adaptable-polymers