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**Geological Model of the Mechanism of Formation of Gas-Dynamic Hazard Centers in the Rocks of the Sylvinite-Carnallite Zone at the Verkhnekamskoye Potassium-Magnesium Salt Deposit****Sergei S. Andreiko<sup>1</sup>, Tamara A. Lialina<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Mining Institute of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (78a Sibirskaya st., Building A, Perm, 614007, Russian Federation)<sup>2</sup>Perm National Research Polytechnic University (29 Komsomolskiy av., Perm, 614990, Russian Federation)**Геологическая модель механизма образования очагов газодинамической опасности в породах сивинито-карналлитовой зоны на Верхнекамском месторождении калийно-магниевых солей****С.С. Андрейко<sup>1</sup>, Т.А. Лялина<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Горный институт Уральского отделения Российской академии наук (Российская Федерация, 614007, г. Пермь, ул. Сибирская, 78-а)<sup>2</sup>Пермский национальный исследовательский политехнический университет (Российская Федерация, 614990, г. Пермь, Комсомольский пр., 29)

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exploration wells, oil fields, potentially oil-bearing structures, gas emissions, gas-dynamic phenomena, replacement zones, carnallites sylvinitization, natural undermining, stratification, gas-filled cracks, displacement troughs, marginal part.

In the course of the research, a geological model of the mechanism of formation of gas-dynamic hazard centers in the rocks of the sylvinite-carnallite zone at the Verkhnekamskoye potassium salt deposit was developed. During the formation of gas-dynamic hazard centers in the rocks of the sylvinite-carnallite zone, the sources of gas-saturated fluids were gas-bearing aqueous solutions, including fluids from oil-bearing deposits located in the thickness of rocks underlying the salt deposit. The paths of ascending migration of gas-saturated fluids could be: rupture tectonic faults, thrusts, through zones of increased fracturing and permeability zones above the slopes of reef structures. Migration of gas-saturated fluids into the salt thickness from the underlying rocks occurred in a subvertical direction (from the bottom up). In the rocks of the sylvinite-carnallite zone, the lateral direction of migration of gas-saturated aqueous solutions prevailed over the vertical one due to the pronounced anisotropy of filtration properties. Fluids moved laterally along numerous clay layers, interlayers and intergranular space. During the migration of gas-saturated fluids in the rocks of the sylvinite-carnallite zone, epigenetic transformations of salt rocks occurred: replacement of sylvinites with rock salt, sylvinitization of carnallites, formation of rocks of mixed composition (sylvinite + carnallite). During sylvinitization of carnallites, the migration of aggressive gas-saturated fluids occurred in the direction from the zones of replacement of sylvinites with rock salt and variegated sylvinites in the direction of development of carnallite rocks. Variegated sylvinite as a product of epigenetic processes in rocks of the sylvinite-carnallite zone near the contact with carnallite rock has increased porosity and decreased strength. The patterns of free gas distribution in the layers of the sylvinite-carnallite zone are determined by the work of the three-zone functional system of halogen metasomatism. The decomposition of carnallite was accompanied by a deficit of the solid phase, the value of which could vary in a wide range of values and reach almost 70%. In areas of complete decomposition of carnallite in rocks of the sylvinite-carnallite zone, voids were formed due to the deficit of the solid phase. These voids, by analogy, can be considered a process of natural "undermining" of the overlying layers and "overmining" of the underlying ones. The effect of natural "undermining" was accompanied by the formation of crack systems in the undermining part of the sylvinite-carnallite zone due to unloading from rock pressure and rock displacement, through which free gases migrated into the undermining layers. As a result, in the rocks of the sylvinite-carnallite zone, under the influence of natural "undermining", in the zone of unloading from vertical stresses due to destruction and stratification at the contacts of layers and layers, as well as along clay interlayers, favorable conditions are created for the filtration of free gases into it.

**Ключевые слова:**

геолого-разведочные скважины, нефтяные месторождения, нефтеперспективные структуры, газовыделения, газодинамические явления, зоны замещения, сивинитизация карналлитов, природная подработка, расслоения, газонаполненные трещины, мулды движения, краевая часть.

В процессе проведения исследований разработана геологическая модель механизма образования очагов газодинамической опасности в породах сивинито-карналлитовой зоны на Верхнекамском месторождении калийных солей. При образовании в породах сивинито-карналлитовой зоны очагов газодинамической опасности источниками газонасыщенных флюидов являлись газонасыщенные водные растворы, в том числе и флюиды из нефтеносных месторождений, расположенных в толще пород, подстилающих соляную залежь. Пути восходящей миграции газонасыщенных флюидов могли быть: разрывные тектонические нарушения, надвиги, сквозные зоны повышенной трещиноватости и зоны проницаемости над склонами рифогенных структур. Миграция газонасыщенных флюидов в соляную толщу из подстилающих пород происходила в субвертикальном направлении (снизу вверх). В породах сивинито-карналлитовой зоны латеральное направление миграции газонасыщенных водных растворов преобладало над вертикальным вследствие ярко выраженной анизотропии фильтрационных свойств. Флюиды в латеральном направлении двигались по многочисленным глинистым слоям прослоек и межзерновому пространству. В процессе миграции газонасыщенных флюидов в породах сивинито-карналлитовой зоны происходили эпигенетические преобразования соляных пород: замещение сивинитов каменной солью, сивинитизация карналлитов, образование пород смешанного состава (сивинит + карналлит). При сивинитизации карналлитов миграция агрессивных газонасыщенных флюидов происходила в направлении от зон замещения сивинитов каменной солью и пестрых сивинитов в направлении развития карналлитовых пород. Пестрый сивинит как продукт эпигенетических процессов в породах сивинито-карналлитовой зоны вблизи контакта с карналлитовой породой обладает повышенной пористостью и пониженной прочностью. Закономерности распределения свободных газов в пластах сивинито-карналлитовой зоны обусловлены работой трехзонной функциональной системы галогенного метасоматоза. Разложение карналлита сопровождалось образованием дефицита твердой фазы, величина которого могла изменяться в широком диапазоне значений и достигать почти 70%. На участках полного разложения карналлита в породах сивинито-карналлитовой зоны из-за дефицита твердой фазы формировались пустоты. Эти пустоты по аналогии можно считать процессом природной «подработки» вышележащих пластов и «надработки» нижележащих. Эффект природной «подработки» сопровождался формированием в подработанной части сивинито-карналлитовой зоны за счет разгрузки от горного давления и сдвига пород систем трещин, через которые происходила миграция свободных газов в подработанные пласты. В результате в породах сивинито-карналлитовой зоны под воздействием природной «подработки» в зоне разгрузки от вертикальных напряжений за счет разрушений и расслоений по контактам слоев и пластов, а также по глинистым прослоям создаются благоприятные условия для фильтрации в нее свободных газов.

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Introduction

The Verkhnekamskoye potassium salt deposit (VKPSD), located in Perm Krai, is the second largest potash salt reserves after the world's largest Saskatchewan potassium salt deposit. The thickness of salt rocks has the shape of a lens with an area of up to 8.2 thousand km<sup>2</sup>. The area of the main multi-layered deposit of potassium-magnesium salts is 3.7 thousand km<sup>2</sup> [1]. The genesis and structure of the Verkhnekamskoe deposit have been studied by many famous scientists and reflected in a number of works [1–4]. The geological value of the field increases due to the presence of oil-bearing structures in the subsalt rocks.

The potash deposit of the Verkhnekamskoye field is represented by a series of productive layers separated by rock salt layers (Fig. 1). The deposit is divided into sylvinite and sylvinite-carnallite zones. The sylvinite zone with an average thickness of 20 metres is composed of alternating formations of red sylvinites (RedIII, RedII and RedI), of banded sylvinite (A) and separating rock salt formations (RedIII – RedII, RedII – RedI and RedI – A). The sylvinite-carnallite zone with an average thickness of 60 m is composed of alternating formations of potassium-magnesium salts (nine banks, which are indexed from the bottom to the top with letters from B to K and rock salt (eight formations – from B-V to I-K). Formation B lies at the base of the

sylvinite-carnallite zone, directly on the banded sylvinite A bed.

Along with potassium salt reserves within the Verkhnekamskoye field territory 14 oil and gas fields and 17 potentially oil-bearing structures (Lower and Middle Carboniferous and Upper Devonian) have been discovered in pre-salt sediments at depths of 1,600–2,300 meters (see Fig. 1) [5].

It is known that the gas factor plays a major role in the initiation and process of gas emissions and gas dynamic phenomena in geological exploration. Free gases in salt rocks are under high pressure, sometimes reaching up to 8.0 MPa [6]. The first information about gas emissions at the Verkhnekamsk potash salt deposit during well drilling dates back to 1925. At opening salts by wells gas emissions are manifested in different ways. Sometimes only foaming of the drilling fluid is observed and a faint noise is heard in the well. In other cases, gas emission is violent, accompanied by mud and cuttings ejections from wells to a height of several tens of metres, leading in some cases to flammable gas outbreaks and fires in the drilling room. Particularly violent gas emissions take place during penetration of sylvinite-carnallite formations from E to V and are most often observed in wells located in the rear parts and on the wings of anticlinal structures. The duration of gas emissions (taking into account pauses) can vary from a fraction of an hour to several days and even weeks.

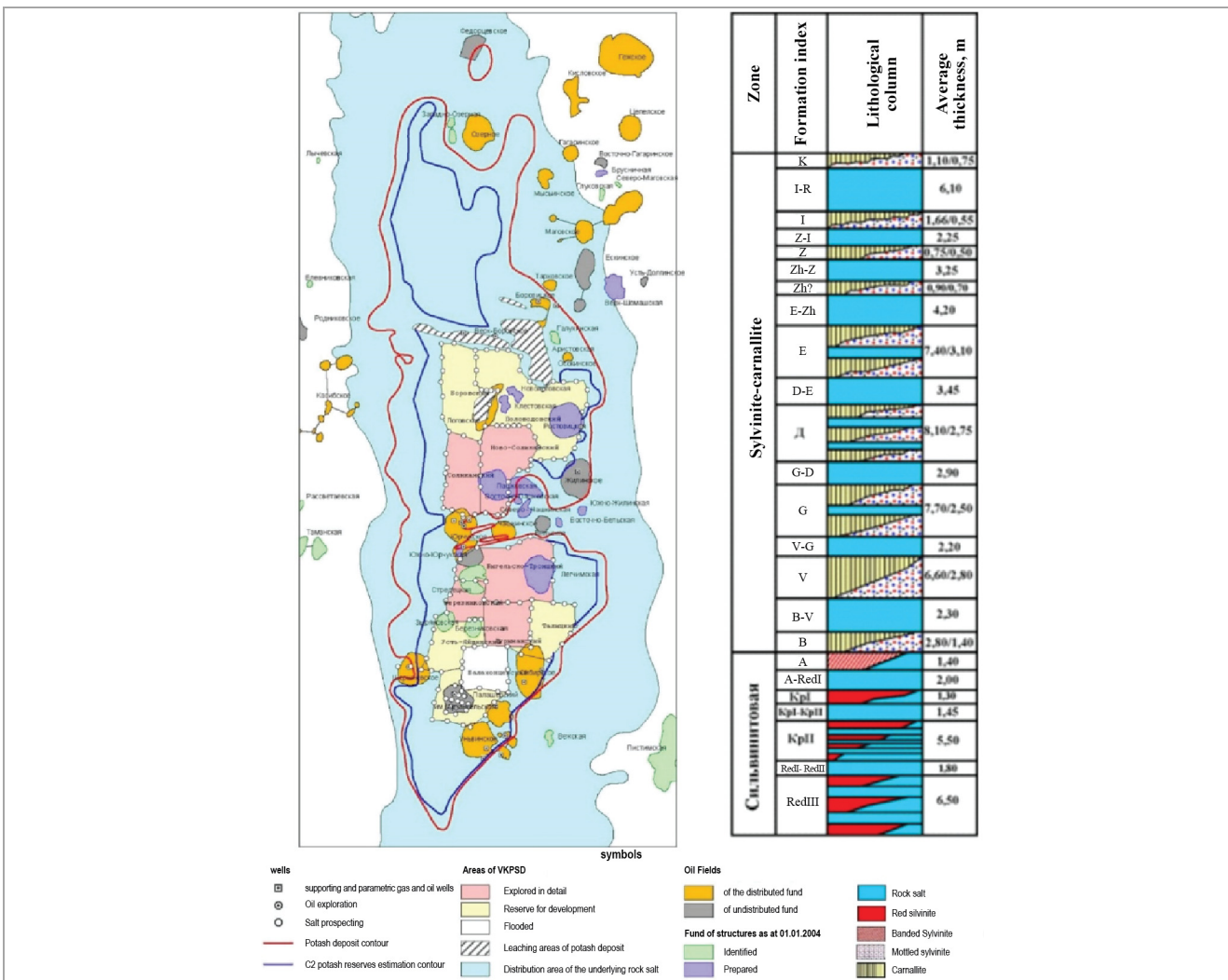


Fig. 1. Combined plan of the Verkhnekamskoe potassium deposit, oil fields and potentially oil-bearing structures

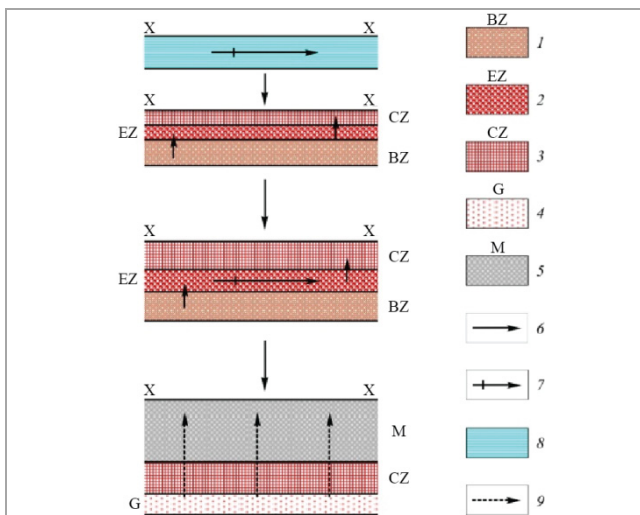


Fig. 2. Model elementary diagram of three-zone functional systems of metasomatism in the formation of GDP source kitchens: P – conductor; T – crack; 1 – bottomhole zone; 2 – exchange zone; 3 – condensation zone; 4 – free gas; 5 – metasomatitis and intersomatitis; 6 – mass transfer between the bottomhole and condensation zones through the exchange; 7 – longitudinal mass transfer along the exchange zone; 8 – rock salt with a "cake" and halopelite layers and interlayers; 9 – direction of migration of free gases in the process of metasomatism; TK – transit zone

Information on gas emissions recorded during drilling of wells at the Verkhnekamskoe potassium deposit, given in archive data and prospecting and evaluating reports, was compiled into a table and analysed. A total of 410 events were collected from more than 180 wells. The largest number of gas occurrences was recorded in the Polovodovsky, Ust-Yayvinsky, Borovsky and Palashersky sections of the VKPSD [7].

It should be noted that in order to increase the reliability of the forecast of gas-dynamic hazard and the effectiveness of preventive measures for its control, it is necessary consider the geological conditions for the accumulations of free gases formation and kitchen sources of gas-dynamic phenomena, including a possible genetic link with epigenetic processes in the potash deposit and oil and gas content of the underlying deposits, which is manifested in the workings of potassium mines in the form of traces of oil showings and the presence of free gases in salt rocks in certain areas of the deposit with an abnormally high total content of heavy hydrocarbon gases reaching 20% or more.

At present, there is no model of the geological mechanism of gas accumulation sources and gas dynamic phenomena in the sylvinitic-carnallite zone rocks above the bed V in the process of epigenetic transformations of sylvinitic and sylvinitic-carnallite zone rocks of the Verkhnekamskoye potash deposit salt column and possible migration of gas-saturated fluids into the salt column from the underlying oil-and-gas-bearing deposits.

The methods of modelling and forecasting of gasdynamic hazard are described in detail in the works of both domestic and foreign authors [8-34]. For the first time, GDP kitchen sources were considered in the work of M.P. Fiveg [35]. Their consideration is based on the point of view based on the ideas of halokinesis

and rejecting the existence of discontinuous dislocations. Kitchen sources of GDP in the bed V was attributed to crushing zones by Dr. Sci. N.M. Proskuryakov [36, 37]. The contours of the geological model of formation of gas-dynamic sources in salt rocks were formulated by Dr. A.I. Kudryashov and further developed by Dr. S.S. Andreiko [1]. However, in the construction of the geological model the authors considered only industrial formations RedII or AB. Geological mechanisms of formation of free gas accumulation sources and sources of gas dynamic phenomena in the rocks of the sylvinitic-carnallite zone (with the exception of formation V) of the Verkhnekamsk potassium salt deposit have not been considered at all so far.

Therefore, the development of a geological model of the mechanism of formation of gas-dynamic hazard zones in the rocks of the sylvinitic-carnallite zone of the Verkhnekamsk potassium salt deposit in the process of epigenetic transformations of rocks of the sylvinitic and sylvinitic-carnallite zones of the Verkhnekamskoe potassium salt deposit is an urgent task. On the basis of this model, it is planned to develop methods for predicting gas-dynamic hazard zones in the sylvinitic-carnallite zone rocks of the Verkhnekamsk potash deposit, which will improve the safety of geological exploration from the surface and from mine workings in potash mines.

#### Methods of research

In order to develop a scientifically based geological model of the mechanism of formation of gas-dynamic hazard centers in the rocks of the sylvinitic-carnallite zone, it is necessary to establish the sources of gas-saturated fluids, the ways of fluid migration into the salt stratum and the mechanism of formation of gas-saturated zones.

For the conditions of the Verkhnekamskoye potassium salt deposit the model scheme of the three-zone system of metasomatism, presented in Fig. 2, corresponds to the mechanism of formation of gas-saturated zones in the process of epigenetic transformations of salt rocks, in particular, carnallite sylvinitization, most completely. In this case, free gas will accumulate in microcavities and voids between the metasomatite and the outer wall of the conductor of aqueous solutions. Based on the work of the model scheme of the three-zone system of metasomatism, a geological model of the mechanism of formation of gas-dynamic hazard centers in the rocks of the sylvinitic-carnallite zone was constructed.

#### Geological model of the mechanism of gas saturated zones formation

In the conditions of the Verkhnekamskoye potassium salt deposit, the mechanism of formation of gas-saturated zones in the rocks of the sylvinitic-carnallite zone of the salt stratum should be considered as a single process of tectogenesis, migration of gas-saturated fluids, epigenetic transformations of rocks of the sylvinitic-carnallite zone, cracking and delamination in the process of natural "underworking" and accumulation of gases (formation of gas-saturated zones – zones of gas-dynamic hazard during geological

exploration and mining) in areas of natural "undermining". In the proposed geological model of the mechanism of gas-saturated zones formation, as mentioned above, the sources of gas-saturated fluids could be packs of clay-anhydrite rocks (sources of gas-bearing aqueous solutions), as well as oil-bearing fields and promising oil-bearing structures in the underlying rock strata [38]. The formation of gas-saturated zones in the rocks of the sylvinite-carnallite zone of the field was followed by a very complex process of halogen metasomatism, accompanied by epigenetic transformations of rocks and the release of dissolved gases into the free phase.

The chemical impact of groundwater is the most powerful factor in the epigenesis of the salt strata of the Verkhnekamsk potassium salt deposit. In the conditions of the deposit the groundwater include post-salt, intra-salt and sub-salt waters [1]. Post-salt waters are infiltrative, and their participation in the mechanism of formation of gas-saturated zones is unlikely. On the contrary, penetrating into the salt column, infiltration water played a destructive role, destroying gas-saturated zones within the large positive structures of the Verkhnekamskoye field. The amount of intra-salt waters in the modern deposit is small, and the waters themselves are in physical-chemical equilibrium with the composition of the host rocks. At the same time, there is a correlation between the intensity of salt deformation and their secondary transformations (clarification, recrystallisation, partial replacement), which is most logically explained by the interaction of salts with intra-salt aqueous solutions. The most probable source of aqueous solutions within the salt strata are clay-anhydrite rock packs. It is known that the pre-salt hydrogeological stage contains six aquifer systems: Lower Permian-Upper Carboniferous; Moscovian; Bashkirian-Upper Visian; Middle-Lower Visian terrigenous, Turnean-Upper Devonian carbonate and Upper-Middle Devonian terrigenous [1, p. 79]. According to a number of researchers, subsalt waters within the Solikamsk depression are gas-saturated and, in the presence of upward migration pathways, could also come into contact with salts.

The upward migration pathways could be: discontinuous tectonic disturbances that were formed as a result of differentiated movements of the subsalt bed; thrust faults formed as a result of unidirectional east-west tectonic pressure directed from bottom to top and from east to west; end-to-end zones of excessive fracturing formed in the course of tectonic development of the Solikamsk depression over the joints of crystalline basement blocks in the sedimentary cover, which could penetrate the salt deposit as well [1, 39, 40]. Without entering into discussions about the ways of upward migration of aggressive gas-saturated aqueous solutions with the authors of these scientific works, we accept that the ways of upward migration of gas-saturated fluids into the salt strata could be all the above-mentioned permeable zones.

It should be noted that the upward migration pathways of gas-saturated fluids from oil fields and potentially oil-bearing structures could be permeable zones above the reefogenic structures. It is known that substitution zones in potassium reservoirs gravitate to the slopes of reefogenic structures [41]. At present, the hypothesis of initiating fracture development above the

reef slope has been put forward and geomechanical modelling by the boundary element method in the "discontinuous displacement" variant has been carried out [43, 44]. As a result of the studies, it was determined the area of fracture propagation above the reefogenic structures which is about 2000 m and reaches the rocks of the salt strata. Thus, it was proved that permeable zones are formed above the reefogenic structures which can serve as pathways for migration of oil fluids into the salt strata.

The migration of gas-saturated fluids into the salt column occurred in the subvertical direction (from bottom to top) in the underlying rocks. Directly in the rocks of the salt stratum, due to the pronounced anisotropy of filtration properties of the saline stratum, the lateral direction of gas-saturated fluid migration prevailed over the vertical direction, and fluid movement occurred along the strata. In this case, the fluids moved through clay interlayers, including the marking clay layer and the intergranular space.

The important role of replacement zones (halitisation) of sylvinite and carnallite strata in the geological mechanism of gas-saturated zones formation in rocks of sylvinite-carnallite zone should be specially pointed out. Replacement of sylvinites and carnallites by rock salt, formation of mottled sylvinites, mixed salts (sylvinite+carnallite) and formation of gas saturated zones in rocks of sylvinite-carnallite zone should be considered as a single process occurring as a result of migration through the thickness and in the thickness of potassium-magnesium salts fluids represented by gas-saturated aqueous solutions or fluids of oil fields (potentially oil-bearing structures). In accordance with the accepted typology, replacement (halitisation) zones of sylvinite beds are subdivided into shielded, open and through [39, p.156-160]. Shielded replacement zones are characterised by the fact that directly above the replacement zone of industrial strata lies one or more beds of sylvinite-carnallite zone, composed of mottled sylvinites. This type includes small, medium and large replacement zones. The open type of replacement zones is characterised by the location of all sylvinite-carnallite zone strata above the industrial replacement zone, represented by mottled sylvinites. Through type of replacement zones is characterized by replacement by rock salt of all layers of sylvinite and sylvinite-carnallite zones by rock salt at completeness of their section in which a layer of marking clay and covering rock salt is presented. The main difference of the internal structure of the through-type replacement zone of the previous two types is replacement of all sylvinite-carnallite zone strata by rock salt. As can be seen from the characteristics of the considered substitution zones, the external and internal structure of all substitution zones are not fundamentally different from each other, which indicates a single epigenetic process of such zones formation. The main difference will consist in the scales of epigenetic processes vertically and laterally in the rocks of the sylvinite-carnallite zone during the formation of gas-saturated zones.

Let us consider the geological mechanism of formation of gas-saturated zones in the rocks of sylvinite-carnallite zone at migration of gas-saturated water solutions in the direction from the replacement zone towards the development of carnallitic rocks.

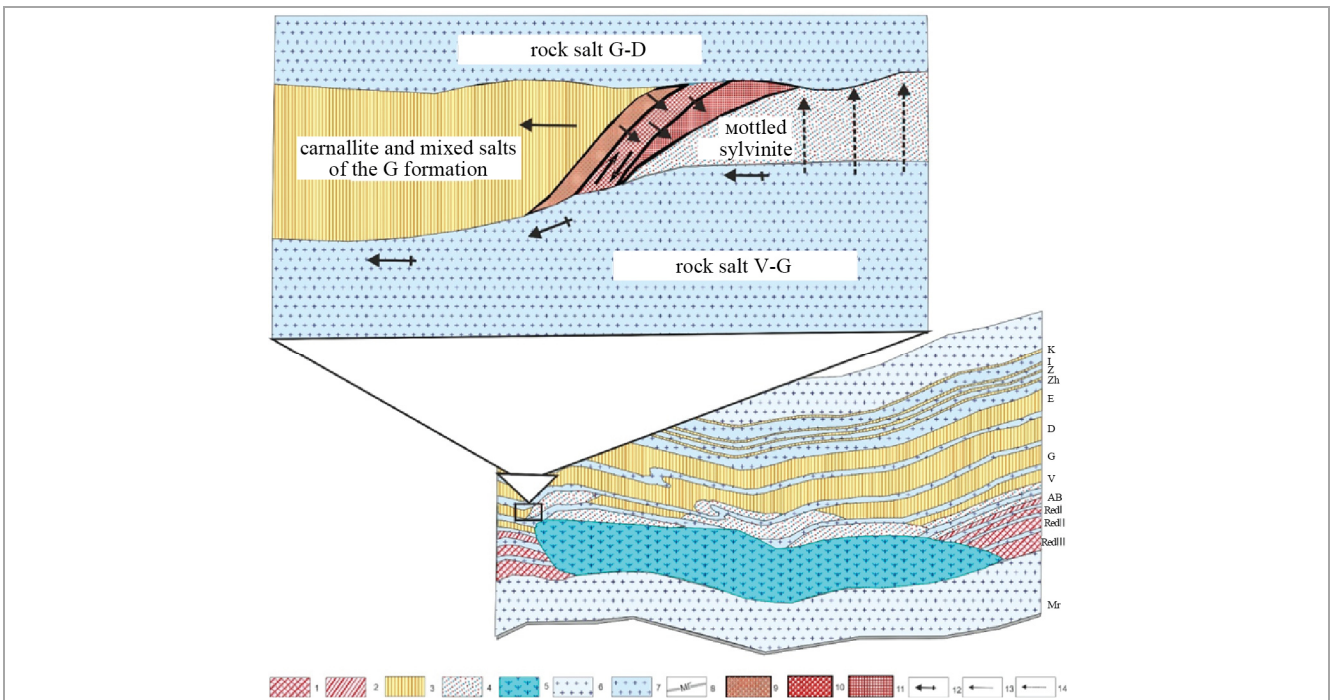


Fig. 3. Model scheme of the three-zone functional system of metasomatism during lateral migration of gas-saturated fluids from the shielded replacement zone in the conditions of the G formation during generation of gas-saturated zones: 1 – red sylvinitite; 2 – banded sylvinitite; 3 – carnallite; 4 – mottled sylvinitite; 5 – replacement rock salt; 6 – covering and underlying rock salt; 7 – interbed rock salt; 8 – marking horizon; 9 – condensation zone; 10 – exchange zone; 11 – bottom-hole zone; 12 – mass exchange between bottom-hole and condensation zone through exchange zone, of exchange zone with transit zone; 13 – longitudinal mass transfer; 14 – direction of free gas migration in the process of metasomatism

In this case, we will proceed from a special case when the replacement zone is represented by the shielded type as the most widespread in the deposit. As an example of epigenetic changes in carnallitic rocks of sylvinitite-carnallite zone by the mechanism of halogen metasomatism let us consider carnallitic formation G. It should be noted that when gas-saturated aqueous solutions affect other carnallitic formations (D, E, Zh, etc.) during their lateral migration from replacement zones towards carnallitic rocks, the mechanism of epigenetic change of rocks will be similar to the one considered for formation G. The model scheme of a three-zone functional system of halogen metasomatism in conditions of carnallitic formation G is presented in Fig. 3. Due to the high permeability of clay-anhydrite interlayers, aggressive solutions penetrated, first of all, through saline clays and, consequently, sylvinitisation of carnallitic rocks of Formation G started mainly from above. In the presence of saline clay layers and interlayers in the soil of Formation G, sylvinitisation could also occur from below, as shown in Fig. 3. The strike zone of the three-zone functional system of metasomatism moved both downward from the conductor and forward in the direction of water solution movement. The decomposition of carnallite was accompanied by the deficit of solid phase, since the aggressiveness of aqueous solution with respect to carnallite is equal to approximately unity element [1, p. 304–308; 41]. As a result, the newly formed rock – mottled sylvinitite – has increased porosity near the contact with carnallite rock. In the areas of complete decomposition of carnallite of the G formation, structural bonds between mineral grains under the influence of lithostatic pressure and continuing migration of solutions were restored, and the rock became monolithic, practically devoid of large pores. Thus, a kind of "gas

barrier" was created, preventing the migration of gases in the direction opposite to the movement of the sylvinitisation front of the carnallite of the G formation. As the sylvinitisation front (bottomhole, exchange and condensation zones of the halogen metasomatism system) progressed, the areas with different porosity moved in the same direction as the migrating solutions – towards the carnallitic rocks of the G formation. As the practice of mining operations at the industrial AB formation shows, the greatest amount of gas emissions and gas-dynamic phenomena occurred in the areas of development of more porous rocks at "fading" of the sylvinitisation process, i.e. near the contact of mottled sylvinitite with carnallitic rock [1, p. 318–321; 45, p. 110–118]. This explains the shift of the maximum frequency of gasdynamic phenomena towards carnallitic rocks.

It is necessary to mention one more very important nuance in the mechanism of formation of gas-saturated zones in the rocks of sylvinitite-carnallite zone. As mentioned above, in the presence of layers and interlayers of saline clays in the soil of bed G, sylvinitisation could occur from below. In this case, the process of halogen metasomatism could spread not over the entire thickness of the carnallitic formation, but only to the lower part of the formation. As a result, gas-saturated zones were formed vertically in the formation section at the boundary with the carnallitic rock. Similarly, gas-saturated zones could be formed in other thick carnallite beds of the sylvinitite-carnallite zone. The illustration of the stated situation is the case of a gas dynamic phenomenon with an intensity of 180 tons, which occurred at the mine BKPRU-2 March 15, 1973, presented in Fig. 4.

As can be seen from Fig. 4, a powerful gas-dynamic phenomenon occurred from the roof of the workings with a width of 3.0 m. The V formation, from which the

gas dynamic event occurred, is of mixed composition: the lower part of the formation is mottled sylvinites, the upper part is carnallitic rock. Similar cases of gas dynamic phenomena have repeatedly occurred in potash mines at the Verkhnekamskoe deposit.

Geomechanical is also very important aspect of formation of gas-saturated zones in rocks of sylvinite-carnallite zone during halogen metasomatism at sylvinite formation of carnallite formations. The bottomhole zone of the three-zone functional metasomatism system moved both upward from the conductor and forward in the direction of the aqueous solution movement. The decomposition of carnallite was accompanied by a shortage of solid phase since the aggressiveness of aqueous fluids relative to carnallite is approximately one. Let us consider the geomechanical processes which accompanied the sylvinitization of carnallite formations by the example of carnallite formation G. Voids were formed in the areas of complete decomposition of carnallite of formation G due to a shortage of solid phase, i.e. the thickness of formation G during sylvinitization decreased significantly, by about 3 times with average values of thickness from 7.70 to 2.50 m. The formation of such natural voids created the mining effect of additional processing of the formation suite above formation G, which underwent sylvinitization. Due to the fact that only natural processes are involved in the process of sylvinitization of carnallite beds, in this case we will understand the change in the thickness of carnallite beds during sylvinitization as natural undermining.

There are two main areas of research on the impact of mining on potash reservoirs. The first direction is related to the study of rock shear and the nature of rock pressure redistribution around the mine workings of the potash reservoir. The second direction is related to the study of processes associated with changes in the gas-dynamic characteristics of potash beds under development. Up to the present in the conditions of the Verkhnekamsk potash deposit no studies of the regularities of changes in the gas-dynamic properties of potash strata during their natural mining have been carried out. Consequently, the participation of geomechanical processes in the mechanism of formation of gas saturated zones in sylvinite-carnallite zone rocks has not been investigated so far.

It is known, that by analogy with technogenic mining, the process of sylvinitisation of carnallitic strata will be accompanied by redistribution of rock pressure, so carnallitic strata of the sylvinite-carnallite zone were exposed to different force fields. Let us consider these processes on the example of sylvinitisation of carnallitic formation G. In the area of influence of the moving front of sylvinitisation of formation G, depending on the nature of deformation and redistribution of rock pressure, the following characteristic zones were formed: not affected by mining operations (zone I); increased rock pressure (zone II); unloading (zone III); restored geostatic pressure (zone IV) (Fig. 5).

Each section of carnallitic strata located in the geological section above the G formation, when the sylvinitisation front was moving along the G formation, consistently appeared in each zone, which was accompanied by multiple changes in the type of their stress state: the state of hydrostatic compression in the zone not affected by the natural reworking; the transition

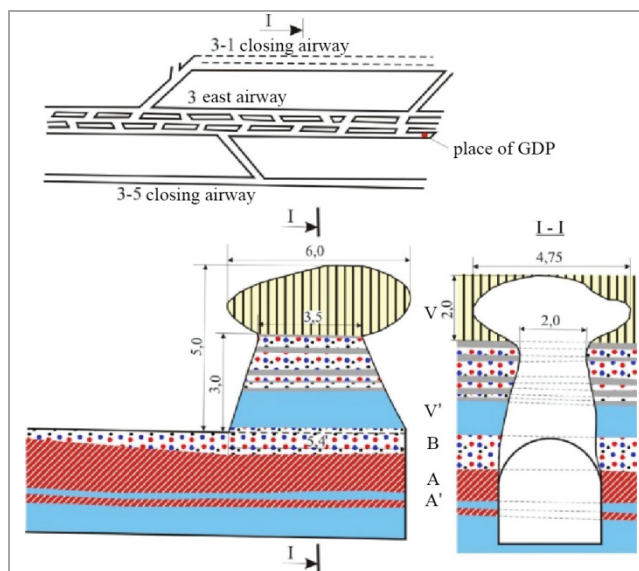


Fig. 4. Gas-dynamic phenomenon in the AB formation (mine BKPRU-2, 3rd East Panel, 3-1 East gate)

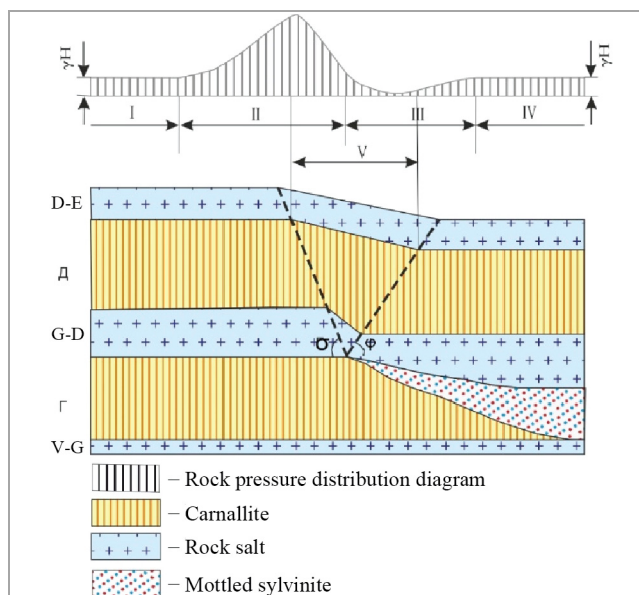


Fig. 5. Zones formed as a result of sylvinitisation (natural mining) of carnallitic formation G: I – unaffected by mining operations; II – of increased mining pressure; III – of unloading; IV – restored geostatic pressure; V – bending;  $\sigma$ ,  $\varphi$  – respectively external and internal boundary angles of full shear at sylvinitisation of the G carnallite formation

to the state of unequal compression associated with the growth of stresses normal to the stratum in the zone of support pressure; reduction of lateral spreading at the boundary of the zone of supporting event and unloading; bending and associated tensile stresses; unloading from rock pressure; recovery of rock pressure and transition to a state of hydrostatic compression.

The deformation of carnallitic strata located above the G formation in the zone of supporting pressure can be considered from the standpoint of the Griffiths theory, which in its qualitative part is reduced to the fact that any body contains within itself a multitude of chaotically located defects. In this case, numerous contacts between lithological differences of rocks, layers and interlayers of clays in carnallitic strata can be considered as inclusions. In conditions of unequal compression, tensile stresses arise

on the contour of these defects, which cause the destruction of the body. Under triaxial unequal-component compression there are observed large plastic deformations of the body caused by the development of internal fracturing and delaminations, which are accompanied by an increase in volume and gas permeability. In this case, the intensity of the process will be the higher, the greater the difference between the normal components of the stress tensor, i.e. reduction of lateral spreading at the boundary of the support pressure zone and the unloading zone will contribute to disruption of the original structure of carnallitic strata as a result of microdefects development.

The deformation of carnallitic strata in the bending zone, which includes part of the zones of increased rock pressure and unloading is of particular interest from the point of view of rock structure disturbance (Fig. 5, zone IV). Within this zone there are active stages of shearing processes, deformation of the massif and redistribution of rock pressure. At the same time, various combinations of main stresses can be generated, up to the appearance of tensile forces. In addition, this zone is characterised by the growth of tangential stresses. In the bending zone, there are created conditions for the increase of fracturing and formation of delaminations, which are undermined during sylvinitisation of the G formation in carnallitic strata as a result of shearing and stretching along the planes of natural heterogeneities and newly formed fracturing.

Changes in the structure of carnallitic strata during their natural reworking will also be promoted by their gas saturation, which leads to the deformations growth in both elastic and plastic regions, as well as to a reduction of strength, yield strength and fracture work.

In accordance with the abovementioned provisions natural reworking of carnallitic strata located above the G formation during its sylvinitisation can be represented as a sequential change of stress state types, each of which corresponds to a certain form of deformation:

- fracturing during the transition of rocks from the state of hydrostatic compression to the state of unequal volumetric compression as a result of loading in the reference pressure zone;
- shear along natural planes of weakening and newly formed fracturing under the action of tangential stresses during the transition from the zone of supporting pressure to the zone of unloading;
- cracking, crack opening and delamination at layer contacts, clay layers and interlayers under the influence of tensile bending stresses.

The peculiarity of deformation of carnallitic strata during natural undermining in the process of sylvinitisation in the zones of increased mining pressure at the border of the sylvinitisation front is that it proceeds under prolonged action of loads. At that, the entire period of deformation can be divided into two stages:

- at direct movement of the sylvinitisation front along the carnallite bed;
- as a result of prolonged stay of carnallitic strata in the zone of increased mining pressure during natural mining.

The nature of the structure of carnallite formations formed after natural reworking is determined by the combination of deformations that took place at these

stages. At the first stage, when carnallitic strata are located in the zone of influence of the moving wave of support pressure, plastic deformations of rocks are caused by the growth of stresses normal to the strata. The main form of plastic deformations in this case will be the formation of new systems of micro- and macrocracks due to the development of internal defects. At the second stage, as a result of prolonged action of elevated stresses, plasticity and creep deformations develop and stress relaxation occurs. In the unloading zones, areas of stratification of carnallitic strata are formed along the contacts of lithological rock differences, clay interlayers and layers.

Thus, in the process of natural underworking of carnallitic strata during sylvinitisation, prerequisites for changing the original rock structure are created, consisting in the appearance of new systems of micro- and macrocracks, as well as segregation along layer contacts, clay interlayers and layers. When several carnallitic strata are sylvinitised, e.g. B, V and G, these effects are intensified. This process can be defined as geomechanical destruction of carnallitic strata of the sylvinite-carnallitic zone under the influence of natural underworking during sylvinitisation of carnallitic formations. As a result of natural underworking within the area of influence of sylvinitisation fronts, areas with different structures and, consequently, with different gas-dynamic characteristics of rocks are formed in carnallitic formations.

Since the deformation of carnallitic strata under the influence of natural underworking lasts for a long geological time, any stop of the sylvinitisation front boundary is a source of the edge part of the shift trough. In the marginal parts of shift troughs carnallitic strata will undergo maximum deformation with the development of fracturing and stratification at layer contacts, clay layers and interlayers, therefore, filtration and reservoir properties of carnallitic strata in these zones will play a very important role in terms of the possibility of formation of gas saturated zones. In these areas, gas-dynamic anomalies are most likely to appear in carnallitic formations, i.e. areas characterised by the degree of rock disturbance, gas content and gas-dynamic characteristics.

In carnallitic strata, mined during sylvinitisation, in the zone of unloading from vertical stresses caused by fractures and stratification along layer contacts, clay layers and interlayers, favourable conditions for free gas filtration into it are created. Thus, during natural underworking in the area of low stresses, quasi-isolated gas-filled areas are formed as a result of rock stratification at layer contacts, clay layers and interlayers. As a result, free gas accumulates in the low-stress zone in quantities exceeding its content in the tight rock. At the same time, additional compressive stresses acting on the other side of the boundary play the role of a kind of barrier preventing further filtration of the gas and its more uniform distribution along the undermined rock. Due to the unstable equilibrium of the system of gas-filled cracks, gas pressure growth in them can occur impulsively, so that to reach very significant values. A similar mechanism could be used to form gas-saturated zones in the layers of the sylvinite-carnallite zone in the process of sylvinitization of other carnallite formations, one or more simultaneously.

## Conclusion

The geological model of the mechanism of formation of gas-dynamic hazard centers in the rocks of the sylvinitic-carnallite zone at the Verkhnekamsk potassium-magnesium salt deposit can be presented as follows:

1. The sources of gas-saturated fluids were gas-bearing aqueous solutions from the underlying salt strata, including oil fields and potentially oil-bearing structures. The upward migration pathways of gas-saturated fluids into the salt column could be tectonic discontinuities, thrusts, through zones of increased fracturing and permeability zones above the reef slopes.

2. Migration of gas-saturated fluids into the salt strata through the underlying rocks was predominantly in the subvertical direction (from bottom to top). Directly in the rocks of the sylvinitic-carnallite zone, the lateral direction of gas-saturated fluid migration prevailed over the vertical direction. In the rocks of the sylvinitic-carnallite zone, gas-saturated fluids moved through clay layers and interlayers, as well as through the intergranular space.

3. Replacement of sylvinites and carnallites by rock salt, formation of mottled sylvinites, mixed salts (sylvinitic+carnallite) and formation of gas-saturated zones in rocks of sylvinitic-carnallite zone should be considered as a single process occurring as a result of the migration of through and in the thickness of potassium-magnesium salts of gas-saturated fluids represented by gas-saturated aqueous solutions or fluids of oil fields (oil prospective structures).

4. Gas-saturated fluids penetrated into the sylvinitic-carnallite zone along the upward migration paths and moved laterally from the replacement zones towards the carnallitic rocks. Lateral migration of gas-saturated fluids through clay layers and interlayers, as well as intergranular space of carnallitic rocks was accompanied by epigenetic changes – sylvinitisation of carnallitic formations by the mechanism of halogen metasomatism, which is the work of a three-zone functional system consisting of bottomhole, exchange and condensation zones.

5. The rock formed during sylvinitisation of carnallites – mottled sylvinitic near the contact with carnallitic rock both laterally and vertically – had increased porosity.

In such rocks there was an accumulation of free gases released from gas-saturated fluids under changing thermobaric conditions and the effect of "salinisation" of gases under increasing mineralisation of aqueous solutions. In addition, bound gases, which were transferred to the free phase during the decomposition of carnallites, could also accumulate here.

6. Further, the structural bonds between mineral grains under the influence of lithostatic pressure and continuing migration of solutions were restored, and the rock became monolithic, practically devoid of large pores. At some distance from the "carnallite – mottled sylvinitic" contact, a kind of "gas barrier" was created, preventing gas migration in the direction opposite to the movement of the sylvinitisation front of carnallitic strata. As the sylvinitisation front (bottomhole, exchange and condensation zones of the halogen metasomatism system) progressed, the areas with different porosity moved in the same direction as the migrating solutions – towards the carnallitic rocks. The process of sylvinitisation of carnallites subsided as aggressive solutions saturated with magnesium chloride.

7. In areas of complete decomposition of carnallites in the process of sylvinitisation, voids were formed due to the deficit of solid phase, i.e. the thickness of formations during sylvinitisation decreased significantly, approximately by 2-3 times. The formation of such natural voids created the well-known mining effect of undermining the formation of layers above the layer that had undergone sylvinitization. In the process of natural underworking of carnallitic formations during sylvinitisation, there are created prerequisites for changing the original rock structure, consisting in the appearance of new systems of micro- and macro-cracks, as well as stratification at layer contacts, clay interlayers and layers. As a result of natural underworking within the area of influence of sylvinitisation fronts, areas with different structures and, consequently, with different gas dynamic characteristics of rocks are formed in carnallitic strata.

8. The deformation of carnallite formations under the influence of natural undermining lasts for a long geological time, and any stop of the border of the sylvinitization front turns out to be the source of the marginal part of the shift trough. In the marginal parts of the shift troughs, carnallite beds will undergo maximum deformations with the development of fracturing and stratification along the contacts of layers, clay layers and interlayers. The filtration and reservoir properties of carnallite formations in these zones will play a very important role in terms of the possibility of forming gas-saturated zones. In these areas, gas-dynamic anomalies are most likely to appear in carnallite formations, i.e. areas that differ in the degree of rock disturbance, their gas content and gas-dynamic characteristics, which are zones of gas-dynamic hazard during mining operations. The boundaries of such zones of gas-dynamic hazard within specific carnallite formations of the sylvinitic-carnallite zone will be determined by the angular characteristics of the marginal parts of the shift troughs formed on the border of the sylvinitization front of carnallites.

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