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WASTE MINIMIZATION AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT IN AN ELECTROPLATING INDUSTRY

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for
the Master of Science Degree in Environmental Management



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January, 2002

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Description	Page
Table of Contents.....	I
List of Tables.....	II
List of Figures.....	III
Declaration.....	IV
Acknowledgement.....	V
Summary.....	VI
Chapter One – Introduction	1
Chapter Two – Literature Review.....	6
Chapter Three - Methods and Materials.....	47
Chapter Four – Results	52
Chapter five – Discussion	68
Chapter six – Conclusions and Recommendation.....	79
References.....	82



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LIST OF TABLES

Table No.	Description	Page
Table 2.1	Criteria for quality evaluation.....	13
Table 2.2	Degreasing solutions available in the market.....	16
Table 2.3	Composition of nickel plating bath solutions and plating condition.....	19
Table 2.4	Types and Effects of Additives Used in Bright Nickel Plating Solution.....	20
Table 2.5	Effect of impurities and their removal.....	23
Table 2.6	Composition of chromium plating baths and plating conditions.....	25
Table 2.7	Sources of pollution in the metal-plating industry.....	39
Table 2.8	Composition of wastewater discharged from pickling of ferrous metals.....	40
Table 2.9	Amount of wastewater from the electroplating industry.....	40
Table 2.10	Composition of wastewater from electroplating plants.....	41
Table 2.11	pK values of hydroxides of some heavy metals.....	43
Table 2.12	pH values where the solubility is <10mg/l, <1mg/l and <0.1mg/l	43
Table 2.13	Complexes formation.....	44
Table 3.1	Parameters selected in determination.....	49
Table 4.1	Raw materials used in the process unit operations.....	56
Table 4.2	Energy consumption for bath heating.....	59
Table 4.3	Wastewater generation in the production processes.....	60
Table 4.4	Process Operating Conditions.....	61
Table 4.5	Bath composition.....	62
Table 4.6	Chromium and nickel concentrations of the treated wastewater	66
Table 5.1	Possible savings achieved if they operate the plant for long hours	73

LIST OF FIGURES

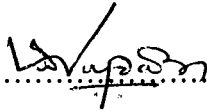
Figure No	Description	Page
Figure 2.1	Methodology of Waste Minimization.....	29
Figure 4.1	Plant layout.....	53
Figure 4.2	Process flow chart.....	57
Figure 4.3	Flow chart of the wastewater treatment	64
Figure 4.4	Nickel concentration in the supernatant.....	67
Figure 4.5	Chromium concentration in the supernatant.....	67



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DECLARATION

“This dissertation has not been previously presented in whole or part to any university or institute for a higher degree”



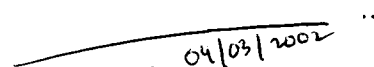
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Acknowledgement

I am very grateful to the Head and staff of Department of Civil Engineering of the University of Moratuwa, for providing me with the opportunity to follow the Masters Degree in Environmental Management, and their unceasing assistance, throughout the course.

I deeply appreciate the excellent guidance, valuable suggestions, constant encouragement, advice and the precious time devoted by Prof. Mrs. N. Rathnayake, Head of Division of Environmental Engineering and the course coordinator, who was also the supervisor of this research study.

I extend my gratitude to Mr. Nafeel and the Management of the City Cycle Industries for permitting me to study their production facility and the wastewater treatment plant which were taken up for this research study and especially Mr. Wahab and Mr. Ghose, Plant Manager for their support and devotion of their valuable time in the midst of their tight schedule of work.

I wish to thank Mr. Mihindu Gunasena, the superintendent of the Electroplating unit of the Industrial Development Board for his brilliant ideas, which helped this research very much.

I also wish to thank the Management of the Central Environmental Authority, my employer, for sponsoring me to follow this course and for granting me the permission to use its laboratory and other facilities where the analytical work pertaining to this study was carried out. In this regard a special word of thanks go to the staff of the laboratory, who were very helpful during the analytical work.

Finally I wish to thank my wife Suja for her understanding, motivation and for her assistance.

SUMMARY

Electroplating has been introduced to Sri Lanka more than a hundred years ago and there are more than 80 electroplating units in Sri Lanka, including household units. However, it has been found that the electroplating technology in Sri Lanka is lagging behind the world level and several problems of electroplating facilities with regard to plating technology and wastewater treatment had been identified.

The objective of this study was to investigate the possibilities of waste minimization and optimization of wastewater treatment in the electroplating industry using readily available resources and technologies in the country, focusing on the nickel and chromium-plating process and treatment of wastewater generated in that process.



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Methodology of this study consisted of making observations of the existing process estimating water and energy consumption, analysis of process solutions and treated wastewater, studying process parameters used in the production process and wastewater treatment, and carrying out a designed experiment to study optimum pH for heavy metal precipitation.

It was found that quality control of the product is poor and the industry lacks technical know-how to carry out the electroplating process and wastewater treatment efficiently. However, the industry has already implemented a few quality control and waste minimization activities such as quality control of intermediate product within the process, two stage rinsing, and dragout recovery.

Possibilities to reduce electricity and water consumption without affecting the quality of the product through introduction of temperature control units for heaters, removal of unnecessary unit operations employed in the production process etc. and the necessity of proper stripping of rejects before recycling them into the production process in order to avoid unnecessary contaminations of bath solutions were identified. With regard to the wastewater treatment, it was found that the optimum pH for hydroxide precipitation of nickel and chromium in a mixture is pH 8.0.

It is recommended to introduce drain boards, stripping for rejects, temperature feed back control system for heaters and improved process control in nickel-plating activity immediately and , to study the possibility of working longer hours a day than the normal 8hr shift, which would increase the savings on electricity used for bath heating. It is also recommended to omit unnecessary unit operations and to change over to Cr³⁺ chromium plating solution instead of Cr⁶⁺ solutions, while proper quality control procedures such as corrosion resistance test & Adhesion tests are carried out to increase the value of the product and reduce wastage.

Measures recommended to improve the wastewater treatment system include carrying out chromium reduction at pH 3 for a minimum period of 30 minutes, strict control of Cr⁶⁺ discharge into the Heavy Metal Precipitation Tank, carrying out nickel and chromium precipitation at a pH value between 8 – 8.5 and filtering supernatant of the sedimentation tank to avoid escape of suspended material with the supernatant.

