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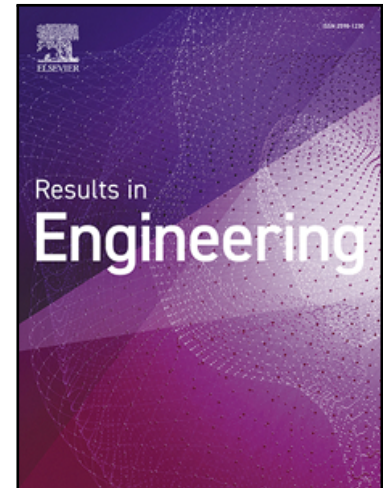
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Andrei N. Lipatnikov

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## Highlights

- Laminar flame speeds are computed for a wide set of  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CO}_2/\text{CH}_4/\text{air}$  mixtures
- Weak influence of CO concentration on lean flammability limit of  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{air}$  mixtures
- In  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CO}_2/\text{CH}_4$  blends, methane can mitigate fire risk better than inert  $\text{CO}_2$
- For  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CO}_2/\text{CH}_4/\text{air}$  mixtures with large volume fraction of  $\text{CO}_2$  there is fire risk

Laminar burning velocities and lean flammability limits of  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CH}_4/\text{CO}_2/\text{air}$  mixtures associated with gases vented out Li-ion batteries after thermal runaway

Andrei N. Lipatnikov\*

Department of Mechanics and Maritime Sciences, Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, 412 96, Sweden

## Abstract

To explore major combustion characteristics of mixtures relevant to gases vented out Li-ion batteries, complex-chemistry simulations of laminar flames are performed for a wide range of  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CO}_2/\text{CH}_4/\text{air}$  mixtures by varying equivalence ratio and mole fractions of these species. The simulations are done for different temperatures of unburned reactants, using three state-of-the-art chemical mechanisms and multicomponent diffusion model with Soret effect. The focus of the study is placed on the influence of concentrations of CO,  $\text{CO}_2$ , and  $\text{CH}_4$  on the computed laminar flame speeds  $S_L$  and a surrogate of lean flammability limit, i.e., equivalence ratio  $\phi^*$  associated with a small speed  $S_L(\phi^*) = 5 \text{ cm/s}$ . Results show that, first, both  $S_L(\phi)$  in lean mixtures and  $\phi^*$  depend weakly on mole fraction of CO in  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}$  blends. Second, an increase in  $\phi^*$  and a decrease in  $S_L(\phi)$  in lean mixtures are more (less) pronounced when adding  $\text{CH}_4$  ( $\text{CO}_2$ , respectively) to  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}$  blends. Accordingly, under certain conditions, fuel can reduce  $S_L(\phi)$  more than diluent. These observations are attributed to a larger (smaller) increase in the mole fraction of inert species when adding  $\text{CH}_4$  ( $\text{CO}_2$ , respectively) to  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}$  blends but retaining the same (low) equivalence ratio. Finally, results show that a large volume fraction of  $\text{CO}_2$  in gases vented out a battery does not exclude fire risks.

**Keywords:** Li-ion battery, fire risk, flammable jets, laminar flame speed, lean flammability limit, numerical simulations

## 1. Introduction

Li-Ion Battery (LIB) technology is a promising tool for sustainable development of clean and efficient power sources that utilize renewable energy and operate without contributing to the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. High power density, light weight and a long lifespan are important advantages of LIBs [1-5], which promote a rapid growth of the number of LIBs used in various sectors worldwide, ranging from small-scale applications such as cell phones and laptops to large-scale applications such as vehicles, aircraft, and ships. However, the high energy density is a hazard also. For instance, leakage of flammable electrolytes such as diethyl carbonate or dimethyl carbonate after damage of LIB poses fire risk. Moreover, LIB failures due to thermal abuse (overheat), electrical abuse (overcharging or discharging), internal short-circuit, or mechanical abuse (e.g., car crash) can trigger internal exothermic reactions within the LIB cell. Such reactions build flammable gases and increase the cell temperature, thus causing the cell to undergo thermal runaway [5-10]. Subsequently, preheated flammable gases can be released into the atmosphere and mixed with the air, followed by ignition and appearance of a jet fire or even explosion, which poses a significant risk to surroundings.

Due to the rapid growth of the number of LIBs worldwide, the number of fire incidents caused by failures of such batteries is also increased, e.g., see Table 2 in Ref. [5] or Table 3 in Ref. [10], thus, calling for intensifying research into LIB fire safety. As stated in a recent review article by Wang et al. [10], “*safety issue is still the main obstacle to the usage of LIBs in large scale applications, such as EVs and energy storage systems*”, but “*comprehensive modeling of the flames produced by the materials ejected from LIB has not been performed to date*”.

\*Corresponding author

E-mail address: lipatn@chalmers.se

These safety issues triggered research into jet fires associated with LIBs [11,12] and, in particular, into major combustion characteristics of gases vented out a LIB after thermal runaway. Such research deals with two different groups of fuels, i.e., (i) liquid carbonate esters used as electrolyte solvents in LIBs, e.g., see Refs. [13-15] and references quoted therein, and (ii) mixtures of light molecules such  $H_2$ , CO,  $CO_2$ ,  $CH_4$ ,  $C_2H_4$ , etc. [16,17]. In the former case, a fire may occur due to leakage of the solvents from a destroyed LIB, followed by the solvent evaporation and ignition. In the latter case, hot flammable gases are vented out a damaged LIB after thermal runaway, with the solvent molecules being decomposed into simpler molecules during the thermal runaway inside the battery. Typically, these two types of fires (liquid solvents or hot gases) do not appear simultaneously and are explored separately.

The present work is solely restricted to the latter (gaseous) mixtures. For them, two major combustion characteristics are in the research focus. These are (ii.a) ignition delay time and explosion limits [18,19] and (ii.b) laminar flame speed and flammability limits [20,21]. The present work is solely restricted to item (ii.b) and to numerical research.

Currently, advanced tools for computing laminar flame speeds of various fuel blends with the air are routinely used, as reviewed elsewhere [22]. These tools involve well validated (under room conditions) chemical mechanisms, e.g., [23-25], various computational software [26-28], molecular transport models [29] and transport property databases [30,31], a widely adopted thermodynamic property database [27], models of radiative heat transfer from flames, e.g., [19], etc. Accordingly, advanced simulations of laminar flame speeds and flammability limits are feasible for various fuel blends and such numerical studies were already performed for gases vented out LIBs after thermal runaway [18,19]. For instance, Henriksen et al. [18] investigated three  $H_2/CO/CO_2/CH_4/C_2H_4/C_2H_6$ /air mixtures and Yu et al. [19] explored burning of a single blend of  $H_2$ , CO,  $CH_4$ , and  $C_2H_4$  diluted with various amounts of  $CO_2$ ,  $H_2O$ , or  $N_2$ .

While the cited studies demonstrated predictive capabilities of state-of-the-art research tools and delivered valuable quantitative data, these results were restricted to few combinations of concentrations of hydrogen, carbon oxide, and small hydrocarbons in a fuel blend. Since mole fractions of  $H_2$ , CO,  $CH_4$ ,  $CO_2$ , and other molecules vary in wide ranges in gases vented out different batteries under different States Of Charge (SOCs) [11,16-18,32-37], there is also a need for a systematic qualitative study of major trends associated with the influence of fractions of various species in such fuel blends on laminar flame speeds and flammability limits. The present work aims at performing such a qualitative study for many  $H_2/CO/CO_2/CH_4$ /air mixtures by separately varying mole fraction of each molecule in a wide range of concentrations, associated with compositions of gases vented out LIBs after thermal runaway.

In the next section, background is summarized. The research method is briefly presented in section 3. Computed results are discussed in section 4, followed by conclusions.

## 2. Background

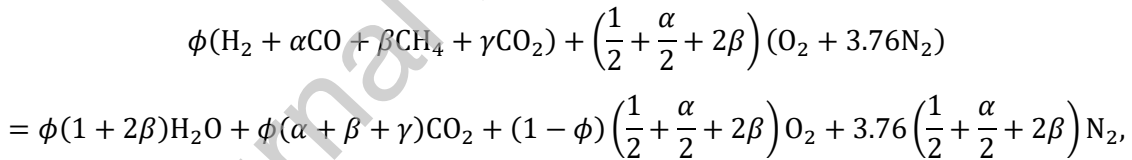
Unperturbed laminar flame speed  $S_L$  is one of the major fundamental characteristics of a reacting gaseous mixture. It is the speed of a planar, one-dimensional, adiabatic flame, whose internal structure is stationary, with respect to the upstream stationary, one-dimensional, and spatially uniform flow of unburned reactants [38]. Under these simplest conditions, the speed  $S_L$  is solely controlled by mixture composition, pressure, and temperature. This fundamental speed is (i) a target for validation of chemical mechanisms of combustion of various fuels, as reviewed elsewhere [22], and (ii) the key input parameter for various models of (partially) premixed turbulent burning [39,40], e.g., turbulent combustion rate is increased by  $S_L$ , as reviewed elsewhere [41]. To run numerical simulations of turbulent burning of gaseous jets vented out LIBs [11,12], values of  $S_L$  are typically required.

This laminar flame speed depends on many factors such as burning temperature  $T_{ad}$ , i.e., temperature of adiabatic combustion products in equilibrium state, molecular transport coefficients, combustion chemistry, pressure, etc. According to the classical theory [38],  $T_{ad}$  is the dominant factor, because (i) the major chain-branching and chain-propagating reactions are localized to narrow zones where the local temperature  $T$  is smaller than but sufficiently close to  $T_{ad}$ , (ii) the reaction rates depend exponentially on  $\Theta/T$ , with (iii) the activation temperature  $\Theta$  being typically high, i.e.,  $\Theta/T_{ad} \gg 1$ . On the contrary, dependence of  $S_L$  on pressure, molecular transport coefficients, or details of a reaction mechanism is much weaker than the exponential one [38].

If reactant temperature is kept constant, the burning temperature  $T_{ad}$  depends on heats of formation of fuel and oxidant (oxygen in the air), heat capacities of various species, but is mainly controlled by concentration of inert diluents in the mixture, which do not contribute directly to heat release, but consume heat released in chemical reactions between active species. Typically,  $T_{ad}$  is the highest in near-stoichiometric mixtures where all fuel and all oxygen are almost completely consumed [38,42]. In lean mixtures, a part of oxygen, which is an excess component, is not consumed, but acts as an inert diluent. Accordingly, the leaner a lean mixture, the lower  $T_{ad}$ . In rich mixtures, concentration of oxygen is not sufficient for the entire fuel to be fully consumed. Consequently, some products of incomplete combustion mimic an inert diluent. Therefore, the richer a rich mixture, the lower  $T_{ad}$ .

If a mixture is too lean or too rich,  $T_{ad}$  is too low for chain-branching and chain-propagating reactions whose rates depend exponentially on  $\Theta/T$  to dominate termolecular radical recombination (chain-terminating) reactions whose rates are weakly sensitive to temperature [43]. Moreover, heat release can be insufficient to overcome even small heat losses [38]. Accordingly, flame propagation is not possible in so lean or so rich mixtures. Lean (rich) flammability limit is the lowest (highest) concentration of fuel in the lean (rich) mixture that can still burn. Contrary to  $S_L$  and  $T_{ad}$ , flammability limits are not fundamental mixture characteristics, but depend on many other factors such as heat losses, buoyancy, flow non-uniformities, differences between molecular diffusivities of major reactants, flame configuration and stretch rate, etc. [42,44]. Since any of these factors can play an important role depending on conditions, quantitative prediction of flammability limits is a feasible [21], but difficult task, which requires expensive multi-dimensional numerical simulations of complex-chemistry, non-adiabatic flames propagating in non-uniform flows. Accordingly, flammability limits are often associated with a small reference value of  $S_L$ , e.g.,  $S_L^* = 5$  cm/s [45,46]. Since the present study aims solely at exploring qualitative trends, this simplest method will be used in the following. Moreover, the focus will be placed on lean mixtures, which are crucial for assessing explosion risks. Indeed, if reactants are very rich (beyond rich flammability limit), subsequent mixing with surrounding air can make conditions flammable later. If reactants are very lean, such mixing will make the reactants leaner.

Since  $S_L$  is primarily controlled by  $T_{ad}$ , which in its turn is controlled by concentration of inert species, it is plausible to highlight this concentration when discussing the influence of mole fractions of various species in  $H_2/CO/CO_2/CH_4$  fuel blend on  $S_L$ . Accordingly, let's consider the following generic reaction



where  $\phi < 1$  is equivalence ratio,  $1/2 + \alpha/2 + 2\beta$  is the stoichiometric ratio, and number 3.76 stays for the air. Here, complete combustion is assumed (i.e., small concentrations of CO and other species in products are neglected). Since inert species involve not only  $CO_2$  and  $N_2$ , but also a part of oxygen, i.e.,  $(1 - \phi)(1/2 + \alpha/2 + 2\beta)$  molecules of  $O_2$ , the total mole fraction of inert species is equal to

$$X_{in} = \frac{\phi\gamma + (1 - \phi)\left(\frac{1}{2} + \frac{\alpha}{2} + 2\beta\right) + 3.76\left(\frac{1}{2} + \frac{\alpha}{2} + 2\beta\right)}{\phi(1 + \alpha + \beta + \gamma) + 4.76\left(\frac{1}{2} + \frac{\alpha}{2} + 2\beta\right)}. \quad (1)$$

If one or two species in  $H_2/CO/CO_2/CH_4$  fuel blend are absent, mole fractions of inert species can be calculated using formulas reported in Table 1.

**Table 1**Mole fractions of inert species in various lean H<sub>2</sub>/CO/CO<sub>2</sub>/CH<sub>4</sub>/air mixtures

Fuel blend	Coefficients	$X_{in}$
H <sub>2</sub> /CO	$\beta = \gamma = 0$	$\frac{-\frac{\phi}{2} + 2.38}{\phi + 2.38}$
H <sub>2</sub> /CH <sub>4</sub>	$\alpha = \gamma = 0$	$\frac{-\frac{\phi}{2} + 2.38}{\phi - \frac{3\phi}{\beta^{-1} + 4} + 2.38}$
H <sub>2</sub> /CO <sub>2</sub>	$\alpha = \beta = 0$	$1 - \frac{\frac{3}{2}\phi}{\phi(1 + \gamma) + 2.38}$
H <sub>2</sub> /CO/CH <sub>4</sub>	$\gamma = 0$	$\frac{-\frac{\phi}{2} + 2.38}{\phi - \frac{3\phi}{(1 + \alpha)/\beta + 4} + 2.38}$
H <sub>2</sub> /CO/CO <sub>2</sub>	$\beta = 0$	$1 - \frac{3\phi}{2\left(\phi + \frac{\phi\gamma}{1 + \alpha} + 2.38\right)}$

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Numerical simulations

Stationary, one-dimensional, planar, adiabatic laminar premixed flames are numerically simulated running PREMIX module [29] of CHEMKIN-II software package [26]. The flames are described with common transport equations for mass, momentum, energy, and species concentrations [29] and by the ideal gas state equation. In the studied case, governing partial differential transport equations degenerate to a set of non-linear ordinary differential equations, which are iteratively solved. Molecular mass and heat transfer is described adopting multicomponent transport model [29], with Soret effect being also considered, because it is known to substantially affect speeds of hydrogen-air or syngas-air laminar flames [47-50]. The numerical grid is automatically refined when a normalized slope of computed variables (parameter GRAD in PREMIX module) exceeds 0.02 at any point, with weak sensitivity of computed results to variations in this threshold being checked.

For simple fuel molecules like H<sub>2</sub>, CO, or CH<sub>4</sub>, there are dozens of advanced chemical mechanisms, as reviewed elsewhere [22,51-53]. Since they were validated using the same experimental data, these mechanisms yield close values of laminar flame speeds, e.g., see Fig. 34 in Ref. [22] as a typical example. While there are small quantitative differences between values of  $S_L$ , computed using different mechanisms, such differences are often comparable with measurement errors or scatter of experimental data. Moreover, these quantitative differences are smaller in lean mixtures, with the qualitative trends being the same. Accordingly, results presented in the following were obtained adopting three of such mechanisms [23-25], which were tested in many papers. Specifically, GRI mechanism [23] is the earliest and most widely used one, especially for methane, e.g., see Figs. 34-45 in Ref. [22] or Fig. 8 in Ref. [53]. Results of validation of this mechanism against data on  $S_L$  measured in CH<sub>4</sub>-air, H<sub>2</sub>/CO/CO<sub>2</sub>-air, or H<sub>2</sub>/CO/CH<sub>4</sub>-air mixtures, can be found, e.g., in Refs. [54], [55], and [56], respectively. This mechanism was also validated for four mixtures associated with gases vented out LIBs [20]. It is worth noting, however, that performance of GRI mechanism is worse for H<sub>2</sub>-air mixtures [57]. The two other mechanisms are more modern. Princeton mechanism [24] was particularly well validated for H<sub>2</sub>/CO-air flames [58-61]. It was also validated for few H<sub>2</sub>/CO/CH<sub>4</sub>-air mixtures [62], but the present author is not aware of results of testing this mechanism against data on  $S_L$ , obtained from more complicated mixtures that are vent out LIBs. San Diego mechanism [25] was validated for H<sub>2</sub>-air [52,57,62], H<sub>2</sub>/CO-air [63], or CH<sub>4</sub>-air [22,53] mixtures, was recently applied to modeling explosion limits of NCA battery vent gas [19], and was validated for four mixtures associated with gases vented out LIBs [20].

Results of the present simulations are used not only for computing the flame speed<sup>†</sup>  $S_L$ , but also for evaluating thermal laminar flame thickness

$$\delta_L = \frac{\max\{|\nabla T|\}}{(T_{ad} - T_u)} \quad (2)$$

Here, the maximum temperature gradient is taken along the distance normal to the flame and  $T_u$  designates unburned gas temperature. This flame thickness is another fundamental characteristic of a flammable mixture [38] and is of interest, because a typical gaseous jet fire occurs in a turbulent flow and turbulent burning rate is increased not only with increasing  $S_L$  but also with decreasing  $\delta_L$ , as reviewed elsewhere [41], see also a recent paper by Wang et al. [64]. Accordingly, this thickness is another important input parameter for modeling turbulent combustion [39,40,65,66].

### 3.2. Conditions

Since the present study aims at qualitatively exploring the influence of concentrations of various species in  $H_2/CO/CO_2/CH_4$  fuel blend on  $S_L$ ,  $\delta_L$ , and lean flammability limit, four groups of cases were simulated. Within each group, (i)  $T_u$  was set equal to 300, 400, 500, or 600 K, (ii) pressure was atmospheric, and (iii) the equivalence ratio  $\phi$  was varied from small to large values to reach both lean and rich flammability limits.

First, since significant amounts of hydrogen and carbon oxide were documented in most measurements [11,16-18,32-37] of compositions of gases vented out batteries after thermal runaway (with the exception of cases with a low SOC),  $H_2/CO$ /air mixtures were simulated by varying the  $CO:H_2$  ratio from 1/9 to 3, i.e.,  $1/9 \leq \alpha \leq 3$  in the considered generic fuel blends.

Second, since methane (fuel) and carbon dioxide (inert diluent) were also detected in most measurements [11,16-18,32-37] of compositions of gases vented out batteries after thermal runaway, the aforementioned  $H_2/CO$ /air mixtures were extended either by adding extra fuel  $CH_4$  (group 2) or extra diluent  $CO_2$  (group 3). Specifically,  $0.058 < \beta < 0.65$  and  $\gamma = 0$  in group 2 or  $\beta = 0$  and  $0.12 < \gamma < 2.7$  in group 3. Large values of  $\gamma$  are associated with a low SOC [11,16-18,32-37].

Third, mixtures listed in Table 2 were studied. All these mixtures are generic, i.e., their compositions differ from measured compositions [11,16-18,32-37] of gases vented out batteries. Alternatively, compositions of gases listed in Table 2 have been designed (i) to cover a range of compositions reported in the cited papers and (ii) to explore the influence of separate variations in concentration of each single species on  $S_L$ . Accordingly, mixture compositions listed in Table 2 mimic the measured compositions (e.g., ratios of volume fractions of  $H_2$ ,  $CO$ , and  $CO_2$  are comparable or/and volume fractions of hydrocarbons are comparable), but do not equal to the measured compositions (e.g., hydrocarbons  $C_nH_m$  with  $n > 1$  or/and  $m < 4$  are substituted with  $CH_4$  in Table 2, with investigation of  $H_2/CO/CO_2/CH_4/C_nH_m$  blends being the next task for future work), because concentrations of several species are different in each pair of the measured compositions. For convenience, relevant measured mixture compositions are reported for each generic mixture in the right-hand column in Table 2. Here, in the measured case names, numbers show SOC and abbreviations LCO, LFP, NCA, and NMC refer to cathode chemistries, specifically, lithium-cobalt-oxide, lithium-iron-phosphate, lithium-nickel-cobalt-aluminum-oxide, and lithium-manganese-cobalt-oxide, respectively. The reader interested in further details is referred to the cited papers.

In the next section, a small part of computed results is reported to emphasize the key trends and to present apparently surprising observations. Since the same trends were obtained at different unburned gas temperatures, only results computed at  $T_u = 300$  K or/and  $T_u = 400$  K are presented, whereas data obtained at other  $T_u$ , e.g., 500 K or 600 K, will be skipped for brevity. The entire numerical database is available upon request.

<sup>†</sup>Since (i) the adopted software, models, chemical mechanisms, and databases constitute a routine, but still state-of-the-art tool for combustion research and (ii) capabilities of this tool for predicting  $S_L$  for various fuel-air mixtures (including all fuels the present work deals with) were already shown by many research groups, computed values of  $S_L$  are not compared with experimental data in the present paper for brevity. A large amount of such validation data can be found in a recent review paper by Konnov et al. [22] or, e.g., in Refs. [20,23,52-63].



**Table 2**Compositions of generic  $H_2/CO/CO_2/CH_4$  mixtures simulated in this work

Number	Species mole fractions				Relevant measured mixture composition
	$H_2$	CO	$CO_2$	$CH_4$	
1	27	27	27	19	LCO 150: $29.6H_2+24.4CO+20.8CO_2+8.2CH_4+17C_nH_m$ [34]
2	29	29	29	13	LCO 100: $27.5H_2+22.7CO+29.8CO_2+6.3CH_4+13.7C_nH_m$ [34]
3	31	31	31	7	LCO/NMC 100: $30H_2+27.6CO+24.9CO_2+8.6CH_4+8.9C_nH_m$ [34]
4	35	25	20	20	Generic Li-ion gas: $34.9H_2+25CO+20.1CO_2+15CH_4+5C_2H_4$ [11]
5	25	45	20	10	NCA 100: $25.7H_2+44.7CO+19.9CO_2+7.1CH_4+2.5C_2H_4$ [35]
6	45	35	10	10	NCA-MJ1c 100: $43.1H_2+37.1CO+9.8CO_2+7CH_4+3C_2H_4$ [32]
7	15	60	20	5	NCA-32Ac 100: $16H_2+58.4CO+20.4CO_2+2.5CH_4+2.7C_2H_4$ [32]
8	35	45	15	5	NCA-32Ec 100: $35.7H_2+44CO+14.5CO_2+3.6CH_4+2.2C_2H_4$ [32]
9	30	5	55	10	LFP 100: $30.9H_2+4.8CO+53.1CO_2+4.1CH_4+7.1C_2H_4$ [34]
10	30	15	45	10	NMC 100: $30.8H_2+13CO+41.2CO_2+6.8CH_4+8.2C_2H_4$ [34]
11	30	15	40	15	NMC 100: $30.8H_2+13CO+41.2CO_2+6.8CH_4+8.2C_2H_4$ [34]
12	20	5	65	10	LFP 50: $20.8H_2+4.8CO+66.2CO_2+1.6CH_4+6.6C_2H_4$ [35]
13	25	40	25	10	NCA 75: $24.3H_2+43.9CO+20.9CO_2+7.5CH_4+3.3C_2H_4$ [32]
14	30	10	50	10	LFP 100: $29.4H_2+9.1CO+48.3CO_2+5.4CH_4+7.7C_2H_4$ [35]
15	30	5	30	35	LCO 50: $30.7H_2+3.6CO+32CO_2+5.7CH_4+28C_nH_m$ [33]
16	25	30	35	10	NMC 100: $22.4H_2+28.9CO+36.8CO_2+5.2CH_4+6.6C_2H_4$ [34]
17	17.5	40	32.5	10	NCA 50: $17.5H_2+39.9CO+33.8CO_2+5.2CH_4+3.6C_2H_4$ [35]
18	15	5	65	15	NCA 25: $15.5H_2+5.5CO+62.8CO_2+8.7CH_4+7.5C_2H_4$ [35]

## 4. Results and discussion

### 4.1. $H_2/CO/air$ mixtures

Figure 1 reports dependencies of  $S_L$  on the equivalence ratio  $\phi$ , computed for three different  $\alpha = 1/9, 1$ , and  $3$ , see curves plotted in dashed, solid, and dotted-dashed lines, respectively, using GRI [23], Princeton [24], and San Diego [25] chemical mechanisms, see curves plotted in blue, black, and red lines, respectively. Two observations are worth noting.

First, while all three mechanisms yield sufficiently close results, there are some differences, which are more pronounced in richer mixtures, i.e., at larger  $\phi$ . Specifically, values of  $S_L$  computed using Princeton mechanism [24] at large  $\phi$  and large  $\alpha$  (i.e., 25%  $H_2$ ) are higher when compared to two other mechanisms and values of  $S_L$  computed using GRI mechanism [23] at large  $\phi$  and small  $\alpha$  (i.e., 90%  $H_2$ ) are smaller when compared to two other mechanisms. The fact that GRI mechanism is not the best one for hydrogen flames is well known [22,57]. Nevertheless, small quantitative differences between  $S_L(\phi)$ -curves computed using the three mechanisms (such differences are also small for other studied mixtures, not shown for brevity) justify adopting any of them in a qualitative study. Results presented in the following were obtained using Princeton mechanism [24] if another mechanism is not specified. From the numerical perspective, this mechanism is more robust, i.e. a wider range of  $\phi$  can be scanned using code PREMIX software package [29] without numerical failures.

Second, an increase in the volume fraction of CO results in decreasing  $S_L$  (and increasing  $\delta_L$ , not shown for brevity). Such a trend is expected, because both hydrogen reactivity and hydrogen diffusivity are higher when compared to CO. However, this trend is difficult to see near lean flammability limit in Fig. 1, because  $S_L$  is very small in lean mixtures when compared to the peak  $S_L(\phi)$  in moderately rich ones.

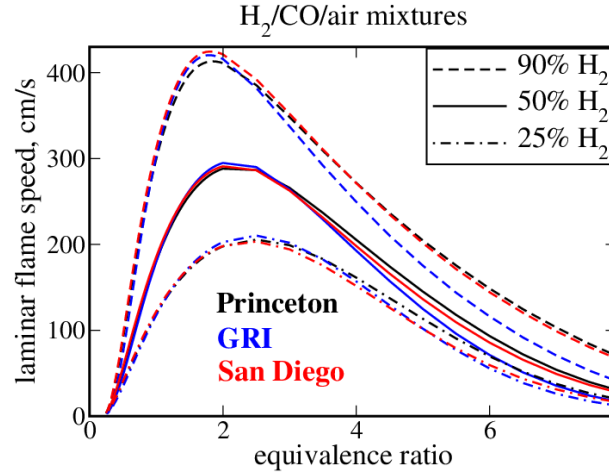


Figure 1: Speeds of H<sub>2</sub>/CO/air laminar flames computed using GRI [23], Princeton [24], and San Diego [25] chemical mechanisms vs. equivalence ratio under room conditions. Volume percentage of hydrogen in H<sub>2</sub>-CO fuel blend is specified in legends.  $T_u = 400$  K,  $P = 1$  atm.

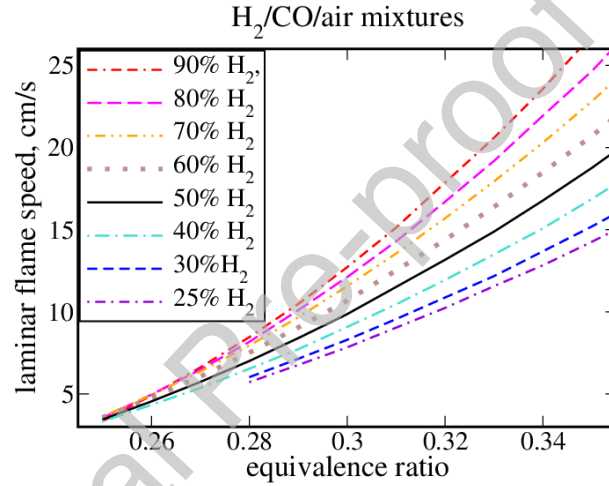


Figure 2: Laminar flame speeds of lean H<sub>2</sub>/CO/air mixtures computed for various volume fractions of hydrogen in fuel blends, specified in legends, using Princeton chemical mechanism [24].  $T_u = 400$  K,  $P = 1$  atm.

Accordingly, Fig. 2 zooms dependencies of  $S_L$  on the equivalence ratio, computed for various  $\alpha$  at small values of  $\phi$ . These results show that an increase in  $\alpha$  by a factor of 27 (i.e., from 1/9 to 3) results in weakly decreasing  $S_L(\phi)$ . For instance, the difference in values of equivalence ratio associated with  $S_L = 6$  cm/s is smaller than 0.02 for  $\alpha = 1/9$  and  $\alpha = 3$ , cf. curves plotted red dotted-double-dashed and violet dotted-dashed lines, respectively. The same trend is observed in Fig. 3.

Figure 3 also shows that GRI mechanism yields substantially larger values of  $\phi^*$  associated with  $S_L(\phi) = 5$  cm/s, see blue triangles, when compared to two other mechanisms. In other words, GRI mechanism tends to result in larger  $\phi$  associated with lean flammability limit.

All in all, Figs. 1-3 indicate that an increase in volume fraction of carbon oxide in H<sub>2</sub>/CO blend results in decreasing  $S_L(\phi)$ , with this trend being weakly pronounced at low equivalence ratios. Accordingly, an increase in  $\alpha$  weakly affects lean flammability limit, especially at  $\alpha < 1$  (curves in Fig. 3 look saturated at large volume fractions of hydrogen).

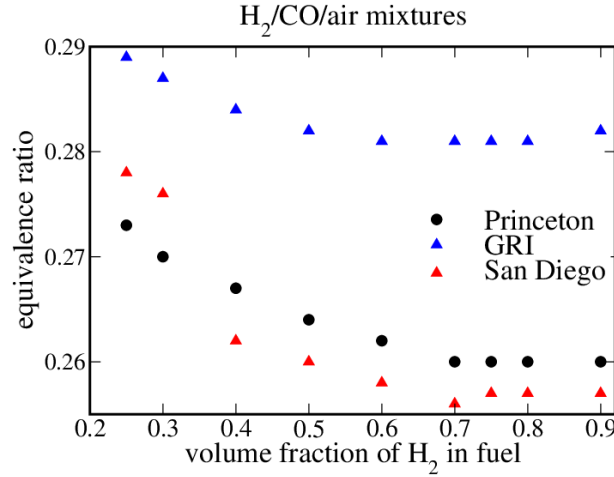


Figure 3: Equivalence ratios associated with  $S_L(\phi^*) = 5$  cm/s vs. volume percentage of hydrogen in  $H_2/CO$  fuel blends. Results computed using GRI [23], Princeton [24], and San Diego [25] chemical mechanisms are plotted in blue triangles, black circles, and red triangles, respectively.  $T_u = 400$  K,  $P = 1$  atm.

#### 4.2. $H_2/CO/CO_2/air$ and $H_2/CO/CH_4/air$ mixtures

Figures 4a and 4b report dependencies of  $S_L$  on the equivalence ratio  $\phi$ , computed for (a)  $H_2/CO/CO_2/air$  and (b)  $H_2/CO/CH_4/air$  mixtures using Princeton chemical mechanism [24] at  $T_u = 400$  K. Here, results for a single set of mixtures ( $\alpha = 3$ ) are presented, because similar trends are observed for other  $\alpha$  and for other  $T_u$  (not shown for brevity). To place the focus of discussion on lean mixtures, the plotted results are restricted to  $\phi < 0.45$ .

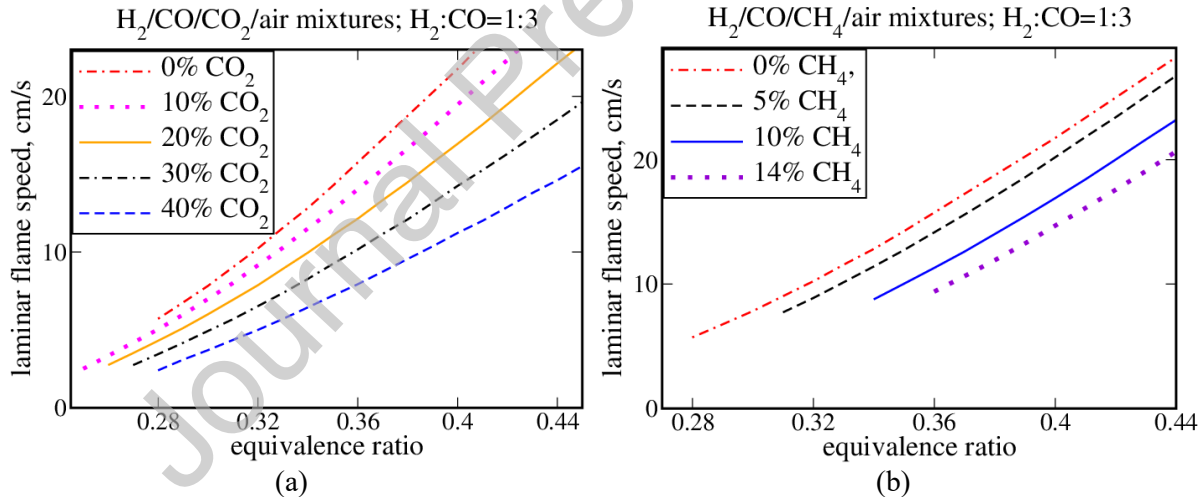


Figure 4: Laminar flame speeds of lean (a)  $H_2/CO/CO_2/air$  and (b)  $H_2/CO/CH_4/air$  mixtures computed for various volume fractions of  $CO_2$  and  $CH_4$ , respectively, in fuel blends, with ratio of  $H_2$  and  $CO$  volume fractions being equal to 1:3. Princeton chemical mechanism [24].  $T_u = 400$  K,  $P = 1$  atm.

Three observations are worth noting. First, as expected, addition of either  $CO_2$  or  $CH_4$  to an  $H_2/CO$  fuel blend results in decreasing  $S_L$ . Second, the influence of carbon dioxide on  $S_L(\phi)$  is quite moderate in lean mixtures, see Fig. 4a. For instance, the addition of 40%  $CO_2$  to the considered  $H_2/CO$  fuel blend results in increasing  $\phi^*$  associated with  $S_L(\phi) = 5$  cm/s from 0.28 to 0.32, cf. curves plotted in red dotted-dashed and blue dashed lines in Fig. 4a (from 0.29 or 0.27 to 0.34 or 0.31, respectively, using GRI [23] or San Diego [25] mechanism, respectively). Accordingly, the risk of fires could be significant even if gases vented out a battery contain a large amount of carbon dioxide, e.g., in case of a low SOC.

The computed weak influence of  $CO_2$  on  $S_L(\phi)$  in lean mixtures is associated with a small amount of the added  $CO_2$  when compared to  $N_2$  in the air. Indeed, even if an  $H_2/CO/CO_2$  fuel blend contains 40%  $CO_2$ , the mole fraction of  $CO_2$  in the entire fuel-air mixture is much smaller than the mole fraction

of  $N_2$ , e.g., a ratio of  $X_{CO_2}$  and  $X_{N_2}$  is about 0.1 if  $\phi = 0.3$  and  $\alpha = X_{CO}/X_{H_2} = 3$ . Consequently, even sufficiently large volume fractions of  $CO_2$  in gases vented out a battery with a low SOC do not guarantee low fire risks.

Third, if one compares the influence of the addition of (i)  $CO$  to  $H_2$ , see Fig. 3, (ii)  $CO_2$  to  $H_2/CO$  fuel blend, see Fig. 4a, and (iii)  $CH_4$  to  $H_2/CO$  fuel blend, see Fig. 4b, the effect magnitude is the lowest in case (i) and the highest in case (iii). Thus, while carbon dioxide and methane are an inert diluent and a fuel, respectively, a decrease in  $S_L(\phi)$  is smaller when  $CO_2$  is added. For example, the addition of 14%  $CH_4$  results in increasing  $\phi$  associated with  $S_L(\phi) = 10$  cm/s more (from 0.32 to 0.37, cf. curves plotted in red dotted-dashed and violet dotted lines in Fig. 4b) when the addition of 30%  $CO_2$  (from 0.32 to 0.36, cf. curves plotted in red dotted-dashed and black dotted-double-dashed lines in Fig. 4a). GRI [23] or San Diego [25] mechanism yields the same trend, e.g.,  $\Delta\phi = 0.05$  or  $0.04$  respectively, in the former case (14%  $CH_4$ ) and  $\Delta\phi = 0.03$  for both mechanisms in the latter case (30%  $CO_2$ ).

To explain these apparently surprising numerical data, let's compare mole fractions on inert diluents in lean  $H_2/CO/air$ ,  $H_2/CO/CO_2/air$ , and  $H_2/CO/CH_4/air$  mixtures. Formulas collected in Table 1 show that  $X_{in}$  does not depend on  $\alpha$  in  $H_2/CO/air$  mixtures, i.e., blending of hydrogen with carbon oxide does not increase  $X_{in}$ . This explains sufficiently close values of  $S_L(\phi)$  obtained at low  $\phi$  from  $H_2/CO/air$  mixtures characterized by significantly different  $\alpha$ . At larger equivalence ratios, contribution of hydrogen to heat diffusivity of the mixture is greater, resulting in increasing the heat diffusivity and, hence, increasing  $S_L$  with decreasing  $\alpha$ .

For  $H_2/CO/CO_2/air$  or  $H_2/CO/CH_4/air$  mixture, an increase in  $\gamma$  or  $\beta$ , respectively, results in increasing  $X_{in}$ , as expected and in line with Fig. 4. Moreover, after some algebra, the difference between mole fractions of inert diluents in the two sets of flames (i.e.,  $CO_2$ , unburned  $O_2$ , and  $N_2$  in the former set or unburned  $O_2$  and  $N_2$  in the latter set), evaluated at the same  $\phi$ , is equal to

$$X_{in}(\beta = 0) - X_{in}(\gamma = 0) = \frac{-7.14\phi(1 + \alpha)\beta + 1.5\phi^2(1 + \alpha)(\beta + \gamma) + 3\beta\gamma\phi^2}{\left[\phi(1 + \alpha + \gamma) + 4.76\left(\frac{1}{2} + \frac{\alpha}{2}\right)\right]\left[\phi(1 + \alpha + \beta) + 4.76\left(\frac{1}{2} + \frac{\alpha}{2} + 2\beta\right)\right]} \quad (3)$$

This difference is expected to be negative at comparable  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  and a small  $\phi$  due to the term  $-7.14\phi(1 + \alpha)\beta$ , which is linear with respect to  $\phi$ , whereas the two other terms in the nominator are proportional to much smaller  $\phi^2$ . Therefore, in lean reactant-air mixtures characterized by the same equivalence ratio, an increase in the mole fraction of inert diluents due to the addition of one mole of methane to an  $H_2/CO$  blend is significantly larger when compared to the counterpart increase in  $X_{in}$  due to the addition of one mole of carbon dioxide to the same blend. Accordingly, a decrease in  $S_L(\phi)$  is more pronounced in the former case, as shown in Fig. 4.

In addition, for instance in blends  $0.81H_2+0.09CO+0.1CH_4$  and  $0.81H_2+0.09CO+0.1CO_2$ , the laminar flame speeds  $S_L(T_u = 400 \text{ K})$  are equal to 25.8 and 42.4 cm/s, respectively, provided that the same equivalence ratio  $\phi = 0.40$  is retained. The differences computed using GRI [23] and San Diego [25] mechanisms are equal to 16.9 and 11.1 cm/s, respectively. Thus, the addition of a fuel ( $CH_4$ ) to an  $H_2/CO$  blend may result in decreasing  $S_L(\phi)$  when compared to the addition of the same amount (per unit hydrogen volume) of a diluent ( $CO_2$ ) to the same blend. From this perspective, methane may mitigate fire better than carbon dioxide.

It is worth stressing, however, that such an apparently surprising trend is solely observed if the same equivalence ratio is retained. On the contrary, if  $CH_4$  is simply substituted with  $CO_2$ , both  $\phi$  and, hence,  $S_L$  are decreased. For example, if  $\phi = 0.40$  for the blend  $0.81H_2+0.09CO+0.1CH_4$ , simple substitution of methane with carbon dioxide yields  $\phi = 0.28$  and  $S_L(T_u = 400 \text{ K}, \phi = 0.28) = 8.9$  cm/s, i.e., a decrease by a factor of about three when compared to the former ( $H_2/CO/CH_4/air$ ) flame.

It is also of interest to note that the next-to-the-bottom row in Table 1 shows opposite dependencies of  $X_{in}$  on  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . Specifically,  $X_{in}$  is decreased when  $\beta$  is decreased or  $\alpha$  is increased. Thus, an increase in the ratio of the volume fractions of carbon oxide and hydrogen in  $H_2/CO/CH_4$  blend may result in decreasing mole fraction of inert diluents in the mixture (if the equivalence ratio retains its value). Accordingly, contrary to a decrease in  $S_L$  with increasing  $\alpha$  in  $H_2/CO/air$  mixtures, discussed in Sect. 4.1,  $S_L(\phi)$  may increase with increasing  $\alpha$  in  $H_2/CO/CH_4$  blends. Indeed, the present simulations show

that such an apparently surprising trend can be observed, e.g., see Table 3, which reports typical characteristics of lean  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CH}_4/\text{air}$  flames, computed by varying the volume ratio of CO and  $\text{H}_2$ , i.e.,  $\alpha$ , and retaining the same  $\phi$  and the same volume ratio of  $\text{CH}_4$  and  $\text{H}_2$ , i.e.,  $\beta$ . All three chemical mechanisms predict this trend, i.e., an increase in  $S_L$  by  $\alpha$  if  $\phi$  and  $\beta$  retain their values. Similar results were obtained at other low equivalence ratios and other unburned gas temperatures.

**Table 3**

Characteristics of lean  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CH}_4/\text{air}$  and  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CO}_2/\text{air}$  flames with different volume fractions of CO

Fuel blend	$\beta$	$\gamma$	$\phi$	$T_u$ , K	$\alpha$	$X_{in}$	$T_{ad}$ , K	$S_L$ , cm/s		
								[24]	[23]	[25]
$\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CH}_4$	0.5	0	0.42	400	0.5	0.8282	1487	13.7	14.4	17.2
					1.0	0.8212	1562	15.9	15.5	18.7
					1.83	0.8128	1581	18.1	16.7	20.2
					3.50	0.8028	1604	19.8	17.5	21.3
$\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CO}_2$	0	0.5	0.42	400	0.5	0.7857	1502	29.6	22.4	30.5
					1.0	0.7831	1544	26.7	21.8	28.3
					1.83	0.7808	1578	24.5	20.5	26.0
					3.50	0.7787	1612	21.8	18.8	23.2

Besides, the bottom row in Table 1 shows opposite dependencies of  $X_{in}$  on  $\alpha$  and  $\gamma$  for  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CO}_2$  blends, i.e.,  $X_{in}$  is decreased when  $\gamma$  is decreased or  $\alpha$  is increased. Table 3 confirms this trend and shows that  $X_{in}$  is decreased and  $T_{ad}$  is increased with increasing  $\alpha$  in  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CO}_2$  blends, provided that  $\phi$  and  $\gamma$  retain their values. However, for these fuel blends, such an increase in the combustion temperature with decreasing mole fraction of  $\text{H}_2$  may be counterbalanced by decreasing molecular fuel and heat diffusivities and decreasing reactivity, which is higher for hydrogen. Table 3 implies that the latter effects dominate the increase in  $T_{ad}$  and results in decreasing  $S_L$  with increasing the volume ratio of CO, in line with common expectations. Thus, while the mole fraction of inert diluents plays an important role, other factors such as molecular transport coefficients should also be considered.

Nevertheless, the important role played by  $X_{in}$  can be further illustrated by comparing characteristics of lean  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CH}_4/\text{air}$  and  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CO}_2/\text{air}$  flames, reported in Table 3. At the same  $\phi$ , the same  $T_u$ , the same  $\alpha$ , and  $\beta = \gamma$ , the latter mixtures, which contain an extra inert diluent, i.e.,  $\text{CO}_2$ , are characterized by smaller  $X_{in}$ , higher  $T_{ad}$ , and higher  $S_L$  despite the former blends contain an extra fuel, i.e.,  $\text{CH}_4$ .

#### 4.3. $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CO}_2/\text{CH}_4/\text{air}$ mixtures

Figures 5a and 5b report maximum (over various  $\phi$ ) laminar flame speeds and minimum laminar flame thicknesses, respectively. These data have been computed using Princeton chemical mechanism [24] and varying the equivalence ratio for 18 mixtures listed in Table 2. The data are plotted vs. mole fraction of carbon dioxide in each generic  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CO}_2/\text{CH}_4$  blend. These mole fractions are specified in the fourth column in Table 2. Black circles and red squares show  $S_L$  or  $\delta_L$  computed at  $T_u = 300$  K and 400 K, respectively. As expected, variations in the flame speed and thickness show opposite trends, because  $\delta_L$  is inversely proportional to  $S_L$  in a typical premixed flame.

Figure 5 shows a significant decrease (increase) in the maximum (minimum, respectively) values of  $S_L$  ( $\delta_L$ , respectively) with increasing mole fraction of  $\text{CO}_2$  in fuel blends. However, these extreme values are reached in near-stoichiometric mixtures, contrary to lean mixtures discussed in the previous section.

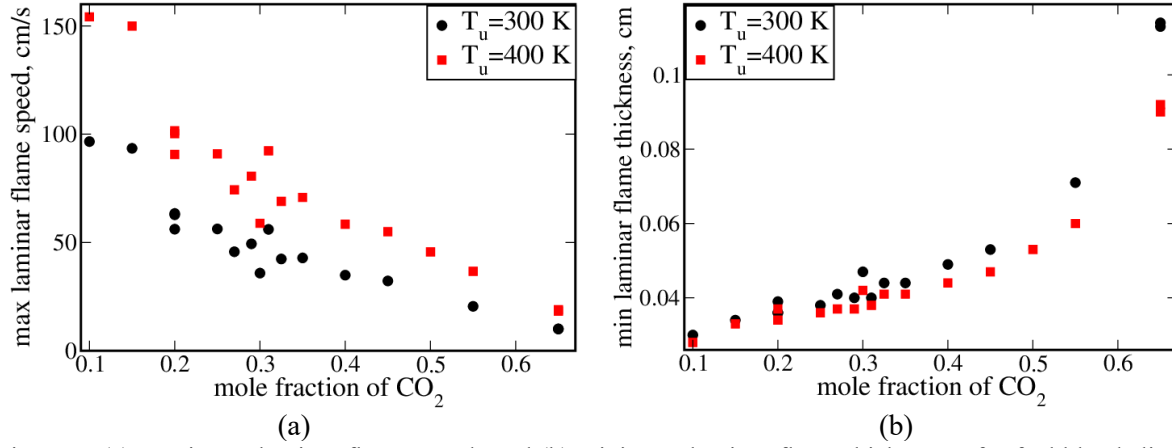


Figure 5: (a) Maximum laminar flame speeds and (b) minimum laminar flame thicknesses for fuel blends listed in Table 2. These extreme values have been obtained by varying equivalence ratio for each single blend and are plotted vs. mole fraction of  $\text{CO}_2$  in that fuel blend. Black circles and red squares show results computed at  $T_u = 300$  K and  $T_u = 400$  K, respectively. Princeton chemical mechanism [24].  $P = 1$  atm.

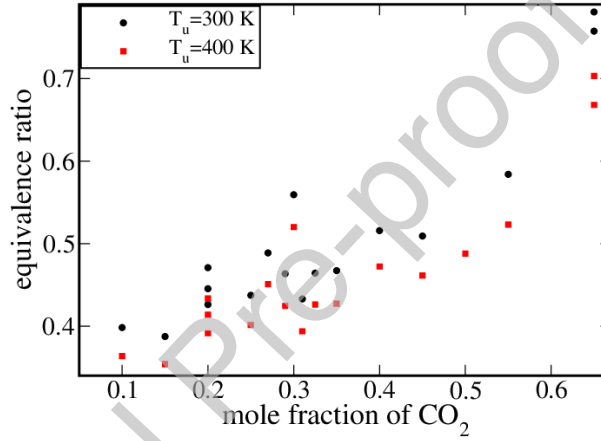


Figure 6: Equivalence ratios associated with  $S_L = 12$  cm/s, computed for various fuel blends listed in Table 2. These results are plotted vs. mole fraction of  $\text{CO}_2$  in fuel blend, reported in the fourth column in Table 2. Black circles and red squares show results computed at  $T_u = 300$  K and  $T_u = 400$  K, respectively. Princeton chemical mechanism [24].  $P = 1$  atm.

The lean burning of the fuel blends considered is addressed in Fig. 6, which reports equivalence ratios  $\phi$  associated with a small laminar flame speed of  $S_L = 12$  cm/s. This laminar flame speed does not characterize lean flammability limit but is chosen to illustrate the trend, i.e., weak influence of  $X_{\text{CO}_2}$  on  $S_L(\phi)$ , using another value of  $S_L$  that differs from values adopted in the previous examples. The results are plotted vs. mole fraction  $X_{\text{CO}_2}$  of  $\text{CO}_2$  in a generic fuel blend. Black circles and red squares show data computed at  $T_u = 300$  K and  $T_u = 400$  K, respectively. While the trend of increasing  $\phi$  with increasing  $X_{\text{CO}_2}$  is well pronounced, the effect magnitude is quite moderate. With the exception of cases 12 and 18, characterized by  $X_{\text{CO}_2}$  as large as 0.65, the other 16 mixtures are characterized by significant laminar flame speeds at  $\phi$  as low as 0.5 ( $T_u = 400$  K) or lower. Even in the two other cases (12 and 18 in Table 2),  $S_L = 12$  cm/s is reached at  $\phi$  smaller than 0.7 at  $T_u = 400$  K. These numerical results again indicate that a large volume fraction of carbon dioxide in gases vented out a battery after thermal runaway does not exclude fire risks. At  $T_u = 400$  K, the lean flammability limit associated with  $S_L(\phi^*) = 5$  cm/s is well below  $\phi = 0.7$  even if mole fraction of  $\text{CO}_2$  in a fuel blend is as large as 0.65. Specifically, for mixtures 12 and 18 in Table 2,  $S_L = 5$  cm/s at  $\phi = 0.53$  and 0.55, respectively, if  $T_u = 400$  K. Thus, a low SOC does not guarantee the lack of fire risk.

## 5. Conclusions

Complex-chemistry simulations of unperturbed laminar premixed flames were performed for a wide range of  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CO}_2/\text{CH}_4$  blends and equivalence ratios at four different temperatures of unburned reactants. Three different state-of-the-art chemical mechanisms and multicomponent diffusion model with Soret effect were adopted. The focus of the present analysis was placed on the influence of concentrations of  $\text{CO}$ ,  $\text{CO}_2$ , and  $\text{CH}_4$  on the computed laminar flame speeds and a surrogate of lean flammability limit, i.e., equivalence ratio  $\phi^*$  associated with a small laminar flame speed, i.e.,  $S_L(\phi^*) = 5 \text{ cm/s}$ .

As expected, the results show a decrease in  $S_L$  and an increase in  $\phi^*$  with decreasing hydrogen mole fraction in the reactants. However, the following three trends are apparently surprising. First, both  $S_L(\phi)$  in lean mixtures and, especially,  $\phi^*$  depend weakly on mole fraction of  $\text{CO}$  in  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}$  fuel blends. Second, a decrease in  $S_L(\phi)$  in lean mixtures is more (less) pronounced when adding  $\text{CH}_4$  ( $\text{CO}_2$ , respectively) to  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}$  fuel blends. Accordingly, under certain conditions, fuel ( $\text{CH}_4$ ) can mitigate fire risk more efficiently than diluent ( $\text{CO}_2$ ) provided that the equivalence ratio retains the same value. Third, an increase in a ratio of mole fractions of carbon oxide and hydrogen in lean  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CH}_4/\text{air}$  mixtures characterized by the same equivalence ratio may result in increasing  $S_L(\phi)$ .

All these observations are attributed to a larger (smaller) increase in the mole fraction of inert components when adding  $\text{CH}_4$  ( $\text{CO}_2$ , respectively) to  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}$  fuel blends (provided that the equivalence ratio retains the same value). Nevertheless, other factors such as high diffusivity and high reactivity of hydrogen can also play an important role and, e.g., control a decrease in  $S_L(\phi)$  with increasing volume ratio of carbon oxide and hydrogen in lean  $\text{H}_2/\text{CO}/\text{CO}_2/\text{air}$  mixtures.

Finally, the computed results also show that even a large volume fraction of carbon dioxide, e.g., 65%, in gases vented out a battery after thermal runaway does not exclude fire risks.

## CRedit authorship contribution statement

A.N. Lipatnikov: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Funding acquisition.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.